



BULLETIN

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<p>THE 2014 ANNUAL MEETING IN SAN DIEGO</p>
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A Reminder: The annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society (NAPTS) will take place all day Friday, 21 November, and Saturday morning, 22 November 2014. The banquet will be held on Friday evening. As always, the meeting takes place in connection with the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in San Diego, California, 22-25 November 2014. In addition to the annual meeting of and banquet of the NAPTS, there will be sessions of the AAR Group, “Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion and Culture.” Our President Elect, Dr. Charles Fox, is the Program Chair of the annual meeting this year. Anyone wishing to contact Dr. Fox about the Society’s program may do so at:

Dr. Charles Fox

chaswfox@hotmail.com

The AAR Group’s co-chairs are:
Dr. Sharon Peebles Burch—Interfaith Counseling Center—spburch@att.net; Prof. Stephen G. Ray, Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary—stephen.ray@garrett.edu.

The following information is from the AAR website:

Annual Meetings Program Book Is Online

Online Program Book can be found on the AAR website at http://papers.aarweb.org/program_book
Check out the *Online Annual Meetings Program Book*. The 2014 AAR Annual Meeting is packed with excellent programming. See a session you just can’t miss? There is still time to register and register for the Annual Meeting in San Diego, held this year

from November 22-25.

The *Program Book*, featuring the complete program listing and room locations, will be mailed to all Annual Meetings registrants in late September. The *Online Program Book* is now available. You must be registered for the Annual Meetings by **September 18** to receive the print version of the *Program Book*. If you register after 9/18, you may pick up a print version at the meeting.

DUES ARE DUE!

With this Summer issue of the Bulletin, annual membership dues are payable to the secretary-treasurer of the NAPTS (*Please give any changes in contact information*):

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- Regular membership: 50 USD
- Student membership: 20 USD
- Retired members who cannot pay the full amount are welcome to send whatever they can afford.

Thank you!

PAUL TILlich: THEOLOGY AND LEGACY THE 2014 CONFERENCE IN OXFORD

RUSSELL RE MANNING

On 14-15 July, Ertegun House and St Benet's Hall, University of Oxford, played host to a group of theologians and philosophers gathered to consider "Paul Tillich: Theology and Legacy." Co-convened by Samuel Shearn (Ertegun House), Werner Jeanrond (St Benet's Hall), and Russell Re Manning (Bath Spa University), the meeting testified to the revival of interest in Tillich's thought in Britain and beyond, and highlighted the vitality of contemporary work that engages with Tillich.

The meeting opened with two plenary lectures that admirably set the tone for high quality of the subsequent discussions. Marc Boss (Institut Protestant de Théologie, Montpellier) presented a masterful survey of his important research into the context of Tillich's intellectual formation in the dense thickets of early twentieth-century revivals of German Ideal-

printed *Program Book*.)

Additional Meetings Reservation System Is Open
Reserve your reception, editorial meeting, or other business event at the Annual Meeting today through the [online Additional Meeting reservation system!](#) Additional Meetings that are requested now are published in the online and print *Annual Meetings Program Book*.

ism and neo-Kantianism, arguing that rumors of Tillich's turn to existentialism have been greatly exaggerated. Douglas Hedley (University of Cambridge) followed with a self-confessed return to Tillich—as witnessed by his schoolboy copy of *The Courage to Be*—by exploring the theme of participation in Tillich. Placing Tillich in the context of the history of the idea of participation in the traditions of Platonism (pagan and Christian), Hedley argued for a robust metaphysical account of participation in Tillich as a foil to those interpretations of his thought that brand it a sentimental naturalism. In keeping with Tillich's interests in theology of culture, the first day closed with an intervention from the musician Richard Parry and the illustrator Chris Glynn, who offered an "artist's perspective" on Tillich in words, music, and images.

Day 2 consisted of a further two plenary lectures, 16 short papers, and Christoph Schwöbel's dinner speech. A brief account of the short papers will suffice to show the quality and range of the engagement with Tillich and his legacy from a younger generation of scholars.

In a session entitled "Tillich and Philosophy," Gorazd Andrejc (The Woolf Institute, Cambridge) offered a Tillichian supplement to Wittgenstein's account of faith that allows for the unavoidable role of doubt in faith, even for Wittgenstein. Kate Kirkpatrick (University of Oxford) presented Jean-Paul Sartre as a "hidden theologian of original sin" and argued that Tillich's account of the threat of anxiety shows an indebtedness to the sage of the Café de Flore. Finally, Julia Mezsaros (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) spoke of selfless love in Tillich as a marrying of Kierkegaard and Sartre in a dialectic of self-subjectivity and self-situatedness. The parallel session "Tillich on Religion" opened with Catherine Sieverinck (VU Amsterdam) brought Tillich's thought on ambiguity in life and the quest for unambiguous life into dialogue with the anthropological approaches of the Dutch theologians Vroom and

Anbeek. Sven Ensminger (University of St Andrews) revisited Tillich's understanding of revelation and its relations to theology of religions in dialogue with Karl Barth. Finally, Robert Meditz (Independent Scholar) presented Tillich's understanding of Judaism in the context of his dialectical account of the history of religion.

Two further parallel sessions followed: "Correlation Revisited" and "Tillich Applied." In the first, Ulrich Schmiedel and Marijn de Jong (both University of Oxford) delivered a joint presentation of their enquiries into Tillich's method of correlation, arguing for the need for an experiential turn to augment Tillich's overly formal methodology. The theme of the implications of methodology framed the following two papers. Rev. Demetrios Bathrellos (Orthodox Institute, Cambridge) critiqued Tillich's embrace of idealism from a perspective informed by Florovsky's "neo-patristic synthesis" and exposed the consequences for his Christology of Tillich's correlational method. Daniel Plant (King's College, London), citing Bonhoeffer and MacKinnon, argued that Tillich's theology is fatally compromised by its universalist methodology that detaches it from the particular religion it is supposed to interpret. The second session opened with Andrew O'Neill (Atlantic School of Theology) argued for a recovery of Tillich's theology as a means of addressing the situation of the declining participation rates in Protestantism. Next, Devan Stahl (St Louis University) suggested a contextualization of Tillich's Protestant principle within the field of you will health care in order to inform a Protestant bioethics. Finally, Matthew Lon Weaver (Marshall School, Duluth) explored a Tillichian pedagogy for the contemporary situation of a technologically rich environment that nonetheless has little faith in progress.

The final, shorter, parallel sessions feature two papers each. The first "Tillich and Religions" opened with Ankur Barua (University of Cambridge), who developed a comparative analysis of the theological systems of Tillich and Ramanuja, highlighting the tensions in their common attempts to hold together the idea that the world is "internal" to the divine and that finite reality has some measure of creaturely independence. This was followed by Ivan Hon (China in Comparative Respective Global), who applied Tillich's account of the nature of religion to the question of the religious status of neo-Confucianism. The second session "Tillich Applied" began with Alexander Blondeau (Luther Theological Seminary, St Paul, Minnesota) sharing

his Tillichian engagement with contemporary accounts of "big, crazy, travel adventure" in terms of a cultivation of a salvific desire for depth. Turning lastly to the "dark night of faith," Stefan Jäger (Evangelistenschule Johanneum, Wuppertal) presented a comparative study of Tillich's absolute faith with Juan de la Cruz's *pura fei* and the Buddhist concept of *shinjin*.

In the day's two plenary lectures, Anne Marie Reijnen (Institut Catholique de Paris) and Reinhold Bernhardt (Universität Basel) both engaged Tillich's legacy for pressing questions of contemporary theology. Anne Marie Reijnen, defending our current context of ecological crisis as a new situation for theology, argued that the gravity of the threat facing us requires a decisive response, even if we cannot be certain of the facts. Here, she found Tillich's a prophetic voice, drawing particularly on his sermon, "Man and Earth" addressing the dreadful threat of nuclear annihilation. Reinhold Bernhardt investigated Tillich's encounter with Japanese Buddhism, which clearly had a significant impact on his late thinking. Bernhardt argued that Tillich offers underappreciated resources for the theology of religions and turned to the dialectic of the ontological way of encounter from Tillich's seminal essay "Two Ways in the Philosophy of Religion." Our conference ended with a thought-provoking dinner speech from Christoph Schwöbel (Tübingen). Taking the question of the revival of interest in Tillich's theology as his theme, Schwöbel offered a new perspective on Tillich's theological project in terms of a theology of transition that emphasized Tillich's mobility above his situation "on the boundary."

The theme of a theology in transition was well suited to the prevailing ethos of the conference at which the engagements with Tillich of a new generation of scholars came to the fore. Interestingly, at the same time, one of the persistent themes was that of the surprisingly "traditional" nature of Tillich's thought. Tillich speaks to today's concerns not (primarily) as a theological innovator, but as an exemplar of a long and distinguished tradition of Christian theologians for whom theology and philosophy, religion and culture, faith and reason, spirit and life have never really been separated. Perhaps it is here that Tillich's radicality lies in his surprising and vulnerable fidelity to the fragile tradition of Christian philosophical theology—in a situation of ever-trenching binaries. Certainly, it is this that makes his thought so repeatedly open to new situations and

to further conversations. And it was this legacy that was powerfully present in Oxford in July.

With thanks to Ertegun House and St Benet's Hall for their generous hospitality, to Sam Shearn and Werner Jeanrond for their organizational genius,

as well as to the Oxford Centre for Theology and Modern European Thought for further support.

Russell Re Manning
Bath Spa University
1 August 2014

**ANXIETY'S FINITE FREEDOM: ANALYZING
THE ROLE OF ANXIETY IN THE FALL**

ADAM PRYOR

A connection between Schelling, Kierkegaard, and Tillich is not difficult to find. Tillich attempts to make the connection for us in various places in his writing: he ties together Schelling and Kierkegaard in terms of the transition from negative to positive philosophy in Schelling's work. This transition is one from abstracting forms of essentialism (especially as with Hegel) to philosophical thinking that begins from within the historical situation of the existent individual.¹

Beyond this appeal to an existential approach, we also find Tillich echoing Kierkegaardian themes—perhaps none more clearly than anxiety and its relation to the Fall. Here I will consider the similarity between Tillich and Kierkegaard regarding the role of anxiety and freedom in their accounts of the Fall. I suggest that their accounts reflect an indebtedness to Schelling's notion of a cosmic Fall. However, there is also a real difference between these thinkers insofar as Tillich remains much closer to Schelling's account of the emergence of Nature than Kierkegaard. The result is that while both Tillich and Kierkegaard posit anxiety's generating a rupture that estranges our existence from its essential innocence, the force of the rupture is different: for Kierkegaard the rupture anxiety constitutes is an infinite qualitative difference, while for Tillich the rupture represents the simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal tendencies of estranged existence's relation to its essence, indicating the difference in their respective indebtedness to Schelling.

Kierkegaard and Anxiety

In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard (as Vigilius Haufniensis) offers a deliberation on the dogmatic issue of hereditary sin. From the beginning of the work, Kierkegaard brackets sin from ethical analysis. Drawing on a conception of ethics as an

ideal task for which all people possess the requisite conditions, Kierkegaard argues that sin is better dealt with through dogmatics because its actuality (its pertinence to the whole human race) puts sin beyond the purview of ethics' ideality.² Dogmatics moves from actuality to ideality; ethics, operating with dogmatics as a precondition, moves from the presupposition of sin (specifically hereditary sin) to explain the sin of the single individual.³

This structure puts Kierkegaard in the thorny place of having to relate Adam's first sin to all subsequent hereditary sin: are these identical? Or, how does how does hereditary sin—as the precondition of subsequent sin—relate to subsequent sin? The problem is that if they are different, then Adam stands outside of all human history as the only person not tinged by hereditary sin; Adam becomes something not quite human.⁴ How then does one make Adam's first sin and hereditary sin the same?

What is critical here is part of Kierkegaard's solution to this problem. Sylvia Walsh aptly summarizes the two propositions that guide Kierkegaard's resolution of this problem: "(1) the individual is simultaneously him/herself and the whole race in such a way that each participates in the other; and (2) the transition from one quality to another occurs suddenly by way of a leap, not through a gradual, quantitative progression."⁵ The first of these propositions is indebted to Kierkegaard's analysis of the doctrinal heritage informing the concept of original and hereditary sin.⁶ If sin in the human race presupposes inheriting the first sin of Adam, then sinfulness is the condition of all humanity subsequent to Adam; this makes Adam different from the rest of the human race—even though he is to be the biblical origin of the human race—by not having this inheritance since he was its progenitor. Putting Adam outside the human race this way is unacceptable in Kierkegaard's analysis.⁷ Instead, in order to ensure that Adam, along with every other single individual, be included in the race of human beings, he suggests that it is essential that the individual be understood to always be himself and the whole race simultaneously.⁸

If one is always simultaneously the single individual and the entirety of the human race, then the quality of a first sin in Adam ought to be no different from the first sin in any other human being. This is precisely what Kierkegaard affirms.

That sin came into the world is quite true. But this does not really concern Adam. To express this precisely and accurately, one must say that by the first sin, sinfulness came into Adam. It could not occur to anyone to say about any subsequent man that by his first sin sinfulness came into the world; and yet it comes into the world by him in a similar way (i.e., in a way not essentially different), because, expressed precisely and accurately, sinfulness is in the world only insofar as it comes into the world by sin.⁹

Explaining how these first sins are not essentially different, Kierkegaard proposes the second guiding principle: the existence of sinfulness comes to be through a qualitative leap. The Fall to sin for Adam, as well as for each of us, comes into the world in the same way—through this inexplicable qualitative leap.¹⁰ The key issue is the opposition that Kierkegaard notes to Hegel—and perhaps also Schelling—on this point. Kierkegaard requires a qualitative leap for both of these instances of first sin, denying the possibility that such a qualitative leap can come about through quantitative progression (i.e., the historical buildup of sinfulness through Adam's first sin cannot be the cause of the qualitative leap of sinfulness for subsequent individuals in the human race; quantitative increase cannot cause a qualitative leap). This issue of not falling into the trap of allowing a quantitative increase to denote a qualitative leap is repeatedly emphasized in *The Concept of Anxiety*.

While the leap itself is inexplicable, its psychological precursor—*anxiety*—can be analyzed. He associates anxiety with “freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility:”¹¹ it is freedom's quality of being able. This is quite different from fear for Kierkegaard, which has a definite object. Anxiety is then not only a precursor of sin, it is also the term in Kierkegaard that designates a state between the potentiality and actuality of freedom that constitutes human existence: the intermediary that ruptures the innocence of dreaming spirit and sets human being into the estrangement of its infinite qualitative difference from God.¹² Anxiety is a precondition to both sin and innocence for Kierkegaard; a facet of our humanity that belongs essentially to the quality of spirit that he elsewhere makes concomitant to be-

ing human. Thus, anxiety is simply a facet of all human beings, innocent or guilty, that cannot be done away with.¹³

Tillich's Anxiety—Schelling and Kierkegaard?

For the reader of Tillich, these Kierkegaardian themes are certainly familiar; as a result, this is probably the most obvious place to draw a connection between them. Tillich's concept of dreaming innocence is uncannily similar to the innocence of dreaming spirit that is ruptured by anxiety in Kierkegaard. Building on a symbolic reading of the account of the Fall in Genesis, dreaming innocence theologically deepens, through its psychological sense, the symbolic meaning of essential Paradise in this mythic account. For Tillich, dreaming innocence is the state of essential being that is not actually a chronological moment in the history of humankind. The dreaming innocence is non-actualized potentiality. Tillich is using the terms “dreaming” and “innocence” in their analogical senses to describe conditions that are existentially distorted in estrangement through the self-actualization of finite freedom. Inherent to the undecided potentialities of dreaming innocence is anxiety.¹⁴

Thus, we could say that like Kierkegaard, Tillich correlates anxiety to the concept of freedom's quality of “being able” and the actualization of possibility. Like Kierkegaard, Tillich makes innocence into something other than an orthodox, original perfection. Finally, by making innocence into something other than original perfection, like Kierkegaard, Tillich does not affirm some notion of a fortunate fall or naïve return to dreaming innocence; instead, making the role of anxiety to be a fundamental feature of human being as the condition for sinfulness.

I would suggest that in both Kierkegaard and Tillich we find in the concept of anxiety and its relation to freedom's possibility an anthropological development of a post-metaphysical theme in Schelling's work. Twentieth century interpretation of Schelling has emphasized his distance from typical German Idealism as exemplified by Fichte or Hegel. His work has most recently been read in light of its post-Subject tendency or effort to get beyond the self-grounding projection of reason.¹⁵ In using Schelling to create a deeper means to comparing and contrasting Tillich and Kierkegaard, my interest is not so much in giving a detailed account of Schelling's work; rather, my aim is to make use of the critical themes in Schelling's work that can allow

us to parse apart the critical ideas that otherwise seem so similar between these two.

To do this, I think it is critical to outline the basic features of the negative and the positive philosophy of Schelling. While Schelling's work has vexed historians of philosophy for its incomplete and un-systematic character, Tillich seems to recognize a connection across the periods of Schelling's works; he connects the very late *Philosophy of Revelation* and *Philosophy of Mythology* to the early work the *Philosophy of Nature* through his *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*. This way of approaching Schelling's work is made clear in Tillich's two dissertations on Schelling. There Tillich offers a remarkably unified presentation of Schelling's philosophy: reading the positive philosophy as its culmination, but a culmination that is incomprehensible without being grounded in the earlier negative philosophy.¹⁶ Particularly important for Tillich are the development of the potencies in Schelling's philosophy of nature as his response to the post-Kantian problem left by trying to unite pure and practical reason.¹⁷

The potencies in Schelling's *Philosophy of Nature* make recourse to the understanding of the organism developed by Kant in the *Critique of Practical Judgment*. We need not get into the detail of the relation of these texts here, but suffice it to note that Schelling's conception of the system of nature is an attempt to get beyond the static, deterministic understanding of nature; it conceives of nature as dialectical "productivity" akin to the purposiveness of an organism that prevents the organism from reaching any point of stasis. Nature is not the object of conscious study, but nature is understood as a movement of opposing potencies that are revealed to be dialectically identical; nature is understood to be an absolute producing subject composed of the identity between its opposing potencies: appearing objective nature and the spontaneity of a thinking subject. The importance here, which Schelling makes clearer through the period of his identity philosophy, is that the self-conscious I cannot be understood as that which generates the whole system of subject and object in our day to day experience; rather, it is a result of nature conceived as productivity.¹⁸

In moving beyond the primacy of the self-conscious I, Schelling must find a ground beyond the subject in the absolute indifference of nature as productivity that gives rise to the self-positing of the subject. Here Schelling is stepping far beyond his roots in Kant, Fichte, and reflective philosophy to-

wards generating a philosophy of being (in the sense of *Sein*); he is trying to address the problem of how a finite world emerges from a ground that is beyond the finite altogether. Where Schelling differentiates himself in this regard is with the concept of *Abfall*: a qualitative leap whereby the finite world emerges from this originary ground. The originary ground is the Absolute or Absolute Identity of Schelling's period of Identity Philosophy. The emphasis is on the unity of knower and known that precedes all subjectivity as the condition for moving beyond the aporia of Kant's critical philosophy.

For Tillich scholars, this is probably the point at which Schelling starts sounding very familiar. The Absolute is connected to Being and God by Schelling. Beyond the circle of self-consciousness, Schelling affirms the absolute identity of Being and God; being is not a predicate of God (i.e., God is not *a* being), but Being and God are indivisible and infinite in their absolute identity. The world of finite things are, by contrast, non-being: that which cannot add or subtract from the absolute identity of God and Being in any way. Finite things can only be understood as modifications of form, not modifications of this absolute identity. The finite world is then both being and non-being. The ground of their existence is the absolute identity of Being and God of which they are particularities, but they are non-being in respect to this same ground as they neither add nor subtract to the ground.

Tillich is clear that this conception of nature and potencies is critical to understanding Schelling's subsequent work.¹⁹ Tillich connects the structure of the potencies both to the conception of *Abfall* in the period of his Identity Philosophy, the system of Freedom developed in the middle period, and the Positive Philosophy of his later work. Schelling's work on freedom is particularly important for my purposes here because of its connection to Tillich's notion of finite freedom and Kierkegaard's conception of anxiety. In addressing the question of freedom, Schelling is posing the question ontologically: freedom is here conceived as the principle that connects finite beings to the absolute identity of Being and God. Freedom, like Schelling's potencies, is understood as a polarity that is authentically understood not as mere arbitrary free will, but as the polarity of freedom and necessity.

Bearing this in mind, Schelling understands freedom to necessarily to be that which forms the bond between finite beings and Being and God. Human beings are made distinctly individual by the

enactment of freedom; this enactment distinguishes the human being from the absolute freedom of Being and God. Put slightly differently, human being is distinguished from Being and God through its freedom. The freedom of the human being is distinct from the absolute freedom of Being and God in that the creative, absolute freedom of Being and God indissolubly links Being and existence; however, the freedom of the human being is precisely individuating because the link between existence and the ground of this existence is not indissoluble for human being. Thus, Schelling finds that the individuating feature of human freedom is the essential capacity to do evil (i.e., separate existence from the ground of existence).

The same logic that applies to human freedom is more widely made use of in Schelling's description of the origins of the world in terms of a cosmic Fall: the eternal emergence of nature from the Absolute. This is a natural connection because nature finds its perfection in the freedom of human being. As such, this emergence into existence of nature is a Fall because it entails a certain alienation from the Absolute in its independence (i.e., the *relative* independence, finitude, and self-subsistence of nature are an estrangement from its true center of being in the Absolute).²⁰ *In short, the anxiety of Kierkegaard and the finite freedom of Tillich used in giving an account of the estranged existence of human beings respectively echo the post-metaphysical speculation informing Schelling's account of the estranged existence of Nature and his account of human freedom as the capacity to do evil more generally.*

What Tillich's interpretation of Schelling highlights is that the difference between human freedom and nature is that "What befalls nature as fate, man bears as guilt."²¹ In both cases there is alienation in the act of becoming independent of the Absolute, but only in human being does this occur as an act of freedom that can be religiously conceived as sin. When we look closely at the section of Tillich's dissertation dealing with these themes, I believe we find a hint of the theological insights to be developed in later works, such as *The Courage to Be* and his *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2. What is developed from this interpretation is an emphasis on the *Realidealismus* (real-idealism) in Schelling's philosophy informing Tillich's theological development of Creation and Fall in terms of the estranged essence of existence. Tillich's use of finite freedom in positing the transition from essence to existence²² can be read in conjunction with his development of

Schelling's real-idealism with its implications for understanding creation as a Fall that generates simultaneously the furthest alienation from the Absolute and a oneness of essence with infinite Reason.

For instance, in commenting on Schelling's transcendental Fall Tillich notes, "This doctrine seems to come close to the heterodox view that the substance [*Substanz*] of man is Original Sin. Had Schelling meant to assert that the principle of identity would have been overthrown, an autonomous relation to God, based on conviction, would have been impossible. But contradiction depends upon unity with essence."²³ In statements such as this one, we find the emphasis Tillich is placing on the qualities of polarity and tension that are critical to the Identity philosophy. The moment of a Fall or the structure of our anxious finite freedom represents simultaneously a centripetal movement or realization of our ground in Being and God and a centrifugal movement or realization of freedom's inherent distancing from this ground. On the face of it, this is really quite close to Kierkegaard's dialectic concerning sin regarding its direct and indirect features. That is, that the awareness of sin serves to directly distance us from God, while acknowledging the depth of our sinful state indirectly is an act of understanding our state more authentically making us dialectically closer to God simultaneously.²⁴

Perhaps, however, there is also a real difference revealed here. Tillich's schema of the Fall, seen in its connection to Schelling's Identity Philosophy, seems clearly problematic for, in Kierkegaard, the qualitative leap of sin constitutes an infinite qualitative difference between God and human beings. More than the Fall, their respective considerations of Christology might exemplify this difference. Kierkegaard's notion of "admiring Christ" as the way to understand Christ's function as prototype²⁵ is quite different from Tillich's conception of the paradoxical New Being where the occurrence in history of finite freedom inseparable from the ground of its being is radically unique—a meaning that is certainly connected to the interpretation of sin and grace that Tillich discovers in Schelling.²⁶ What this could indicate is that hidden within the similarity in Tillich's and Kierkegaard's accounts of the preconditions of sin and the emergence of our existential reality are deep differences about the *quality of the existential reality that emerges*, indicating Tillich's indebtedness to the whole of Schelling's corpus and the more limited indebtedness of Kierkegaard to fea-

tures of Schelling's positive philosophy stripped of a connection to the earlier negative philosophy.

¹ Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 135; Paul Tillich, "The Nature and the Significance of Existentialist Thought," *The Journal of Philosophy* 53, no. 23 (November 8, 1956): 739–48.

² Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, trans. Reidar Thomte and Albert B. Anderson, Kierkegaard's Writings 8 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 16–19; see also Sylvia Walsh, *Kierkegaard: Thinking Christianly in an Existential Mode*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 80–81. It is important to note that Kierkegaard makes an exception in regard to his analysis of ethics for the Greek concept of virtue—especially as expressed by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. He maintains that Greek virtue ethics is not properly ethics per his definition of ideality and so excludes this branch. On this point, see Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, n. 36 and the corresponding pages of the draft of the work (*Pap.* V B 49:8).

³ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 26–28.

⁵ Walsh, *Kierkegaard*, 84.

⁶ Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 27–28.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 30. The unacceptability here is both logical and dogmatic (i.e. humanity cannot come by descent from something which is not itself [logical], and to attest such a position is contrary to the biblical affirmation of what Adam is [dogmatic]).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹² *Ibid.*, 49.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁴ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 33–36.

¹⁵ For instance, consider Andrew Bowie, "Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter, 2010, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/schelling/>; Saitya Brata Das, "Schelling, F. W. J. Von," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2011), <http://www.iep.utm.edu/schellin/>.

¹⁶ Paul Tillich, *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Philosophy: Its Presupposi-*

tions and Principles, trans. Victor Nuovo (London: Bucknell University Press, 1974), 41.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 44–45.

¹⁸ F.W.J. Schelling, *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K.F.A Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856), I/3, 277.

¹⁹ Paul Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*, trans. Victor Nuovo (London: Bucknell University Press, 1974), esp. 53ff.

²⁰ Schelling, *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's Sämtliche Werke*, I/4, 28–32 & 295–6.

²¹ Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*, 107.

²² Tillich, *ST*, 2:29–58. This connection is also supported by a number of other correlate themes that take up features of Schelling's potencies found in the first and third sections of the *Systematic Theology*, such as the distinction between *ouk on* and *me on*, the self-world distinction in his ontology, and the idea of the spirit and its actualization.

This connection raises an interesting question about the way to interpret Tillich's concept of dreaming innocence. Usually descriptions of this term emphasize its psychological quality as an existential state of individuals—a sort of psychological placeholder for the inherent awareness of existential estrangement. Reading Tillich in closer connection to Schelling on this point emphasizes the ontological importance of dreaming innocence as something more than a psychological description of essential being.

²³ Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*, 108.

²⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong, Kierkegaard's Writings 19 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 26.

²⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong, Kierkegaard's Writings 20 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 233ff.

²⁶ Tillich, *ST*, 2:92 & 148; Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*, 108ff.

**See you in San Diego
in November!**

**CORRELATING TO “NONES:”
TILlich’S METHOD OF CORRELATION AND
LATE MODERNITY**

LAWRENCE A. WHITNEY, LC†

This essay is, essentially, an exercise in systematic wonder. That wonder is directed in the widest sense toward ongoing adjustments to modern theological methods amidst present tectonic, social, and cultural shifts. On the one hand, Paul Tillich’s method of correlation, which was so compelling during the mid-20th century and remains influential in many circles, has declined in terms of its availability to the imagination of most late modern Christians and the wider societies of North America. On the other hand, it is not clear that any other theological approach has become more particularly compelling to the late modern mindset, as demonstrated by recent demographic trends away from “organized religion,” i.e., the rise of the “nones.” Taken together, these two realities suggest that some new ways of thinking, in conversation with the successes of the past and the pitfalls of the present, may provide a more hopeful prospect for a renewed theological vision for the future.

Tillich’s 20th Century Existential Situation

It would be impossible to responsibly give an account of the mid-20th century society and culture from which questions emerged to which Tillich correlated theological answers as though said milieu could plausibly be reduced to a few axioms and characteristics. Rather, a more responsible approach is to briefly articulate the society and culture Tillich understood himself to be addressing. As it turns out, Tillich himself did summarize his understanding of the socio-cultural situation of his time in two axioms and two characteristics. In *Theology of Culture*, Tillich explored “Aspects of a Religious Analysis of Culture,” and therein identified “the special character of contemporary culture:” “Our present culture must be described in terms of one predominant movement and an increasingly powerful protest against this movement. The spirit of the predominant movement is the spirit of industrial society. The spirit of the protest is the spirit of the existentialist analysis of man’s actual predicament.”¹ Industrialism and existentialism, then, are the axioms of Tillich’s day.

In addition, there are “two main characteristics of man in industrial society,” according to Tillich. “The first of these is the concentration of man’s activities upon the methodical investigation and technical transformation of his world, including himself, and the consequent loss of the dimension of depth in his encounter with reality.”² Second, “in order to fulfill his destiny, man must be in possession of creative powers, analogous to those previously attributed to God, and so creativity must become a human quality.”³ Tillich thus ascribes the characteristics of shallowness and hubris to the industrialist axiom. The existentialist axiom, by contrast, is characterized by meaninglessness and estrangement, which may in turn inspire either a neurotic acceptance of this state of affairs, or a courageous creativity of cultural production that expresses “the destructive trends of contemporary culture.”⁴ The existentialist axiom, then, is framed by the industrialist, but turns the framework of industrialism into a protest of itself.

One important aspect of Tillich’s understanding of the socio-cultural situation that he fails to bring out is its unified and totalizing nature. Industrialism was the axiom of one culture, in Tillich’s view, and existentialism is not even really an axiom of a distinct culture, but rather of a prophetic subset of industrialized society. No one could escape from the totalizing worldview of industrial society, as far as Tillich could see. There was good reason for Tillich to believe this. In the wake of the Second World War, there was a great deal of confidence that the progressive agenda of the victors over Nazism and Fascism would carry the day and that peace and prosperity would spread to all corners of the globe. Certainly, communism and socialism still had to be reckoned with, but in a sense, they merely provided a concrete example of what progress would overcome. Even for Tillich’s form of existentialism, which is by nature more pessimistic about the value of human progress in itself, there remains an abiding hope that people might overcome their estrangements and live meaningful lives in the new being. This unity of culture meant that there was a commonality of language for expressing and addressing its members. Tillich was particularly enthusiastic about the existentialist language within the industrialist culture as the form of the Christian answer to the industrialist predicament: “The confrontation of the existential analysis with the symbol in which Christianity has expressed its ultimate concern is the method which is adequate both to the message of

Jesus as the Christ and to the human predicament as rediscovered in contemporary culture.”⁵

21st Century Existential Situations

It is difficult to express the existential situation of our 21st Century context, not least because the language of existentialism has fallen significantly out of use. Furthermore, the unified social, economic, political, ethical, philosophical, and artistic norms, values, and worldview have largely broken down, or at least the diversity that underlay the supposed unity that Tillich described has been revealed. There are large portions of the human population that have been left out of not only the technical advances of industrialism but also the political, economic, and social advances of late modern societies. Even in supposedly industrialized or “developed” societies, the full flowering of the promises of the progressive vision have not blossomed as pervasively as anticipated. The ongoing challenges of gender equality both in the United States and around the globe may be the starkest example of this gap between the progressive promise of the mid-20th century and the real human predicament of the present moment, although there are many others including those revolving around race, tribe, religion, and sexual orientation. Existentialism as Tillich posited it pointed to some degree to the ways in which the industrialist vision broke down and in many cases crushed the human spirit in the name of improving human life. The limitation of this existentialist vision, however, is its individualism, focusing as it does on the estrangement of the human subject from its ground. This analysis of the individual human being is then cast as the predicament or situation of all humans generally, thus making existentialism yet another unified, totalizing enterprise. By contrast, the 21st Century axioms of postmodernism and pluralism emphasize the incredibility and implausibility of singular and totalizing analyses, and the integrity of communities that make up societies without being entirely subsumed under them, respectively.

Postmodernism is frequently defined, with Jean-Francois Lyotard, as “incredulity toward meta-narratives.”⁶ What this means is that the current socio-cultural framework infects its inhabitants with an allergy toward grand arcs of interpretation that subsume everything under a single heading. Postmodernists give voice to alternative narratives of a single event to point out the irreducibility of life and the human experience. Rather than a human being hav-

ing a singular identity, human experience is of multiple evolving and shifting identities over time. Rather than history demonstrating an inevitable evolution toward a particular end, multiple histories evolve and devolve, intersect and dissect, toward variable and oftentimes contradictory ends. Perhaps most importantly, there is nowhere for any individual human being to stand to identify all of the myriad histories and identities and their intersections in order to tell the story of the whole. The result is that the very notion of providing an analysis of “the human situation” in general becomes untenable.

The second axiom of the contemporary context, pluralism, is in a sense derived from the first. Pluralism can be defined sociologically as the state of affairs in which multiple communities, each made up of multiple identities, intersect with increasing frequency and intensity. Philosophically, pluralism might be defined as the productive interaction of such communities. In both cases, pluralism recognizes the real differences that obtain among the communities and individuals in question, a la postmodernism. Furthermore, pluralism also borrows from postmodernism an allergy toward univocal truth claims, preferring instead to acknowledge the possibility of multiple truths, particularly with regard to ethics and religious and cultural beliefs. Pluralism goes further, however, in insisting on the integrity of the communities in question as valuable in various ways in their own rights such that the ongoing maintenance of the variety of communities should be a societal and cultural priority.

The upshot of postmodernism and pluralism with regard to the 21st century existential situation is that there is no singular 21st century existential situation but rather a plurality of existential situations. The postmodern incredulity toward meta-narratives resists any attempt to provide a unified, totalizing account of the human situation in general. Pushed to its extreme, postmodernism would leave culture with absolutely no common cultural norms and practices, relativizing every aspect of human subjectivity and denying any grounds for valuation. Pluralism resists this extremism by insisting that communities do have an integrity that is valuable, particularly over against the universalizing tendencies of more dominant cultural norms and values. It is notable that the case to be made here is not that either of these socio-cultural frameworks is necessarily true, given that on their own terms there would be no ground from which to evaluate their veracity, but rather that they are deeply prevalent in the present socio-cultural

moment. The result is that these cultural frameworks leave societies without a common set of cultural practices that might give rise to a common framing of the existential questions to which theological answers might be correlated. This leaves systematic theologians with a challenging conundrum: how do you answer an unposed question?

The Rise of the “Nones”

This broader cultural analysis can be brought into focus by narrowing the field of vision to a particular emerging social phenomenon, namely the rise of the “nones.” Far from indicating an explosion of interest in cloistered religious life, the rise of the “nones,” as recently demographically attested in a report by the Pew Forum on Religion and American Public Life,⁷ is a movement away from all forms of “organized religion.” The term “none” refers to someone who, when asked about their religious affiliation, responds by checking the box marked “none.” Correlated with other data in the survey in question, it becomes clear that the vast majority of these “nones” are neither atheists nor agnostics, but rather they identify as “spiritual but not religious,” or believe in God, and in some cases pray regularly, but apart from any wider religious movement or organization.

At first glance, it might seem that disaffiliation is, in effect, a claim that there simply are no questions to which a theological answer might be considered adequate or compelling. This hypothesis, however, is belied by the fact that the “nones” are not disaffiliating from God or the prospects of theology so much as they are disaffiliating from the institutions of religion. Thus, the “nones” seem to suffer from a plethora of questions coupled with skepticism toward communal answers, likely due to the hypocrisy of religious institutions so publicly on display, particularly in the face of the public insistence of their own righteousness by at least some such institutions. The rise of the “nones” may be diagnosed as a sign of the dearth of adequate and compelling answers to the myriad and yet highly particular and specific questions arising in late modern societies. Simultaneously, the “nones” arose out of the socio-cultural milieu of postmodernism and pluralism, which call into question the adequacy of any answers offered by anyone other than themselves. It is not merely religious institutions that are questionable, due to questionable morality and reliability, but

rather the “nones” are incredulous toward institutions and authority in general.

The rise of the “nones”—those moving out of religious affiliation—is mirrored within religious bodies by the rise of the “nominals”—those who remain affiliated but with a much weaker commitment than might have been expected a generation ago.⁸ The concept of the “nominals” is more challenging because what qualifies as commitment has never been entirely clear and is brought to the interpretive work by the researcher as opposed to being objectively verifiable from the questionnaire itself. (There is no box on the survey for “noncommittal”). Nonetheless, there is a common characteristic between the “nones” and the “nominals”: both cohorts, one within and one outside of religious institutions, understand their members themselves to be not only the final but in fact the only, and likely lonely, arbiters of what constitutes an adequate spiritual life.

Notably, the data from the Pew Forum survey seems to suggest that the rise of the “nones” and the “nominals” is not merely a giving over to the post-modern malaise, although there is plenty to suggest that the particular form of individualism that post-modernism can inspire is at play in these sociological phenomena. In fact, there is some data to indicate that at least some of the “nones” and “nominals” wish that religious institutions were better at addressing their existential situation. For example, 78% of the religiously unaffiliated believe that religious organizations “bring people together and strengthen community bonds,” and 77% believe that religious organizations “play an important role in helping the poor and needy.” The complaint seems more to be that religious organizations are just not answering the existential questions that are arising among this significant segment of the population. 70% of the unaffiliated believe religious organizations “are too concerned with money and power,” 67% believe they “focus too much on rules,” and 67% believe they “are too involved with politics.”⁹ At the same time, 68% of the unaffiliated believe in God or a universal spirit.¹⁰ The complaint, then, is that religious organizations are attempting to answer questions that are outside their purview. Rather than correlating theological answers to existential questions, the “nones” and the “nominals” are observing that religious institutions are overly concerned with attempting to provide answers to mundane questions.¹¹ The remainder of this essay wonders about what it would be like for theology and religious in-

stitutions to return to addressing existential questions.

Toward a Renewal of Theology

If this analysis is accurate, that the rise of the “nones” and the emergence of the “nominals” is a sign of inadequately addressed existential questions amidst a general cultural skepticism of broadly and commonly accepted answers, then the age is ripe for a renewal of theology. This renewal might begin with Tillich’s approach to systematic theology in terms of the method of correlation: “The method of correlation explains the contents of the Christian faith through existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence...”¹² Tillich further explains that, “in using the method of correlation, systematic theology proceeds in the following way: it makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise, and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to these questions.”¹³ In turn, “the analysis of the human situation employs materials made available by man’s creative self-interpretation in all realms of culture. Philosophy contributes, but so do poetry, drama, the novel, therapeutic psychology, and sociology.”¹⁴ A summary of the method of correlation, then, might be that questions arise from the human predicaments of life as articulated in their socio-cultural frameworks, and theological answers are given out of the Christian symbols.

Furthermore, it is helpful to consider the nature of system for Tillich, that is, what makes systematic theology systematic, which may be found in his consideration of “the rational character of systematic theology.”¹⁵ There are three forms of rationality that apply to systematic theology for Tillich: semantic rationality, logical rationality, and methodological rationality. “The principle of semantic rationality involves the demand that all connotations of a word should consciously be related to each other and centered around a controlling meaning.”¹⁶ Logical rationality “refers first of all to the structures which determine any meaningful discourse and which are formulated in the discipline of logic.”¹⁷ This definition is somewhat circular in Tillich’s statement, using “the discipline of logic” to define logic, but refers nonetheless to the factor of coherence, namely that terms are always used in the same way. Finally, and most important for Tillich’s understanding of the nature of system, methodological rationality re-

fers to an established method “carried through rationally and consistently.” “It is the function of the systematic form to guarantee the consistency of cognitive assertions in all realms of methodical knowledge.”¹⁸ These criteria of coherence and consistency are most called into question with regard to Tillich’s notion of system as a result of shifts in the socio-cultural frameworks for understanding the questions that arise from culture.

For Tillich, writing at a time when the existential questions could be stated in as systematic a fashion as the theological answers, these criteria made a great deal of sense. The present context is far more fractured and diverse than Tillich’s context, or at least the context Tillich understood himself to be addressing, and so the existential questions that arise are in many ways incommensurate. The question of being for a poor, single mother of five in a *favela* in Brazil is not the same question of being for a middle-class, married father of one in the United States. The things that cause and might resolve their estrangements and anxieties are different, and those differences matter, requiring different responses. A singular, coherent, and consistent response to both questions would be looked upon skeptically for the very reason that, to the postmodern mind, the answer must be leaving something out, and what is left out is likely to be crucial. Instead, theological answers to the existential questions of the present require a more narrow tailoring to the precise contours of the questions as they are posed. This may result in answers that are incoherent and inconsistent with respect to each other, but this makes sense given that in the method of correlation the answer is always given in the form, albeit not necessarily the content, of the question.¹⁹ At the same time, even the postmodern mind is likely to look askance at theological answers that are incoherent and inconsistent within their response to a single existential question. This is to say that the field of applicability in which systematic theology operates is significantly narrowed, and the broader scope requires a greater tolerance for vagueness, that is, “the inapplicability of the principal of contradiction such that it might obtain to mutually exclusive instances.”²⁰

Even as the very nature of system must be reconsidered, so too must the viability of explicitly Christian symbols to correlate the content of revelation with the existential situation of the human person.²¹ For Tillich, the Christian symbols retained the power to do this, and he believed that the Christian symbols were superior to the symbols of other relig-

ions in correlating revelation and situation effectively. The experience of pluralism, in which the integrity of a variety of communities is respected, honored, and valued at least calls the superiority of Christian symbols into question. Furthermore, the historic sensibility of superiority among many Christians leads many in the presently pluralistic context to discount the Christian symbols for being tainted by having arisen amidst this superiority complex. In Tillich's language, the revelatory situation has changed, and so this is a time in which he says, "theology can become prophesy, and in this role it may contribute to a change in the revelatory situation."²² This move to the prophetic is no simple task, as "one cannot arbitrarily 'make' a religious symbol out of a segment of secular reality. Not even the collective unconscious, the great symbol-creating sources, can do this."²³ This being the case, Tillich was worried that "in a secular culture both the symbols for God and the theonomous character of the material from which the symbols are taken disappear."²⁴

The 68% of the "nones," and a presumably even higher percentage of the "nominals," belie the wholesale loss of the theonomous from culture, but rather indicate at least some desire for a truer theonomy. Here it may be helpful to borrow from Tillich's contemporary, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and his conception of "religionless Christianity:"

If religion is only a garment of Christianity—and even this garment has looked very different at different times—what is religionless Christianity?... How do we speak of God—without religion?... In what way are we religionless-secular Christians, in what way are we the *ek-klesia*, those called forth, not regarding ourselves from a religious point of view as specially favored, but rather as belonging wholly to the world?²⁵

What Bonhoeffer seems to mean by "religion" is the symbolic terms that make up particularly religious language. In other words, he is wondering how we speak of God without using the word "god." Bonhoeffer suggests that the way to learn to speak in such a way is by becoming immersed in, "belonging wholly to," the world. Tillich has a similar recommendation, which he calls "the mystical element": "When we recognize the loss of a symbol we cannot say, 'Let's try to replace it.' Symbols cannot be invented; they cannot be produced intentionally. But perhaps the mystical element may be the way that a different sort of Protestantism, a non-moralistic and

non-intellectualistic Protestantism, may return to some of the positive elements in Catholicism."²⁶

Tillich is here responding to a question about how to recover the vitality of a tradition that gets lost when a symbol dies. He is pointing to the mystical element as a way of recovering some vitality that was lost in Protestantism from the death of the symbol of Mary from Catholicism and the moralization and intellectualization of the symbol of grace. For Tillich, this mystical element must always give voice to the theonomy it encounters in the language of the culture in which it speaks, and so the mystic must become a religionless Christian, belonging wholly to the world, in order to acquire the symbols that might newly correlate revelation with situation. This is what it would mean for theology to be prophetic.

Of course, the prophetic role of the theologian for Tillich is more than simply the work of acquiring new symbols for theonomous reality. It is also the work contributing to a change in the revelatory situation. Theologically, the rise of the "nones" and the "nominals" is a symbol of the declining sensibility for the revelatory character in the human situation. This declining sensibility is in part linked to the supposed incredibility or implausibility of large cultural projects in the postmodern framework. One prophetic role for bringing about a change in the revelatory situation, then, would be to demonstrate the viability and vitality of a large cultural project or projects. The best way to do this is simply to build a large cultural project. *Esse proves posse*: the existence of a thing proves its possibility. If it exists, it is possible and plausible. As Howard Thurman said, "meaningful and creative experiences between peoples can be more compelling than all of the ideas, concepts, faiths, fears, ideologies, and prejudices that divide them."²⁷ Tillich emphasized that it is in significant part cultural productions that theologians analyze in order to determine the existential questions to which they correlate theological answers. The prophetic work of theology, then, is in part to encourage and participate in these cultural productions on such a scale and scope of meaning and creativity that they may overcome the divisions to which the postmodern mindset relegates the human situation. This renewed production in turn is the world in which religionless Christians, and religionless theologians, should immerse themselves in order to discern the symbols that will correlate revelation with situation. And this new correlation may in turn allow for a broader level of systematic reflection that

would be acceptable across cultural contexts able to recognize in one another a common ground. Perhaps one day the human community will even return to recognizing a common ground of being.

¹ Tillich, Paul. *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959): 43.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*: 44.

⁴ *ibid.*: 46.

⁵ *ibid.*: 49.

⁶ Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁷ The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

“‘Nones’ on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation.” (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2012).

<<http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx>>.

⁸ Cathy Lynn Grossman. “Religious ‘Nominals’ Drifting Away From Mainstream Judaism And Christianity” *The Huffington Post*.

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/05/religious-nominals-judaism-christianity_n_4032592.html>.

⁹ The Pew Forum. “‘Nones’ on the Rise.” *op. cit.*: 23.

¹⁰ *ibid.*: 22.

¹¹ This analysis contrasts sharply with the section of the Pew Forum report entitled “Some Theories About Root Causes of the Rise of the Unaffiliated,” as it seeks to provide a theological theory for the rise of the unaffiliated whereas the report offers only sociological explanations.

¹² Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology: Volume One*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951): 60. Of course, Tillich would note that the method of correlation is not really his, as systematic theology has always used the method of correlation, “sometimes more, sometimes less, consciously, and must do so consciously and outspokenly, especially if the apologetic point of view is to prevail.”

¹³ *ibid.*: 61.

¹⁴ *ibid.*: 63.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 53.

¹⁶ *ibid.*: 55.

¹⁷ *ibid.*: 56.

¹⁸ *ibid.*: 58.

¹⁹ Tillich. *Systematic Theology*. *op. cit.*: 64.

²⁰ C.S. Peirce, “Issues of Pragmatism,” *The Essential Peirce* vol. 2 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 351.

²¹ *ibid.*: 240.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*: 241.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, trans. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Touchstone, 1971): 280-81.

²⁶ Brown, D. Mackenzie. *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue*. (New York: Harper & Row: 1965): 149.

²⁷ Thurman, Howard, *The Search for Common Ground*.

If you have presented a paper to the annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society or the AAR Tillich Group in 2012 or 2013 and it has not been published, please send a copy to the editor for publication in the Fall number of the Bulletin. Since this is privately circulated, publishing a paper here does not conflict with publication elsewhere.
Thank you.

**“WHAT CAN I DO?:” TILlich IN CONVER-
SATION WITH LIBERATION THEOLOGY ON
THE OVER-INFORMATION AGE**

NATHAN CRAWFORD

I. Introduction

In a recent article written online for *Relevant Magazine*,¹ the author proposed that the age that we live in makes it easy to simply sit and read a Twitter feed or series of Facebook posts that point to various problems. The author also says that this can overwhelm us by making us aware of the problems facing our world. Issues like world hunger, climate change, the inequality between the rich and poor, hazing and bullying, the rights of workers, racist and sexual discrimination, gay rights, and so on and so on, leave us in the spot of not knowing what to do. In the face of the enormity of the problems our world presents us, the only response at times seems to be “What can I do?”

In our world, the question of what we can do in the face of terrible tragedy is the main existential problem for those immersed in the information age. Many people feel that there is nothing to be done or that the only options are minor band-aids on the scope of these problems. The question of what I do becomes prevalent, even in the fields of philosophical and Christian ethics.² There is a sense of despair and hopelessness that comes in the face of the overwhelming problems of our world. There is a sense of powerlessness that occurs as well. The seeming inability to do anything to combat the crises facing our world leaves us in an existential lurch, a position that does not allow us to move forward or perform any meaningful action while we feel a sense of demand to respond.

In this paper, I argue that Paul Tillich’s theology offers a theoretical framework for how to begin negotiating this existential problem. I propose that in order to construct a way of dealing with the problems confronting us, we place Tillich into conversation with the theological insight of liberation theology, specifically that of Jörg Rieger. In this paper, I make such a move. I begin with Tillich, who, I contend, offers the theoretical ground upon which to construct the kind of theology necessary for dealing with the existential crisis associated with not knowing what to do in the face of the world’s problems. I turn to Rieger’s thought to more thoroughly “flesh out” some of Tillich’s more abstract concepts. Spe-

cifically, I argue that Rieger’s “bottom-up” Christology offers a necessary complement to Tillich and, therefore, can be used as an answer in the face of crisis.

II. Tillich and Return to Origin

Tillich’s analysis of humanity’s existential situation begins at the beginning. In his early text, *The Socialist Decision*, his discussion begins with an exposition of what he terms the “origin.” For him, the origin is “creative” because from it “something new springs into being, something that did not previously exist...” However, this does not mean that the something new merely stays in line with the origin; rather, the something new struggles for its own independence while also, at times unconsciously, it needs to acknowledge its indebtedness to the origin for its own being. While “the origin brings us forth as something new and singular,” it also “takes us, as such, back to the origin again.” Tillich uses the example of being born moving into the fact that from birth we must also die, but that this also throws us back to realize our own birth—our coming into being awakens our sense of having our being end which leads us to ask about our coming into being.³

In talking of the origin, Tillich notices that these are the very things that tend to “root” us. He talks of the myth of origin, which is what happens when people and groups tie their existence to another finite entity or story. Tillich notices three kinds of origin in particular: soil, blood, and society. The myth of origin in and through soil understands our existence as being tied to and coming from the earth, the processes and cycles of nature. The second myth of origin is through blood, which sees our existence as rooted in our familial relation. Here existence is predicated upon one’s family line or clan. The third type of origin is that found in communities and societies. These myths of origin create narratives for the construction of a community or society that ensures the continued existence of people in and through such a community.⁴

Tillich finds these myths of origin to ultimately be lacking. He does so because of the focus on the finite, the limited nature of each of their stories. Likewise, they do not delve into the origin needed for all things and people. When Tillich looks to find such an origin, he ultimately turns to being. Thus, ontologically speaking, being is the origin: being is holy. Tillich says, “For being is the origin of everything that exists, and being constitutes the criterion

of everything that exists: the power of being is the highest standard. Being is itself truth and the norm...Ontology is the final and most abstract version of the myth of origin."⁵

At the heart of the myth of the origin, Tillich finds an inherent ambiguity. He talks of how we are caught in the lives in which we have been given. Here, he draws on Heidegger's notion of "thrownness" as developed in *Being and Time*.⁶ Tillich argues that the true origin—being—becomes obscured by the actual origin—whether it is society, blood, or soil. The actual origins are those that perpetuate myths based upon finitude that seemingly root us in a transcendent moment. In doing so, they actually cover over the true origin of being. Echoing the thought of Heidegger, Tillich argues that the history of thinking on the origin has been a long series of attempts to actually hide being.⁷

Instead, in rediscovering being as our origin, we can enact our true freedom. Tillich argues that we are not simply bound to what we find in the existence around us. Our freedom comes from realizing that "one is subject to a demand that something unconditionally new should be realized through oneself... [T]he existence and actions of human beings are not confined within a mere development of their origin..."⁸ Freedom comes in developing a new way of being, of understanding the world. The fact that people do not allow themselves to be confined to the actual origin leads to various developments in our world, most notably for Tillich the development of liberal, democratic, and socialist thought in politics.⁹

The move to break the myth of origin comes through what confronts us as a demand or as an ought both in and through the true origin.¹⁰ The true origin is expressed in the demand, the demand that comes from another person through the I and Thou relation.¹¹ The I and Thou relationship is the basic human relationship, the one that expresses our being in its most original moment. To make a demand upon a person or society based upon a moralistic, utopian visions ultimately fail because they do not embrace the I and Thou relationship at its core; they try to form an ideal society that is based upon an "actual origin" instead of the true origin of being. Therefore, what is demanded is to move life itself in its most basic, original relationships toward an embrace of life in its inmost being.¹² In so doing, the origin can become what it was meant to be in and through the construction of relationships that seek to ultimately embrace the I and Thou in an act of love.¹³ The fulfillment of the origin occurs when the

origin is embraced in its most basic forms of the I and Thou and when those forms can then open new possibilities for society. Ultimately, Tillich concludes, "In the fulfillment, the origin returns, but it returns as something new; it is changed by the demand under which it stands. In this way the bourgeois principle is transcended in the socialist principle."¹⁴

For Tillich, the "turning point" in the struggle against the ambiguity of the origin comes in the form of prophetism. In his mind, the way that humanity moves out of and against nature is the same way that the prophetic moves out of and against paganism.¹⁵ Tillich argues that in the prophetic nature we find a form that breaks "false" or ambiguous origins. The religion that spearheads this movement is Judaism. This is because the Jewish religion posits a God that is everywhere and that all of history, due to this God, is moving in a certain direction.¹⁶ Through this understanding of God, Judaism breaks the various myths of origin and in so doing shows the false basis of many forms of power. The Jewish prophets show that allegiance is to be only to the One True God, thus rejecting various aspects of society, like the monarchy and sacred aristocracy. There is an unconditional demand, a demand for righteousness through the embrace of the ultimate origin. Now, in this demand, the alien is to be treated as an equal in esteem, even higher esteem at times because the prophet calls us to be rooted in the origin of being. This ultimately leads to the opposition of the priests by the prophets: the priests cover over the true origin through the continuing of religious traditions over the embrace of being.¹⁷ Thus, anytime that one aligns with the mythical origin against the true origin, the prophet comes to offer critique; similarly, when religion aligns itself with political romanticism or moralism, then it loses its prophetic foundation and identity.¹⁸

The task of prophetic criticism is to raise the question of existence in a way that is both ultimate and unconditional.¹⁹ In doing so, the prophetic demand concerns that which reality ultimately faces. The prophetic has an interpenetration of the demand and the promise: this means that in the prophetic there is a demand for some sort of action, but a promise for a type of being or society accompanies the demand. Socialist thought, when done in concert with the return to the origin, contains this prophetic element: it has a demand for a better society in light of the I and Thou relationship as well as containing

an expectation for the transformation of society into one of equality and true democratic ideals.²⁰

The role of the prophetic then is to articulate the demand that arises from the true origin in a way that leads to an expectation for things to change. The Church is an entity that must continue to fulfill its prophetic role. The origin of the Church is in the place of a prophet, to the one Jesus Christ. It is not tied a particular land, family, or society. As such, the church can reveal the dynamic structures in society and can then undercut the way that these dynamic powers cover over the true origin. The Church even performs such critique in the Church itself. In its prophetic role, the Church shows the problems of a society and points to the possibility of a new, alternate future.²¹ The prophetic, though, also includes a call to action: if we expect something new to happen, we must be able to articulate the action needed for such an expectation to occur. Thus, the prophetic evokes a genuine call to action that arises in its articulation of the demand and expectation.²²

According to Tillich, this prophetic element can also be found in the very substance of socialist principle. He says, "Socialism is a prophetic movement, but it exists in a context in which the myth of origin has been broken and the bourgeois principle has become dominant. *Socialism is prophetism on the soil of an autonomous, self-sufficient world.*"²³ Socialism critiques the false, actual origin that says we live in a world defined by the capitalist virtues of autonomy and self-sufficiency. Instead, socialism is founded upon the true origin of being that says we are actually to be concerned with others through our continued involvement with others.

Within the thinking of Tillich, socialism is a return to the origin. For him, the spirit of Western, bourgeois society occurs when, "Goal setting takes the place of concern for being, the creation of tools replaces the contemplation of intrinsic values."²⁴ This disrupts the return to origin by trying to master this return. It takes all "conditions, bonds, and forms" that contribute and are related to the origin and places these under some sort of foreign, capitalist mastery that results in the covering over of the return to the origin. The origin cannot arise because it has been covered over, done so by the attempts at harmony made by bourgeois.

Part of the socialist return to origin, then, is the attempt to shake society's belief in harmony. When this belief is shaken and undone then the bourgeois principle also is shaken, leading to its undoing.²⁵ Tillich says, "Belief in social harmony, just like the

belief in harmony generally, is shattered on the reality of class. The bourgeoisie has sought to escape this contradiction by *equating bourgeois class interest and the interest of society as a whole.*"²⁶ Harmony is shaken when we enter the class conflict into societal thinking. Now, the question becomes what is equitable and just for all of society and not just the bourgeois. There is an equality between the master (the one who controls production) and the laborer (the one who actually does the producing). This equality is at the ground of the return to the origin of society.

Tillich believes that when society begins to recognize that the "I" and "Thou" share equal dignity that this is the beginning of justice. The demand for justice for all is what drives society to return to the origin. The intention at the heart of justice is where the origin comes to the fore. Tillich sees existence and being as caught in a cycle where power and forces vie to "pay one another penalty and compensation for injustice" according to laws and ordinances of certain times. There is a stripping of dignity that occurs. When justice is done, there is the retrieval of the dignity of all people because justice comes prior to what Tillich calls the "tragic cycle of existence." He says the unconditional demand placed upon our lives, "confronts the power and impotence of being with justice, arising from the demand. And yet, the contrast is not absolute, for the *ought* is the fulfillment of the *is*. *Justice is the true power of being*. In it the intention of the origin is fulfilled."²⁷ Thus, later in his life, Tillich can still conclude, "*Justice is not an abstract ideal standing over existence; it is the fulfillment of primal being, the fulfillment of that which was intended by the origin. Justice is not bound to the actual powers of origin and their ambiguity.*"²⁸

For Tillich, the return to the origin that allows the embrace of socialism can only happen when one has experienced the demand for justice and that this demand is made not only on others (namely the bourgeois), but also a demand upon oneself. If one has not struggled with the spirit of justice at the heart of socialism then it is impossible to truly grasp the spirit of socialism.²⁹ But, this is not some romantic notion of justice that is at work in Tillich's thought. Instead, he argues that this move to justice is embedded in a most "sober realism...a believing realism, a realism of expectation."³⁰ Tillich says, "Socialist expectation receives from the socialist principle a content that resolves its inner conflict. What is expected is not an absolute contradiction of

present reality, but rather, it is the true meaning of the origin. What is demanded is not some abstract norm of justice unrelated to the origin, but rather the fulfillment of the origin itself."³¹ The justice that comes about fulfills the call and demand that the origin makes on our lives. It now becomes the task to spell out what this origin means in a more theological way.

III. Return to the Origin and the Method of Correlation

The question now becomes how we navigate our way theologically to pursuing a socialist agenda, especially in light of the thought of Tillich. Of course, the great German transplant offers us a method of correlation, where the theologian offers an answer to a question that is being asked within our world. This answer comes from learning about and understanding the world. Tillich's method of correlation offers a way for theology to be relevant in our society while also pursuing the transformation of said society. And, in my opinion, it also offers a point of contact with liberation theology, the theological impetus behind today's continuing move toward a religious embrace of socialism.

Tillich begins his method of correlation by analyzing the human situation. Today, that analysis is what Tillich terms "existential." We are analyzing the questions that our world asks that cut to the very core of who and what we are. The symbols of the Christian message are then used as the answer; or, at least, these symbols are used to formulate the answer and to give meaning in a way that speaks to our existential situation.³² Tillich reiterates this when he says, "The Christian message provides the answers to the questions implied in human existence. These answers are contained in the revelatory events on which Christianity is based and are taken by systematic theology *from* the sources, *through* the medium, *under* the norm."³³

At the root of Tillich's argument for a method of correlation is the idea that religion is "at home" in humanity, that "religion is the aspect of depth in the totality of the human spirit."³⁴ Here, we see the importance of religion as ultimate concern: the reason that religion is at home in the human situation is because it is concerned with analyzing that which concerns us ultimately.³⁵ This is why he turns to the theories presented by psychoanalysis for understanding our human situation. Psychoanalysis studies those things that humans often cover over or sup-

press; in so doing, it shows an accurate portrayal of what actually concerns us ultimately, even those things that may not be consciously thought. Tillich then says that the use of Christian religious symbols comes into play in order to provide appropriate answers and meaning to this search for ultimate concern.³⁶ This use of Christian symbols makes the form of grace contemporary, since grace is only really grace if it is present and able to be seen and felt in our situation.³⁷ The method of correlation allows this to occur, to see where grace is happening in our world.

In order for the theologian to be adequately aware of the situation one finds the self in, one must be "courageously" participating in the contemporary situation, all those "various cultural forms which express modern man's interpretation of his existence..."³⁸ In doing so, theology can help people respond to the true origin of their lives. This allows theology to challenge current structures and to give humanity the impetus to creative self-interpretation.³⁹ The theologian can also help people understand their society better because no one can understand the modern, western world without an awareness of its Christian roots. Christianity has permeated all aspects of modern society—its institutions, customs, morality, and intellectual life. The theologian, and Christianity in general, are immersed in the society in which they exist and are being formed by its institutions and language. But, the western world is also "Christian" in its origin. No matter how much the theologian tries and no matter how much western society tries, they cannot be free from one another. Both intertwine and are meaning giving aspects to the other.⁴⁰

The culmination of the return to the origin and the method of correlation is an embrace of religious socialism. Tillich says, "Religious socialism makes the exceedingly difficult attempt, on both the intellectual and the social level, to work toward a form of future society in which the autonomous life of that society will be filled with the meaning-giving essence of Christianity."⁴¹ The intellectual and spiritual life must receive its directive and impulse from the actual world in which it resides. This world presents challenges to Christianity and religious socialism provides a series answers to the world from the meaning-giving statements of Christianity. Christianity fills the vacuum through its own socialist impulse.

The statements that theology makes always have the necessary component that is the ethical. Tillich

says, “The ethical element is a necessary—and often predominant—element in every theological statement.”⁴² Theology carries the ethical with it. This ethics that arises from theology carries with it the task of judging and combating the way in which things keep us from God. When it comes to religious socialism, the ethical imperative means that its “most decisive religious task in behalf of the present society is to participate in exposing and combating a demonic capitalism.”⁴³ The demonic in capitalism refers to the way in which it alienates us from the divine and from our true selves, the selves that return to the origin of existence in the action of justice. Uncovering the demonic in capitalism means exposing and breaking those structures that keep us from the divine and from our true existence by acting in a theological way consistent with theology’s implicit and necessary ethic.

Therefore, religious socialism never abandons the practical and/or theoretical forms of the socialist life to secularism. Rather, religious socialism always penetrates to the very religious core of the character of the socialist life.⁴⁴ Religious socialism takes the religious core of the socialist doctrine and seeks to make it imminent in its shaping of the world. Tillich says, “Religious socialism is an attempt to unite the radical nature and the transcendence of the religious perspective with the concreteness of an imminent will to shape the world.”⁴⁵

The religious kernel at the heart of socialism is not merely a transcendent set of beliefs but beliefs that work themselves out in the world, by shaping the world in a way that restores dignity to both the “I” and the “Thou” through the pursuance of justice. This is at the heart of the return to the origin for religious socialism.

IV. Rieger’s “Bottom-Up” Christology

From the above, we learn that the socialism Tillich proposes has a religious motivation. This, though, does not spring from a necessary set of doctrines but from the theological impetus to think through that which ultimately concerns us, namely in and through being and justice. In order to more thoroughly root our discussion of what we can do in light of the world situation, I want to turn to the doctrine of Christology. Christology offers a site for theological thinking that gives itself to demanding a certain kind of existence in the here and now while also giving an expectation of what the world may look like, namely as the Kingdom of God. It is in the

turn to Christology that we can find the answers to the questions that our world asks.

I would argue, though, that Tillich ultimately betrays himself through his own Christology. His understanding of Jesus Christ is one that bifurcates form from content. For Tillich, the form of Jesus of Nazareth is different from the content that we place upon that person in making him the Christ, the Messiah. The nature of Christ is to be transcendent, other, beyond. As such, Tillich’s Christology ultimately cannot speak to the questions being posed today: the way in which Tillich thinks through Christ is separated from the historical Jesus of Nazareth. This is why we need a supplement and, thus, my turn to the Christology of Jörg Rieger. I also choose Rieger for his personal similarity to Paul Tillich: both are Germans who have immigrated to the United States, both are socialists, both have come to questions of justice through the noticing of racism. In all, they share many biographical similarities. However, the major difference lies in the fact that, as a liberation theologian, Rieger looks for the concrete action of God on earth, in the historical moment. In answering the question, “What can I do?”, Rieger points to what Jesus of Nazareth did and how this can be emulated in our contemporary context.

He believes that a problem currently exists that requires theology to understand how the idea of God has been complicit in the procurement of top-down power differentials within the context of globalization.⁴⁶ Much of contemporary theology has buttressed an idea of God as a Supreme Being, ruling from a great throne and shouting commandments to God’s people. It is a top-down God in that this God always operates out of a place of power in relation to human beings and the rest of creation. Rieger says, “[T]he principles of classical theism matched the requirements of the empire and provided valuable support for its goals.”⁴⁷ Classical theism ends up affirming top-down, unilateral forms of power, like those used within empire. However, if Christianity is to be true to the God of biblical revelation, the idea of God needs to operate counter to this logic of the “top-down.”

By contrast, God becomes that which is counter to the “status quo,” a counter empire.⁴⁸ The new ways of thinking of God as counter-empire offers resistance to the various pseudo-religious concepts that operate in the logic of capitalism. One such example is the idea of the “invisible hand of the market.” This idea functions theologically as a divinity that guides the market to some divine ends. Of

course, this idea is in service to empire over and against Christianity.⁴⁹ The way to begin to counter this is through a rethinking of the idea of God.

Rieger begins to offer such a counter to empire by looking for God in and through Christian theology based on biblical revelation. We find God where grace is, where grace irrupts. As Rieger looks at our world, he finds grace occurring as Christianity deals with the various issues that arise from “asymmetries of power in both global and personal relationships.” These places of asymmetrical power are where God’s grace is needed and where it comes to the fore. He calls these places of pressure and says that it is in the midst of these places of pressure that God’s grace comes alive.⁵⁰

Furthering this idea, Rieger says, “[Grace] is tied to the lives of those who are different, those whom we usually do not notice because they inhabit a lower class or because they are born into a race or gender that we consider less prestigious; it opens our eyes for God’s own ways of bringing about a new creation in the midst of pain and suffering.”⁵¹ And, for Rieger, we begin thinking about God from these places because the grace of God cannot be commodified here; it does not work for the continued power of the top, but seeks to embrace those on the bottom. Grace, coming from the One beyond commodification, cannot be reduced to some economy; rather, it is pure gift and is found in places of pressure.⁵²

In light of the above, the rethinking of the idea of God needs to begin from places of pressure that works against empire and its hegemonic forms of power. Thus, God cannot be reduced to one more “pure master signifier.”⁵³ The thinking and naming of God must overcome the various structures of exclusion that have been developed in light of the modern approach to God.⁵⁴ In doing so, the idea of God is put to use as that which does not embrace the forces of exclusion. God functions in this theology as what exposes the “dissonances and tensions” that have been “repressed in the dominant theological discourses.”⁵⁵ Theology should move into that which is “repressed” by being “systematically excluded from the worlds of labor: the long-term unemployed, exploited children, commodified nature...”⁵⁶ For theology, Christ is the one who brings out that which is repressed in the religious and political economies of his time by showing the gap that existed between the haves and the have-nots.⁵⁷ By mediating this gap, theology seeks the truth of the contemporary situation through its thinking about God.

Theology begins from its awareness of what is going on in the world as a place of oppression and exclusion. In contrast to the logic of exclusion at work in the world, God’s logic is that which works from the bottom-up—God’s sovereign power comes from God’s weakness in taking on the form of the servant. Theology takes place in the cracks and fissures that come from the relationship between God and the excluded.⁵⁸ Theology addresses these exclusions by seeing how the idea of God disrupts the hegemonic thinking of the current empire by reshaping “the way things really are.”⁵⁹ Rieger points to the example of how the story of Jesus works in the Roman Empire and Paul as a place where we can see this taking place. He says that the Roman Empire tried to co-opt the story of Jesus through the development of “classical theism” by using it as a story that buttresses Empire.⁶⁰ Jesus as Lord now means that Jesus is the political Lord sitting on his ruling throne. In contrast, the story of the early Christians (as found in the gospels and Paul) points to the Lord crucified by the Roman Empire as a criminal on a cross. Rieger says, “A day laborer in construction from Galilee who led a movement of the common people and who ended up on one of the crosses of the empire—Paul kept reminding his constituents of this cross—could not easily be assimilated by the empire and its concentration of power in the hands of the few.”⁶¹ Jesus, then, is not what is found in the empire but what counters the empire through the living of a life that cannot be assimilated by empire.

The reason that the idea of Jesus is able to counter empire is because of the bottom-up logic used. This logic can be used by theology to counter empire.⁶² This logic means that these communities are inherently democratic by giving all people the ability to participate and question the community. Theology cannot be inclusive if it does not work from the bottom-up.⁶³ The bottom-up approach begins with those people on the bottom of society, the oppressed, marginalized, and the excluded. By beginning here the bottom-up approach focuses on a community that resists the structures of Empire through its inclusion of the excluded. In this way, theology is concerned with the kind of justice that is inherent to the Judeo-Christian tradition. This justice is concerned with restoring to full relationship with the community any and all who have been excluded or pushed to the margins. This comes from the covenant of God to humanity in and through Jesus of Nazareth, which extends beyond any boundaries or margins.⁶⁴ Thus, theology uses the logic of the bot-

tom-up in order to construct a way of thinking the communities of resistance to Empire.

In order to root this logic of the bottom-up in a more explicitly theological manner, Rieger turns to the doctrine of Christology. The incarnation serves as a place for him to think the nature of what communal holiness through a bottom-up logic may look like, as here “[t]he typical religiosity that goes from the greatest to the least comes to a halt and is turned around. This has implications for our images of God and, ultimately, for Godself.”⁶⁵ He goes on to say, “As the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ turns things upside down, we might say that the incarnation is the logic of downturn.”⁶⁶ The incarnation gives Rieger a theological site to use as a place of resistance to empire and as a place for reimagining holiness. However, for him, resistance is not enough in light of the incarnation. Rather, it would be reactionary to simply label as “good” or “just” that which sees itself as countering empire. Instead, the incarnation teaches us that we must find our way into “the way, the truth, and the life” that is Jesus Christ. By doing so, we enter into an alternative truth of Christ in regards to empire; now resistance is to any structure or way of thinking that tries to limit “Christ’s reality and against whatever keeps us from following Christ.”⁶⁷ Thus, when Rieger looks at Nicaea and Chalcedon, he brings out the fact that the similarity between the two is their unwillingness to bring closure to the doctrine of Christ as they refuse to fully explain the connection between God and Christ, Christ and humanity, etc. This would resolve the tension and paradox of the doctrines. The councils teach us that the necessary part of thinking theologically is to work open-endedness into our ways of thinking, even when it seems to be least expected.⁶⁸ Christology shows the way into the logic of a community of resistance that works from the logic of the bottom-up.

The openness that comes with the doctrine of Christology, for Rieger, is central to the construction of a doctrine of social holiness. Theology must be open, following the line of thought embraced at Nicaea and Chalcedon. This is because if theology is not truly open then it blocks “any real encounter with others.” For Rieger, many attempts at openness are simply elaborate moves to closure through generalization. He says that people in positions of control tend to construct generalizations so that they “talk about *the poor, the oppressed, the Chinese, the Tarahumara Indians, and so forth...*”⁶⁹ This type of openness ends in a top-down construction of the

other as part of some hegemonic group. In contrast, the type of openness needed is that which is open to people in these groups as people. This openness comes through listening first.

Thus, if theology is to operate from the bottom-up, listening is the place to begin. The truth of theology is based upon openness and listening. This is because these allow one to be shaped by the subject matter rather than being in control of it.⁷⁰ Listening means that we are now involved in the truth of the situation as we embrace those excluded from or oppressed within empire. Due to this, listening opens us to the truth of the contemporary context—that the suffering of the oppressed, marginalized, and excluded comes from the perpetuation of societal and economic structures. When one embraces this, it leads to “the kind of anger that generates resistance.”⁷¹ Thus, listening is the beginning of resistance.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion of this paper, the question of “what can I do?” in the over-information age is probably not answered. However, I believe that through the strands I pull together, I can begin to make an argument for how one can begin to make decisions and act in our technologically advanced age.

First, it would be disingenuous to argue for some neat approach to what we can do in our age after writing on Tillich. He, rightly I believe, makes us uncomfortable by encouraging our existential angst. There is a bit of undecidedness, of a “I-know-not-what-to-do” that comes from living in our age—especially as we are confronted the all too numerous ills that face our existence. The first response is to simply be uncomfortable and know that there may be nothing we can do. In light of the great suffering of our world, we should be indecisive and, yet, we must still act, in some way through some means.

This leads to the second strand: Tillich’s religious socialism. I would also say that Tillich’s socialism does begin to point a way through the muddle of our existence to begin allowing us to respond to the question “what can I do?” Tillich’s socialism is built upon the attempt to restore equal dignity to the “I” and the “Thou.” He calls this justice, and this kind of justice is at the heart of what it means to pursue Tillich’s socialist agenda. The attempt to restore dignity can, I believe, begin to point us through the muddle of our over-information age. For example, when we

see that there are children dying of AIDS in Africa (such as those brought to our attention by the ONE campaign), perhaps our initial reaction is not to “buy” something, but to ask how it is that I restore that person’s dignity—what can I do so that child is treated and respected as my “thou” instead of as a thing? This begins the process, I believe, towards making decisions on what we do.

Tillich’s socialism, however, also points in another direction. He says that part of socialism is a disrupting of the harmony perpetuated by the bourgeois spirit in western society. This means that the bourgeois principle covers over the disharmony that actually exists. Social media can help us begin to uncover the disharmony at the heart of the world through the making available of information and through the organization of people to disrupt such harmony. The “Occupy Wall Street” movement is a good example of using Twitter to allow its “followers” to know where its movements and protests will take place to disrupt the harmony of the bourgeois world. Similarly, we can begin to point out the loss of dignity that is required on the part of the lower classes in order for the bourgeois harmony to continue to exist.

The last strand is that of Rieger’s Christology. I believe that the Christology of Jörg Rieger advances a conception of what we can do further than Tillich can. Rieger’s Christology actually undermines traditionally forms of God by focusing on the God who uses a “bottom-up” logic. No longer is the question “what can I do?” easily answered with “be like Jesus.” Instead, imitating Jesus becomes a difficult act that requires one to enter the mundane, the difficult, to enter relationship with the poor and the oppressed, with those who need liberation. By following the Jesus that moves from the “bottom-up” we can participate in the disruption of the bourgeois society while also giving dignity to those that have been robbed of it. The question is not “what would Jesus do?” but “how did Jesus give human dignity to those robbed of it?” and “how did Jesus disrupt the power institutions of his day?” By following Jesus through these questions we can begin to participate in the religious socialism that Tillich so boldly advances.

¹ Kirsten Phillips, “You Can’t Care about Every Issue,” *Relevant Magazine* (<http://www.relevantmagazine.com/reject-apathy/you-cant-care-about-every-issue>; accessed Nov. 19, 2013).

² For an example, see Catherine Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 95ff.

³ Paul Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, trans. Franklin Sherman (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996). See also, Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 3.

⁷ Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 107.

¹³ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 152-153.

¹⁴ Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 107.

¹⁵ Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 35.

¹⁶ Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 18ff.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁹ See Paul Tillich, *Political Expectations*, ed. James Luther Adams (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 10-15

²⁰ Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 104-105.

²¹ Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 50.

²² Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 105.

²³ *Ibid.*, 101.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xxxvii.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

³² Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume I*, 62.

³³ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁴ Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

³⁷ Tillich, *Political Expectation*, 30.

³⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume I*, 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁰ Tillich, *Political Expectation*, 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴² Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume I*, 31.

⁴³ Tillich, *Political Expectation*, 50.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁴⁶ Joerg Rieger, *Globalization and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 55.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁸ Nestor Míguez, Joerg Rieger, and Jung Mo Sung, *Beyond the Spirit of Empire: Theology and Politics in a New Key* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 163.

⁴⁹ Joerg Rieger, *No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 65ff.

⁵⁰ Joerg Rieger, *Grace Under Pressure; Negotiating the Heart of the Methodist Traditions* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church), 9-10.

⁵¹ Ibid., 52.

⁵² Ibid., 47.

⁵³ Joerg Rieger, *God and the Excluded: Visions and Blindspots in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 143.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 145.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 180.

⁵⁶ Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 115.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 115-16.

⁵⁸ Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 173.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 176.

⁶⁰ Rieger, *Globalization and Theology*, 9.

⁶¹ Ibid., 8-9.

⁶² Ibid., 3.

⁶³ Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 12.

⁶⁴ Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 137.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 129-30.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 130.

⁶⁷ Joerg Rieger, *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 318.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 100.

⁶⁹ Joerg Rieger, "Liberating God-Talk: Postcolonialism and the Challenge of the Margins," in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, eds. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 211.

⁷⁰ Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 186.

⁷¹ Rieger, "Liberating God-Talk," 216-17.

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