



# BULLETIN

*The North American Paul Tillich Society*

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**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NAPTS  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND  
FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22  
AND NOVEMBER 23, 2013**

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2013  
9:00 AM—11:30 AM  
Room: Hilton Baltimore—Brent**

**Theme: Tillich and Liberation Theologies**

Duane Olson, McKendree University  
*Presiding*

Zachary W. Royal, Garrett Theological Seminar  
*Cultural Transformation as Ultimate Concern:  
Tillich's Theological Project of Cultural Em-  
beddedness in Conversation with The Black Lib-  
eration Theology of James Cone*

Alan Richard Realistic Living, Inc.

*Liberation from the Word: Tillich's Systematic  
Theology and Revelation in Liberation Theology*

Nathan Crawford, Plymouth, Indiana  
*"What Can I Do?": Turning to Tillich for  
Help in the (Over)Information Age*

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**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2013**

**1:00 PM—3:30 PM**

**Room: Hilton Baltimore—Brent**

**Theme: Correlation and Contemporary Thought**

Bryan Wagoner, Davis and Elkins College  
*Presiding*

Laura Thelander, Luther Theological Seminary  
*Tillich and the Changing Face of  
Theological Education*

Mary Ann Stenger, University of Louisville  
*Correlating a Contemporary Existential Ques-  
tion with the Symbol of Transfiguration*

Alexander Blondeau, Luther Theological  
Seminary  
*"Yes, But Only If God Does Not Exist": A Tilli-  
chian Answer to the Question of God's Necessity  
for Morality*

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**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2013**

**4:00 PM—6:30 PM**

**Room: Hilton Baltimore—Brent**

**Theme: Tillich and Contemporary  
Christianity**

Echol Nix, Furman University  
*Presiding*

Lawrence Whitney, Boston University  
*Correlating to "Nones:" Tillich's Method of  
Correlation and Late Modernity*

Sharon Peebles Burch, Interfaith Counseling Center  
*Formulating Questions, Facilitating Change:  
Tillich's Method of Correlation*

Christopher Rodkey, Penn State University, York  
*Pentecosting: Preaching the Death of God*

**7:00 PM—10 PM**  
**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22**  
**THE NAPTS ANNUAL BANQUET**

**Place:** The Baltimore Convention Center,  
Room 328.

**Speaker:** Marion Hausner Pauck

*Details following the NAPTS and AAR Tillich  
Group Programs*

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**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23**

**9:00 AM—11:30 AM**

**Room: Sheraton Inner Harbor  
Loch Raven 1**

**Theme: Issues in the Systematic Theology**

Charles Fox, Regent University  
*Presiding*

Annette Neblett Evans, Lynchburg College  
*Otherness and Fallenness*

Wesley J. Wildman, Boston University  
*Tillich's Systematic Theology as a Template  
for the Encounter between Christian  
Theology and Religious Naturalism*

Richard Grigg, Sacred Heart University  
*The Key Element in Paul Tillich's Systematic  
Theology*

Ryan Coyne, University of Chicago  
*Reconsidering the Sources of Tillich's  
Ontology*

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**TILlich: ISSUES IN THEOLOGY, RELIGION,  
AND CULTURE GROUP**

**A24-229**

**SUNDAY—1:00 PM—2:30 PM**

**TILlich: ISSUES IN THEOLOGY, RELIGION,  
AND CULTURE GROUP**

**Theme: Contemporary Applications of Paul Til-  
lich's Theology**

Sharon Peebles Burch, Interfaith Counseling Center  
*Presiding*

Mike Grimshaw, University of Canterbury  
*The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Radical,  
 Impure Tillich*

Samantha Lyon, Boston University  
*No Shallow Beauty: A Reinterpretation of  
 Anthropocentrism in Paul Tillich's Theology of  
 Nature*

Michael Turner, University of Chicago  
*A Failure to Communicate? A Tillichian  
 Approach to the Symbolism in Cool Hand Luke*

Alexander Blondeau, Luther Theological Seminary,  
 St. Paul  
*Intimacy Through Self-Loss: Intersections in the  
 Paradoxical Soteriologies of Paul Tillich and  
 Sebastian Moore*

**Tillich Group Business Meeting**  
**Russell Re Manning, University of Aberdeen**  
*Presiding*

**A24-277**  
**TILlich: ISSUES IN THEOLOGY, RELIGION,  
 AND CULTURE GROUP**  
**KIERKEGAARD, RELIGION, AND CULTURE  
 GROUP**  
**Sunday - 3:00 PM—4:30 PM**

**Theme: Schelling, Kierkegaard**

Russell Re Manning, Aberdeen  
*Presiding*

*Panelists:*

Adam Pryor, Bethany College  
 Stacey Ake, Drexel University

### THE NAPTS ANNUAL BANQUET

The NAPTS Annual Banquet will be at the Baltimore Convention Center, Room 328.

**Speaker:** Marion Hausner Pauck

**Title:** Remembering the Past, Looking Forward to the Future

**Menu:** Breast of Chicken filled with Fresh Lump Crab Mousseline, with thyme infused mushrooms, wild and white rice with orange and scallion, sautéed fresh vegetable medley, and fruit-topped New York cheesecake.

Vincent A. McCarthy, St Joseph's University,  
 Philadelphia  
 Christian Danz, Universität Wien, Evang. Theol.  
 Fakultät  
 Daniel Whistler, University of Liverpool

**A25-238**

**MONDAY—1:00 PM—3:30 PM**

Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group

**Theme: Paul Tillich in Conversation with Contemporary Pentecostal Theology**

Wolfgang Vondey, Regent University,  
*Presiding*

Nimi Wariboko, Andover Newton Theological School  
*Political Theology from Tillich to  
 Pentecostalism in Africa*

Frank Macchia, Vanguard University  
*Justification in the Ecstasy of the Spirit: A  
 Pentecostal Engagement with the Pneumatology  
 of Paul Tillich*

Lisa Stephenson, Lee University  
*Spiritual Presence and the Divine Feminine: A  
 Tillichian-Pentecostal-Feminist Spirituality*

*Responding*

Mark Lewis Taylor,  
 Princeton Theological Seminary  
 John Thatamanil  
 Union Theological Seminary

**Reservations:** Contact Frederick Parrella, Secretary  
 Treasurer at:

[fparrella@scu.edu](mailto:fparrella@scu.edu)

408.554-4714 ((office))

408.259.8225 (home)

**Price:** 55 USD

The banquet fee may be paid in advance by mail:

Dr. F. J. Parrella, Religious Studies  
 Santa Clara University  
 Santa Clara, CA 95053

**Cash or check only.**

**IN MEMORIAM: ROBERT P. SCHARLEMANN**

[Editor's Note: The theological world, especially the world of Tillich scholarship, lost one of its great luminaries in 2013. Bob Scharlemann was an extraordinary gift to all of us in Tillich studies. Two of his students, who are themselves distinguished scholars in Tillich, have written brief tributes in his memory. The editor is grateful for the following contributions.]

Robert P. Scharlemann, Emeritus Commonwealth Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, died July 10th in Charlottesville, Virginia. One of the early founders of the North American Paul Tillich Society in 1974, Scharlemann served as Vice-President (1977), President (1978), and Secretary-Treasurer and Editor of the *Newsletters* (1979-1982, 1988-1997). As the NAPTS informal liaison, he regularly attended the conferences of the Deutsche Paul Tillich Gesellschaft, the Tillich Symposia in Frankfurt sponsored by Prof. Dr. Gert Hummel, and the colloquia of the Association Paul Tillich d'Expression française. His two major books on Tillich are: *Reflection and Doubt in the Thought of Paul Tillich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969) and *Religion and Reflection: Essays in Paul Tillich's Theology* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005).

Outside of his enduring scholarship on Tillich, Scharlemann explored theological reasoning and truth, especially in *The Being of God: Theology and the Experience of Truth* (New York: Seabury, 1981) and in *The Reason of Following: Christology and the Ecstatic I* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991). He published several other monographs and edited volumes in philosophical theology with the University Press of Virginia. He also served as Editor of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* in the early 1980s.

After earning both a B.A. and a B.D. from Concordia College, Scharlemann received a Fulbright Scholarship that enabled him to go to the University of Heidelberg. There he received his doctorate in philosophical theology, with his dissertation published as *Thomas Aquinas and John Gerhard* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964). He served as Professor of Religion at the School of Religion at the University of Iowa (1963-1981) and then was appointed Commonwealth Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia.

As a professor, Dr. Scharlemann empowered his students to become their own thinkers and scholars. His seminars focused on furthering his students' re-

search, rather than his own projects. His quiet manner yet penetrating questions created an atmosphere of shared investigation and deepening students' analyses.

Outside of his academic work, Scharlemann preached regularly in various Lutheran churches and played the piano for his own enjoyment.

He was a significant contributor to the scholarship, finances, and social spirit of the NAPTS. We have missed him during these past few years of illness but we are grateful for his many gifts to Tillich scholars over many decades, both in North America and in Europe.

Mary Ann Stenger  
University of Louisville

**REMEMBERING MR. SCHARLEMANN**

I have always believed that God works in mysterious ways. That's probably why I never thought about what a miracle it was that Robert Scharlemann came to the University of Virginia a mere two years after I arrived to do my graduate study. I had come to the University of Virginia to live in the mountains and to study Paul Tillich, and though the former was going well, the latter was not. To really study Tillich, one needed a Robert P. Scharlemann. Luckily for me, he arrived. I didn't know him well, but I do remember certain specific things about him that, when taken as a whole, made him an unforgettable and exceptional professor. Below are a few of my favorite memories.

*As a teacher:* He was traditional, and always dressed up. For class, he always wore a sweater vest under his blazer. His punctuality rivaled Kant's.

*As a lecturer:* He was, not surprisingly, brilliant. His lectures were a work of art. The courses he taught were like giant jigsaw puzzles that, when first dumped from the box, seemed impossible to put together. However, by the end of a semester, the picture—be it 19<sup>th</sup> century theology or Tillich's *Systematic Theology*—was complete, with the pieces fitting together in a seamless whole.

*As a mentor:* He was honest. He never gave praise when it wasn't due. He was a man of very few words, but what he said was inspirational. Before he took me on as an advisee, I asked him if he considered himself to be a 'Tillichian'. His answer: "Yes, in the sense that Tillich tells us to think for ourselves." When it came time to write my dissertation, I asked him to help me choose a topic that hadn't been done. He said, "The topic doesn't matter. Just

do it better than anyone else.” And, finally, when he called to tell me he was ready for me to defend, he said simply, “This will do.”

*As a scholar:* He was incomparable. He lived his intellectual life on a totally different plane, and though he knew it, he was not arrogant about it. In fact, he was one of the least arrogant people I have ever known. Once, trying to make conversation, I mentioned that a friend at Duke Divinity School had a class in which they were to read *The Being of God*. He looked at me and nodded and said, in his clipped voice, “Alright.” Later, my friend called to say that the assignment had been modified: now, instead of reading the book, the semester’s goal was to outline one chapter. When I told him that, he smiled and said, “That’s about right.”

*As a person:* He was quite possibly the most authentic person I have ever met. He did things his way, and he was not influenced by the opinion of society. For example, he was not chatty. He rarely started conversations, but he seemed happy to converse when engaged. He never talked about himself. This being said, his students didn’t know much about him. To us, he seemed a bit of an enigma. Imagine our surprise to learn that he drove a sports car! And that it sported the license plate DASEIN 1. (We always wanted to ask him if he knew who had taken DASEIN, but we didn’t.) Another surprise: his favorite place to hang out was the *Dunkin Donuts* on Emmett Street in Charlottesville. It was there that I saw him for the last time, about eight years ago. It was mid morning. He had retired from teaching at UVA, and was reading the newspaper. He was

dressed, as always, in a blazer, sweater vest and tie. He seemed genuinely happy to see me. We talked like old friends, mainly about our shared love of the TV series, *Frasier*. I told him then how much I had enjoyed, and benefited from reading, *The Reason of Following*. As I was leaving, I got up the courage to thank him for everything. I also told him that I thought we had strikingly similar intellectual interests, but that he was just operating on a much higher plane. He tilted his head and thought for a moment, then smiled and said, “I think that’s right.” I wasn’t hurt; he didn’t say it to be mean. For him, it was just a statement of fact. And it was true.

*His legacy?* Mr. Scharlemann wrote an essay about Paul Tillich with the very apt title, *After Tillich, What?* Members of this society have taken that title as our task. But I have often thought, since learning of his death, of how necessary it is for us to pose the question *After Scharlemann, What else?* Like Tillich, his thought was (light) years before its time, and it will take years to unlock it and make it more accessible. He has left us with a rich and vast legacy, and we owe it to him to preserve it.

It would be comforting, but speculative, to think that Scharlemann is now at a conference table in heaven with Tillich, Barth, Niebuhr, and others. But he is, in fact, with them in stature, and will be remembered as one of the greatest philosophical theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Annette Neblett Evans  
Lynchburg College

#### NEW PUBLICATIONS

Gounelle, André. *Paul Tillich. Une foi réfléchie*. Collection Figures Protestantes. Lyons: Editions Olivétan, 2013.

Brant, Jonathan. *Paul Tillich and the Possibility of Revelation through Film*, Oxford University Press, 2012. This study explores the possibility that even films lacking religious subject matter might have a religious impact upon their viewers. It begins with a reading of Paul Tillich’s theology of revelation through culture and continues with a qualitative re-

search project assessing the experiences of filmgoers in Latin America.

*From Erdmann Sturm:*  
Paul Tillich, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* (1930-1933): Philosophie der Religion (1930). Die Entwicklung der Philosophie von der Spätantike zur Renaissance (1930/31). Geschichte der Ethik (1931). Die Philosophie der deutschen Klassik (1932). Fragen der systematischen Philosophie (1932/33). Herausgegeben und mit einer historischen Einleitung versehen von Erdmann Sturm. Berlin/ Boston: Verlag de Gruyter/ Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmbH, 2013.

**TILlich'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AS AN  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE FOR A  
COMPARATIVE CRITICAL DIALOGUE ON  
PEACE-MAKING**

PETER SLATER

The founders of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University wanted to encourage those who educate future international leaders and their teachers to enlist religion in the cause of world peace. In the aftermath of World War II and the Korean War, many liberal arts colleges and university faculties of Arts and Science were establishing departments of Religious Studies to address the ignorance of most North Americans regarding traditions other than their own. Many Philosophy departments shelving broader inquiries to concentrate on the “logic of language” had left a gap in Humanities programs for those studying alternative ideas concerning meaning and values in life. The turn to “religion” as an academic concentration was part of an attempt to fill this gap.

In this draft chapter of a book I hope to finish writing in 2013, I review salient features of the theology of Paul Tillich with a view to developing a confessionally-based approach to comparative thinking that is relevant to implementing their mandate in the twenty-first century. As distinct from supposedly neutral descriptions of all religious positions, confessional comparative approaches are explicitly theological and dialogical, based on the full resources of particular denominational dealings with others. “Post-modern” comparative theologians, such as Francis X. Clooney S.J., the current Director of the Harvard Center, are experts trained in the history of traditions “other” than their own, who ask what their dialogical encounters suggest on specific topics.<sup>1</sup> To supplement such historical, textual proficiency with the disciplined insights of critically systematic theological thinking on issues raised, I draw on Tillich for a fuller sense of what systematic theological thinking involves, with particular reference to peacemaking.

Tillich and Barth were two of the most important Protestant theologians of the twentieth century. Unlike Barth, Tillich bridged the gap between the universalizing perspective of the Center’s founders and the particularizing demands of contemporary academic research in confessional theology and religious studies. As noted elsewhere, he was at Harvard when the Center was established but kept his

distance. Both the first Director of the Harvard Center—my father Robert Slater at Columbia, and I at Harvard—attended Tillich’s public lectures and graduate seminars on theology.<sup>2</sup> His conception of theology was more attuned to the neo-orthodoxy being embraced at the time by mainstream Protestant theological colleges in Europe and North America than our Anglican blend of patristic dogmatics and philosophy of religion. Regarding comparative theology, his starting-point was different from the would-be scientific one, a century earlier, of Max Müller, the organizing editor of the Sacred Books of the East,<sup>3</sup> and from the natural theology approach of many Catholic theologians and philosophers of religion.<sup>4</sup>

Paul Tillich, Robert Slater, and Wilfred Cantwell Smith, the second Director, were all men of large vision. They knew directly the ravages of modern warfare and economic depression. Any answers to global questions for them had to ring true to their generation’s experiences.<sup>5</sup> They lived through the rise and fall of fighting “the war to end all wars” and the founding and failure of the League of Nations. Theirs was the first theological generation to be confronted with the challenges of the nuclear age. The “cold war” during their Harvard years marked the beginning of the end of the modern era, when absolute appeals to national sovereignty had to be modified by the transnational impact of nuclear deterrents, proving once again that technological advances in weaponry and communications trigger greater revolutionary seriousness about peacemaking than might otherwise occur.<sup>6</sup>

In politics, Tillich became an early advocate of religious socialism.<sup>7</sup> Whereas his father’s generation equated socialism with atheism, he considered it a necessary but not sufficient attempt to meet basic human needs that, if neglected, leave people vulnerable to the promises of demagogues.<sup>8</sup> Among survivors of World War I, those in Europe who considered themselves in the Aryan vanguard of evolution or the first wave of “the proletarian revolution” were idolizing dictatorial leaders. Some used social Darwinism to justify a state policy of racial and class “cleansing.”<sup>9</sup> Theistic apologists co-opted religion to support tyrants who projected their hostility onto enemy others.<sup>10</sup> Overwhelming majorities in both Germany and Russia locked step with bureaucrats who enlisted ill-educated youths to become martyrs for the Fatherland or the Party.<sup>11</sup> Tillich’s was the first generation to question seriously the modern as-

sumption that Christianity entails historic, irreversible progress towards global civilization.

### 1. Doing Systematic Theology in a Secular World

Tillich came to prominence when world events forced theologians to think ecumenically beyond the confines of traditional congregations and privileged classrooms. As an army chaplain during World War I, he came to know working-class conscripts and understand why they dismissed the church as an institution of and for the bourgeois establishment. Many of their leaders were Marxists. Recovering from what we now call “post-traumatic stress disorder,” he returned to the Bohemian ethos of Berlin to find his bride pregnant by his best friend. Later, as a Dean of Arts in Frankfurt, he faced down Nazi students demanding the dismissal of his Jewish colleagues. The student mob’s ignorance and disdain for others made him forever alert to the importance of general education in the Humanities. To Nazis, the enemy aliens were biblical theists, both Jews and Christians, who denied the absolute value of their sacred homeland and its Führer.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, Tillich, Bonhoeffer, and other Prussians were secure about their German origins and Christian heritage.<sup>13</sup> To them the dangerous “others” were heresy-hunting crypto-pagans.<sup>14</sup> Tillich’s challenge to himself in despair was to articulate reasons to affirm meaningful ways of life, when traditional religious responses rang hollow.

Tillich’s abiding academic importance is that he appropriated for mainstream Protestant theology a post-Hegelian emphasis on existential dynamics in the history of religion and culture. He incorporated insights from Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche into mainstream theology. His definition of religion, as “that which concerns me ultimately or unconditionally” (*das mir unbedingt angeht*), has as its reference-point a collective intuition of the ultimate source of life that can never be contained in any dogmatic definition, political platform or scientific formula.<sup>15</sup> What makes religion religious by this definition is its focus on basic priorities. Religious thinking is priority thinking. Systematic theology is critical thinking about the priorities of worshipping theistic communities. What makes them theological is their confession that intuition of “the unconditional” is not a human construct of finite ideas multiplied to mathematical infinity, as Feuerbach assumed. It is a response to divine grace.<sup>16</sup> The relevant dynamics are those of human agents resonating to a shared

sense of qualitatively different spiritual movements, cosmic in scope yet individually registered.

In philosophy, Tillich regarded Schelling rather than Hegel as the precursor of existential demythologizing. Instead of Hegel’s triumphant march of the Holy Spirit in “world” history, or Kierkegaard’s lonely leap of faith, Schelling posited “the demonic” in “the divine” as the basis of vital processes forming our natural identity and driving us to realize freedom in history. Tracing the demonic in history is a legacy from the biblical prophetic tradition, revived in secular form by the Marxists.

In the history of ontology, what is striking about Schelling and other German Classical Idealists, insufficiently noticed by theologians, is how thoroughly they emphasized dynamics over form. When Tillich characterized religion as the substance and culture as the form of our ways of life, not *vice versa*, that reflected a significant reversal of traditional thinking. It undercut the classical assumption of dogmatists that their job is to unpack eternal truths. Among Platonistic Church Fathers and their successors, the Bible was mined for timeless axioms.<sup>17</sup> Conservative Protestant exegetes still follow their Hellenistic tradition. Modern fundamentalists added Newtonian physics to their repertoire of God’s timeless truths. By contrast, Tillich’s conception of salvation-history privileged the prophetic Hebrew proclamation of timely truths.

Against fundamentalists of all stripes, Tillich drew on his Lutheran-Augustinian tradition of faith seeking understanding, not the “pure” reason of transcendental deduction favored by post-Kantians.<sup>18</sup> His Augustinian-Platonic starting-point was introspective awareness of the “depth dimension” of grounded being and a hierarchical sense of being and value, construed as a dialectical synthesizing of material and spiritual factors, as we live under the umbrella of divine grace.<sup>19</sup> Priority goes to the spirit rather than the letter of Scriptural texts.

It follows from Tillich’s definition of religion that the primary issue for theology is not whether some supernatural agent called “god” exists, as if god-talk is what makes anyone religious. The issue is whether what is truly “unconditional” is what actually governs our ways of life and informs religious language. Is it really the unequivocal source of truth, beauty, and goodness that governs our endeavors in the last resort? To give contemporary answers to this question we need to study the history of religions as well as philosophy. Under the heading of “comparative religion,” he discussed the “quasi-religions” of

National Socialism and modern capitalism, acknowledging the secularizing cultural impact of scientifically oriented worldviews. Among these, he preferred those attuned to the life sciences over those privileging mechanistic talk of sub-structures and super-structures (See ST II, 6-7, 66; SD 115, 133).

The choice of what is unconditional was not for Tillich a matter of personal taste or private preference. It is an ontological conclusion concerning finitude, to be argued for philosophically on the basis of living symbols that enable us to participate cognitively in what frames this-worldly interactions. According to him, truly unconditional is the God beyond the “god” depicted in many theologies. Theological language must always be construed dialectically, that is, saying both Yes and No to how different readers unpack what they mean.<sup>20</sup> In question are existential, not factual, constraints on our current potential (To.P.). 168-170). As successive generations articulate these differently, “world” history is a major source of data for comparative thinking (PE, 237-9).

Modern scholars acknowledge many academic disciplines—physics, biology, anthropology, psychology, and so on. Their moves from one discipline to another reflect their assumptions about levels or dimensions of being and awareness, using “bottom-up” or “top-down” thinking, from material to immaterial modes or *vice versa*.<sup>21</sup> The existentialists’ reaction against scientific positivism led “dialectical theologians,” including Tillich, to look for more realistic expectations for life in the modern, alienated world and to ask what criteria should govern the decisions required of us, as individuals and citizens of nation-states, working for reconciliation among warring classes and peoples. He highlighted decisive “leaps” to “higher” or “deeper” dimensions of being and becoming, rather than deductions based on laws supposedly governing the march of history (ST III 327, SD 101-3)

In dialogue with leading social and natural scientists in his university, Tillich adopted a conception of successive stages of becoming from inorganic, through organic, to personal and spiritual modes of interaction (ST III, 342-4; CB, 95).<sup>22</sup> He showed his Platonic roots (and the Romantic legacy) by naming *eros* the moving force of history and, in history, making political concerns predominant over social, economic, cultural, and religious ones (SD 25, 88, 150-2).<sup>23</sup> The more personal the determining precedents are, he argued, the more individual human decisions about ultimate meaning inform the histories

addressed by philosophers and theologians. The more spirited the precedents for actions originating with ourselves are, the less deterministic the laws of history can be (ST III; 313-326, LPJ, 41—compulsion). Our conceptions of precedents (causes) and the bases for different identities surviving the accidents of history (substances) must be adjusted when appraising different kinds of subjects and objects in space-time. Spatial relations are primary in descriptions of inorganic matter. Temporal concerns are primary for accounts of human affairs.

Dialectical thinking belongs at the spiritual end of the scale, as the way to understand ontology, which maps abstractly the substantive, dynamic processes of human experience. “The” ontological question is “Why is there something rather than nothing?” The dialectically least misleading philosophical, non-mythological answer is based on experiencing “the shock of non-being,” which led Tillich to refer to God as Being-itself, Life, Spirit, and, most emphatically, as “not-not-being,” established by “the undeniable fact that there is something and not nothing.”<sup>24</sup>

In *The Courage to Be*, the priority of existential dynamics over essential form is evident in the way Tillich reworked conceptions of the hierarchy of being.<sup>25</sup> He differentiated among decisions regarding physical, moral, and ideological or spiritual levels or dimensions of becoming. Courage is required on all levels, because finite existence is always under threat, relative or absolute, due to sickness or death, degrees of guilt, and loss of meaning for some or all of our working assumptions.<sup>26</sup> Which dimension of existence is culturally dominant, and when, depends on both individual circumstances and the times in which we live. The ideological/spiritual dimension is implicitly “highest” insofar as it includes our sense of the meaning of anything and everything.

To curb totalitarian arrogance, Tillich advocated “the Protestant Principle” learned from the Hebrew prophets, who taught that, in the final analysis, only God is king. It arms us against prelates and politicians who consider their edicts infallible.<sup>27</sup> Correcting theological misapprehensions is prerequisite to formulating concrete political programs for times between the “whence” of our common origins and the “whither” of our common destiny. In *The Socialist Decision*, he explained that, unlike “essence,” which evokes a Platonic logic of eternal forms, the “word *principle* is used to refer to the summarizing characterization of a political group” (SD, 9). Principles focus our thinking on critical features of spe-

cific eras without going into copious detail. The classical contrast between eternal ideas and temporal appearances abstracts too generally from actual events.

Principles guide concrete, historical movements in distinctive eras. They aid our understanding of the essential character and direction of “new and unexpected realizations” of original situations. Examples are the Protestant Principle, for post-Reformation developments in modern Europe, and the Socialist Principle, as definitive of what Tillich hoped might become a majority political dynamic in the twentieth century (SD, 10). The Protestant era followed on Luther’s courageous challenge to Catholicism in the sixteenth century. Lutheran eschatological dualism regarding “the Kingdom of God and the demonic powers which stand against it” holds “the secular world...immediate to God” in a way neglected by mysticism and ecclesial supernaturalism.<sup>28</sup>

The Socialist Principle, on Tillich’s rendering, is a Christian version of the Marx-inspired movement to supersede bourgeois capitalism by inaugurating a “classless society” (SD 58-63). In the nineteenth century, class struggles had revived awareness of the demonic dynamic in history suppressed by Enlightenment belief in harmonizing progress (To.P., 35 re demonic); Tillich hoped that his generation’s “kairos” was for religious socialism as Luther’s was for Protestantism (To.P., 40).<sup>29</sup> His concern for temporal specificity perhaps explains why he named it the Protestant Principle and not the Prophetic Principle.

Tillich wrote *The Socialist Decision* in 1932 with Heidegger and Nietzsche very much in mind. He set an example of how theologians and religious philosophers may appeal to all people to co-operate in developing a sense of global community, while maintaining different ideological positions. Like Barth, his own identity was rooted in an avowedly Protestant appeal to the Bible in a way not shared by other Christians, other religious leaders and non-religious critical theorists. But, against Barth, Tillich maintained that ontology can provide intellectual common ground across cultures. His dialectics required him to incorporate insights from other disciplines.<sup>30</sup>

His sense of existential dialectics led Tillich to develop a new way of doing systematic theology. He noted that each cultural epoch generates questions for exponents of dominant ideologies. In response to them, Christian theologians question unexamined presuppositions of their embedded cultures. How questions are framed affects which answers will be

heeded. Questions and answers should go both ways, even though theologians are often expected to deduce eternally correct answers from the dogmatic traditions of their denominations. In America, he attributed his dialectical way of being systematic to what a teaching assistant called “the method of correlation.”<sup>31</sup> This label for dialectical, bipolar theologizing thereafter became his theological trademark.<sup>32</sup> However named, the method encourages dialogue with non-theists.

In Christian theology, comprehensive systematic answers relate to: (1) how we know the religious dimension in life, (2) how Christians conceive of divine and human being, (3) how the biblical record of Jesus’ life makes concrete the universal scope of divine power, (4) how in real life we rely on this power of being and becoming, and (5) how our realizations of this “Spirit” make history and what realistic hopes we have, despite disappointments, for our future. These are the topics treated in this order in Tillich’s three-volume *Systematic Theology*. Systematicians check whether the theological answers to one set of questions are consistent with answers to the others. Apologetic theologians, in the good sense, examine ways in which each generation makes connections among its questions and answers with their contemporary cultures. While principles have some lasting validity, conclusions are never perfect or final for the next generation. His theology was at times apologetic, systematic, biblical, historical, and philosophical.<sup>33</sup>

In theory, we could start with any question and answer from any sub-division of systematic theology, since each implies all the rest. In dialogue with mid-twentieth century North American linguistic analysts, Tillich found no interest among them in critical theory and Marxism. Because their challenges concerned meaning and knowing in the light of modern science, he began Volume One of his Systematics with the doctrines of revelation and God as Creator. This left detailed consideration of the doctrine of the Spirit, the interpretation of history, and eschatological hope, for the last volume. An unintended consequence was that his conception of God as “Being itself” in Volume One received much more critical scrutiny than his more foundational conception of God as Spirit, expounded in Volume Three.<sup>34</sup>

As noted in Chapter Four above, when articulating their theological priorities, narrative theologians critical of Tillich privilege biblical history over Hellenistic ontologies.<sup>35</sup> In the heyday of neo-orthodoxy,

some of my Harvard classmates questioned whether Tillich's theology was "really" Christian, given his apparently divided loyalties between biblical foundations and secular culture.<sup>36</sup> They missed the import of his self-designation as "neo-dialectical" (PE, xxviii). In fact, he was always a mainline Protestant who located his seminal propositions inside "the circle of revelation" recorded in the Bible (ST I, 8-11, 106-115). But, in Robert Slater's sense (see Chapter Two), he was never a "subscriptionist" insisting on only his own denomination's reading of Scripture. By comparison with Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, Tillich's *Systematic Theology* is so compact because he relied on dialectical ontology, when flagging issues regarding Christianity and culture. Narratively, as with Barth, these would require much more extensive unpacking.

Twentieth century existential theologians agreed that any move into a circle of faith requires conscious commitment.<sup>37</sup> Faith comes first. This was not for them an impediment to dialogue, since dialogue was their way of inquiring into others' equally personal commitments grounded in differing traditions. In Buber's version of post-Kantian philosophy, dialogue is predicated on "I-Thou" relationships. For Tillich, what was not a matter of choice were the ontological presuppositions articulated in expressions of the foundational polarities of being in relationship. These informed his theory of symbolic usage, which always presupposed his conception of the reality of Spirit in history.<sup>38</sup>

The ecumenical movement after World War II nourished hopes for church union among Protestants and respect for Catholic and other religious traditions. Part of the dialectic was between articulating denominational positions congruent with the current historical situation and addressing them to all Christians, whose message was supposedly true of and for all humanity. (The Lund principle is to do together what best we do together and alone what best we do alone.) As noted in earlier chapters, the impulse for the ecumenical movement came mostly from the overseas mission experience of people like Robert Slater, Wilfred Smith, and their teachers.<sup>39</sup> Modern encounters with "other" religions raised apologetic questions for theologians about claims to uniqueness and exclusivity, which required radical rethinking about the role of religion in society. Prior to his dialogues with Zen masters in his later years, Tillich's conception of other religious traditions was mostly theoretical.<sup>40</sup>

Key to Tillich's version of Augustinianism was his conception of giving priority to dynamics over form in his treatment of religion and culture, by re-orienting all references to eternity. Giving priority to dynamics means that what is substantive is a temporal movement embodying our priorities. Any reference to what transcends finite conditions is not to timelessly constructive "Ideas," as for Christian Platonists, but to an ontologically higher order of temporality which includes our times.<sup>41</sup> Such "higher" temporal ordering encompasses the possibility of our self-destruction, but also the possibility of restorative new creations. Powers of being are powers of becoming. Among times, moments of fulfillment give us glimpses of aspired ends (To.P., 40-6).

Whether one calls "transcendent being" divine or not is a secondary, historical question. What matters is the confession that we cannot save ourselves, whether we construe "salvation" in supernaturalist or naturalistic terms. The existential problem needing solution is systemic. Theological explanations of this by reference to original sin, stemming from Augustine, still tend to carry his dated and flawed genetic presuppositions, deflecting attention from the sinful social structures which preoccupied Tillich's generation.<sup>42</sup> What is theologically important is the Augustinian insistence on the qualitative difference between divine and human being, when asking what makes a new future possible for people in need of forgiveness.

A post-Kantian account of the spatio-temporal nexus frames all such critical analyses by reference to what, in Tillich's idiom, is "trans-spatial", "trans-temporal", "trans-causal" and "trans-substantive." We cannot say directly what "the" transcendent is. Bad theology construes eternity as unending duration in space-time and divine being as just one greatest kind of substance among many (ST III, 399-400, 415). What is symbolized in talk of eternal life is a qualitative, not a quantitative, change in conceptions of the world to come. As pointed out by Robert Slater and many others, what is experienced by those responding to what they deem the "transcendent" Ground of Being is often said to be "ineffable." Asking for unqualified objective descriptions of any such "ultimate" referent neglects the significance of this point.

Regarding the demonic in history, the age-old question is whether the origin of evil lies in material or spiritual conditions or a combination of these. Augustine's insight was that our potential for evil is the greater the more god-like and spirited we are.

What brings lasting value to life is our power to be and become ourselves with others in community. Flourishing in life requires more than food and shelter. Contrary to the dualism postulated by Manicheans, he construed the doctrine of creation out of nothing to mean that the nothingness of evil is due to a primal falling away from our inescapably spiritual, life-giving God/Truth-relationship, which is the only viable basis for order in any historical community, even among “barbarians.” We are responsible agents, not complex machines. Our spiritual capacities make us of greater worth than others but fallible and, therefore, of greater danger to others. Not what limits us but what allows us to imagine that we can ever be unlimited puts us on a slippery slope to demonic self-destruction. Evil is a parasitic perversion of creaturely powers of being. It is only reversible by divine grace, whereby the demonic is made to serve divine purposes.<sup>43</sup>

Tillich’s starting-point was his German Lutheran ethos. His ontological unpacking of it was radical because of the priority given to dynamics over form in conceptions of grace and the political power of the demonic for better and for worse in history.<sup>44</sup> He applied Luther’s doctrine of justification by grace to his own trauma after World War I. Building on Pauline insights regarding the role of the Law/Torah,<sup>45</sup> Luther maintained that temptation as such is not necessarily evil but part of divinely “demonic” creativity. Whether any given move proves to be finally creative or destructive depends on our participating in a more encompassing affirmation of grace for all concerned, grounded in our common origins and ultimate ends.

In this life, Lutheran ethics emphasizes our vocation to be secular saints here and now, not having minds set on life elsewhere. Accepting ourselves as God accepts us, as we are and might now become, estranged but becoming reconciled, is foundational for living authentically at peace with ourselves and our world.<sup>46</sup> Our “intra-historical” aim is to realize the reign of the Christ even now in a way that breaks the destructive power of all demonic drives. Our “supra-historical” aim is to anticipate realizing the universality of God’s rule in such a way as to transcend all historical negations of it (To.P., 36-7). Although less helpful for generating pragmatic proposals for peace-making, the Protestant Principle has fresh interest for comparative theologians, I believe, because Muslim prophetic traditions, as contrasted with the priestly traditions of other “world religions,” have become such an important factor in

global politics in the twenty-first century. I shall return to this possibility below.

In human history, according to Tillich, we do not earn freedom from the consequences of past failures. Rather, in spite of lost opportunities, in moments of creative crisis (“kairos”), we are *given* timely new possibilities that enable us to participate in life-enhancing relationships essential to our future health (e.g., To.P., 37). Reference to divine being, in his usage, follows from confessing that, in this world, the laws of becoming are not mechanistically determined but graciously inspired impulses to fulfilling ways of life. Where there are higher forms of life, remedial action turns on enlisting willing cooperation from those who are alienated from their own “essential” selves, their neighbours, their environment and the very essence of all being. A theological axiom is that, in relation to moral agents, God’s “will” is not coercive but empowering (LPJ, 46-8, 67, 114)—“love does not enforce salvation.”)

Tillich’s contribution was and is due, not to his mostly “inclusivist” response to other traditions,<sup>47</sup> but to his combination of apologetic and systematic theology in a way that acknowledges global issues without sacrificing denominational identity. On the apologetic front, his expertise was in classical humanism, depth psychology, existential philosophy, and expressionist art. His own baseline was always German Classical Idealism, especially Schelling, in philosophy, and German Lutheranism, in theology, on the latter acknowledging debts to Ernst Troeltsch on mysticism and Martin Kähler on the Christ of faith. While ostensibly balancing his articulation of “the Protestant Principle” with “the Catholic substance” of Christian praxis, his account of the latter was admittedly underdeveloped. The sacrament most important to him was the sacrament of preaching the Word.<sup>48</sup> (In his early days, he equated sacramentalism with paganism (To.P., 40). I shall argue below that his position needs to be augmented by the sense of sacramental universe that Robert Slater imbibed from Archbishop William Temple.

Giving meaning to our existence is the high calling of philosophers of religion. Dogging critical discussion have been essentialistic theories of meaning and truth that allow for only one right version of events. Despite his dynamic ontology, Tillich, like Wilfred Smith, still defined basic terms according to the essentialist/classicist conventions of their humanistic education, making “root” meanings normative for all subsequent usage. However, Tillich’s stress on symbolic rather than literal meaning en-

abled him to allow for the fluidity of ideas expressed in living language. He insisted that all God-talk is metaphorical. "Father," for instance, can be a potent symbol in religious discourse because, at its best, fathering "participates" in the reality of nurturing relationships fostered by divine creativity. But fathering can inhibit mature independence. Any fixed idea of fatherhood must be broken to allow us to adjust to new conditions and develop new customs. The dynamics of faith are deepened by doubting and breaking hardened formulations of what creation and parenting are about.<sup>49</sup> We should develop a more historically critical theory of being and becoming than the absolute monism or dualism of Hellenistic classicists and a more constructivist philosophy of language than that of Idealists, ancient and modern.

The theological challenge after Freud and Nietzsche is how to construe New Testament portraits of God, despite God's wrath, as enabling, not disabling. The primary biblical model is of divinely royal parenting. Where Augustine stressed the eternity of divine decrees, Tillich concentrated on the mind-opening effect of future possibilities. The vital depths plumbed by Kierkegaard's account of dread are of what might *not* be. Better to sin and perhaps be saved than not to become ourselves, however sinfully. Against the negative impact on our imaginations of dealing with strangers in an uncertain world, only a stronger power of being, divine-encompassing-demonic, not supra-human so much as unconfined by the limitations of egocentrism, can call us to act on the peace which passes all understanding with sufficient power, love and justice to transform negatives into positive opportunities for ourselves and others.

## 2. The Courage to Make Peace

In Tillich's judgment, the religious mistake of much quasi-religion is the same as that of false religion, putting penultimate concerns in the place of what truly confronts us with unconditional demands. Such idolatry vitiates much organized religion, not just secular culture.<sup>50</sup> The result in his time was to give *de facto* absolute priority to consumer capitalism in America and to the Fatherland in Nazi Germany. While abstract arguments about what is truly so turn on the disputants' ontological presuppositions, what makes the definition of religion necessarily theological is his monotheistic attention to idolatry. By his analysis, our necessarily symbolic and existentially self-involving embodiments of the dy-

namics of life are religious, or "quasi-religious," because they are articulations of the depth dimensions of reality. As such, they are apt material for theological criticism from those "inside" the circle of revelation.

When he insisted against Marx and Hitler on giving socialism a religious foundation, Tillich understood himself to be laying a theological framework for political thinking, not proposing a specific party platform (PE, 41-2). His interest was in global strategy, not tactical maneuvers. Expectation of fulfilling our created and creative possibilities, at least partially, informs the character of national and international politics. What counts are not specific ideas for how the future may unfold but the principles that govern our adjustment to changing times and places. Theologically, his religious usage was informed by his Lutheran appropriation of the Augustinian tradition, combining Schelling's insistence on the demonic with Luther's insight into the creative role of temptation, when realizing our vocation to be Christians in this world.

Tillich's political thinking followed from his interpretation of history.<sup>51</sup> His early academic orientation was to post-Hegelian, dialectical readings of global history. But World War I shocked many of his generation into taking dialectical materialism seriously.<sup>52</sup> The Nazis' appeal to the supposedly genetic superiority of "the master race" sent them searching for conceptions more plausibly grounded in scientific theories of evolution. As noted above, except among dogmatic Marxists, confidence in cultural progress was shattered. Tillich's espousal of religious socialism was his contribution to the debate in Germany over Nazi, Bolshevik, and other political philosophies. The Socialist Principle, as he expounded it, gave a Marxist reading to Kant's injunction to treat people as ends in themselves, never only as means.<sup>53</sup> On the economic front, it advocated "material" justice. Against dictatorships, it promoted recognition of universal human rights (To.P., 54).

The bookends of critical historical thinking for Tillich are answers to the questions "Whence?" and "Whither?" concerning our identity-forming cultures. Bourgeois intellectuals had appealed to our common origins to justify rejection of aristocratic feudalism. Socialists built on and corrected this appeal, while looking ahead towards ending class warfare. They proposed a common future in a welfare state. After World War I and the Great Depression, many intellectuals, including Tillich, Robert Slater, and Wilfred Cantwell Smith (see Chapters Two and

Three), took “the socialist decision.” In his presentations of this, Tillich consistently reverted to a Christian humanist stress on the foundational ideas for a theology of politics that he considered essential in our “post-Protestant” era (To.P., 53) xxx

As a religious socialist, Tillich advocated a combination of mutually corrective and provocative symbols drawn from the young Marx’s egalitarian humanism and from prophetic biblical eschatology. To the Protestant work ethic, Enlightenment rationalism had added laissez-faire economics, from which all of us supposedly benefit, and political liberalism, with its embedded belief in natural harmony, supposedly flowing automatically during liberal régimes. In actual practice, workers and indigenous peoples overseas were treated as commodities. What ensued was class warfare and colonial unrest. Tillich looked to a combination of the Protestant Principle and “the Socialist Principle” to give sufficient religious grounding to secular visions of “the classless society.” Religious expectations, in his broad sense, harness demonic energies in the service of realizing global community, which is the antithesis of modern nationalistic hegemonies (ToP 52) In the twentieth century, he argued, the Socialist Principle negates “the Bourgeois Principle” of consumer capitalism.

The relevant political history is the history of groups with a sense of vocation as peoples, not just a sum of individual biographies. A nation’s moral and religious character is discerned from its guiding principles. Tillich applied his Lutheran conception of calling to the history of national ambitions, of the Greeks to civilize barbarians, of the Romans to establish the rule of law, of the Americans inviting immigrants to start afresh in the new world, and so on. The Germans failed when they lost their Christian sense of vocation inherited from the Holy Roman Empire (ST III, 330-1, ToP 170) Our global political aim should be to participate in an international or multi-national community, about which, however, we learn mostly negative lessons from history.

Tillich’s own formative history was that of his native Germany. To be defeated twice in one lifetime, he often remarked, was especially hard for those educated to believe in their own cultural superiority. Broadcasting for the Voice of America at Easter, 1944, he told listeners that, by denying that they had been defeated after World War I, the Germans had squandered the opportunity to learn from their experience. Renewal could never happen under the Nazis. They were counting on technical superior-

ity to win and failed to appreciate the spiritual resilience of their defeated opponents. Calculating only in I-It terms was fatal. Christian hope is based on the promise of God’s ever-new creation, not the genius of heroes. Yet the possibility of resurrection, not just for individuals, but also for the Germans as a nation, was still open to them.<sup>54</sup>

Peacemaking is a collective challenge. During times of global unrest, in Tillich’s idiom, it requires both the courage to be ourselves as individuals and the courage to participate in communities in this world without losing ourselves. Neither is possible without the ever renewed divine impetus to be reconciled with ourselves, our neighbours and our world, that is, theologically speaking, consciously or not, impossible without justification by grace through faith. In global history, the confluence of positive and negative factors makes certain times especially auspicious for new initiatives. In theological terms, the question is: if our time coincides with God’s time in a unique way (a “kairos”), what is the political calling of inspired groups among us to transform present demonic drives into creative new realizations of God’s rule for all? (re kairos e.g. Top 39-40) The most recent instance for Tillichians of such a “kairos” is the ending of apartheid in South Africa.<sup>55</sup>

Achieving peace internationally requires creative political decision-making. Historically, nations do not make decisions. Individuals do. In politics, power blocs unite behind charismatic leaders. (ST III 329-333) Public education is directed to inducting the younger generation into the ideologies of influential groups (e.g. SD 24) What are communicated are not abstract concepts and scientific data, but secular and religious symbols of future expectations engaging the whole person (SD 147-8) One role of theology is to critique assumptions behind our choices of symbols. A challenge for modern theologians is to translate their religious message into secular idioms accessible to significant others.<sup>56</sup>

To the post-World War II generation in Europe and North America, as illustrated by Sartre, the existential meaningfulness or meaninglessness of their ideologies was of paramount importance, though questions of physical survival and morality are also always present (CtoB 143-4 on Sartre) For Tillich the major disciplinary insights into the courage to be came from depth psychology and existentialist philosophy. Against dialectical materialism and Hegelian idealism, he advocated “belief-ful realism,” taking due note of material conditions and the

systemic effect of human failures (SD xxxvi)<sup>57</sup> Unreal is any interpretation of history which neglects the demonic. The Protestant Principle is aimed more at the fear of failure than at realizing on earth as much of the coming Kingdom as possible.<sup>58</sup>

Following the massive destruction of people and property during World War II, many realized that a new world order would have to be established (ToP re genuine hope 179-181) There was guilt on all sides. All must rely on spiritual, not just material resources, Tillich insisted, if they were to learn from their past. By dehumanizing others, the Nazis had dehumanized themselves (ToP 51, 117). They must be totally defeated before the German people could recover their place in European politics. What gave him hope was that, while the Allies had announced that leaders responsible for wartime atrocities would be brought to justice and tried as criminals, the Allies finally decided not to seek revenge by imposing punitive sanctions on the defeated nations, as they had after World War I. (He did not know that Germany would be divided into East and West.)<sup>59</sup>

To hold individuals responsible before an international tribunal, Tillich pointed out, was an historic rejection of evasive appeals to national sovereignty. Carrying out orders of superior officers would no longer be accepted as a valid excuse for committing crimes against humanity. The judgment would be on each to the extent that he or she was considered responsible. What was important was the international precedent. Just establishing the authority of a world court was a major step towards making peace.<sup>60</sup> Calls to establish a world government were unrealistic.<sup>61</sup> The idea of national sovereignty was and is too entrenched among the political majority (SD 86-7) The subsequent conflict between capitalist and communist federations was kept to a "cold" war only because leaders on both sides were persuaded that a nuclear holocaust would prove suicidal.

Making peace requires faith and hope. By highlighting courage rather than faith, Tillich underscored the point that each historic move is not just a matter of intellectual analysis. It is a risky existential decision for which we are all morally responsible, at least in part. He applied Luther's sense of being saints *in spite of* being sinners to our realization of existential courage. We must find the courage to make peace in spite of despair over finding any adequate and universally acceptable philosophy or religion. The dynamics of faith drives individuals beyond credulity in response to doubts about our selves, our traditions (including our religions), and our world.

Becoming ourselves as parts of larger wholes is very much a function of the courage to be in this world.

'World' means *Lebenswelt*, in Heidegger's sense, not just a collection of physical objects (e.g. PE 239) Global history is of union, reunion, alienation and reconciliation, as we are moved to become ourselves in relationships in all dimensions of our being (LPJ 22-5) Historical achievements are always more fragmentary and incomplete than Hegel supposed. Most worrisome to existential philosophers and theologians were the dehumanizing side-effects of the technological underpinnings and mass marketing practices of modern economies, to the point where moral concerns are deemed irrelevant by political decision-makers.<sup>62</sup> News media tell us who today's mass murderers are, for instance, but not who manufactures their weapons or allows them to acquire them. Individuals are pilloried while systemic evils go unchallenged. The temptation is to lose ourselves in anonymous crowds.

From biblical times, the Christian symbol for the end of history has been the Kingdom of God. Tillich was adamant that the coming Kingdom is a symbol for ultimate fulfillment, not a literally anticipated historical objective (ST III, 357-361, 364, 375, 390-3) The negative qualifications are so dominant that one wonders, at times, whether his expectations were akin to those of *Waiting for Godot*.<sup>63</sup> But the symbol of the coming Kingdom is not a "mere" symbol. It participates in, while not exhausting, the cosmic reality of our global future. Its spatial and temporal connotations express the political dimensions of our collective hope. The reference is necessarily eschatological, to what frames global history, not to something fully realizable.

For Christians, the "center of history" is Jesus as the Christ overcoming the historic "split" between our essence and existence mythologically traced back to Adam.<sup>64</sup> We live now in two orders of being, where all flesh is grass, yet, by the power of God's promise, we may run and not be weary (Isaiah 40, SH 12-23) Because admission to God's Kingdom is by invitation, not coercion, and many more decline their invitations than accept, global peace is only ever more or less realized in different times and places. Twentieth century events warrant a tragic reading of modern history.

Tillich's advocacy for religious socialism ended in disappointment and, in America, he mostly left political theology to his colleague Reinhold Niebuhr.<sup>65</sup> He endorsed various Christian positions on nuclear deterrence, but not nuclear pacifism, main-

taining that pacifism could only be a policy chosen for and by individuals, not one that Christian churches could or should urge on non-Christians (ToP 16, 19-20, 73-4,136). His main contribution was to the articulation of principles, based on comparative critical assessments of secular expectations for our future, drawing on both the findings of modern science and the classical wisdom of the Humanities, including the history of religions.

### 3. Creative and Restorative Justice

People worldwide share a vision of global harmony, Tillich believed, because the same Word/Logos imbues common human wisdom. But it is a mistake to assume that similar versions of the Golden Rule, found in most cultures, constitute a basis for world peace. The rule glosses over ambiguities in historical existence. Good intentions are not enough. Some sense of spiritually higher demands is a necessary part of our experience. Our ideas of what is good are often flawed, reflecting alienation from self and world (LPJ 79) Effective critiques of these are conveyed by the central symbols of our traditions.<sup>66</sup> In modern Occidental culture, acknowledging every individual as a person, for instance, is a valid formal principle articulated in Kantian ethics. But it only gains content from human experience cultivated by quite different conceptions of law, tradition, conscience and public authority in the course of our history (LPJ 80).

Most important for Tillich is what is on the spiritual end of the hierarchy of being, where ought becomes is and our essential humanity defines the promise of existence. What we learn from the sciences and social sciences is viewed from the perspective of divine wisdom. As William Temple remarked, we cannot change the past, but we can change our valuation of it. Our experience of what is truly eternal may be fleeting, but that experience transforms our existential context.<sup>67</sup> Where there is greater risk of destruction there are also greater possibilities of creative development. When at an impasse, Tillich concluded, a community must break through its fixation on traditional expectations and conventional wisdom to imagine a fresh future for both friends and enemies.

Cultural breakthroughs occur in response to revelation. The final and definitive revelation in history for Tillich the theologian is of Jesus as the Christ. It entails rejection of Jewish and every other form of nationalism and cultural imperialism (SD

20-1) Jesus inaugurates new creation for all but, under present and foreseeable future conditions, only fragmentarily. God has infinite freedom. Inanimate matter has no freedom. But because human “essence” is of *finite* freedom, destined to err, we only fully realize God’s peace “supra-historically.” (e.g., ST I 165-8, 238, 255; II 6-10, 130, 135-8; III 317-321) Satanic power within history has in principle been defeated. The new creation is of “the New Being” realized in “the Christ Event” which overcomes existential estrangement from self and others, not in abstract theory but in real, morally ambiguous history.<sup>68</sup> But present experience is still ambiguous.

Preaching on Galatians 6:15—“For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation”—Tillich equated all religions, including Christianity, with “circumcision” and atheistic secularity with uncircumcision. The Christ is God’s judgment on all religion. The Cross of Christ reveals that God’s power is not coercive, but also that the condemnation of Jesus by religious and civil authorities is itself condemned in a way that forever destroys demonic nationalism and creates the possibility of ultimate forgiveness. (LPJ 113-5)

For Tillich, we recall, symbols participate in the reality symbolized. They cannot be invented. They grow out of histories and inform cultures. They fit the facts of life in such ways that, through them, we grow into new worlds of meaning, of which they are focal parts. They galvanize us into action to affirm new relationships. Such is the Cross.<sup>69</sup> Its power as a central symbol for Christianity through the centuries is its epitomizing of priorities, reminding martyrs in every age that God’s peace on earth is worth dying for. The crucial move is Jesus sacrificing his finite human expectations for God’s New Israel in Palestine and trusting that the Spirit will lead to renewal in a way that makes the divine transforming the demonic a real possibility for all (e.g. ST II 111, 123) The divine-human promise of fore-giveness in his name is the Christly response to universal estrangement. It prompts individual as well as collective penitence.

In the last chapter we noted George Lindbeck’s critique of Wilfred Smith’s and Paul Tillich’s “experiential-expressivist” hermeneutics of the biblical message as undercutting “belief-ful-realism.” However, in Tillich’s case, this misses what he valued about expressionist art.<sup>70</sup> This is relevant because for him most revelatory in the New Testament is the “portrait” of Jesus passed on by the apostles. He declared that Picasso’s *Guernica* was one of the most

Protestant paintings in the twentieth century because it drove home the horrors of war, in a culture increasingly complacent about belligerent nationalism and bombing civilian targets (OAA 95-6). Unlike documentary positivism, it exposes the “split” between what we are meant to be, in creation, and what we are, in history. Picasso’s art does not help us to imagine a new way to peace. But it opens us to respond to the “depth dimension” of divinely inspired love, willing the good of both our own people and our enemies. What is revealed on the Cross does not change the data studied in physics and physiology. After resurrection, the world looks the same. But the forgiveness pronounced enables reconciliation of the otherwise unreconciled. Expression in this dimension means self-transcendence (LPJ 54). In Buberian terms, ideal I-You encounters become real enough to justify hope that this new meaning in our lives is indestructible. It validates the courage to be.

Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr., all waged political campaigns against the vested interests of their day in such a way that they inspired others to implement their ideas and embody their values. They did not seek death, but refused to stop preaching when threatened with death. Their Spirit/spirits live on, resurrected in the movements they began in God’s name. What their pragmatic followers instituted were less than perfect programs and institutions. The move from coming Kingdom to Catholic Church or from Hindu Swaraj to the modern state of India dismays idealists. But each inaugural vision remains an inspirational benchmark for later statesmen and reformers.<sup>71</sup>

More important than documentary realism or specific answers, Tillich insisted, are the questions raised by great art (OAA 191). Dialectically, existential negatives direct critical attention to the encompassing positives on the horizon of hope. The theologian’s job includes correlating such questions with the answers implied. Living on cultural boundaries prompts us to look for creative options consistent with the quest for personal love and the demand for universal justice characteristic of God’s coming Kingdom. In political theology, religious meaning turns on the articulation of these foundational principles.

Tillich argued that world peace can only be realized, however briefly, through acts and proposals to establish creative justice, a term he used anticipating Archbishop Tutu’s notion of “restorative justice.” The term evokes reactions other than payback. Augustinian realism reckons with the cosmic perva-

siveness of sin and instinct for revenge. Its political response does not give priority to promulgating legal codes but to nurturing civic virtues.<sup>72</sup> Its challenge is to transform sinners with grace.<sup>73</sup> Tillich rejected Augustine’s interpretation of the Fall and doctrine of double predestination. But he retained a large measure of Augustinian-Lutheran realism regarding sinful social structures and the primary role of civil authorities in fostering social order. As Reinhold Niebuhr reminded their generation, Augustinian realism underlies the conception of checks and balances incorporated by modern democracies.<sup>74</sup>

What is required at all times is a creatively “theonomous” interplay of love, power, and justice appropriate to the present. The word ‘creative’ rather than ‘restorative’ points to reliance on the resurrecting divine Spirit which breathes new life into us, to the point where we become “new beings.” Creativity, as contrasted with reconstructive mechanics and social engineering, involves more than technological reasoning. In Tillich’s accounts of “theonomous” culture, the qualitatively differentiating reference to “theos” frames conceptions of “autos” and “heteros,” resolving any divisive dichotomy between autonomy and heteronomy among finite agents (ST I, 83-6, 147-150).

Few have accepted Tillich’s neologism, but his neo-Augustinian conception of how to relate finite human interactions to infinite cultural conditioning bears critical scrutiny. It construes divinely inspired and humanly enacted law and order (“nomos”) to be dynamically liberating, not dogmatically inhibiting. It affirms both valid concerns for self-sufficiency and submission to properly constituted “higher” authorities. It gives priority to the rule of international law over the sovereignty of nation-states and holds individuals responsible for situating their conceptions of self and society not just locally, but in the context of promised global community, where power is used justly for the welfare of all. “Power” means the power of being and becoming, the raw dynamics of creativity in all dimensions of life, including our sense of its possibilities. “Love” marks the motive for giving priority to what concerns each and all of us unconditionally. It prompts us to say Yes and No to Aristotelian ideas of retributive and distributive justice in a way that recognizes the rights of others, while strengthening our autonomy in a way that makes new creation thinkable.

“Justice” in post-Kantian philosophy referred to ideally universal norms governing responsible moral behaviour.<sup>75</sup> Most critics in Tillich’s time assumed

that religious regimes are authoritarian and coercive. They branded religious commandments as heteronomous.<sup>76</sup> They missed his insistence that the divine love commandment by definition cannot be forced. Love for Tillich always connotes reunion of the previously estranged. Against nationalistic myths of origins, which foster reactionary calls to “return to our roots,” the unconditional demand to love our neighbours as ourselves prompts us to work for a future unlike our past. It prompts us to seek new ways to cope with the Yes and No of our present prospects (SD 5)

Instead of apocalyptic ideologies, such as those embraced by old-time Marxists, belief-ful realism fosters expectations which take account of our limitations, while seeking realistic ways to transcend them (SD xxxvii) In North America, Tillich realized that socialism was not a live political option for the majority of Americans and that political strategies keyed to nineteenth century conceptions of class warfare were obsolete. But he still believed that principles grounded in a dynamic ontology should define the character of what he hoped would be a socialist world order as a secular expression of the Coming Kingdom.

Tillich’s mature conception of the dynamics of the Protestant Principle is given in *Love, Power and Justice*. There ‘justice’ refers to the structuring element of a political culture and ‘love’ to the drive of a nation’s self-consciousness as an historical people. Love includes cognitive as well as emotive aspects, the grace of *agape* as well as erotic desire for fulfillment. “The highest form of love and that form of it which distinguishes Eastern and Western cultures is the love which preserves the individual who is both the subject and object of love.” The individual centered self is transformed by such love. By its emphasis on loving person-to-person relationships, according to him, Christianity manifests its superiority to any other religious tradition (LPJ 27)

However, love without justice is sentimentality. Justice with love includes a demand for fairness in the distribution of material goods and retribution from wrongdoers. It treats people as capable of nourishing love and justice as personal virtues. Creative justice becomes possible, when we acknowledge the judgment of history on human failures, and look beyond our current situations for constructive alternatives, which will ennoble all concerned. (ST II, 80, 86, 166-8)

On historic occasions, the structuring element of justice, on Tillich’s analysis, combines with the dy-

namic inspiration of love to raise our aspirations as people called to live in one world. Justice directs the legal formation of political administrations. Love provides the dynamic energy to break through to new levels of personal fulfillment, individual and collective. Love and justice are the definitive principles, in his sense of ‘principles’, of the coming Kingdom of God. They are inseparable in the divine power of being, which eternally overcomes the destructive side-effects of the demonic in history (LPJ 57-62) Creative justice follows from tacit or explicit reliance on an ever-present unconditional demand to make new beginnings in spite of seemingly total human failure. It begins with mutual listening, giving by acknowledging others’ justified demands on us to equalize our powers of being-in-relationship, and forgiving, on the grounds that divine grace is not bound by human calculations of what is fair for us as God’s creatures (LPJ 66 re Job, 84-6 re giving and forgiving as declaring proleptically future right relationships.)

The challenge for comparative theologians and historians of religion today is not to uncover the hidden unity of all religions and philosophical schools, to provide a basis for communal harmony, as proponents of a “world parliament of religions” hoped in the nineteenth century.<sup>77</sup> The challenge is to educate leaders for a world viewed pluralistically, in which people from different traditions work with others, celebrating differences, including cultural differences, and learning not to use these as reasons to destroy others as “heretics.”<sup>78</sup> A virtue ethic begins with each individual and depends on education for long-term results. Tillich was convinced that no one can make good decisions unless he or she is educated to have the right priorities, as theologically defined. (See e.g. ST III, 329-339 re the structure of historical dialectics, progress and regression)

To mitigate the political destructiveness of national rivalries—whether religiously grounded, quasi-religious, or secular—Tillich advocated programs of international education which would make widespread his own experience of living “on the boundary.” He had left Germany involuntarily and become an American citizen. In retrospect, he recognized that, as a result, his outlook had become more realistically global than that of many of his German compatriots. American isolationists also needed to enlarge their vision. The image of being “on the boundary” became his root metaphor for modern living and the title of his autobiographical memoir (OB). When I reviewed it in the 1960s, I

dismissed his metaphor on the grounds that his actual history was that of a mainstream, established middle-class Protestant appointee at Harvard, whose portrait had been on the cover of *Time* magazine, hardly a marginal existence. (My review was in *Friends Journal*, 1966). However, I now recognize that the boundary metaphor caught his sense of existential dialectics, the Yes and No of his life experience on all levels and dimensions of human being in the twentieth century, youth and adult, town and country, church and society, and his call to correlate secular and religious questions and answers for each new generation.

If Tillich is right, questions and answers regarding meaning and value in history are always Yes *and* No propositions, not categorical and univocal statements, true without qualification. The language used to frame our decisions is necessarily ambiguous and correct political thinking is indeed dialectical. Theological analyses should help us critique the priorities of religious responses embodied in different ways of life, drawing on data from the history of religions. Religious wars are arguably due to non-theological factors, not the unconditional call to be true and good which inspires the best in religion. That there is common grounding for our ultimate concern is, for him, evident from the mystical strand in all traditions.<sup>79</sup> Religious awareness is of “the depth dimension” of being at all levels. The history of religions shows patterns of major differences *within* ongoing traditions, including conflicting views on how to regard others, some proselytizing, some not.<sup>80</sup>

### Interim Concluding Queries

Tillich’s emphasis on personal commitment and moral maturity is congruent with psychologist Steven Pinker’s avowedly Kantian conclusion, in *The Better Angels of our Nature*, that changing habits of mind to sharpen the sensibilities of moral agents, not perfecting ideological systems, are what have prompted modern people to be generally less violence-prone than their ancestors. However, Pinker’s data suggest that enhanced appreciation for the rule of law is what differentiates us from tribal gang cultures, which teach us to take the law into our own hands.<sup>81</sup> If so, as comparative theologians, should we not ask whether a Christian love ethic is politically inferior, not superior, to the priority given by Jews to Torah and Muslims to Shariah? If the Protestant Principle is a Euro-American variant of the prophetic principle, should we not expect the Prophet

Muhammad’s more global vision of its political enactment to prove more consonant with current experience? In politics, Muhammad’s example portrays prophets on Hebraic lines, more as theocratic judges than proleptic preachers.

Drawing and respecting boundaries has become a popular image for observing rules governing individual and international relations. However, particularly with regard to “the clash of civilizations,” existentialist and multi-cultural “liberals” have been accused of relativism in a way that undercuts the rule of law.<sup>82</sup> The priority of grace, as Calvin realized, requires corporate as well as individual embodiment. Some read pluralists’ emphases on comparable commitments across traditions as shallower than exclusivists’ insistence on the distinctiveness of their home traditions. In his late dialogues Tillich’s empathetic acknowledgments of others’ symbols was mostly inclusivist.<sup>83</sup>

As a common intellectual grounding for dialogue, Tillich’s reliance on ontology seems no more promising than Barth’s reliance on kerygmatic dogmatics. As Fred Streng pointed out, Buddhist and Taoist ontologies do not support his assumption that being is necessarily prior to non-being.<sup>84</sup> Against the Augustinian tradition, William Connolly has argued that “agonistic” pluralism is more likely to inhibit us from demonizing others. Also, hermeneutically, it is not self-evident that every Yes points to only one viable No, or vice versa. A dialogical, as contrasted with Tillich’s dialectical, reading of traditions may better enable us to appreciate the proverbial wisdom and carnival humor of popular religious usage.<sup>85</sup>

In practice, the effect of describing our ultimate concern as ineffable and its articulation as unfinalizable is to put as much emphasis on penultimate concerns informing ways of life leading to an ideal end, in histories of religion, as on descriptions of what that end is.<sup>86</sup> How any historical group describes the referent of its “ultimate concern” and whether it corresponds with our conceptions of reality may be less important than the priorities implied by their conceptions of proximate or penultimate concerns, relative to ultimate concerns, when making vital decisions in day-to-day living with strangers.<sup>87</sup> What weakened the impact of Tillich’s conceptions was his insistence on academic qualifiers on all occasions, even when the need was for inspirational slogans. Such anti-idolizing caution inhibits calls to action.<sup>88</sup> Because so many religious and political traditions have ascribed to their leaders’ pronouncements infinite/divine infallibility, not human fallibility, such

caution seems, nevertheless, the better part of historical wisdom.

Politically, for Tillich the No, as articulated by the Protestant Principle, was always more evident and generally accepted than the Yes. Denunciation of the Nazi regime, consumer capitalism and communist totalitarianism was readily relevant from many perspectives. The Yes of the “kairos,” specifically the providential time for religious socialism in Germany immediately following World War I, was less widely appreciated, both among church leaders and by secular politicians.<sup>89</sup> In Britain, the Labour Party had the support of Archbishop William Temple and formed the government, defeating Churchill after World War II. But in the U.S.A. ‘socialism’ remains a smear word avoided by liberal Democrats vulnerable to right-wing campaign rhetoric. Perhaps the results of the most recent US presidential election will help us to recover a more global perspective on the issues raised.

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Hugh Nicholson, “The Reunification of Theology and Comparison in the New Comparative Theology,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77: 3, September, 2009, 609-646.

<sup>2</sup> Published in Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, (hereafter ST) I-III, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951, 1957, 1963.

<sup>3</sup> Reading selections of these with their chaplain, while working in soup kitchens in Manhattan during the Great Depression, is what led to Mrs. Griscom and her friends to endow the Center at Harvard.

<sup>4</sup> See Jacques Dupuis, S.J. *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997, and *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*, ed. Francis X. Clooney, S.J. London & New York: T. & T. Clark/ Continuum, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> As noted in Chapter Three, as a pacifist, Smith went to India to teach, during the war years, and experienced firsthand the fratricide, among colleagues and friends, following the partition of India in 1947. Robert Slater served his curacy in a slum parish of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK, during the Great Depression. Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1966), 52, “The experience of those four years of war revealed to me and to my entire generation an abyss in human existence that could not be ignored. If a reunion of theology and philosophy is ever to be possible it will be achieved only in a synthesis that does justice to this experience...My philosophy of religion has attempted to meet this need...It attempts to ex-

press the experience of the abyss in philosophical concepts and the idea of justification as the limitation of philosophy.”

<sup>6</sup> See Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels Of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, New York: Viking, 2011, 74, citing N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process, Sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations*, rev.ed. Blackwell, Cambridge MA, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> For introductions see e.g. John R. Stumme, *Socialism In Theological Perspective: A Study of Paul Tillich 1918-1933*, Scholars Press, Missoula, Montana 1978, AAR Dissertation Series 21, and Ronald H. Stone, *Paul Tillich’s radical social thought*, Atlanta: John Knox, 1980, 39-96.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, (hereafter PE) tr. James Luther Adams, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948, 241 “The faces of the permanently unemployed which I saw in Germany in 1931 and in England in 1936—faces I shall never forget—are witnesses of the destructiveness of unemployment.”

<sup>9</sup> I owe this point to a lecture in 2011 by Margaret Macmillan on the build-up to World War I.

<sup>10</sup> See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011, 20 “For peoples seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential, are potentially most dangerous enmities occur across the fault lines between the world’s major civilizations.”

<sup>11</sup> Paul Tillich, *Theology of Peace*, (hereafter ToP) ed Ronald H. Stone, Louisville Ky: Westminster/John Knox, 1990, “The World Situation,” 111-157. Note PE 246 re youth movements as a reaction against nineteenth century individualism.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966, on Jews as surrogates for Christians.

<sup>13</sup> Eberhard Amelung, author of *Die Gestalt der Liebe: Paul Tillich’s Theologie der Kultur*, Mohn: Gütersloh, 1972, pointed this out to members of Tillich’s graduate seminar at Harvard in 1956-7.

<sup>14</sup> On anti-Semitism and Nazi political romanticism note Paul Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, (hereafter SD), tr. Franklin Sherman, Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012 earlier published by Harper & Row, 1977, 5-6, 22, 35, 38, 59, 77, 168 n.18

<sup>15</sup> See translator James Luther Adams’s Introduction to Paul Tillich, *What Is Religion?* New York: Harper & Row, 1969, 14-15. See also D. MacKenzie Brown ed., *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue*, New York: Harper & Row, 1965.

On politics, note Stumme, *Socialism in Theological Perspective*, 216 “The dialectic of religious responsibility and reservation set in the horizon of the paradoxical breaking in of the kingdom of God gives Tillich the principles of his theology of politics. The Unconditional is concretely present without being identical to any socio-political reality. Tillich’s eschatology, which articulated a Chalcedonian solution to the question of divine and human activity, provides an all-encompassing perspective for prophetic criticism and new creation.”

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter Two above re Robert Slater on “responsive theology”

<sup>17</sup> For a contemporary philosophical exposition of this approach see Richard Swinburne, *Revelation: From Metaphor to Analogy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Besides ST I, 3-4 and II, 383, re fundamentalists, note Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955, 4, “The basic error of fundamentalism is that it overlooks the contribution of the receptive side in the revelatory situation and consequently identifies *one* individual and conditioned form of receiving the divine with the divine itself.”

<sup>19</sup> Paul Tillich, “Two Types of Philosophy of Religion,” in *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball, New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, 10-29.

<sup>20</sup> Note the exchanges on this between Durwood Foster and Robison James in the *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society*, XXXVII, 1 & 2, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> See e.g. Arthur Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming—Natural, Divine, and Human*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 53-5, 157-163, 339-342, 373-4.

<sup>22</sup> See Wilhelm & Marion Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought*, (hereafter “Pauck”) San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989, 117-8 re Wertheimer, Mannheim, Kantorowicz, Horkheimer, Gelb and Goldstein.

<sup>23</sup> See also ST III Index references to *eros*. Note Alexander C. Irwin, *Eros Toward The World: Paul Tillich and the Theology of the Erotic*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991, 70 re anti-fascist youth movement. Eros =embodied love driven by attraction to “higher” possibilities of personal development

<sup>24</sup> See Tillich’s response to Robert Scharlemann in his “Rejoinder,” *Journal of Religion*, (hereafter JR Rejoinder) XLVI, January, 1966, 1-II, 184-196, 185.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice: Ontological Analysis And Ethical Applications* (hereafter LPJ), London/New York: Oxford University Press, 1954, 44.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, (hereafter CtoB) New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, 40-54.

<sup>27</sup> See e.g. PE 161-181 “The Protestant Principle and the Proletarian Situation.”

<sup>28</sup> Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl E. Braaten, New York: Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 1967, 193. Stumme 217, 258 n.19, refers to H. Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture*, New York: Harper Torchbook, 1951, suggesting that Tillich at times fits the Lutheran type of Christ and culture in paradox, but generally follows more the Augustinian type of Christ the transformer of culture.

<sup>29</sup> Note PE 222-233, “The End of the Protestant Era?” e.g. 227 re Barthianism and 230 re the ongoing power “of prophetic protest against every power which claims divine character for itself.”

<sup>30</sup> See James Luther Adams, *Paul Tillich’s Philosophy of Culture, Science and Religion*, New York: Harper & Row, 1965, on the contrast between Barth and Tillich and *The System of the Sciences*, 116—182, including 130-2 on where he followed the later Schelling against classical idealism, 138-144 on the empirical sciences and concept of Gestalt..

<sup>31</sup> The late Bishop William Coleman who taught Humanities at York University in Toronto.

<sup>32</sup> See Peter Slater, “Dynamic Religion, Formative Culture, and the Demonic in History,” *Harvard Theological Review* 92:1, January, 1999, 95-110.

<sup>33</sup> See David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine*, Harrisburg PA: Trinity Press International, 1999, revised edition of *The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975, 64-74, for a critical exposition of Tillich’s “expressionist” construal of the biblical portrait of Jesus as the Christ. Kelsey’s book demonstrates that all theologians combine Scriptural, philosophical, and experiential warrants in their systematic expositions of Christian doctrine.

<sup>34</sup> On using ‘spirit’ rather than ‘mind’, see ST II 21-2.

<sup>35</sup> Besides Lindbeck, see also Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger & William C. Placher, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992, 3-4, 64-9 (treating Tillich as “Schleiermacher redivivus”), and 71 re “ad hoc correlation.”

<sup>36</sup> We were all influenced by Paul Lehmann’s graduate seminars on Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, to which we were admitted before proceeding to Tillich’s graduate seminar in our second year. See Pauck op.cit. 226 on the debate on this between John Dillenberger and E La B. Cherbonnier.

<sup>37</sup> See John Macquarrie *God-Talk: An Examination of the Language and Logic of Theology*, New York: Harper & Row, 1967, 33-54..

<sup>38</sup> For a scientist's return to this emphasis in "epigenetics," see Bruce H. Lipton, *The Biology of Belief: Unleashing the Power of Consciousness, Matter & Miracles*, New York: Hay House, 2008, 65-91

<sup>39</sup> See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1992, 368-510.

<sup>40</sup> See Paul Tillich *The Encounter of Religions and Quasi-Religions*, ed. Terence Thomas, Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, Introduction xii-xxvii, and Pan-Chiu Lai, *Towards A Trinitarian Theology of Religions: a Study of Paul Tillich's Thought*, Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1994, 20-1, 27-9.

<sup>41</sup> On this Barth and Tillich were agreed. For Barth see e.g. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II, 2 tr.G.W. Bromiley et al., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957, 662-3. In Tillich note e.g. ToP 29-33.

<sup>42</sup> Patrick Kierans, *Sinful Social Structures*, New York: Paulist, 1974.

<sup>43</sup> For an introductory overview see G.R.Evans, *Augustine on Evil*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, and on Tillich's interpretation of original sin see Peter Slater, "Tillich on the Fall and the Temptation of Goodness," *Journal of Religion*, 65.2, April, 1985, 196-207.

<sup>44</sup> For Tillich's Lutheran resources see Kyle A. Pasewark, *A Theology of Power: Being Beyond Domination*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993.

<sup>45</sup> On Augustine's Pauline schema re law and grace see Paula Frederiksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, New York: Doubleday, 163-5.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. "You are accepted," *The Shaking of the Foundations*, 153-183.

<sup>47</sup> Pan-Chiu Lai, *Towards a Trinitarian Theology of Religions: a Study of Paul Tillich's Thought*, Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1994, and Robison James, "Tillich on 'The Absoluteness of Christianity': Reconceiving The Exclusivist-Inclusivist-Pluralist Scheme," Issues in the Thought of Paul Tillich Group, American Academy of Religion Meeting, Philadelphia, November 19, 1995.

James refers readers to Tillich's 1955 essay on "Participation and Knowledge: Problems of an Ontology of Cognition," in Paul Tillich, *Main Works/ Hauptwerke*, Carl Heinz Ratschow, general editor, vol.I, *Philosophical Writings/ Philosophische Schriften*, ed Gunther Wenz, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter-Evangelisches.

<sup>48</sup> re T's sermons see Pauck 227-232, and the Preface to Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948, v-vi. See also Tillich's critique of Barthian preaching in "What Is Wrong

With The 'Dialectic' Theology?" in Mark Kline Taylor ed., *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries*, San Francisco: Collins Liturgical, 1987, 104-118, 114, reprinted from *The Journal of Religion*, XV, 1935, 127-45.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, New York: Harper Torchbook, 1957, 5-6 re Freud.

<sup>50</sup> Re capitalism see e.g. Paul Tillich, *Political Expectation*, (hereafter PE) New York: Harper & Row, 1971 240-1, and SD 42-4, 52-6.

<sup>51</sup> So Raymond F. Bulman, "Tillich's Critique of Political Theology," 355, in *Religion et Culture: Colloque du Centenaire Paul Tillich*, ed. Michel Despland, Jean-Claude Petit et Jean Richard, Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval/Les Éditions du Cerf, 1987, 353-366.

<sup>52</sup> See e.g. PE Introduction, xvii-xix autobiographical note re Calvin, Luther and the interpretation of history.

<sup>53</sup> For Tillich's last thoughts in response to Clark A. Kuchemin's critical appraisal of the appeal to Marxist dialectics, see JR Rejoinder 184-196, especially 189-191. On the significance of Kant's third critique for Tillich see Adina Davidovich, *Religion as a Province of Meaning: The Kantian Foundations of Modern Theology*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 84-99, 221-68, 277-8.

<sup>54</sup> *Against The Third Reich: Paul Tillich's Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany*, (hereafter ATR) ed. Ronald H. Stone and Matthew Lon Weaver, Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox, 1998, 241-4, "The Ancient and Eternal Message of Easter," April 4, 1944, tr. Lon Weaver.

<sup>55</sup> See John W. deGruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 2nd ed, London: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986, 195-237. Also Ronald Stone, "Tillich's Kairos and its Trajectory," NAPS Bulletin XXXVII, 3, Summer 2011, 4-10.

<sup>56</sup> On "the vernacular paradigm" in Christianity see Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1-6.

<sup>57</sup> Also Paul Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, (hereafter RS) tr. H. Richard Niebuhr, Cleveland & New York: Living Age Meridian, 1956, 11-13.

<sup>58</sup> Walter Leibrecht ed., *Religion and Culture: Essays in honor of Paul Tillich*, (hereafter Leibrecht) New York: Harper & Row, Introduction, 11-13.

<sup>59</sup> See Paul Tillich, *Against The Third Reich: Paul Tillich's Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany*, (hereafter ATR) ed. Ronald H. Stone & Matthew Lon Weaver, Louisville Ky: Westminster John Knox, 1998, 184-7, 203-7, 210, 225-8, 242-8. Note Pauck 205 re T's appeal to Roosevelt .

<sup>60</sup> See Tom J. Farer, "The U.N. and Human Rights: More than a Whimper, Less than a Roar," in *United Na-*

tions, *Divided World: The UN's Roles in International Relations*, ed. Adam Roberts & Benedict Kingsbury, Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, 95-138. Check also Kathryn Sikkink, *The Justice Cascade*, NY: Norton, 2011.

<sup>61</sup> See ToP 135-8 re recovering democratic institutions, 138, "Christianity must stress the necessity of a common spirit within each federation of nations."

<sup>62</sup> See Clark A. Kuchemin, *Journal of Religion*, "Professor Tillich: Justice and the Economic Order," *Journal of Religion*, XLVI, January, 1966, 1: II, 165-183.

<sup>63</sup> Paul Tillich, *On Art and Architecture* (hereafter OAA) ed. John & Jane Dillenberger, New York: Crossroad, 1987, 169 mentions Godot.

<sup>64</sup> See note 42 re Tillich on the Fall.

<sup>65</sup> On Tillich and Niebuhr see Pauck, 169-170, 178-9

<sup>66</sup> On central and auxiliary symbols see Peter Slater, *The Dynamics of Religion: Meaning and Change in Religious Traditions*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978, 15-46.

<sup>67</sup> William Temple, *Nature, Man, and God*, London: Macmillan, 209.

<sup>68</sup> *The New Being*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955, 20.

<sup>69</sup> See Robert Scharlemann, "Demons, Idols, and the Symbol of Symbols in Tillich's Theology of Politics," in *Religion et Culture*, ed Despland, Pettit & Richard.

<sup>70</sup> See David Nikkel, "Updating Tillich on Religion and Art," NAPTS Bulletin, XXXVII, 3, Summer, 2011, 10-16.

<sup>71</sup> Gandhi's thinking was informed by C.F. Andrews' exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. On their collaboration see *Gandhi and Charlie: The Story of a Friendship*, ed. David McI. Gracie, Cambridge MA: Cowley, 1989, 75 (appealing also to the Buddha on non-injury), 159.

<sup>72</sup> Augustine enlisted state power against the Donatists reluctantly, when persuasion failed to avert their armed attacks on Catholics. See Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, Norwich: Canterbury, 1963, 237-311, 242 "In some matters, the Donatists employed techniques worthy of a later age, as when they took to throwing acid mixed with quicklime into the eyes of their victims..." 264-5 on the need for military protection.

<sup>73</sup> On Augustinian virtue ethics see Eric Gregory, *Politics & the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, 37, 114, 194-5 re Tillich & Martin Luther King Jr. Gregory, 20, "From an Augustinian point of view, love and sin in fact constrain each other." See also his note 103, p 193, re M.L. King Jr and citing Desmond Tutu, *The Rainbow People of God*, NY: Doubleday, 1994,

117 invoking *ubuntu* as God's call "to be available for others, and to know that you are bound up with them in the bundle of life, for a person is only a person through other persons."

<sup>74</sup> See Eric Gregory, on Niebuhr, 11-13, 80-94.

<sup>75</sup> For a critique of the modern colonial fallout from Kant's conception of disembodied reasoning see J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, 5, 79-121.

<sup>76</sup> E.g. Daphne Hampson, author of *Christian Contradictions: The Structures of Lutheran and Catholic Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, when at Harvard.

<sup>77</sup> An influential voice at Harvard on these topics when the Center was founded was that of William Ernest Hocking, author of *Living Religions and a World Faith*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1940.

<sup>78</sup> See William E. Connolly, *The Augustinian Imperative: A Reflection on the Politics of Morality*,

Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993, xxviii, 13, 78-84, 144. 34-9 Connolly reads Augustine's as a command ethic (see note re Gregory and virtue ethics).

<sup>79</sup> ST I, 43, 140-1, III, 215-6.; *On the Boundary* 15-19; and Pauck 96-8; re Otto and T's nature mysticism.

<sup>80</sup> Note e.g. Kenneth Cragg's reflections on the history of Christian attempts to evangelize the world in A.K. Cragg, *The Christian And Other Religion*, London: Mowbrays, 1977, 8-10; Bosch 487-8; and George R. Sumner, *The First & The Last: The Claim of Jesus Christ and the Claims of Other Religious Traditions*, Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2004, 4-11 on pluralism and Christian particularism.

<sup>81</sup> Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels Of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, 660. On religion Pinker does not take account of Gordon Allport or Robert Fowler. Pinker 106-116 notes an upsurge in "decivilizational" violence in the USA, from the 1960s to 1980, when "Spontaneity, self-expression, and a defiance of inhibitions became cardinal virtues" for the do-your-own-thing existentialists' generation of "rolling stones."

<sup>82</sup> Note Huntington 195-6 re human rights, and universality vs. cultural relativism.

<sup>83</sup> According to Rob James, for Tillich there are senses in which Christians should be pluralists, inclusivists and exclusivists, all three, without being inconsistent, according to the levels of experience to which they are appealing in dialogue with others. See Robison James, "Tillich on 'The Absoluteness of Christianity': Reconciling The Exclusivist-Inclusivist-Pluralist Scheme," *Issues in the Thought of Paul Tillich Group*, American Academy of Religion Meeting, Philadelphia, November

19, 1995. James refers readers to Tillich's 1955 essay on "Participation and Knowledge: Problems of an Ontology of Cognition," in Paul Tillich, *Main Works/ Hauptwerke*, Carl Heinz Ratschow, general editor, vol. I, *Philosophical Writings/ Philosophische Schriften*, ed. Gunther Wenz, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter-Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmbH, 1989, 382-9, and, for a German translation, Paul Tillich, *Gesammelte Werke IV*, ed. Renate Albrecht, Stuttgart: Evangelische Verlagswerk, 1961, 107-17.

<sup>84</sup> Frederick J. Streng, "Three Religious Ontological Claims: 'Being-Itself,' and 'Nothingness Within Somethingness,' and 'The Field of Emptiness,'" in *Traditions in Contact and Change: Selected Proceedings of the XIVth IAHR Congress*, ed. Peter Slater & Donald Wiebe, Waterloo ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 249-266.

<sup>85</sup> For elaboration see Peter Slater, "Contesting confessions: Connolly's Augustinian Imperative and Bak-

htin's dialogical imperative," *Theology Today*, 68.3, October, 2011, 272-289.

<sup>86</sup> On the difference here between apprehending and comprehending, mystery and problem, note David H. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009, Vol. 1, 76-9 citing M. B. Foster.

<sup>87</sup> On justification and penultimate concerns note Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. E. Bethge, tr. Neville Horton Smith, New York: Macmillan, 1955, 79-100, cited by deGruchy op.cit.

<sup>88</sup> Note Walter Liebrecht's observations in his Introduction to *Religion and Culture: Essays in honor of Paul Tillich*, New York: Harper, 1965, 15-19

<sup>89</sup> Note Ronald H. Stone, *Paul Tillich's Radical Social Thought*, Atlanta: John Knox, 1980, 44-51, 88-9, 113 deGruchy re S. Africa.

### PAUL TILlich AND PAUL RICEUR ON THE MEANING OF "PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY" INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL SONN

This paper examines the historical and constructive issues underlying Paul Tillich and Paul Ricœur's muted response to each other's works and critically explores the space for possible productive conversation between them.<sup>1</sup> The conspicuous silence between the two great thinkers is vexing because, as it is well known, Ricœur succeeded Tillich's chair as John Nuveen professor in philosophical theology at Chicago.<sup>2</sup> And beyond their common institutional affiliation and position, they also shared common interlocutors and intellectual trajectories. Both drank deeply from the well of modern German thought, indebted especially to the philosophies of Kant, Jaspers, and Heidegger, as well as the theologies of Kierkegaard, Barth, and Bultmann. Furthermore, they also seemed to understand the nature and meaning of philosophical theology in strikingly similar ways: philosophy's role in elucidating human existence, theology's task in interpreting the meaning of existence, the necessity to interpret the symbols of the Christian message in the contemporary situation, the creative re-interpretation of that tradition—all these themes are shared by Tillich and Ricœur. Yet, despite their common institutional associations and intellectual affinities, they remained largely silently on each other's works. This paper

explores their muted response to each other's thought, and to that end, it has three sections: first, there is a historical section that examines the few instances where Ricœur addresses Tillich's works (Tillich, to my knowledge, never mentions Ricœur); second, there is a constructive section where I suggest that the reason they never publicly engaged each other is due to a fundamental disagreement over the very meaning of the nature and task of philosophical theology; and third, there is a critical section that re-assesses their positions and puts them into productive conversation with each other.

#### I. Historical Section

When Tillich assumed the chair of Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in 1940, he stated in his inaugural address, "Philosophical theology is the unusual name of the chair I represent. It is a name that suits me better than any other, since the boundary line between philosophy and theology is the center of my thought and work."<sup>3</sup> Having earned doctorates in philosophy at Breslau and theology at Halle, and having already taught philosophy at Frankfurt and theology at Berlin and Leipzig, it was perhaps altogether appropriate that his new position in America was at the boundary of the two disciplines, devoted to philosophical theology.<sup>4</sup> For Ricœur, too, his academic positions throughout his career are suggestive of his own views on the relationship between philosophy and theology. He first taught philosophy at Stras-

bourg, which was the only university at the time in France to have a Faculty in Protestant theology, and, when he moved to the Sorbonne, he simultaneously taught at l'Institut protestant de théologie. And when he succeeded Paul Tillich's chair as John Nuveen Professor at Chicago in philosophical theology, he found the title strange as it contradicted his own view of the separation between philosophy and theology. "My own teaching was," he states, "bizarrely entitled 'Philosophical Theology'; that was the name of Tillich's chair. What I say elsewhere about the way in which I conceive of the relations between philosophy and theology indeed contradicts the title of the chair. But no one attached any constraints to this title, which I found upon arriving at Chicago."<sup>5</sup>

From these brief remarks, it is clear that Tillich and Ricœur had seemingly profound differences regarding the nature and task of "philosophical theology," but whatever disagreements they may have had, they were rarely made public. To my knowledge, Tillich never once cited Ricœur's works, although he was certainly aware of his younger French contemporary because he had hosted him when he visited Chicago,<sup>6</sup> and he sent him a signed copy of his third volume of *Systematic Theology*.<sup>7</sup> There is no doubt that Ricœur had read Tillich, given his many personal copies of his writings, and he even directed a dissertation on his thought, which was later published and for which he wrote a laudatory preface.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, he had agreed to write a postface in 1969 to the French translation of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, but due to the untimely passing of the editor, it did not come to pass.<sup>9</sup> Despite his familiarity with Tillich's works, however, Ricœur's personal copies of his writings do not possess the copious and heavily annotated notes that other works within his canon enjoyed, such as Augustine's *Confessions*, Barth's *Dogmatics*, or Ebeling's *Word and Faith*. And Ricœur never wrote an extensive commentary or article on Tillich's thought, citing him only twice; once very briefly in an extended essay entitled "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" (1977),<sup>10</sup> and another time in a footnote to one of his lectures on biblical hermeneutics for his Gifford Lectures delivered in 1986.<sup>11</sup> In both instances, Ricœur delineated between a position that espouses theology as a response to a question raised by philosophy and a view with which he aligns himself that understands theology as a response to a call. From these tantalizing, but brief and undeveloped, notes, the next section aims to construct and elaborate on their fundamental differ-

ences regarding the relationship between philosophy and theology and their contested views over the very meaning of "philosophical theology."

## II. Constructive Section: Paul Tillich

There is already much written on Tillich's understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology, and I will not be attempting here either a particularly novel interpretation of that relation or setting forth a comprehensive understanding of it. Rather, given the constraints of this paper, I aim to funnel certain themes in a schematic way that will put into relief the differences he had with Ricœur. When I use the term "philosophical theology" here, I refer to Tillich's later mature works. This is for two reasons. Firstly, even as Tillich scholars have rightly traced the origins and development of his understanding of philosophy and theology back to his dissertations on Schelling,<sup>12</sup> it is his later works, particularly as it was formulated in his *Systematic Theology*, that have become most influential for theology. This also means that I do not attempt to speculate on how Tillich might have reworked his theological method in light of his later encounters with the history of religions through his seminars with Mircea Eliade.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, and more germane to the purpose of this paper, when Ricœur speaks of Tillich's philosophical theology as a response to a question, it is a clear signal that he is referring to his later formulation of the method of correlation rather than his early articulations in *The System of the Sciences*, for instance.<sup>14</sup> Still, insofar as Tillich was articulating his systematic theology for a quarter of a century prior to its actual publication—a point he makes in the preface to volume 1 of *Systematic Theology*—<sup>15</sup> I will draw on relevant articles in those earlier years that support his later claims.

To understand what philosophical theology means, it is helpful to discuss first what it is not. Firstly, philosophical theology implies a theology with a philosophical character, which, in turn, implies a theology without philosophical character. From this, he distinguishes between two types of theology: philosophical theology and kerygmatic theology. Although both forms are based on the kerygma, the former explains the kerygma in close relation with philosophy, while the latter makes no explicit reference to it. Karl Barth, who Tillich frequently names to be representative of kerygmatic theology, at least acknowledged that he could not avoid philosophical concepts, language, and meth-

ods completely, and so it is to Barth's 'radical pupils' who are ostensibly the targets of Tillich's criticism here.<sup>16</sup>

Philosophical theology also implies a philosophy with a theological character, which, in turn, implies a philosophy without a theological character. Philosophy without theology, on Tillich's view, leads to either a logical positivism that does not deal with any problems that concern us or a mere epistemology or history of philosophy enumerating one opinion after another without existential basis. Thus, Tillich's account of philosophical theology rejects the extremes of what he calls theological supernaturalism, which denounces the import of philosophy, as well as philosophies that believe it to be improper to mix with theology.

So, what does Tillich *positively* mean by 'philosophical theology'? One way to address this question is to ask what does Tillich mean by the term 'philosophy' and what is theological about philosophy, and to ask, conversely, what he means by the term 'theology' and what is philosophical about theology. Regarding the former, Tillich grants that there is no generally accepted definition of philosophy;<sup>17</sup> it can be construed, for instance, as metaphysics, as epistemology, as ethics, or as a regional science. He works around this thorny issue by suggesting a definition of philosophy that offers the widest possible meaning, for whatever the object of philosophy, it is always something that is. Thus, philosophy, in his words, is "*that cognitive approach to reality in which reality as such is the object.*"<sup>18</sup> In short, Tillich associates philosophy with 'metaphysics', by which he means the rational inquiry into the structures of being as they appear in the human encounter with reality. He is quick to disassociate this understanding of metaphysics from common misperceptions of it that suppose a reality beyond the physical realm. Indeed, because of this, Tillich prefers to associate philosophy with ontology or what he elsewhere calls the 'original meaning of metaphysics'.<sup>19</sup> To understand philosophy in these terms, however, makes the division between philosophy and theology impossible because as Tillich states, "whatever the relation of God, world, and man may be, it lies in the frame of being."<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, insofar as metaphysics is directed towards the structures of being, the philosopher tries to maintain a detached objectivity that does not ask the question of its own existential roots. But insofar as every human being and thus every philosophy has existential interests and passions, it implies that philosophy, whether it is ac-

knowledged or denied, whether it is implicit or explicit, has ultimate concern in its background.<sup>21</sup>

If the meaning of philosophy is ontology or metaphysics in the original sense, and it is theological insofar as the question it raises implies being-itself with the existential attitude of passion from ultimate concern, now we can turn to the meaning of theology and how theology is philosophical. If God is the object of theology, Tillich insists that we cannot talk about God as given directly—otherwise God would simply appear as an object beside other objects—but rather only in an indirect sense through religious symbols. In and through its symbols, the religious encounter with reality opens up the dimension of reality in which ultimacy appears. Theology then is "the conceptual interpretation, explanation, and criticism of the symbols in which a special encounter between God and man has found expression."<sup>22</sup> The objective and subjective side of faith are interrelated; on the object-side, faith occurs always already within given religious symbols against the horizon of history and tradition, and on the subject-side, religious symbols must be interpreted in a way that adequately answers and expresses the 'existential situation.' Thus, as philosophy implies and is driven towards theology, so too, theology implies philosophy. For in order to interpret religious symbols, "theology must use concepts which are either taken directly from a metaphysical system or which have already entered the general language without normally reminding of their philosophical origin."<sup>23</sup> Theology presupposes a structure of expression that draws on the conceptual tools of its period such that it cannot escape the problem of the 'situation'.<sup>24</sup>

Tillich's understanding of philosophical theology, then, rejects a strict conflictual view that falls into either a theological supernaturalism or a philosophical positivism. Insofar as theology cannot respond without a philosophical analysis of the human situation, theology is dependent on and requires philosophy. On the other hand, philosophy is dependent on theology because its task in pursuing the structure of being discovers a question that philosophy cannot answer. This mutual interdependence between philosophy and theology, then, accounts for why Tillich found the unusual name of his chair in 'philosophical theology' best suited for his thought and work.

### Paul Ricœur

With an understanding of Tillich's philosophical theology in hand, we can now contrast it to Ricœur's

understanding. Ricœur expressed a discomfort with the term ‘philosophical theology’ and rarely mentions it in his works. Indeed, it is often noted by Ricœur scholars that he separated his philosophical writings from theological claims throughout his career. Perhaps nowhere is this dual program more explicitly enunciated than in *Oneself as Another* (1990), which, in his words, pursues an ‘autonomous philosophical discourse’.<sup>25</sup> It is well-known that the original Gifford Lectures delivered in 1985-86 included two studies on biblical hermeneutics<sup>26</sup> so as to remain faithful to the founder’s will for the lectures to be on ‘natural theology’. They, however, were removed from *Oneself as Another* to remain faithful to the separation of philosophy and theology that Ricœur had maintained throughout his life. He writes in *Oneself as Another*,

The ten studies that make up this work assume the bracketing, conscious and resolute, of the convictions that bind me to biblical faith...I think I have presented to my readers arguments alone, which do not assume any commitment from the reader to reject, accept, or suspend anything with regard to biblical faith. It will be observed that this asceticism of the argument, which marks, I believe, all my philosophical work, leads to a type of philosophy from which the actual mention of God is absent and in which the question of God, as a philosophical question, itself remains in a suspension that could be called agnostic.<sup>27</sup>

On the one hand, his philosophical writings are guarded from a crypto-theology such that philosophy retains its own autonomous validity claims, but, equally important, biblical faith is guarded from a crypto-philosophy. Ricœur puts this separation between philosophy and theology most succinctly when he was asked by an interviewer, “Would you accept being introduced as a ‘Protestant philosopher’?” to which Ricœur responds, “Certainly not. But ‘philosopher and Protestant’, yes!”<sup>28</sup>

Such a strict separation between philosophy and theology may suggest within a Tillichian analysis that Ricœur’s thought leads to either a philosophy of logical positivism that does not deal with any problems that concern us or an epistemology or history of philosophy enumerating one opinion after another without existential basis. But readers of Ricœur will quickly point out that even as he enjoyed a broad engagement with the history of philosophy, that he was always concerned with using the resources of that tradition in the service of concrete thinking about human existence. Alternatively, one may con-

strue Ricœur’s thought as a form of theological supra-naturalism, which denounces the import of philosophy. It can be argued - as indeed many have - that the impulse to separate philosophy and theology is grounded in Ricœur’s Reformed tradition and the critical retrieval of Barthian theology in particular. Thus when Ricœur distinguishes his own position that understands theology as a response to a divine call from a Tillichian approach to theology as a response to a human question raised by philosophy, he seems to slide closer to the kerygmatic theology of Barth and away from Tillich.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, Ricœur stands with Barth in rejecting liberal theology, which argued for the appropriateness of Christianity to the modern age by seeking a rapprochement with wider culture by employing modern methods in historical studies, philosophy, and biblical criticism. If liberal theology built up and built in presuppositions of historical understanding and research that could serve as a basis for theology as a universal science, Ricœur, in agreement with Barth, argued for the priority of ‘listening to the Word of God’.<sup>30</sup> Ricœur writes, “If the believer speaks of God, it is because he speaks first of the Word of God.”<sup>31</sup> And again, “I am in accord with the way in which Karl Barth poses the theological problem. The origin of faith lies in the solicitation of man by the object of faith.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, the central task of theology is not an answer to the anthropological or epistemological question, ‘How is human knowledge of revelation possible in general?’ or even to the existential question of being-itself, but rather it is listening to the Word of God spoken to this or that person. For both Barth and Ricœur, moreover, the Word of God is mediated by the ‘world of the biblical text’ - the written Word of God. As Mark Wallace, the first scholar to observe Ricœur’s close affinity to Barth, stated, “For both thinkers, the world of the text is primarily not the Bible’s *Sitz im Leben* uncovered by historical criticism, but its *Sitz im Wort* that confronts the listener as the reliable Word of God.”<sup>33</sup> Their common concern was that extra-biblical material—Platonism, Aristotelianism, historicism, existentialism, phenomenology, general hermeneutics—would be inserted into the biblical world and become the basic framework for interpretation. Rather, both Ricœur and Barth sought to let the text speak for itself without external impositions and presuppositions.

When Ricœur distinguishes his own position that understands theology as a response to a divine call from a Tillichian approach for theology as a re-

sponse to a human question raised by philosophy, or to put this differently, the conception of theology as a listening as opposed to an answering, it is perhaps due to their seemingly stark disagreement over the very nature and meaning of philosophical theology that they rarely engaged each other's works in public. But I suggest that by critically engaging their works, there are important points of contact between these two thinkers that bring their respective understandings of philosophical theology much closer together.

### III. Critical Section

To understand their approaches *simply* as a response to a human question (Tillich) or as a response to a divine call (Ricoeur) reduces their thought to one or another aspect of what is a more complex and larger picture. Tillich's method, for instance, clearly does not impose a human limitation on God's transcendence. If humans are necessarily philosophical and thus necessarily ask the meaning of existence that implies being-itself, Tillich nonetheless rejects natural religion and its circumscription and reduction of religion to human nature.<sup>34</sup> Here, he agrees with the Barthian critique that there is no human experience or knowledge of God without the revelation of God. True religion is not assimilable into or bound within human spirit, history, and culture, but is rather grounded in the Unconditioned itself. And so Tillich's philosophical theology is not simply a response to a human question, but also it is a response to a divine call. By emphasizing the aspect of Tillich's thought that insists on the priority of divine freedom and transcendence and human limitation, it brings it closer to Ricoeur's position.

Similarly, Ricoeur's philosophical theology—if that is the right term—is not simply a response to a divine call, but touches and contacts human existence. Even as he is indebted to Barth, Ricoeur can be seen to belong to the second-generation of French thinkers who sought to enlarge the role of philosophy with respect to Christian faith. Ricoeur notes, for instance, in an extended review of Roger Mehl's *La condition du philosophe chrétien* (1947), that it was “the first great book in French where the new Reformed theology confronts the vocation of philosophy and that the main interest of this book resides in that it attempts to move beyond the phase of crisis and rupture that was of the first generation of Barthians and towards a positive attitude regarding philosophy and culture precisely from a radically

Christocentric theology.”<sup>35</sup> According to this second generation of Barthians, which Ricoeur himself seems to endorse, their vision of the task of theology is much more sympathetic to the aims and insights of philosophy.

On the other hand, from Ricoeur's early student days, he demonstrated an expanded understanding of philosophy beyond logical positivism and history of philosophy so as to involve concrete human existence in relation to God. In his intellectual autobiography, he notes that he wrote his master's thesis, entitled *Problem of God in Lachelier and Lagneau*, because: “I found it intellectually satisfying that thinkers so taken with rationality and so concerned with the autonomy of philosophical thinking had granted a place for the idea of God.”<sup>36</sup> His first major scholarly works, which dealt with the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel and Karl Jaspers, engaged thinkers that dealt with the ‘mystery’ and ‘paradox’ of human existence and the place for philosophy *and* myth. He was clearly animated by questions regarding the relationship between philosophy and Christian faith, evident in his extended review of Mehl's work. And even as Ricoeur frequently claimed the separation between philosophy and theology for much of his career, late in his life, he sought to bring them closer together. At a conference held in his honor at Chicago, for instance, he states: “Several speakers here have underlined my insistence on not mixing discourses. But now I feel freer to be attentive to the correlations and even to the unwrapping of the different fields of theology and philosophy.”<sup>37</sup> And again, in another context, he claims, “I maintained the autonomy of philosophical reflection, attaching myself to what remains in the anthropological domain: What is human action? What is a person?...On the other hand, I rooted myself in a tradition which refers itself to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures that are deployed in narratives, confessions of faith, ritual practices, etc. I *always* found myself at the intersection points of these / two domains” [emphasis added].<sup>38</sup> If a retrospective approach to Ricoeur's works allows for the constructive interaction between philosophy and theology, a prospective approach through the lens of a Mehlian Barthianism permits it on historical and textual grounds. What emerges, then, is an expanded view of philosophy rooted in existence and driven to theology and a theology that not only draws from but also significantly intersects with philosophy. For throughout the arc of his career, from existentialism and phenomenology through hermeneutics to ethics

and politics, there is a parallel and overlapping move made in his theology with respect to both methods and concepts.

## Conclusion

This paper suggested that the reason for Tillich and Ricœur's noticeable silence on each other's work was due to a fundamental difference over the very meaning of philosophical theology. Through a critical comparison of Tillich and Ricœur's thought, however, I have tried to bring them closer together: an expanded understanding of philosophy that takes seriously human existence and its implicit relation to being-itself or God, a critique of natural religion that attempts to circumscribes it within the realm of the human, and an understanding of theology as both a listening and an answer that draws from and contacts with philosophy. Thus, this paper not only offers an historical account of two discrete, but related understandings of 'philosophical theology' at Chicago in the 1960s through the 1990s, but also two distinct, but related approaches to its constructive task more generally.

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<sup>1</sup> For scholars who constructively relate Tillich's theology of culture with Ricœur's hermeneutics, see, for instance, David E. Klemm, "Individuality: The Principle of Ricœur's Mediating Philosophy and its Bearing on Theology of Culture," in *Meaning in Texts and Actions: Questioning Paul Ricœur*, ed. David E. Klemm and William Schweiker (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 275-291; William Schweiker, "Hermeneutics, Ethics, and the Theology of Culture," in *Meaning in Texts and Actions: Questioning Paul Ricœur*, ed. David E. Klemm and William Schweiker (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 292-313.

<sup>2</sup> The John Nuveen chair was a gift by John Nuveen Jr. in memory of his father John Nuveen Sr., who was an investment banker specializing in municipal bonds and who was extraordinarily involved in the Baptist community. Nuveen Jr. himself lived a fascinating and rich life, who had the ear of figures as disparate as Eisenhower and Stevenson, and who served on the board of trustees at Chicago and economic and political committees in Washington. According to his biographer and former Dean of the Divinity School (and former assistant to Tillich at Union Theological Seminary), Jerald Brauer, John Nu-

veen was pleased with the appointment of Tillich as the first John Nuveen Professor because "in him, Nuveen recognized a brilliant, creative mind totally dedicated to understanding and articulating the deepest insights of the Christian faith so that it addressed modern humans exactly where they lived." See Jerald C. Brauer, *John Nuveen: A Life of Service* (Chicago: Baptist Theological Union, 1997), 3. Nuveen passed away in 1968, just before Ricœur's appointment, so it is impossible to know for certain what his impressions of the French thinker would have been.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Tillich, "Philosophy and Theology," in *The Protestant Era*, ed. and trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 83. Originally published in *Religion in Life* 10, n.1 (1941).

<sup>4</sup> Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 57-58.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 49.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>7</sup> At the Fonds Ricœur in Paris, one can find his personal copy of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, volume 3, signed by Tillich and dated to November 3, 1964.

<sup>8</sup> Jocelyn Dunphy, *Paul Tillich et le symbole religieux*, preface by Paul Ricœur (Paris: Jean-Pierre Delarge, 1977), 11-14.

<sup>9</sup> Thanks to Olivier Abel for this note.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," in *Essays in Biblical Interpretation*, edited by Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 96-97. Originally published in *Harvard Theological Review* 70, n.1-2 (1977).

<sup>11</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Le soi dans le miroir des Écritures," in *Amour et justice* (Paris: Éditions Point, 2008), 46.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, Tillich writes, "It sometimes strikes me, when I read some of my earliest writings, how much of what I believed to be a recent achievement is already explicitly or at least implicitly contained in them." Paul Tillich, "Author's Introduction," in *The Protestant Era*, ed. and trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), x-xi. See also, Paul Tillich, *My Search for Absolutes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 36.

<sup>13</sup> In an address delivered at the Tillich Memorial Service of the Divinity School held in Rockefeller Memorial Chapel at the University of Chicago, Eliade relates that in his seminars with Tillich on the history of religions, "What he was accomplishing in our unforgettable evenings was a *renewal of his own Systematic Theology*."

Mircea Eliade, "Paul Tillich and the History of Religions," in *The Future of Religions*, ed. Jerald C. Brauer (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), 33. The last public lecture that Tillich gave, entitled "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," concluded a conference on the history of religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School on October 12, 1965. See Paul Tillich, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," in *The Future of Religions*, 80-94. For his writings that reflect on his experience in Japan, see Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963). For his lectures leading up to and following shortly after his visit, see Paul Tillich, *The Encounter of Religions and Quasi-Religions* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> In *The System of the Sciences*, philosophy is understood as a doctrine of the principle of meaning.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), vii.

<sup>16</sup> Tillich, "Philosophy and Theology," 84.

<sup>17</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 18.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 20, 163.

<sup>20</sup> Tillich, "Philosophy and Theology," 86.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Tillich, "Relation of Metaphysics and Theology," *The Review of Metaphysics: A Philosophical Quarterly* 10, n.1 (September 1956): 59.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Tillich, "Theology and Symbolism," in *Religious Symbolism*, ed. F. Ernest Johnson (New York: The Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1955), 108.

<sup>23</sup> Tillich, "Relation of Metaphysics and Theology," 61.

<sup>24</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 24.

<sup>26</sup> Both lectures can be found in Ricœur, *Amour et justice*.

<sup>27</sup> Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 24.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Paul Ricœur: la foi du philosophe," *Le Christianisme au XXème Siècle* n.697 (July 11-24, 1999), p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Ricœur, "Le soi dans le miroir des Écritures," in *Amour et justice*, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Le philosophe en face de la confession des péchés," *La Confiance* n.1-2 (1957): 25. See also Paul Ricœur, "La question de l'humanisme chrétien," *Foi et vie* n.4 (July 1951): 326. Importantly, Barth begins his *Church Dogmatics* with a section entitled, "The Doctrine of the Word of God."

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 25. See also Ricœur, "La question de l'humanisme chrétien," 326.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 523.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Wallace, "The World of the Text: Theological Hermeneutics in the Thought of Karl Barth and Paul Ricœur," *Union Seminary Quarterly* 41, n.1 (1986): 7.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Tillich, "Natural and Revealed Religion," *Christendom* 1 (Autumn 1935): 159.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Ricœur, "La condition du philosophe chrétien," in *Lectures 3. Aux frontières de la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994), 235.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Intellectual Autobiography," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 6.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Ethics and Human Capability: A Response," in *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, ed. John Wall, William Schweiker, and W. David Hall (New York: Routledge, 2002), 283. See also Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 159.

<sup>38</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Paul Ricœur. Nous sommes responsable du périssable," *L'actualité religieuse dans le monde* n.91 (July-August 1991): 44.

*If you have not paid your dues for 2013, please do so as soon as you are able.*

*Thank you!*

## TILlich AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY: ADEQUACY OF ACCOUNTS OF FAITH

COURTNEY WILDER

### I. Introduction of the Problem

What is faith? Who can be faithful? What is at stake in the relationship between those questions? Accounts of Christian faith vary widely within the tradition. As Paul Tillich argues in the first pages of *Dynamics of Faith*, the very term *faith* "...confuses, misleads, creates alternately skepticism and fanaticism, intellectual resistance and emotional surrender, rejection of genuine religion and subjection to substitutes."<sup>1</sup> Despite this state of general confusion, Christian faith accounts do have some structural as well as doctrinal commonalities. An important and problematic shared expectation, but one Tillich does not explicitly reflect upon, is the presumption that the faithful Christian is a person of ordinary cognitive capability who can function as a moral and religious agent and who can assent to the truth of teaching about Jesus. Tillich cares about a somewhat different set of misconstruals; of primary concern to Tillich in *Dynamics of Faith* are three distortions specific of faith: the intellectualistic distortion, which confuses faith with knowledge, the voluntaristic distortion, which claims that faith can be an act of will, and the emotionalistic distortion of faith, which frames faith as "mere feeling."<sup>2</sup> The first and third of these concerns are most relevant to this discussion.

Although Tillich does not speak directly to issues of intellectual disability, his analysis of faith is useful in assessing and addressing emerging ecclesial and spiritual problems of Christians with intellectual disabilities. So the first problem is: to what extent are people with intellectual disabilities neglected by the Christian tradition, and how can Tillich's analysis of faith help us assess this? The second problem is whether and to what extent Tillich's work offers the basis for a constructive account of faith of people with intellectual disabilities. The interrogation here is bidirectional: I am using Tillich to investigate the broader tradition on this question, and then turning to Tillich's own account of faith to determine its adequacy for a specific population of Christians.

My interest in this question of faith and intellectual disability is both practical and theoretical. Recently I taught a course in disability theology. I asked a woman named Sherri who is a member of

my community to come and speak to my class. Our kids know each other from the babysitter's house; I first held Sherri's younger daughter when she was a few months old. Sherri is an alumna of the institution where I teach, her father-in-law is one of my colleagues, she has participated in adult education sessions I have taught at her church, and I thought that she might offer useful insight to my students. Her young daughter, Macy, has Down Syndrome, and Sherri is deeply involved in support organizations for families like hers. In addition to coming to speak for one class session, she sat in on the class for an entire semester, which was a great gift.

One day she mentioned that she's working with her church's Sunday School teachers to modify the curriculum so that her small daughter, who is now three, can be included with her peers and can be supported as she develops Christian faith. I began to wonder: what will Macy's experience of faith be like? What is she capable of? Can the Christian tradition in general, and Tillich in particular, sufficiently account for her experiences in the usual descriptions of Christian faith? If Tillich can't account for Macy's faith experience, his understanding of faith is too narrow. If he can, or if his understanding of faith can be expanded to include her experience, then Tillich provides theological resources for an important and understudied problem of pastoral care, and for better understanding by Christians of what faith is.

My argument is not simply that Macy should be welcomed wholeheartedly into Christian life, although of course I think she should. Nor am I seeking to make a sentimental argument about the purity of her notions of Jesus, or the need of her family for a supportive church warranting some kind of special exemption for her despite her disability, or the obligation of decent people to recognize her humanity and status as a child of God, although one could make arguments about all of those things. In fact, one sees such positions laid out frequently, especially in the name of pastoral care for people with disabilities and their families. Such accounts of Christian life tend to blunder in exactly the ways that Tillich objects to in his incisive description of what faith is not, which makes Tillich useful in figuring out the scope of the problem. And I am also interested in the challenge that Macy's prospective faith experience poses to the adequacy of Tillich's theology.

Framing my question around this particular child offers the opportunity for a very focused investigation. Individuals with Down Syndrome vary greatly

in their cognitive ability.<sup>3</sup> It is common for a person with Down Syndrome to attend school, to learn to read, to have deep and loving relationships with family and friends, to attend church, to engage in paid work, and to be a productive and contributing member of her community. Innovative programs offering higher education for people with Down Syndrome have shown great promise.<sup>4</sup> However, people with Down Syndrome are not necessarily recognized as faithful Christians by their religious communities, nor is their participation necessarily welcomed. There is also very little systematic reflection on what their faith experiences entail. This reflects a gap in Christian accounts of faith that Tillich can help us identify more clearly, and—perhaps—also help us solve.

## II. Implications of the Problem

Models of faith that assume typical intellectual capabilities on the part of the faithful Christian create at least two categories of problem for Christian theology. One, what is the faith status of persons who are either too young to properly assent and participate in faith or too old or infirm to continue in what may have been a lifelong affirmation of Christianity? This problem is treated in a variety of ways, typically with the goal of reasonable pastoral care rather than strict adherence to a conception of faith. An often-unstated premise of such treatments is that the infant or very young person will eventually mature into a state of cognitive and moral agency, and that a very old person has emerged from a state of cognitive and moral agency which still covers his or her relationship with God once typical cognition has faded. If the very young person dies before the age of reason, however that is calculated, modern pastoral care typically simply stipulates to the family that the child is with God without getting overly concerned about the child's own particular capacity for faith. We might well ask a series of questions about those solutions, but I wish to bracket that discussion as not the focus of this paper.

The second category of problem, which is the focus of this paper, is less well-treated and remains under-examined within Christian practice. What are the faith experiences of people with intellectual disabilities, whose cognitive capabilities may never reach the idealized state of rational moral agents? Can they experience faith? If so, do accounts of faith developed with a normative assumption of typical intellectual status be adequate to describe the faith of

persons with intellectual disabilities? By focusing on people with Down Syndrome, I'm deliberately not taking up in this paper a the most difficult version of this question: What can we say about the possible faith experiences of human beings who are nonverbal, who have very little demonstrable cognitive activity, whose families and caretakers can treat them with great love but who have very few ways of responding? While that is a related and compelling issue it is also a problem for another day.

The field of disability theology is entering a second generation and offers a wide range of resources, both practical and theoretical, although the particular question I'm posing has not been well-addressed. Theologian John Swinton notes, "...[R]eflection on disability (particularly disabilities that relate to intellect and reason: the prized assets of liberal society) is seen as a way of cracking open false assumptions and revealing the true nature of God and human beings."<sup>5</sup> He echoes the concerns Tillich expresses regarding the focus of faith (on that which is genuinely absolute) and the mode of faith as ultimate concern rather than knowledge or feeling or will. Thus Swinton points to the importance of something that is exactly Tillich's sort of task—the recognition and rejection of inadequate accounts of the relationship between God and human beings. Related issues of pastoral care, an important focus of disability theology, help underscore the importance of examining Christian accounts of faith critically and carefully.

## III. What can Tillich offer?

*Dynamics of Faith* offers an analysis of what kinds of theological claims Christians make about faith and how coherent and theologically sound they are. Tillich's robust critique of various constructs of faith, mentioned above, can easily be expanded to address the problem at hand. One thing that faith is not, says Tillich, is "...an act of knowledge that has a low degree of evidence."<sup>6</sup> This is not a claim that faith does not depend on cognition, but a claim that faith is not adherence to truth claims that seem, on face value, to be false. Tillich is not addressing the veracity of various truth claims within the Christian tradition here, although he does in other places. He is also not arguing that faith is unrelated to the content of Christian teaching. What he does say here is that being a faithful Christian does not depend on a distorted notion of assent to truth claims.

This position of Tillich's reflects the influence of both Schleiermacher and existentialism on his

work, and it helps distinguish the experience of faith from issues of doctrinal adherence. Tillich's position also offers an opening for us to ask the question of whether the claim that faith is not about *knowledge* gives us a basis to question the degree to which faith is about *cognition*. What is at stake here for the ordinary Christian? Faith constructs that require standard cognitive abilities on the part of the faithful to comprehend specific doctrines or affirm of Jesus' identity are common and have some unexpected consequences, like exclusion of people with intellectual disabilities from full participation in Christian life. (We can think of this as the Macy problem.) This includes, for example, regular exclusion from attendance at religious services, and from receiving standard theological instruction—hence the concern of Macy's mother that her Sunday School teachers have a plan to include her.<sup>7</sup> One study of intellectually disabled people and their religious lives described the experience of one man who was not permitted to attend the funeral of his own father, although he expressed desire to attend and to pray for his father.<sup>8</sup> Young people with Down Syndrome seeking baptism in traditions emphasizing “believer's baptism” have been discouraged from participating in the ritual.<sup>9</sup>

Intellectual disabled people are sometimes prevented from participating in Eucharist out of concern that they don't understand what is happening. In fact, this remains official Roman Catholic policy: “As presented in the U.S. bishops' Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, the requirement that a communicant possess sufficient ‘use of reason’ to distinguish regular bread from consecrated elements still prevents some with Down's from Communion.”<sup>10</sup> These kinds of ecclesial decisions presume an intellectual and cognitive baseline for faith, and that baseline is set fairly high. The decision about whether a particular person with Down Syndrome is eligible to receive the sacrament also seems to be left up to individual parish priests, leaving open the possibility for uneven treatment of people with Down Syndrome from congregation to congregation. A British research participant named Jill reported, “Well, I did make my first confession...But when my mam was alive the priest come round to the house because I'm Downs syndrome and that; and he actually upset my mam by saying that I'm Downs Syndrome and I don't know what...he was saying to my mam that I don't know about religion... I'd love to make my communion with everyone standing around me the

whole family, except my mam who isn't with me anymore.”<sup>11</sup> So a model of faith that associates it too strongly with knowledge excludes those whose cognitive abilities are deemed insufficient. Jill's community, with full doctrinal support, excluded her from the sacraments on the basis of her intellect.

What can Tillich offer us here? Can he speak to the experience of Jill, who expressed desire to participate in the sacrament of communion but was deemed cognitively incapable? Tillich has both a critique and a positive description of faith in response to the problem he sees of distortions of the notion of faith. He writes, “[F]aith is more than trust in even the most sacred authority. It is participation in the subject of one's ultimate concern with one's whole being.”<sup>12</sup> In Tillich's view faith is experiential, rather than grounded in knowledge; he argues that equating faith with knowledge is actually a terrible mistake. This is important because if faith is not identical with knowledge of doctrine, then a door opens for faith experiences of those with intellectual disabilities. Put bluntly, if Tillich is correct in his rejection of faith framed as assent to truth claims, then one's IQ is neither a guarantee of faith nor a barrier to it.

However, Tillich has not yet solved all our problems or pointed us clearly to an understanding of faith for intellectually disabled people. Nor can we use Tillich to adopt a notion of faith as feeling something about the divine; this is the third distortion of faith that he identifies. Clearly for Tillich, faith does involve some cognition. For instance, he writes, “Faith is the most centered act of the human mind.”<sup>13</sup> He moves to a discussion of Freud and the ego, superego, and id, and then continues,

This leads to the question of how faith as a personal, centered act is related to the rational structure of man's personality which is manifest in his meaningful language, in his ability to know the true and do the good, in his sense of beauty and justice. All this, and not only his possibility to analyze, to calculate and to argue, makes him a rational being.<sup>14</sup>

This suggests that for Tillich, essential components to faith are language, some ability to distinguish between right and wrong, freedom to act, and some appreciation for beauty and an ability to comprehend justice. Moreover, Tillich argues that faith “lives in many forms” and that “Every religious and cultural group and, to a certain degree, every individual is the bearer of special experience and content of faith.”<sup>15</sup> This is somewhat ambiguous; what Tillich means by “to a certain degree” is unclear. How-

ever, he neither reduces faith to an intellectual experience nor holds that it is non-cognitive, arguing, "...we must deny that man's essential nature is identical with the rational character of his mind."<sup>16</sup> Tillich also emphasizes the necessity of understanding something about God. He writes, "There is no faith without a content toward which it is directed. There is always something meant in the act of faith."<sup>17</sup> So, while Tillich does not specifically take up issues of intellectual disability, he does offer specific aspects of human experience that are components of faith. Does this characterization offer us enough to begin work on a Tillichian account of faith of people with intellectual disabilities?

### III. Current Situation

We might ask first: what other resources in the Christian tradition, and specifically within disability theology, do we have to help with this analysis? Many attempts to address the question of faith of people with intellectual disabilities emerge from pastoral care concerns, and they typically include somewhat sentimental claims about the evident faith of people with intellectual disabilities. I find these approaches largely dissatisfying. For example, one professor of theology argues that he "... can find no biblical text telling us forthrightly that mentally disabled people who cannot confess Jesus Christ as Savior are 'under God's salvation.' As I read the New Testament, I can find only one path to salvation—the path of an informed faith in Jesus Christ."<sup>18</sup> However, he is unwilling to posit the damnation of the intellectually disabled, noting instead that "[People with intellectual disabilities] rarely allow doubt to overtake their faith the way we rational believers sometimes do."<sup>19</sup> This, plus the author's conviction that God is a God of love, permits him to argue for the salvation of persons with intellectual disability.

This is kindness of a sort, and certainly an improvement on a position that requires full assent to Jesus as savior for salvation, but it is not a very good argument. The dubious loophole offered to people with intellectual disabilities is their inability to doubt, a description of faith that would be from a Tillichian perspective hardly be an improvement over the notion of faith that is being addressed. Tillich writes, "If faith is understood as belief that something is true, doubt is incompatible with the act of faith. If faith is understood as being ultimately concerned, doubt is a necessary element in it. It is a

consequence of the risk of faith."<sup>20</sup> Thus the writer is unwilling to problematize the overall framing of faith, but wishes to include people with disabilities on the grounds that God surely loves them. Thus sentimentality and kindness, no matter how well-meaning, do not solve the theological problem under discussion in a rigorous way.

What can people with intellectual disabilities do? We will recall that Tillich offered a collection of criteria for what faith requires. He does not focus exclusively on rationality, instead including requirements of some language, an ability to discern right and wrong, some freedom of action, and an ability to recognize beauty and justice. A British study of people with intellectual disabilities (including but not limited to people with Down Syndrome, described as people who "were current users of adult services for people with intellectual disabilities"<sup>21</sup>) found a number of interesting patterns that speak to Tillich's criteria. First, the study subjects were typically able to articulate their religious identity, explain central doctrines of their faith traditions like the incarnation and resurrection, and express a point of view about what their religious participation was and what they thought of it.<sup>22</sup> The study's authors also reported findings of ethical concern for other people on behalf of their subjects: "A Christian man and a Muslim woman in the study outlined that they felt a religious obligation to help people. Both individuals felt that they wanted a role within their community where they could help others who they saw as being less fortunate than themselves."<sup>23</sup> Significantly, some participants of the study had converted as adults to traditions different from those practiced by their families of origin.<sup>24</sup> The study also found that "Some interviewees particularly liked aspects of the atmosphere of the place of worship and the religious ceremonies, including the ritual sense of the sacred often present in services, and bible reading." A participant named Ian reported that he enjoyed, "'High church and the incense, swinging incense, you know...and the church choir.'"<sup>25</sup>

These narratives suggest that there is at great possibility of faith—as Tillich characterizes it - on the part of people with Down Syndrome and other similar intellectual disabilities. Tillich's concern that faith not be reduced to intellect or certain sorts of relationships to truth claims, nor to pure emotional experience, but instead reflect a range of human experiences, offers the framework for a more robust description of Christian faith experiences of intellectual disabled people. However, Tillich is not before

his time on the issue of intellectual disability, and does not appear to have considered the possibility of a person with below-average intellectual capacity having experiences of faith. So while Tillich does not solve the Macy problem for us, he does provide a rich, multi-dimensional description of faith that could with further theological development be used as a basis for regarding this particular child as a member of her religious community and a faithful Christian.

<sup>1</sup> Tillich, p. xviii

<sup>2</sup> Tillich, p. 39

<sup>3</sup> Maatta et al; <http://www.down-syndrome.org/reports/313/>

<sup>4</sup> Gose, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "For Students With Intellectual Disabilities, a Program Provides a New Path to Careers". 9/30/2011, Vol. 58, Issue 6

<sup>5</sup> Swinton, p. 277

<sup>6</sup> Tillich, p. 31

<sup>7</sup> Turner, p. 169

<sup>8</sup> Turner et al p. 165

<sup>9</sup> Gaventa, *Disability Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2006. <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/815/990>

<sup>10</sup> Cones, p. 50

<sup>11</sup> Turner et al, p. 169

<sup>12</sup> Tillich, p. 32

<sup>13</sup> Tillich, p. 4

<sup>14</sup> Tillich, p. 6

<sup>15</sup> Tillich, p. 55

<sup>16</sup> Tillich, p. 7

<sup>17</sup> Tillich, p. 10

<sup>18</sup> Smedes, p. 94

<sup>19</sup> Smedes, p. 94

<sup>20</sup> Tillich, p. 18

<sup>21</sup> Turner, p. 162

<sup>22</sup> Turner [p. ]

<sup>23</sup> Turner, et al, p. 165

<sup>24</sup> Turner et al, p. 167

<sup>25</sup> Turner et al, p. 167

**"BELIEF WITHOUT BORDERS: THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE RISE IN 'NONES'"**

LINDA MERCADANTE

Is it possible that the organization that hosts us today could be someday called the *American Academy of Spirituality* instead of the *American Academy of Religion*? I ask this because of the large and growing numbers of Americans who do not want to be identified with any religion. As you are know, there is a very well documented rise in people not involved in any organized religion. According to recent surveys, more than one in five Americans are "nones," i.e., unaffiliated with any religious tradition. For those under 30, the number rises to more than one in three, and could possibly be much higher. Take a look at a survey, done in October 2011 by the well-respected Pew Forum, entitled "'Nones' on the Rise," and you will realize that this train won't be stopped. Paul Tillich, with his ground-breaking work in theology and culture, would have had a field-day analyzing this trend.<sup>1</sup>

Each year during the 1990s, 1.3 million adults joined the ranks of the "nones."<sup>2</sup> Now there are more "nones" in America than mainline Protestants.<sup>3</sup> Note that this is the same decade that saw a rise in conservative Christianity, including its political involve-

ment, and you might want to ponder if there is any connection. During this same period there was also some modest increase in the number of those identified with non-Christian religion, but that was small compared to the rise in "nones." In fact, the amount of self-identified "nones" more than doubled between 1990 and 2001, going from 14.3 million to 29.4 million.<sup>4</sup> Between the beginning of this century and today, that number has now risen to 46 million.<sup>5</sup> As I indicated earlier, the largest percentage of "nones" is among young adults, ranging from one third to perhaps even three quarters of all adults under 30. According to surveys, there is no sign that this surge is simply a transitional youthful phase. Instead, it seems to be a permanent pattern.<sup>6</sup> Although this trend is not yet universally apparent across the country, it seems like a train that can not be stopped.<sup>7</sup>

Given the decline of permanent religious affiliation among growing numbers of Americans, we seem to be moving to a "religion of no religion."<sup>8</sup> As Paul Heelas remarks, "It is not an exaggeration to say that [we] are living through the most radical period of spiritual religious change of belief since Christianity took root [in the Western world]."<sup>9</sup> One thing to keep in mind, however, is that these "nones" are not all simply secular. Thus the secularization theory is not necessary proved by this surge. Even less are these people largely atheist. According to

Pew surveys mentioned earlier, some 68% say they believe in God or a Universal Spirit. Many express a deep connection with nature and the earth. Some of them even pray regularly. Many, although not all, of these identify themselves as “spiritual but not religious” [SBNR]. These are the people I have been most concerned with over the last five years, when I have been meeting, interviewing them and analyzing their beliefs. Of course, not all “nones” are “SBNR.” In fact, only 37% of the “nones” describe themselves this way. Even less, are they all what religious people hope for, i.e. “seekers.” For only 10% of the unaffiliated are actually looking for a new spiritual home. These are Pew’s numbers.<sup>10</sup>

So why the rise in the unaffiliated? Pew categorizes the many existing theories into three main ones: (1) *Political backlash*: i.e., religion is seen as too entangled with conservative politics, coming across as judgmental, homophobic, hypocritical, etc. and this alienates people, especially more liberal ones. (2) *Demographic*: With recent generations delaying marriage, not marrying, and/or delaying bearing children or not bearing them, this has a profound effect on religion simply because married people, especially those with children, are more likely to have a religious affiliation. Also, against stereotype, Americans not becoming more religious as they age. (3) *Broad social disengagement*: According to Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone*, as well as other social commentators, there is an increasing decline in membership, organizational loyalty and “social capital,” in general.<sup>11</sup> So the rise in “nones” may be just one manifestation of this.

And yet, in spite of all this, we have seen a rise in *non-religious spirituality*. It’s hot and it’s for sale. The evidence of this is all around us. Putting a spiritual ribbon on everything has become very popular. You can’t avoid it whether you partake in a yoga class at your local community center or attend a full-fledged residential retreat at a non-religious place such as the Omega Institute or Esalen. Given our market economy, spirituality outside organized religious channels has become big business.

But should we be encouraged or discouraged by all this? What are we really seeing? Tillich might have as many questions as we do in the face of this new trend. For instance: Is this an idolatrous situation? A replacement for transcendence and revelation? Are we simply seeing the doubts and anxieties of secularized peoples being expressed and even, thanks to our economic system, increasingly commodified and offered back to them for sale? Or are

we witnessing the infinite making itself known through the finite? Are we seeing the freedom of God making the divine self known in ways that may positively scandalize religious people? Is this a “new theonomy” breaking into a religiously exhausted culture, or a culture exhausted by religion? Was the early Tillich right after all? And if it is this second option, can this possibly be read through the lens of popular culture, especially as it is captured, branded, marketed and sold by the media and the culture industry? The answer to these large questions has yet to emerge. In the meantime, we would do well to pay attention.

I have been doing in-depth research on “nones,” in particular the SBNRs, for over five years. My book with Oxford University Press, entitled *Belief Without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual But Not Religious*, will be available in March 2014. I took an approach different from others. Rather than studying the cultural products, church efforts to attract, or even the emerging institutions that attract them, I decide to study the people themselves. Based on one hundred extensive interviews, several focus groups, many site visits and hundreds of informal conversations, this is a work of qualitative analysis. Although, unlike the quantitative analysis of surveys, this work makes no claim to be representative, my research accords with the many surveys taken on the unaffiliated in the last decade or so. But my work goes into one important area that surveys either do not or cannot do. I focus on a very under-studied area, i.e., the beliefs of SBNRs.

Why would a theologian use qualitative analysis? For one thing, very little qualitative work has been done on the SBNRs, or even on the “nones.” Perhaps this is a reaction against a perceived over-focus on beliefs in a formerly hegemonic Protestant-tinged American civil religious climate. Second, qualitative research can help us ferret out a fuller picture of beliefs than surveys. Qualitative research helps us get below theories that may have caused us to minimize, homogenize, or miss core aspects in the spiritual lives of SBNRs. The sheer fact that not much qualitative work has been done on belief, especially that of spiritual seekers, makes this needed. Although I won’t go into my methodology in detail here, I do want to mention that I recorded all my interviews—which lasted sometimes two hours long—transcribed them, loaded them into a dedicated program for this type of research, and then did a sort of “content analysis,” searching for theological themes. And I found them.

Why did I focus on belief? It seems counter-intuitive at first glance because many SBNRs take a decidedly anti-dogmatic stance against religious belief in general. They contend not only that belief is non-essential, but it is potentially harmful or at least a hindrance to spirituality. In fact, many contend that any insistence on truth claims, religious belief, or conceptual clarity is really the hegemonic thought-control of organized religion. Even more people today make a conceptual dismemberment of religion and spirituality, even though both words imply common elements—transcendence, ritual, belief and practice.

But what we need to realize is that the sharp separation of religion from spirituality is *more strategy than philosophy*, a way to get out from under the external constraints of authorities, traditions, or institutional bonds, and personalize one's spiritual quest. In fact, the many people I spoke with *did* care deeply about their beliefs. Their refusal, for instance, to commit to any group unless they could fully subscribe to all its principles, is just one of the many factors which demonstrate this. When I delved below the seemingly programmatic assertions of my interviewees, I found something quite unlike either a general rejection of belief. Nor did I find a routine catalog of basically standard Christian beliefs simply divorced from institutional affiliation, i.e., believing without belonging. I also did not find total anarchy, total "Sheilaism," simply "salad bar" spirituality. Instead, I found a third alternative, an emerging consensual narrative.

My conversation partners are spread across the continent (as well as from other Western nations) and are a diverse group age-wise, socio-economically, racially and regarding sexual orientation. In order to determine who would fit my profile, I had to depart from standard measures of religiosity (membership, personal claims) and from the usual measures of belief (mostly Protestant standards, such as belief in the inerrancy or literal interpretation of Scripture). The main criteria was that my potential conversation partners self-identified primarily as "spiritual but not religious" regardless of their practices. What I found was that—rather than being distinguished by their spiritual practices—these were folks who had instead made an emotional commitment *not* to believe certain things, no matter where they might sit on a Sunday morning. I found they fell into several types, which I have labeled: dissenters, explorers, casuals, seekers and immigrants. I

cannot spin all this out here, but the book will go into great detail on these types.

Thus, although we may speak about "lived religion," we should also speak about "lived theology." For I was hearing a growing rejection of organized religion for reasons I would call theological, as well as an emerging set of alternative beliefs. When approaching the question of religious belief in America, the change today is not in having beliefs or not having them. Instead, the change has come in several key areas: (1) where the "locus of authority" lies; (2) whether or not one has the ability, or is willing to make the effort, to discern the beliefs underlying various the spiritual practices one uses; (3) whether or not one has been given the conceptual tools to discriminate among belief claims; (4) whether or not one finds hybridity and syncretism an improvement on orthodoxy, or is simply unaware of conflicting claims. Although my respondents were clearly making an emotional commitment *not* to believe certain things, even choosing expressivism over rationality, they were *still* concerned with actual beliefs.

Before going on, let me also be clear what I'm *not* saying: I'm not saying that the cognitive element is the only important element in religion or spirituality. I'm not saying that people, if they claim a religious tradition, must agree with it in order to be counted, to be good, to be real practitioners. I am not saying that people cannot conduct their religious and spiritual lives until they get their ideas settled. I am not saying that heterogeneity in belief—or hybrid identity—is a new thing, at least in practice if not in overt avowal.<sup>12</sup> Nor am I saying that each person has a fully worked out systematic theology, nor that people are always integrated wholes, with belief and behavior totally in sync. For even among believers, we know we cannot simply assume a deep and consistent "religious congruence" between a person's professed beliefs and their attitudes or behavior.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, it has always been obvious to religious leaders that there are many "fuzzy" faithful sitting in their pews, people who are neither completely clear, completely in agreement, nor completely faithful to the tenets of their religion.<sup>14</sup> What is different, however, is that my interviewees seem to be promoting or affirming this, rather than hiding or denying it.

What can be gained from this research? First, my initial assumptions—which were the assumptions of many in religious circles—were wrong. Thus, I found that, among my interviewees: (1) few have been hurt by religion; (2) few are looking to "settle down," i.e., to find a new spiritual home, and

(3) their beliefs are not simply “salad bar” theology. Of course, much depends upon the type of interviewee we examine. For those I call the “casuals,” there is an eclectic, “as-needed” approach to belief. For those I found who were genuinely “seekers,” they sometimes resist and sometimes try to reconcile previous religious beliefs. Many often saw the examination of belief—or the rejection of it—as an important transitional stage in their spiritual growth. For those I call “spiritual explorers,” they often are looking for interesting ideas and practices, with a kind of “doctrine of universal truth” as their touchstone. I found true hybridity only in some interviewees but did find syncretism championed and embraced, albeit not always at a deep conceptual level. Indeed, syncretism was not a dirty word to them but more a matter of pride

As for the shift in locus of authority, there is a clear trend toward “self-spirituality” or the sacralization of self. That was true among virtually all my interviewees. They see themselves as responsible for own liberation, their own spiritual growth, and their own truth. They see the self as the seat and arbiter of all that. They also commonly believe that their lives were broken—for a variety of reasons—but could very well be fixed. Thus their constant search for techniques and teachers. Also common is the psychologizing of spirituality. Indeed, psychology has replaced religion or theology for many. As I said earlier, there is an emotional commitment not to believe and a clear “detraditioning” going on. The convergence of psychology and shift in locus of authority means that, for many of my interviewees, the ego—which represents external, yet internalized and inauthentic, tradition—is not always to be trusted. Instead, the Self must be liberated from the tyranny of both external authority and also the surface ego, which has been molded by those authorities. As a result, there are a host of psychotherapeutic, artistic, and spiritual practices called into service to make this happen. In my book, I show how some of these trends are clearly echoes of a Western liberal religious heritage.

Another important common factor is a kind of “Theology of Universal Truth” among the interviewees. They denigrate or minimize religion and couple this with a “perennialism” or “cosmopolitanism” which sees all religions as essentially the same, and also equally misguided in their ancillary features. Instead, they feel they have access—even better than the actual practitioners—to the hidden wisdom in all traditions. Thus, the institutional equiva-

lent of “ego operations” creates the distinctions. They feel that religious mystics have been the few always in touch with this special knowledge. Clearly there is a gnostic element in SBNR theology. That is, only they, the enlightened, see this hidden wisdom in all religions and also have the power of separating the wheat from the chaff.

As for ethics, there are some values held in common but the arch principle is tolerance. My conversation partners do not want to make too many moral claims on themselves or on others. They want to reduce all action to personal choice. And they often have trouble asserting that there is “good” and “evil.” However, there is also a selective focus on certain contemporary “virtues” such as compassion and tolerance, while other traditional virtues such as charity, hope, and diligence are minimized.

As for specifically theological issues, my interviewees have some themes in common. They reject male imagery for the divine or the transcendent dimension. They reject simplistic divine interventionism. Indeed, they question transcendence in itself and also often reject any personal, self-conscious or communicative God figure. In addition, they reject certain beliefs they identify with organized religion, such as exclusivism and teleology. These are seen as childish and/or hegemonic, destructive, or repressive of true self. Although their cosmology is monistic, I did not find the pantheism I expected. Nature was a soothing force to them, and helped clear away the ego operations caused by tradition, but it was not worshipped per se by very many. Exceptions can be made for some interviewees in the Pacific Northwest Mountain states, where with nature’s grandeur, you might expect it.

Even though they rejected divine intervention, many nevertheless exhibited a belief in a type of providence or grace. Here they showed a somewhat interventionist theology where guidance, intuition, and spiritual flow exists. While this seems in conflict with their impersonal, non-self-conscious non-transcendent Oneness, they professed it anyway. However, the guidance they sought was often not directed at them personally. Instead, it was more like a power strip, so you could plug in or not. Yet their own ability to tap in assumed there is a force wanting to shower benevolence on them, even if it isn’t a conscious or personal being. In addition, they saw the universal “oneness” as non-demanding by definition. They often focused on emerging consciousness. Even the “oneness,” although often seen as non-conscious, could evolve in this direction.

As for human nature, my interviewees felt that the truly spiritual person is one who is “awake” or “conscious.” They indicated that an awakened person could recognize and even give consciousness to this transcendent force through their own self-consciousness. So rather than asking how humans could have self-consciousness—if they came about this by random action or energy—instead they see the force or source as striving to attain self-consciousness through the believers personal growth. This is what made me postulate that for many, the “believer” is almost functioning as God’s “therapist” bringing the One to consciousness. Many, however, saw themselves instead as “God-in-training.” This process involved getting into alignment with their true nature. Some themes we might expect among this cohort were not often found. Very few had a gnostic emanation theory of “creation.” There was little dualism, certainly not of good versus evil version. When it did exist, it was often male/female in nature, certainly in the more consciously pagan interviewees. These did not represent a high percentage of my conversation partners, however. What about Jesus? If he was thought of at all, it was more as a guru, Bodhisattva, spiritual guide, or enlightened master. I realize that to many religious scholars, many of these themes seem to indicate a “turn to the East.” However, I found very few “immigrants” to other religions. Instead, I saw a distinctively American product, a borrowing, adapting, and selectively using aspects from Eastern, folk, and other religions.

As suggestive as my research proved to be, there are still many unanswered questions, particularly theological ones. Here are just some of them: Regarding the sacred dimension in their beliefs, are we simply seeing a new recognition of mystery of God, God’s hidden side? Or are we moving into non-theism? As for their overarching cosmology, is this really monism, or instead a nascent understanding of being “in Christ” or moving into “heart of God”? Is this immanence a form of paganism or just a deeper sense of the immanence of God in all creation?

Regarding human nature: Is this truly a sacralization of the self, or in fact a deeper sense of the *imago dei*? Is this the end of human nature as distinct, or is it instead a greater appreciation of everything as God’s creation? Is the self-spirituality a version of sanctification, perhaps a new appreciation of “theosis,” or simply modern individualistic self-focus? Or is it a way to protect against the anonym-

ity and bureaucratization of our post-modern world? As for theology in general, are we seeing a new epistemology, even the decline of rationality, or is this trend simply a protest, a revamping, or a corrective to an overly cognitive Christianity? Are we seeing the end of belief as a factor in faith, or instead a deeper appreciation for the experiential/emotive/expressivist dimensions? Is this the triumph of liberal Protestantism, taking its unmediated access to God to its logical conclusion? Or are we simply broadening our understandings, bringing some Eastern theology into a Western perspective? And will the foreign soil make a difference in whether or how the seed grows?

And what about community? Are we seeing a new and expanded version of “Sheilism,” a private individualized “religion?” Or is this, rather, the end of collectivity based on hierarchy, imposition, or inequality and the beginning of cooperation based on choice/intention/good will? From a sociological perspective, are seeing a giant step toward Euro-style secularization or, instead, a protest of it (and modernity)? Is this an individualistic niche-marketing of spirituality, a designer version of consumerism, the interior decorating of the capitalistic “soul”? Or is it just a necessary adaptation to our economic system? Even more, does this critique cut deeper, implicitly providing a countervailing force to consumerist capitalism?

And what about the common good? What’s going to be the effect of this rise in “nones” on American democracy, on institutions, on idea of the common good which seems to assume some basic agreement or presuppositions or common values? Will we find religious freedom enhanced or, rather, constrained, because of this trend? For if religion is so individualized, diverse and fragmented, what does freedom of religion mean in the end? And how can it be accommodated? (Think of the military, prisons, schools). What will be the fate of institutions which were built on religious frames? Going forward, will we be left with only two versions of religion, the “hard” version [exclusivist, superior] and the “soft” version, the SBNR? Will liberal religion be edged out or starved out [whether that is Islam, Christianity, or Judaism]? Or does this SBNR trend imply, instead, the triumph of liberal values? Will we have secularism for the many, but the hard version of religion for some?

These are just some of the questions I am left with after this project. But some things are beginning to come clear. For, rather than “salad bar” spiri-

tuality, I believe we are seeing a nascent and possibly cohesive emerging narrative which could, possibly, become a “meta-narrative” or even a “sacred canopy” for a new era.

<sup>1</sup> For worldwide comparisons, see “The Global Religious Landscape,” Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, Dec. 18, 2012, and Oct. 2012 report “Nones on the Rise,” [www.pewforum.org](http://www.pewforum.org) For a summary, see Kimberly Winston, Religious News Service, Dec. 19, 2012, “Unbelief is now the world’s third largest ‘religion.’” [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

<sup>2</sup> American Religious Index Survey, Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Estimates vary, but research indicates that “nones” make up anywhere from 19-25% of Americans, and the amount is still growing. Surveys are a recent scientific tool, so it is difficult to speculate with any accuracy how many “nones” existed before polls began. Some say the 1950s and 60s should not be taken as the historical norm. But for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, this reality has been well documented by both scientific and popular surveys. See, for instance, the American Religious Identification Survey [ARIS 2008], Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, Trinity College; the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Faith in Flux: Changes in Religious Affiliation in the U.S.*, 2009; also see their *Religion Among the Millennials*, Feb. 2010; Knights of Columbus, Marist Poll, *American Millennials: Generations Apart*, Feb. 2010; *Newsweek*, “Spirituality in America,” Aug. 29-Sept. 5, 2005; *Parade*, “Has America Become More Spiritual?” Oct. 4, 2009. Estimates of the “nones” vary greatly. Putnam in chapter one of *American Grace* puts the percentage of “nones” at 19% and that of mainline Protestants at 17%; Robert Putnam, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012]. The television show “Religion and Ethics Newsweekly” also did a three part series on this group in the fall of 2012. In Jan. 2013, National Public Radio did a series of shows on “nones” on its popular “Morning Edition.” For reference to decline in mainline Protestantism, see e.g., William McKinney, “Crunching the numbers,” *The Christian Century*, April 2, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, *Religion in a Free Market: Religious and Non-Religious Americans, Who, What, Why, Where*, [Ithaca, NY: Paramount Books, 2006], p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Pew Forum “Nones on the Rise” p. 9

<sup>6</sup> Pew Forum, *Religion Among the Millennials*, 2010; LifeWay Research Aug. 2009 survey of 1200 Millennials.

<sup>7</sup> At one presentation I gave at The Collegeville Institute, Dr. Carolyn Schneider, a professor from Texas Lu-

theran University in Sequin, TX assured me that most of the students in her “Religion in the U.S.” class had never heard the term “spiritual but not religious.” All under 21, they were nearly uniformly from conservative Christian backgrounds. They were confused by the phrase at first, thinking that spirituality must be a pejorative term if it was de-linked from religion. But after some explanation, they rapidly appropriated the popular connotation that “spiritual” meant one had a vital, living faith, and that to just be “religious” without it, meant one was a hypocrite. Thanks to Dr. Scheider for sharing this vignette.

<sup>8</sup> One who has used this term is Jeffrey Kripal in his book *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*, [University of Chicago Press, 2008].

<sup>9</sup> Paul Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*, [Blackwell, 2008], pp.74-5.

<sup>10</sup> Pew, “‘Nones’ on the Rise.”

<sup>11</sup> Pew, “‘Nones’ on the Rise,” and Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, [Touchstone by Simon & Schuster, 2001].

<sup>12</sup> E.g., The Pew Forum, “Many Americans Mix Multiple Faiths,” Dec. 2009.

<sup>13</sup> In his 2009 presidential address to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Mark Chaves challenged this problematic assumption. See “Rain Dances in the Dry Season: Overcoming the Religious Congruence Fallacy,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (2010) 49(1): 1-14.

<sup>14</sup> One study looks at this issue in Europe which has been longer on the trajectory towards the decline in religious affiliation. See David Voas, “The Rise and Fall of Fuzzy Fidelity in Europe,” *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 25, No 2, 2009, 155-168.

*If you have not paid your dues for 2013, please do so as soon as you are able.*

*Thank you!*

**MUSIC AS THEOLOGY: USING TILlich'S  
THEOLOGY OF CULTURE TO UNDERSTAND  
THE PROPHETIC AND THEOLOGICAL IN  
POPULAR MUSIC**

MEREDITH A. HOLLADAY

It is difficult to begin to write *about* the darkness of life—pain, suffering, death, grief. These experiences often seem so immensely and profoundly personal that speaking about them runs the risk of becoming sterile or inauthentic. Music, as writers across disciplines insist, can express what ‘mere’ words cannot. Melody, rhythm, poetry, and the *experience* of all that (both in the creation and consumption of the product) can serve as cathartic and through that help teach us who we are, and how we struggle. Using Tillich as foundational, I put forth a theological aesthetic that is grounded in the tradition of human life, thought, and experience, as interpreted through a Christian lens. In a 1956 article, Tillich wrote, “the Church listens to prophetic voices outside itself, in judgment both on culture and on the Church in so far as it is a part of culture. Most such voices come from persons who are not active members of the manifest Church.”<sup>1</sup> Music, as a unique cultural form—the combined biography, music and lyrics, and the audience reception—offers overwhelming support for locating genuine theological reflection and prophetic witness outside the walls of the institutional church.

Tillich’s correlational method offers an entry point for pieces of and voices from the larger culture to help shape our theological answers. In fact, he argues, the culture *must* shape our theology. Though he does not extend it explicitly to popular culture or popular music more specifically, it seems both an easy and obvious application of his method. For Tillich, art and culture have a transformative power in our world. If art and culture contain means by which we understand ourselves, and if we are confronted with the indisputable reality of human life and divine truth, then we cannot help but be changed by it.<sup>2</sup>

Tillich describes that “the two indirect ways of expressing ultimate reality are philosophy. . . and art.”<sup>3</sup> Human culture contains the potential for revelatory power, promise and potential. In *Theology and Culture*, he argues that in recognizing the meaning found within culture that we in turn learn something about ourselves, both individually and as

communal beings, and in turn we are able to learn something about God.<sup>4</sup>

Cultural forms, specifically music, can fill the role and shape the form of theological reflection. Because theology is contextual—it is *personal, specific, lived*, and because it is descriptive in so far as its substance and style are *narrative*, we can identify the function of theology in the cultural forms around us.

Theological reflection emerges from particular contexts, experiences and praxes, or else it is void of application, of meaning, of substance. Not only through abstract, theoretical reflection, but also through the day-to-day activities of the living community—through its context—theology finds concrete application, both in its ‘problems’ and in its answers. Theology is—and must be—personal and specific because, according to Tillich, “the object of theology is that which concerns us ultimately. Only those propositions are theological which deal with their object in so far as it can become a matter of ultimate concern for us.”<sup>5</sup>

Tillich further defines theology as “a help in answering questions.”<sup>6</sup> His method of correlation is consistent with the experience of being human: “Being human means asking the questions of one’s own being and living under the impact of the answers given to this question. And, conversely, being human means receiving answers to the question of one’s own being and asking questions under the impact of the answers.” Therefore, the correlation of theological method “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.”<sup>7</sup> *Theology, therefore, deals with specific questions of human experience.*

An couple of examples to illustrate this first principle would be the song, “Dear God” by Monsters of Folk, and “Idea #21 (Not Too Late)” by Over the Rhine. The song “Dear God,” essentially is an expression of the ages-old problem of theodicy:

Dear god, I’m trying hard to reach you  
Dear god, I see your face in all I do  
Sometimes it’s so hard to believe in  
Good god I know you have your reasons

Dear god I see you move the mountains  
Dear god I see you moving trees  
Sometimes it’s nothing to believe in  
Sometimes it’s everything I see

Well I've been thinking about,  
 And I've been breaking it down without an answer  
 I know I'm thinking aloud but if your loves  
 Still around why do we suffer?  
 Why do we suffer?<sup>8</sup>

The question of theodicy is voiced from a personal perspective, out of particular human experience. Likewise, the song "Idea #21" by Over the Rhine, is, in many ways, a recapitulation of lament language of scripture (Psalm 13, 22, 35; Habbakuk 1), again summarized out of particular human experience:

Till we lay these weapons at your feet,  
 Lord  
 How long, how long  
 Till we call all hatred obsolete, Lord  
 How long, how long ...  
 Our eyes all shine in different colors we  
 cry, Lord  
 How long  
 Our dreams our tears are all the same by  
 and by, Lord  
 How long, how long<sup>9</sup>

Tillich champions cultural forms as valid and vital means of expressing these ultimate concerns. As Tillich articulates, aesthetic forms have the unmatched capacity to connect to and express the depths of human experience—persons' deepest hopes, fears, despair, faith and love (and the lack of any or all of these). The expressive capability of artistic forms ought to be instructive for those 'doing' theology, in bringing to light the objects of "ultimate concern," to which theology must find an answer if it is to speak a Christian message. He argues that theologians, as members of society, participate in cultural systems (politics, poetry, philosophy), and so must look to them in theological reflection: "[The theologian] uses culture and religion intentionally as his [sic] means of expression, . . . he formulates the existential questions implied in them, to which his theology intends to be the answer."<sup>10</sup> *In sum, theology is specific, grounded in particular contexts, dealing with individual and collective human experiences.*

Further, the theological task is not directed toward a vague, unknowable, unnamable deity. Insofar as it emerges from a specific tradition and as soon as it describes a specific understanding of the divine, theology is specific. Tillich notes that God, then is

not God if God is not the creative ground of everything that has being. God then is both nearer to and more transcendent than we have the capacity to know. In this way God, and all our reflection about God is thoroughly personal, emerges out of our lived (individual and in community) experience, and is specific—about a particular deity who relates to creation in a particular way.

In anticipating the critique that cultural relevancy is equated to relativism, these theologies carry an implicit and thorough "no," instead insisting that theology *begins* with cultural relevancy. The solution (if there is one, it is surely not exhaustive), seems to be fuller attention to the sum of human experience—from birth to death, from elation to despair, from seen to unseen. Tillich points to this in his further explanation of the correlative method. This does not relativize theology; on the contrary: to locate or describe new answers to old questions does not disrupt the unity between the earlier and later parts of the system.<sup>11</sup> He writes that the "theologian does not rest on the theological answer which he [or she] announces. He can give it in a convincing way only if he participates with his whole being in...the human predicament. . . . In formulating the answer, he must struggle with it."<sup>12</sup>

An example here comes, again, from Over the Rhine, and their song, "All My Favorite People," in which they acknowledge the fullness of humanity—brokenness and sacred life:

All my favorite people are broken  
 Believe me  
 My heart should know

Some prayers are better left unspoken  
 I just wanna hold you  
 And let the rest go

All my friends are part saint and part sinner  
 We lean on each other  
 Try to rise above

We're not afraid to admit we're all still beginners  
 We're all late bloomers  
 When it comes to love

All my favorite people are broken  
 Believe me  
 My heart should know

Orphaned believers, skeptical dreamers  
 Step forward  
 You can stay right here

You don't have to go  
 Is each wound you've received  
 Just a burdensome gift?  
 It gets so hard to lift  
 Yourself up off the ground<sup>13</sup>

If theology emerges from particular contexts, and speaks to lived experience, then theological reflection must include narrative in both its form and quality. Attention to human stories resounds with the lived nature of theology; the telling, hearing, and sharing of stories are theological acts. James McClendon developed the narrative quality of theology, insisting that theology, because it is a journey, begins with biography. Biography as theology 'works' because, through the telling of (and reflecting upon) stories of real lives, it allows us to catch a glimpse of the truth of human suffering, struggle, hope, and love. He argues that "there is no more important inquiry than the one which sets out to answer those whence and why and whither questions. . . . In a word, some problems *are* hard problems, and turning away from them if they aren't my problems is neither easy nor a solution."<sup>14</sup> At least one way that music, specifically, fills this niche is in its power to remind us of the theological act of telling and listening to human stories. The role of narrative to teach us about ourselves, others, our world, and our God ought to be reclaimed, and songwriting represents a wide-reaching, accessible means to remind us of that.

An example from U2's catalog would be an appropriate interlude here. In the song "Peace on Earth" from the album, *All That You Can't Leave Behind*, is in many ways a prayer—a prayer for peace, styled after telling stories of those who seek peace:

Jesus can you take the time  
 To throw a drowning man a line  
 Peace on Earth  
 Tell the ones who hear no sound  
 Whose sons are living in the ground  
 Peace on Earth  
 No whos or whys  
 No one cries like a mother cries  
 For peace on Earth  
 She never got to say goodbye  
 To see the color in his eyes  
 Now he's in the dirt

Peace on Earth

They're reading names out over the radio  
 All the folks the rest of us won't get to know  
 Sean and Julia, Gareth, Ann and Breda  
 Their lives are bigger than any big idea<sup>15</sup>

Tillich describes both culture and art (which are, of course, overlapping categories) as having several functions, including various prophetic functions. Art is prophetic in its ability to protest the way things are. In its ability to describe authentically how things are, according to Tillich, art "opens the eyes to a truth which is lost in the daily-life encounter with reality. We see as something unfamiliar what we believed we knew by meeting it day to day."<sup>16</sup>

Art is also prophetic in its ability to express the element of hope: "What prophetic hope expects is affirmed as given in forms of perfection which the artist can produce in the world of images."<sup>17</sup> Tillich argues that expressions of art that are inauthentic to human experience are dangerous, because they conceal reality, protest, and hope. Insofar as art is able to be authentic to both reality and potentiality, it operates prophetically.

Two examples from contemporary music will be helpful here as well. First, Paul Simon's "Wartime Prayers" from his 2006 album, *Surprise*, addresses the difficulty of finding hope in situations of warfare:

Prayers offered in times of peace  
 Are silent conversations  
 Appeals for love, or love's release  
 In private invocations  
 But all that is changed now  
 Gone like a memory from the day before the  
 fires  
 People hungry for the voice of God  
 Hear lunatics and liars ...

Times are hard, it's a hard time  
 But everybody knows  
 All about hard times, the thing is  
 What are you gonna do?  
 Well, you cry and try to muscle through  
 And try to rearrange your stuff  
 But when the wounds are deep enough  
 And it's all that we can bear  
 We wrap ourselves in prayer<sup>18</sup>

A second example comes from a solo recording from Amy Ray (one half of the Indigo Girls): the

song “Let it Ring,” from her 2005 album, *Prom*. The song is an expression of both protest at how things are, and hope and vision of how things ought to—or could—be.

When you march stand up straight.  
When you fill the world with hate  
Step in time with your kind and  
Let it ring

When you speak against me  
Would you bring your family  
Say it loud pass it down and  
Let it ring

Let it ring to Jesus ‘cause he sure’d be proud of  
you  
You made fear an institution and it got the best  
of you  
Let it ring in the name of the one that set you  
free  
Let it ring

As I wander through this valley  
In the shadow of my doubting  
I will not be discounted  
So let it ring

You can cite the need for wars  
Call us infidels or whores  
Either way we’ll be your neighbor  
So let it ring

Let it ring  
in the name of the man that set you free  
Let it ring

And the strife will make me stronger  
As my maker leads me onward  
I’ll be marching in that number  
So let it ring

I’m gonna let it ring to Jesus  
Cause I know he loves me too  
And I get down on my knees and I pray the same  
as you  
Let it ring, let it ring  
‘Cause one day we’ll all be free  
Let it ring<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, a prophet is someone doing the work of theology (that is reflecting on the truth of human experience as it relates to the truth of God in hope for renewal and restoration) in the midst of and con-

fronting the world as it is, but does not remain satisfied that the world stay as it is. Hence, prophetic witness is any message—given or received—that speaks honestly out of human experience, relating authentic human struggle, pain, hope, and love, and that denounces injustice and despair.

In a sense, the barrier that has been drawn—mostly as a result of the Enlightenment—between what is sacred and what is secular, is false. The church is to minister to the whole person, and the same person who goes to a concert, or a movie, or paints on a canvas on Saturday does not morph into a different person when she enters a church service on Sunday. We must break down these competing spheres in order to understand and confront real people struggling in a world constantly pushing towards despair and violence.

What is perhaps unnerving about this challenge—and it *is* a challenge—is that it insists on permeable walls of the Church, and on a Church that does not identify itself by resisting the outside world. The challenge also implies that the Church itself might be changed by the world. This is not necessarily a challenge to the Church’s core identity, but in how it understands its role and function within a particular time and place. Jon Michael Spencer explains that we ought to pay attention to “the creators and consumers of popular music in order to discern how this vast segment of culture perceives the great mysteries that myths address and how these ultimate concerns figure into the worldview that in turn formulates the character of the secular world.”<sup>20</sup>

The pastoral implications here are many. Certainly, there are potential ways that popular culture can be implemented within the life of worship, education and discipleship of the institutional church. Allowing persons of faith to bring their culture into church, so to speak, encourages them to bring their faith into their culture. Further, part of the task of the minister is to shepherd persons in the life of faith, guiding them with questions, wisdom, and grace. The implications of art and popular culture being theologically significant mean that part of the pastoral task is guiding people in understanding and interpreting these forms of culture. Popular culture inevitably creates and shapes meaning in people’s lives. We must assume this meaning has theological and prophetic implications. Churches, theologians, pastors, must rifle through the masses of culture to help others ‘read’ these elements.

Likewise, I hold that paying attention to forms of popular culture can reawaken the Church to the prophetic spirit already and always at work in the world. When these forms of culture serve to challenge the status quo and systems of injustice and oppression, they remind us of our own call to speak out for the voiceless and care for the outcast and downtrodden. Any institution risks falling into complacency; the institutional church is no exception. Music, sometimes especially popular music, can call us back to our identity in the already-but-not-yet work towards the Kingdom of God. As artists work in the same kind of imaginative spirit as the prophets, so too they remind us of our own call to imagination—imagining the way things *could* and *ought* be in the Kingdom of God. These things ought to provoke us toward a theology and an ecclesiology that puts creativity and imagination at a place of priority.

Another pastoral implication is in the necessity of recognizing the power of telling a story as a theological act. When we open ourselves to hearing others' stories, we learn more about ourselves and each other, developing greater compassion and capacity for solidarity with others' experiences. Andrew Greeley echoes this in his discussion of the sacrament of grace: the real experience of grace in human experience, which assumes "that experiences, images, and stories of God are to be found in popular culture and indeed that these experiences, images, and stories provide a wealth of material of immediate practical use in Catechetics and homiletics."<sup>21</sup> Religious language and conversation is essentially about telling a story, and resonating with others' stories, therefore "religion becomes a communal event when a person is able to link his [or her] own grace experience with the overarching experience of this religious tradition."<sup>22</sup> Thus, as we are able to, and do perceive grace in so-called secular forms, particularly the imagination and popular culture, and the church ought to take these experiences and "rearticulate, refine, re-collect, and re-present [them] and thus to deepen and enrich and challenge them by integrating them into the [Christian] Community."<sup>23</sup>

In conclusion, it is important to understand the theories and perspective on popular culture in order to make a case for what elements of culture are helpful, genuine, and open representations of human life, struggle, and hope, particularly in relation to understanding and awareness of the divine. The questions up to this point have largely originated in and remained outside of "the Church," meaning, outside

of any official religious institution or "orthodoxy," but rather, recognizing that all persons are created by God, and religious institutions are, for all intents and purposes, created by persons, that genuine theological reflection can and does occur outside of any institutionally-sanctioned outlet, or any sort of sanitized subculture.

I'll be marching in that number  
 So let it ring  
 I'm gonna let it ring to Jesus  
 Cause I know he loves me too  
 And I get down on my knees and I pray the same  
 as you  
 Let it ring, let it ring  
 'Cause one day we'll all be free  
 Let it ring.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, a prophet is someone doing the work of theology (that is reflecting on the truth of human experience as it relates to the truth of God in hope for renewal and restoration) in the midst of and confronting the world as it is, but does not remain satisfied that the world stay as it is. Hence, prophetic witness is any message—given or received—that speaks honestly out of human experience, relating authentic human struggle, pain, hope, and love, and that denounces injustice and despair.

In a sense, the barrier that has been drawn—mostly as a result of the Enlightenment—between what is sacred and what is secular, is false. The church is to minister to the whole person, and the same person who goes to a concert, or a movie, or paints on a canvas on Saturday does not morph into a different person when she enters a church service on Sunday. We must break down these competing spheres in order to understand and confront real people struggling in a world constantly pushing towards despair and violence.

What is perhaps unnerving about this challenge—and it *is* a challenge—is that it insists on permeable walls of the Church, and on a Church that does not identify itself by resisting the outside world. The challenge also implies that the Church itself might be changed by the world. This is not necessarily a challenge to the Church's core identity, but in how it understands its role and function within a particular time and place. Jon Michael Spencer explains that we ought to pay attention to "the creators and consumers of popular music in order to discern how this vast segment of culture perceives the great mysteries that myths address and how these ultimate concerns figure into the worldview that in

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Church and Contemporary Culture,” *World Christian Education* (Second Quarter 1956): 43.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tillich, *Writings in the Philosophy of Culture, Kulturphilosophische Schriften*, ed. Michael Palmer, Berlin, New York, De Gruyter, 1990. Quoted in Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader*, London, SCM Press, 2004, 209.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

<sup>5</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:viii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:62.

<sup>8</sup> “Dear God (Sincerely M.O.F.)”, James Edward Olliges, Jr. [http://www.elyrics.net/read/m/monsters-of-folk-lyrics/dear-god-\(sincerely-m.o.f.\)-lyrics.html](http://www.elyrics.net/read/m/monsters-of-folk-lyrics/dear-god-(sincerely-m.o.f.)-lyrics.html).

<sup>9</sup> “Idea #21 (Not Too Late)” Linford Detweiler and Karin Bergquist, <http://overtherhine.com/albums/ohio/>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:38.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume II: Existence & The Christ*. University of Chicago Press, 1957. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 2:15.

<sup>13</sup> ““All My Favorite People,”” Linford Detweiler & Karin Bergquist, <http://overtherhine.com/albums/the-long-surrender/>

<sup>14</sup> McClendon, *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology*, 89.

<sup>15</sup> ““Peace on Earth,”” Bono, <http://www.atu2.com/lyrics/lyrics.src?VID=9&SID=311>

<sup>16</sup> Tillich, ““from, ‘Art and Ultimate Reality’,”” 214.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> ““Surprise,”” Paul Simon, <http://www.paulsimon.com/us/music/surprise/wartime-prayers>

<sup>19</sup> ““Let it Ring, ““Amy Ray, <http://www.daemonrecords.com/amy/lyrics.html>

<sup>20</sup> Jon Michael Spencer, *Theological Music: Introduction to Theomusicology*, Contributions to the study of

music and dance no. 23 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 12.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew M. Greeley, *God in Popular Culture* (Chicago, Ill: Thomas More Press, 1988), 18.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 75-6.

<sup>24</sup> ““Let it Ring, ““Amy Ray, <http://www.daemonrecords.com/amy/lyrics.html>

<sup>25</sup> Jon Michael Spencer, *Theological Music: Introduction to Theomusicology*, Contributions to the study of music and dance no. 23 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 12.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 75-6.

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