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Verna Marina Ehret

2022 was quite a year all around. As we learn to adjust to the transformations brought to our world through a pandemic and the impacts of climate change as well as natural and human made disasters and crises, we continue to find the voice of Paul Tillich to be prophetic and sustaining. Through the 2022 meeting of the NAPTS we had significant opportunities to wrestle with both the fine details of Tillich's thought and the broader applications of it. The presentations were outstanding and the discussions lively and inspiring. In part these discussions were made possible through the technical skills and equipment provided by President Elect Ben Chicka, which allowed us to run the meeting in a hybrid format. At the business meeting we retained most of the board, but Greylyn Hydinger has agreed to enter the presidential line. As he becomes Vice President he is replaced on the board by Eric Trozzo. The executive committee now is Bin Song as past president, Ilona Nord as president, Benjamin Chicka as president elect, and Greylyn Hydinger as vice president. Lawrence Whitney remains treasurer and I, Verna Marina Ehret, remain secretary and editor of the *Bulletin*. In my capacity as editor, I have added an element to the *Bulletin*, a spotlight on members. The goal of this spotlight is to highlight the continuing work of our members and recognize their overall contributions to the Society. The first spotlight is one of my mentors and the previous editor, Frederick Parrella.

Four other announcements to note. First, the website for the society, <https://www.napts.org/>, has been revised to include updated information. It will be going through a significant transformation over the next few months to become more interactive, provide some members only content, and allow us to collect dues electronically. Announcements for those updates will be made through the Google group. Second, the 2023 meeting will be Friday, November 17, in San Antonio along with the AAR. The Call for Papers will be sent out through the

Google group in late March and be made available on the website. However, if you would like to propose a panel, please contact Benjamin Chicka at benjamin.chicka@gmail.com. The Tillich Fellows program continues as well. More information will be forthcoming along with the CFP. If you have graduate students working in Tillich, please pass along that information to them. Third, if you know of anyone who is a part of the Society and has not been receiving the emails from the NAPTS Google group, please have them contact me at vehret@mercyhurst.edu so I can make sure we have the correct email address for them. Finally, if you have given a paper at a recent meeting, either through the NAPTS or the Tillich Group of the AAR, please send your paper to me at the email above to be published in future volumes of the *Bulletin*.

2022 Meeting Keynote Address

"Jesus Christ as 'real-picture' of Faith: Paul Tillich and the Debates of Christology"

Christian Danz

In 1934, one year after his emigration, Paul Tillich published a review of Emil Brunner's book *The Mediator* in the journal *The Christian Century* under the title *Disciple and Critic of Barth*, which appeared in English translation in the same year.¹ For his review, Tillich not only used the original German version of Brunner's book, published in 1927, he also wrote his review in German. Most importantly, Tillich's 1934 Brunner review is an expanded version of a footnote from his essay *Christologie und Geschichtsdeutung* published in 1930. Here it says: "It is the merit of Brunner's book: 'The Mediator' that he treats the historical question up to the problem of the non-existence of Jesus. It is his shortcoming that he does not leave the questionability of the empirical in the radicality which includes the non-existence. In the crucial point he softens and thus deprives himself of the possibility of new positive ways of

¹ Cf. P. Tillich, *Rezensionen/Reviews 1911–1955*, ed. by C. Danz/E. Sturm, EW XXI, Berlin/Boston 2023, 260–272.

Christology.”² But what does this new, positive way of Christology consist of? Christology, according to Tillich in his 1930 essay, is interpretation of the meaning of history. Its circular structure explicates Christology. This is precisely the substance of Tillich’s talk of a middle of history but also of his formula Jesus Christ as real-picture of faith.

With his Christology, Tillich reacted to the Christological debates since 1900. These debates in German Protestantism are characterized by a double feature. On the one hand, historical Jesus research led to the insight that the historical Jesus does not belong in Christianity, but in ancient Judaism. On the other hand, in reaction to this, reflexive versions of Christology were elaborated that no longer refer to the historical person Jesus of Nazareth. Rather, Christology is used by Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Friedrich Gogarten and others to describe the reflexive structure of the act of faith. Paul Tillich’s Christology, which will be the subject of the following, also stands in this context. His new, positive way of Christology consists in a reflexive version. The object of Christology, is the reflexive structure of the act of faith, but not the historical person Jesus of Nazareth. This is precisely the systematic content of Tillich’s determination of Jesus Christ as the real-picture of faith, which will be the subject of the following.

I have divided my remarks into three sections. In order to understand the specificity of Tillich’s Christology, we must include his theological development. This will be done in the first section. Then we will turn to the Christology of *Systematic Theology*. In the concluding third section, I will explore the question of what starting points Tillich’s Christology offers for debates in the 21st century.

1. The Development of Tillich’s Christology

In 1911, the young Tillich discussed together with friends 128 theses about *Die christliche Gewißheit und der historische Jesus*. In his theses, he claims that the certainty of the Christian faith is independent from the historical Jesus. In the background of the 128 theses there is, on the one hand, the contemporary historical Jesus research which leads to a difference between the historical Jesus and Christianity. Especially Johannes Weiss and other theologians from the so-called History of Religion School (*religionsgeschichtliche Schule*), like William Wrede, for example, had all shown that Jesus of Nazareth must be understood in the apocalyptic horizon of the ancient Judaism³ – and that means, in difference to Christianity. Albert Schweitzer in his famous book about the history of Jesus research from 1906 had taken up this result from historical debates of his time and declared that the historical Jesus plays no role for the Christian religion.⁴ The result for the theological debates is a dissolution of the historical Jesus from Christology. Christology does not start with the Jesus of the history, but rather with the Christian religion, which refers itself back to Jesus.⁵

On the other hand, there is the framework in which Tillich’s Christology is understood as a conception of a speculative theology. Following Fichte and Schelling, the foundation of the theological system is for Tillich the absolute truth or the absolute identity. The main principle as *spirit* that is characterized through a relation to itself. Tillich calls this principle the identity of self-consciousness, which is at the same time the principle of certainty and autonomy.⁶ It is important to see that this principle means an identity of the universal and the concrete. This is the structure of the absolute spirit or the absolute truth. The concrete is true insofar and only insofar as it is a

² Cf. P. Tillich, *Christologie und Geschichtsdeutung*, in: *Ausgewählte Texte*, ed. by C. Danz/W. Schüßler/E. Sturm, Berlin/New York 2008, 238-253, Fn. 27.

³ Cf. J. Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, Göttingen 1892; W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums, Göttingen 1901.

⁴ Cf. A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, vol. 2, Hamburg 1966, 620-630.

⁵ Cf. P. Tillich, *Die christliche Gewißheit und der historische Jesus*, in: *ibid.*, *Briefwechsel und Streitschriften*. Theologische, philosophische und politische Stellungnahmen und Gespräche, EW VI, Frankfurt a. Main 1983, 31-50, here 32-34 (*A. Critique of the historical evidence*).

⁶ Cf. Tillich, *Die christliche Gewißheit und der historische Jesus*, EW VI, 43 (thesis 102): “If the proposition ‘I equals I’ or the identity of self-consciousness is the principle of certainty, there is no principle of cognition above the autonomy of the self-positing I [*sich selbst setzenden Ich*]”.

representation of the universal. If the concrete exists for itself as concrete, then the concrete stands in contradiction to the absolute truth.⁷

Against the mentioned background, Tillich constructs not only his theology and philosophy of history but also his Christology. The concrete is a medium that represents the absolute. In this sense, Jesus Christ is an image that is produced from the spirit, namely the relation between the universal and the concrete. "The autonomous version of the Christological problem has to replace the two-nature-doctrine through a doctrine about the relation between the absolute and the concrete spirit that must be viewed in Christ and realized through him."⁸ Tillich identifies the dialectical structure of the absolute spirit and its realization in history with Jesus Christ. Only in this way does Jesus play a role in Christology – namely, as an image of the relationship between absolute and individual spirit. Certainty is the individual spirit which knows itself as the realization of the absolute spirit. But the localization of this event in history remains doubtful.⁹

During and after World War One, Tillich transformed his early theology and also his Christology that was built within the horizon of the speculative construction of absolute truth and identity. Absoluteness is no longer a subordinate frame of the construction of history, but rather absoluteness is a part or an element of the act of self-disclosedness of the concrete existence. In his writings after the War, Tillich calls this *breakthrough*, a metaphorical description of the revelation of God. Instead of the absolute, Tillich speaks now from the unconditioned. Religion is a performative act in the human consciousness. What happens in religion is that the consciousness becomes aware that the unconditioned is the presupposition of all acts of consciousness. But this presupposition is not a content as such, because the unconditioned is the

condition of all contents. On the one hand, this structure must be disclosed for an individual, that is to say, it is always an act of revelation. Otherwise, knowledge of God is not possible. On the other hand, insofar as one can talk about this breakthrough, namely the disclosedness of the unconditioned as a presupposition of all acts of the consciousness, this is only possible by using cultural forms, which must at the same time be negated. Every concept of God is a human production and therefore both necessary and totally wrong.¹⁰ This understanding of revelation leads also to important transformations of Tillich's Christology. The latter is now understood as a symbolic description of the reflexive structure of the religious performative act, and within another aspect, it is connected with soteriology.¹¹ What remains is that the doctrine of Jesus Christ does not start with the historical Jesus. The historical Jesus is not the foundation of the Christian faith. In contrast, Jesus Christ is a structural description of the faith event as a personal act in the present. This shows that Tillich's Christology describes the appropriation of faith by the individual as an act in history. In the religion of paradox – of which Christ is the image –, the content of religious consciousness is the connection between religious act and the representation of this act in consciousness. Only by representing this connection in the religious consciousness does consciousness become true, whole and transparent.

We find a detailed elaboration of Tillich's Christology in the lectures on dogmatics that he gave at the University of Marburg and Dresden between 1925 and 1927. If Christology explains the structure of the performative act of faith, then Christology must begin with the act of faith as the breakthrough of the unconditioned in the human consciousness. Since 1924, Tillich calls this salvation revelation, as differentiated from foundational revelation.¹² The latter is the disclosedness in the human

⁷ Cf. Tillich, *Die christliche Gewißheit und der historische Jesus*, EW VI, 41 (thesis 87).

⁸ Cf. Tillich, *Die christliche Gewißheit und der historische Jesus* EW VI, 45.

⁹ Cf. Tillich, *Die christliche Gewißheit und der historische Jesus*, EW VI, 42f. (thesis 100).

¹⁰ Cf. Tillich, *Die Überwindung des Religionsbegriffs in der Religionsphilosophie*, in: *ibid.*, *Frühe Hauptwerke*, GW I, Stuttgart 1959, 367-388, here 381.

¹¹ Cf. F. Wittekind, „Allein durch den Glauben“. Tillich's sinntheoretische Umformulierung des Rechtfertigungsverständnisses 1919, in: C. Danz/W. Schüßler (eds.), *Religion – Kultur – Gesellschaft. Der frühe Tillich im Spiegel neuer Texte (1919–1920)*, Wien 2008, 39-65, here 46-52.

¹² To this differentiation, cf. Tillich, *Rechtfertigung und Zweifel*, in: *ibid.*, *Offenbarung und Glaube. Schriften zur Theologie II*, GW VIII, Stuttgart 1970, 85-100.

consciousness that the unconditioned is the presupposition of all acts of the consciousness. This general revelation is the condition of the salvation revelation but at the same time is always ambiguous.¹³ Also the foundational revelation is a part of the theological circle, namely a moment in the structural description of the Christian faith. Having this in mind, it becomes clear that Tillich goes out from the conviction that the foundational revelation has a teleological orientation to the salvation revelation.

The starting point of Tillich's Christology in his dogmatics lectures in the 1920s is neither the historical Jesus nor the faith of his followers, but rather the image of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ That means an interrelation from both aspects. Already here is the image of Jesus Christ a "real picture" of the structure of the performative act of faith.¹⁵ But what does this image symbolize? Nothing else other than the before mentioned reflexive structure of the religious act. Christology describes the salvation revelation. The content of the revelation of salvation is the foundational revelation and thus the negation of the content of consciousness, which represents this revelation in consciousness. Exactly this dialectic represents the image of the Christ in and for the Christian faith.¹⁶

In 1936, Tillich gave his first dogmatics lecture in New York, entitled *Advanced Problems in Systematic Theology*.¹⁷ What is new in these lectures is not the construction of Christology as such. Also in his dogmatics in the 1930s Tillich does not deal with the historical Jesus in his Christology.¹⁸ Rather Jesus is an image produced from faith which is not dependent upon the historical Jesus.¹⁹ As well as in his German

dogmatics, Tillich connects the explication of the Christology with the performative act of faith.²⁰ So it remains that Christology is an explanation of the reflexive structure of faith. One can say that the Christological conception in the dogmatics courses from New York is an intermediate stage on the way to the Christology of the *Systematic Theology*.²¹

2. Jesus Christ as 'real-picture' in *Systematic Theology*

As we have seen, the task of Christology for Tillich is not to give a description of the historical Jesus. The man from Nazareth is not the founder or the foundation of the Christian religion. Rather, he is an element in and a part of the Christian faith. This is exactly the content of Tillich's formula in *Systematic Theology* that the Christian event is both "a historical fact and a subject of believing reception" (ST II, 98). This formula is a continuation of his German Christology. The starting point for the Christological construction in the *Systematic Theology* is that the Christian faith is a performative act in history and theology has the task of explaining this faith. We must now deal with the construction of Tillich's Christology in his magnum opus. First, we must explain the interrelation between fact and reception in the Christian event, second, we must consider the function of the historical Jesus for the Christian faith and finally the function of Christology as an expression of the reflexive structure of the performative act of faith.

First: One does not obtain a correct understanding of Tillich's differentiation between the fact of the Christian event and the believing reception of this fact if, for example, the fact is understood as a presupposition. The fact of the Christian event and

¹³ Tillich takes this up in the *Systematic Theology* in his conception of the ambiguity of life. Cf. P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, Chicago 1963.

¹⁴ Cf. P. Tillich, *Dogmatik-Vorlesung*, EW XIV, Berlin/New York 2005, 332-335.

¹⁵ Cf. Tillich, *Dogmatik-Vorlesung*, EW XIV, 339.

¹⁶ Tillich offers a short summary of his Christology in the 1920s in his article *Christologie und Geschichtsdeutung* from 1930. Cf. Tillich, *Christologie und Geschichtsdeutung*, 238-253.

¹⁷ P. Tillich, *Advanced Problems in Systematic Theology*, EW XIX, Berlin/Boston 2016.

¹⁸ Cf. P. Tillich, *The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Christian Faith*, in: *ibid.*, *Advanced Problems in Systematic Theology*, EW XIX, Berlin/Boston 2016, 317-321.

¹⁹ Cf. Tillich, *The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Christian Faith*, EW XIX, 319: "The content of our faith is a picture which is created by faith – namely, the picture of Jesus given in the whole New Testament".

²⁰ Cf. Tillich, *Advanced Problems in Systematic Theology*, EW XIX, 115: "The method of our lecture is to show the correlation of the theological concepts with anthropological concepts. [...] Christology in correlation to the doctrine of man".

²¹ Cf. also P. Tillich, *Existential Questions and Theological Answers*. First Series: *Existence and the Christ*. Syllabus of Gifford Lectures 1953, University of Aberdeen 1953.

the believing reception of this fact are not two separate parts. Indeed, there are some phrases from Tillich that sound as if he meant a historical assumption,²² but this is not correct. As we have seen in our overview of the development of his Christology, this is not Tillich's position. The historical fact as the one aspect in the Christian event is not a presupposition of the faith, rather the historical fact is a presupposition which only exists in the act of faith, with the believing reception consisting not of a separated element. The Christian event, namely the act of faith, is both fact and reception. Tillich constructs his Christology as an expression of the act of faith and this means an act of appropriation. Faith is a personal act. The personal dimension, i.e., that it must be performed by a human being, is represented by Jesus as the image of faith. But this act is always an act bound to the history of revelation. Its basis is the distinction between foundational revelation and salvation revelation. This means for the image of Christ that it describes the transition from the foundational revelation to the revelation of salvation. Tillich's differentiation between fact and reception exemplified this structure of the faith. Tillich's formula of the Christian event as fact and reception is not a historical thesis but rather a systematic thesis about the beginning of Christianity. The Christian religion begins neither with Jesus nor with the kerygma of the early Christians.²³ It starts with an interrelation between Jesus and his followers, or – as we can call it with a contemporary terminology that is used in the historical research – with the remembered Jesus.²⁴ Also in this view it becomes clear that Tillich exemplifies with the interrelation between both *factum and reception* the structure of the faith as an act, which is bound to a concrete history. Jesus means here an image produced by faith to describe itself as a personal act of the disclosedness in the self-relation of the

consciousness. Without this act, no faith is possible, and at the same time this act produces an image from itself. Christianity is what it is only through this act, namely the individual appropriation of the remembered Jesus as an image of the act of faith.

Second: Tillich clearly distinguishes in his *Systematic Theology* two meanings of the concept of the historical Jesus. On the one hand, the term "historical Jesus" is defined as the result of historical research. Historical knowledge is not simply a contemporary construction, it is also ever "fragmentary and hypothetical."²⁵ In this sense, the term "historical Jesus" is a methodological construct. Yet, there is another meaning of the term "historical Jesus" that differs from this conceptual usage. Here the term is used as "the factual element in the Christian event."²⁶ And this is very different from the first sense used in the historical research. As an element of the interrelation in which the Christian faith is composed, the term "historical Jesus" does not mean the man from Nazareth behind the sources of the New Testament. Rather, the term refers to the personal act in which the faith consists, and which occurs in history. Tillich's distinction between the two meanings of the "historical Jesus" is very helpful for the Christological debates. Historical research is important for an understanding of the history of the Christian religion, its sources, and their relation to the ancient Judaism, but the historical research itself gives us no foundation for the Christian faith. The question of both historical research and Christology are not identical but are rather two independent questions that cannot be collapsed together into homogeneity. The image of faith from its own history is, so we can say, not only different from the historical image of the history, but also the image of faith is to a certain extent independent from history. Undoubtedly, there are interrelations between both dimensions, but as Tillich says, faith "cannot even

²² Cf. P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. II, Chicago 1957, 98: "If theology ignores the fact to which the name of Jesus of Nazareth points, it ignores the basic Christian assertion that Essential God-Manhood has appeared within existence and subjected itself to the conditions of existence without being conquered by them".

²³ Cf. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. II, 97: "Christianity was born, not with the birth of the man who is called 'Jesus,' but in the moment in which one of his followers was driven to say to him, 'Thou are the Christ'".

²⁴ Cf. J.D.G. Dunn, *Remembering Jesus. How the Quest of the Historical Jesus Lost Its Way*, in: J.K. Beilby/P. Rhodes Eddy (eds.), *The Historical Jesus. Five Views*, Downers Grove 2009, 199-225.

²⁵ Cf. Tillich, *The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Christian Faith*, 317. ST II, 107

²⁶ (ibid.)

guarantee the name 'Jesus' in respect to him who was the Christ."²⁷

What follows from this is that faith has its own foundation not in the historical Jesus as a result of the historical research, but in a historical event. This is only momentarily a paradox, because the historical event means that faith arises without historical foundations in history. Faith, and this is Tillich's thesis, has its foundation and its truth in itself.²⁸ There is no ground or principle through which one can give a justification of faith as a personal act which has happened in history. Only in the event of faith lies the justification of the faith, for Christology gives no reason for faith. Against this background, the doctrine of Jesus as the Christ is not a content of faith, rather Christology has a reflexive function for faith, namely to give a description of the structure of the act which faith is. This is what is meant when Tillich calls Jesus as the Christ the "real picture" of faith.

Third: Like in his writings after the First World War, Tillich connects his Christology with Soteriology in the *Systematic Theology*.²⁹ This is not really surprising because the Christology is an expression of the act of faith that is at the same time salvation. Tillich called this salvation revelation in his dogmatics of the 1920s, and final revelation in the *Systematic Theology*. But what exactly does Christology express if it is a description of the act of faith? Tillich names the reality of faith since the late 1920s the "New Being".³⁰ The faith or the "New Being" in history is a happening in the human consciousness which finds its representation in the image of Jesus as the Christ. In this event the consciousness becomes not only aware that the unconditioned as ground and abyss is the presupposition of all acts of the human consciousness, but exactly this performative act is

the content of the consciousness. It is exactly this, the position and the negation of the forms, that makes the content of the image of Jesus as the Christ. He represents a concrete personal life that negates his own life. Only in this act is Jesus *the* Christ or the final revelation.³¹ Christology describes the reflexive structure of the act of faith or the New Being. Therefore, Tillich focused his Christology on the cross and the resurrection of the Christ.³² Cross and resurrection are on both sides of the act of faith, namely the negation of the form and the affirmation of the form. In this dialectic of critique and formation (*Gestaltung*), which constitutes the act of faith, lies the realization of the true religion in history. In short, Jesus as the Christ is the real image of the faith.

3. Tillich's Christology and the Contemporary Christological Debates

Paul Tillich works out his Christology as a theological description of the performative act of faith. Christology does not deal with the historical Jesus or the kerygma of the early Christians. The background of the history of the problems of Tillich's doctrine of the Christ are the debates in the first half of the 20th century, especially the historical Jesus research on the one hand, and the Christological debates in Protestant theology on the other hand. In this respect, one can say that Tillich's Christology is a child of his own time. But what is the significant importance of Tillich's Christology that must be considered for 21st century debates? There are two aspects of his Christological conception that are significant for a Christology in our time. The first is his starting point with the theological circle, and the second is what follows from this regarding the debates about a theology of religions. But both aspects mentioned, in contrast to Tillich, must be reformulated on the basis of another understanding

²⁷ Cf. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. II, 107.

²⁸ Cf. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. II, 114: "And the inevitable answer is that faith can guarantee only its own foundation, namely, the appearance of that reality which has created the faith".

²⁹ Cf. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. II, 150: "Christology is a function of soteriology. The problem of soteriology creates the christological question and gives direction to the christological answer".

³⁰ Cf. P. Tillich, *Die Gestalt der religiösen Erkenntnis*, in: *ibid.*, *Dogmatik-Vorlesung*, EW XIV, Berlin/New York 2005, 395-431, here 428f.

³¹ Cf. P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, Chicago 1951, 134: "Jesus is the religious and theological object as the Christ and only as the Christ. And he is the Christ as the one who sacrifices what is merely 'Jesus' in him. The decisive trait in his picture is the continuous self-surrender of Jesus who is Jesus to Jesus who is the Christ".

³² Cf. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. II, 150-165.

of religion. Tillich starts from a conception of religion as a breakthrough of the unconditioned in the human consciousness, whereby the unconditioned is already given in consciousness. Religion is directedness towards the unconditioned. In the interest of the generality of religion, the disclosedness of the basic dimension of consciousness, i.e., the unconditioned, is itself indeterminate. But this is a construction of a presupposition that is today not plausible in the least. In contrast to Tillich, a general concept of religion must be rejected and the construction of the concept of religion must be limited to Christianity.³³ Religion is also not an essential part of the human being, as Tillich presupposes. Rather, religion is a special form of communication in culture, which, as such, is not necessary for being human. Religion arises contingently in history and underlies an evolution in the culture. So religion is a form of interpretation of the world in symbolic forms and the knowledge of religion must be a part of religion. There is no unconscious religion. Such an understanding of religion is a postulate that finds no plausibility in a pluralistic world. On the basis of the mentioned new understanding of religion as communication, it is possible to take up Tillich's Christology. At first, however, we must deal with his formula that the Christian event is both fact and reception, and then with the implications of this formula for a theology of religions.

First: Tillich presupposes in his Christology the historical Jesus research from the first half of the 20th century. In this time, the historical research stands in the shadow of the so-called form-history, and the general opinion was that there is no certain knowledge about the historical Jesus.³⁴ The further development in the historical research, especially in the so-called third quest since the 1980s, leads in the end to a methodological change. On the one hand, it

becomes clear that the historical Jesus is a methodological construct of historical science, and on the other hand that it is not possible to go behind the sources in a methodological way. Against this development, the historical Jesus behind the sources is no longer the aim of the historical research, rather the remembered Jesus *in* the sources.³⁵ Memory is always a construction of the past and not merely a photographic record.³⁶ For the historical research on Jesus, this means that we can only find the interrelation between Jesus and his followers, i.e., the remembered Jesus, but not a Jesus for himself.³⁷

As we have seen above, Tillich starts his Christology, not unlike the so-called third quest, with an interrelation between fact and believing reception. Christology deals neither with a historical Jesus that stands behind the interpretations of his followers, nor simply with these interpretations alone. Historical Jesus research is different from the task of Christology. The first deals with history, while the second deals with the actual Christian faith and explains its structure. As mentioned before, Tillich distinguishes for this reason two meanings of the term "historical Jesus". Also for Tillich, the historical Jesus as a historical question is a construct of science, but as such is not the basis or foundation of the Christian faith. The historical Jesus as an element of faith must be understood quite differently. Jesus exists as Christ only in and for the Christian faith. So it is not simply the remembered Jesus that constitutes faith, but solely the religious *use* of the memory of Jesus that gives rise to the Christian religion that he represents. Therefore, Tillich's Christology is important for the contemporary debates because his conception can be connected with the historical Jesus research in the horizon of the third quest and its methodological program of the remembered Jesus. His Christology allows for a

³³ Cf. C. Danz, *Gottes Geist. Eine Pneumatologie*, Tübingen 2019; *ibid.*, *Religious Diversity and the Concept of Religion. Theology and Religious Pluralism*, in: *NZStH* 62 (2020), 101-113.

³⁴ Cf. the overview about the historical Jesus research by P. Rhodes Eddy/J. K. Belby, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: An Introduction*, in: *The Historical Jesus. Five Views*, ed. by. Paul Rhodes Eddy/James K. Belby, Downers Grove 2009, 9-54.

³⁵ So, for example, James D. G. Dunn, and the New Testament scholar Jens Schröter in Germany.

³⁶ Cf. J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in den frühen Hochkulturen*, München 2013.

³⁷ Cf. Dunn, *Remembering Jesus*, 203: "The fact that Jesus made disciples is generally recognized. What has not been given sufficient recognition or weight, however, is the effect of his impact. These disciples encountered Jesus as a life-transforming experience: they followed him; [...] Why? Because they had believed Jesus and what he said and taught".

theological interpretation of the remembered Jesus of the historical research.

Second: And there is yet another aspect in Tillich's Christology that is significant for contemporary debates, namely his construction of Christology as a reflexive description of the act of faith. As we have observed, this means that Jesus is only seen as the Christ *in* and *for* the Christian faith. One can say that Jesus is the origin of faith *in* the Christian religion, and is not a presupposition outside of the Christian religion. From this point of view, consequences for a theology of religions follow. In the contemporary debates about theology of religions, especially in the so-called pluralistic theology, we find the demand for a reduction of Christology. If Jesus as the Christ is the only one incarnation of God in an objective historical fact, then all other religions are false and wrong. The argument is that there is no possible recognition of other religions within the framework of a traditional Christology.³⁸ Therefore, the doctrine of the Christ must be reduced. Jesus Christ is like other religious heroes – an appearance of the absolute Real, but neither identical with the Real nor the only one who manifests the absolute. The presupposition of the pluralistic model is a general concept of religion, which reduces religious diversity.³⁹ Religions are equal because they are human responses to manifestations of the same indeterminate transcendence. The pluralistic model is based on an unclear understanding of the relationship between theology and religion. Thus, pluralistic theology constructs the equality of the religions in the dimension of theology that is different from the self-view of the religions. Such a model can neither explain how religions function nor could it recognize the distinctiveness of the concrete religions.

Against the pluralistic model of a theology of religions, we must explain both how religion function, and also how religions legitimately differ from each other. For this task allows us to reject a general concept of religion that assumes religion as intrinsic to being human, and at the same time

explain, in a theological level, the distinctiveness of Christianity in contrast with other religions. The peculiarity of the Christian religion lies in Christology.⁴⁰ But the doctrine of the Christ is neither a content of the Christian religion, nor is Christology related to other religions. As we have seen, Jesus Christ is an image of the Christian faith for Tillich. With the doctrine of the Christ, the Christian religion describes in itself its distinctiveness, namely that the individual appropriation of God is a part or an element of the understanding of God. Christology has a function for the description of religion in Christianity, and does not refer to a historical person. Jesus as a man of history is both a part of the ancient Jewish religion and the Christian religion.⁴¹ However, only in the latter is he the Christ. But this is the central insight of Tillich's Christology. He opens a new perspective on the contemporary debates of Christology in the age of religious pluralism that allows, on the one hand, the recognition of other religions as religions and, on the other hand, to explain the distinctiveness of the Christian religion. But this is only possible, however, if Tillich's own understanding of religion is itself transformed.

Book Panel on *Tillich and Religious Socialism* by Kirk MacGregor

"Religious Socialism or Spiritual Capitalism: A Remark on the Paul Tillich and Religious Socialism by Kirk R. MacGregor"

Bin Song

As a comparative theologian working on Ruism (Confucianism) and Christianity, I am attracted by the holistic nature of Paul Tillich's thought. Having theologized so thoroughly from the indescribable cusp of divine creation to the multitudinous ways of day-to-day mundane living, Tillich's thought

³⁸ Cf. J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion. Human Responses to the Transcendent*, New Haven 1989; P. Schmidt-Leukel, *Religious Pluralism & Interreligious Theology. The Gifford Lectures – An Extended Edition*, New York 2017, 26-27.

³⁹ Cf. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 235-236.

⁴⁰ Cf. C. Danz, *Grundprobleme der Christologie*, Tübingen 2013, 223-240.

⁴¹ Cf. C. Danz, *Jesus zwischen Judentum und Christentum. Eine christologische und religionstheologische Skizze*, Tübingen 2020.

furnishes a contemporary Christian example which is, in my view, comparable to the holistic spirituality in ancient Ruism⁴². Kirk R. MacGregor's rigorous and creative re-reading of the entire Tillichian corpus enhances my admiration of Tillich. I actually rivetted myself entirely to the book on a round-trip train from Washington D.C. to New Haven (CT). After I finished the book and looked outside the window, the first stream of words that came into my mind were: this is essentially a constitutional text for a new country!

A few questions concerning the major argument of the book need to be raised before I remark on the numerous insights and inspirations of the book.

Firstly, I think the role of free market in the ideal society of religious socialism needs to be clarified. At one point, the book says "Tillich perceived the free market, a zero-sum game and thus a war of every person against every other person, as the outgrowth of divergent interests principally provoked to fulfill themselves by destroying others."⁴³ However, the book also states that in a society of religious socialism, the free market should still be maintained "as a register of needs and as the regulator of the direction of production and the establishment of prices – all, to be sure, within the perimeters of central planning."⁴⁴ Furthermore, the vision of the United Nations Millennium Development Campaign that "financial services need to be furnished to help increase productivity in impoverished regions" is thought of as being consistent with religious socialism,⁴⁵ and individual business initiative needs to be "empowered" as well.⁴⁶

From these quotations, we can discern that a free market based upon the protection of private property is still the basic engine of economic growth in the society of religious socialism. This engine is

nevertheless re-envisioned by MacGregor as being regulated by centralized governmental policies that are consistent with the ethical and spiritual standards of religious socialism. My concern is that I am not sure whether this society should be characterized as "socialism," especially per how socialism was historically practiced in socialist societies such as the Soviet Union or the Maoist Communist China. In these countries, private property was seen as an anathema, and market economy was normally treated as a temporary ad-hoc policy to deal with imminently menacing societal issues which are illegitimate per the ultimate socialist standard. For instance, the adoption of market economy in China since 1980s has been increasingly treated by the current communist regime as a non-socialist byway that an advanced socialist country needs to eventually overcome⁴⁷.

If we think of the ideal society depicted by the book from the perspective of capitalism, I am wondering whether the private property or asset which engineers the growth of market economy under the regulation of centralized planning can be counted as "capital" as well. This is because capital in the economic sense is just the initial investment of productive inputs which consequently generate products and wealth via the process of exchange of goods. MacGregor may respond that in the society of religious socialism, capitals are still necessary to its economy but the use of them will have to become ethical. Then, my further question would be why not to call it a society of "ethical" or "spiritual capitalism," which term seems to be intuitively more fit given the ways how capitalism has evolved since Karl Marx and early Tillich's (which refers to the German period of Tillich's writing) time.

⁴² See my further analysis of the comparability in Bin Song, "Ideal and Reality: An Interreligious Reading of the Gospel of John and the Mengzi," in *Georgetown Companion to Interreligious Studies*, edited by Lucinda Mosher (Georgetown University Press, 2022), pp.302-307 and Bin Song, "Is Mengzi or Xunzi more Protestant?" *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society*, Vol. 46, No. 3 and 4 (2020): pp. 10-13.

⁴³ Kirk R. MacGregor, *Paul Tillich and Religious Socialism: Towards a Kingdom of Peace and Justice* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 82.

⁴⁴ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 148.

⁴⁵ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 173.

⁴⁶ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 156.

⁴⁷ See Lingling Wei, "Xi Jinping Aims to Rein in Chinese Capitalism, Hew to Mao's Socialist Vision," *The Wall Street Journal*, Sep. 20, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/xi-jinping-aims-to-rein-in-chinese-capitalism-hew-to-maos-socialist-vision-11632150725>, accessed on 12/28/2022.

One evidence of such an evolution of Capitalism is about the creation of the labor force of “knowledge worker.” Knowledge workers rely upon their knowledge obtained from education to pursue the exchange of produced goods, and hence to generate wealth in varying industries. Knowledge workers consequently own their knowledge as a form of capital in a market economy⁴⁸. Since religious socialism encourages universal education⁴⁹ and free market, *ipso facto*, it encourages individuals as agents of business to own their knowledge capital. Therefore, the difficulty to define such a societal framework as “socialism.”

In a word, the first question boils down to the definition of “capitalism” vs “socialism,” as well as the effectivity of such definitions in analyzing the human conditions identified by the book.

Secondly, both Tillich and MacGregor stress the necessity of democracy in a society of religious socialism, because even the class of proletariat cannot be expected as being able to renunciate their own power once the power is secured.⁵⁰

However, if this is the case, we can expect that there is still a hierarchy of power in the society of religious socialism even if everyone is equal under the law. Furthermore, individuals relying upon their talents and education are expected to pursue varying jobs contributing to their autonomy and to the overall benefits of the society, which is a vision of theonomous autonomy per Tillich.⁵¹ But this implies that there should be a division of labor both horizontally, regarding the differentiation of profession and career, and vertically, regarding the existence of varying hierarchies (such as those rewarded managers and elected political authorities). If this is the case, how can we envision religious socialism as a “classless society”?⁵² I think one possible response from MacGregor is that social differentiation does not need to be as unethical as in the case of capitalism critiqued by Marx and early Tillich. However, from the perspective of capitalism,

we can argue that the existence of social hierarchy is a necessary incentive to individuals’ self-development, and hence, why not just call such an ideal society as “ethical capitalism” or “a society with ethical classification of people”? This question is reinforced by the fact that no socialist countries in history and in reality has ever practiced authentic democracy. Therefore, to envision such a democratic “socialist” society replete with divisions of labor and hierarchies of power is indeed a stretch for my imagination.

Thirdly, the prior two points question the validity of the term “socialism” in denoting the ideal society depicted by the book. This makes me wonder why the later Tillich, particularly in his three-volume *Systematic Theology*, did not highlight the vision of religious socialism anymore. Perhaps the fact that he lived in a capitalist society and witnessed the new development in such societies in contrast with what unfolded in Soviet Union and China had driven Tillich to rethink of the theory of Marxist socialism that he studied in his youth. Therefore, rather than interpreting the socialist decision as a Kairos per the Spiritual Manifestation, another strategy to understand the earlier and later Tillich together is to stress that his philosophy of society evolved after Tillich found a new home in the U.S, and socialism was consequently not a quite comfortable term to employ in his later thinking anymore. Surely, this is just my speculation, which does not diminish the convincing power of the ethical nature of the society depicted by MacGregor. For what it’s worth, the speculation reinforces the term controversy I identified in the prior two points.

As mentioned, there are more inspirations than questions I have obtained from the book. I list a few of them in the following to conclude my remark, and I do think that this is a must-read book for anyone interested in Tillichian studies.

Firstly, Tillich’s critique of conservative political romanticism (CPR), as well as its affinity with the

⁴⁸ See my further analysis of knowledge worker in Bin Song, “Contemporary Business Practices of the Ru (Confucian) Ethic of ‘Three Guides and Five Constant Virtues (三綱五常)’ in Asia and Beyond,” *Religions* 12, no. 10: 895. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100895>.

⁴⁹ MacGregor, Tillich, 152.

⁵⁰ MacGregor, Tillich, 103.

⁵¹ MacGregor, Tillich, 124.

⁵² MacGregor, Tillich, 138.

ideology of Nazi Germany, is a powerful tool to rethink of the Trumpist ideology and movement in the U.S. The origin and demonic nature of the CPR is analyzed brilliantly by MacGregor in Chapter Three of the book, which is a gift to Tillichian readers.

Secondly, Tillich emphasizes the role of human efforts in fulfilling the spiritual nature of human being rooted in the being-itself. Tillich even claims that traditional symbols of theonomy needs to be modified to accommodate new developments of human rationality.⁵³ I feel this is the closest point to the Ruist (Confucian) spirituality, and MacGregor's work foregrounds this aspect of Tillich's thought cogently.

Thirdly, Tillich's thought on utopianism furnishes a powerful conceptual tool to ponder the situation of modern Chinese politics leading to the utopian movement in the communist Cultural Revolution during 1966-1976⁵⁴. MacGregor's book strengthens some of my key comparative ideas in this regard, and I do hope that Tillich's thought once applied to politics can help humankind to eliminate any form of political utopianism similar to the one just mentioned.

"Response to Paul Tillich and Religious Socialism: Towards a Kingdom of Peace and Justice by Kirk R. MacGregor"

Devan Stahl

Introduction

First, I want to commend Dr. MacGregor on this truly impressive work, *Paul Tillich and Religious Socialism: Towards a Kingdom of Peace and Justice*. His synthesis of Tillich's religious socialism in the German and American context is both clear and deep. This is a text I think I read 10 years ago, but not one I have thought much about since. Reading it, I found myself appreciating Tillich all over again. Over the past few years, I have been working in the arena

of bioethics and have not had much occasion to look at Tillich's works that fall outside the realm of health, but what a mistake! I found so many important ideas in Dr. MacGregor's book that apply to my thinking about healthcare and medicine. In my remarks, I want to draw attention to a few things I appreciated in the book and follow them up with some questions about their applicability for today.

Socialism in the Contemporary American Context

First, I want to draw attention to the general theme of this book, religious socialism, and ask how we might use Tillich's insights today.

Dr. MacGregor does a tremendous job in the book of explaining Tillich's context and his reasons for promoting religious socialism as well as the cost of it. Tillich was surely a prophetic voice in his time. His friendship with Jewish people, his characterization of tyrannical capitalism and nationalism as demonic, the idolatry of conservative political romanticism, his preferential treatment of the proletariat, and his belief that complete secularity was impossible seem all too relevant to our contemporary American context.

In the world of bioethics, we caution one another not to throw around analogies to Nazi Germany or the Holocaust lightly. And I could not help but write in the margins of my copy of this book, "is this happening today?" For instance, Dr. MacGregor explains that the Nazis sanctified their myth of origin but forging a distinctly "German religious tradition which expunged the Christian and prophetic factors from mass perception and substituted them with allegiance to the nation as the supreme creaturely value."⁵⁵ The Nazis pulled a bait and switch in which they substituted allegiance to the nation over the church while kowtowing to Protestant churches.

I recently saw a tweet from a pastor declaring that anyone who voted for a Democrat in the midterm elections ought to be put under Church discipline.

⁵³ MacGregor, Tillich, 115.

⁵⁴ See Bin Song, "The Utopian Seed of Modern Chinese Politics in Ruism (Confucianism) and its Tillichian Remedy," in *Why Tillich? Why Now?*, edited by Thomas Bandy (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2021), pp. 95-110.

⁵⁵ Kirk R. MacGregor, *Paul Tillich and Religious Socialism: Towards a Kingdom of Peace and Justice* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 69.

When Christians become so beholden to one political party, it is hard not to worry that tyranny and oppression are soon to follow. In 2016, it seemed that the moral character of our elected leaders mattered less than their political affiliation. In my world of bioethics, I learned that nothing better predicts one's stance on vaccines than how they combine their politics and religious affiliation. We worried in early 2020 that medical mistrust among racial minorities (which is understandable given the history of American medicine) would lead to low vaccination rates, but instead found that white evangelicals were the group least likely to take the Covid vaccine. The collapse of one's politics and spirituality can have deadly consequences.

So, Dr. MacGregor, how do you think Tillich would talk about the Religious Right today? Of course, Tillich did not live long enough to see the emergence of the Religious Right in American politics. Leaders of the Religious Right, like Jerry Falwell, have successfully created the myth that the movement began as a response to Roe in the early 70s. Of course, historians have successfully showed that the pro-life movement came many years after Roe. In fact, it was their desire to protect segregated schools that led to the formation of the Religious Right. We have good reason to suspect that Tillich would not have appreciated either the prolife or segregation stance of the Religious Right. As you note, Dr. MacGregor, Tillich believed one of the important attributes of religious socialism was its basis in equality, both for men and women. I wonder what you think Tillich would say about the contemporary pro-life movement and its associations with American Christianity. I ask this selfishly as I live in a state that has now banned abortion and is grappling with trying to protect women facing life threatening emergencies during pregnancy.

The Religious Right also seems beholden to free market capitalism in ways that might cohere with Tillich's critiques of capitalism, which robs the material world of its transcendence. As you write, "prior to capitalism, humanity's relationship to material entities was consecrated by gratitude and veneration...[seeing] material entities as divine

gifts."⁵⁶ And this line in particular struck me, "For the prod of limitless want refuses the spirit opportunity for unconditional experiences and demands that it labor only on behalf of time, thus steering the spirit along in the vicious cycle of conditionality.... Capitalism presents people with the false ultimate concern—which they hence regard as divine—of accumulating more meaningless possessions, thus idolatrously giving a spiritually noxious process the position rightfully belonging to God alone as being-itself."⁵⁷ This is perhaps the most devastating critique of capitalism I've read in a long time. Of course, it is likely that both major political parties in the US are subject to judgment about their fealty to capitalism, but one seems more distinctly to uphold the free market and privatization as a solution to what ails our nation. I wonder what you think of that assessment or if I should be just as critical of the progressive left.

But it seems to me that the ways the Religious Right has brought together nationalism, America's origin myths, capitalism, and patriarchy seems to be exactly what Tillich was pushing against in his own time. And of course, this is why Tillich is cautious not to say that religious socialism is the sanctification of socialist politics. Socialism stands under the religious, which critiques socialism, demanding that it never become utopian or militant.

But I wonder, Dr. MacGregor, what would Tillich say about the kinds of socialism that we talk about in our contemporary context. The book came out last year, so I have to imagine that Dr. MacGregor was writing much of this book in anticipation of the 2020 elections, when the word 'socialism' was suddenly again thrust into the political spotlight with some democratic presidential candidates calling themselves 'democratic socialists'. Would Tillich have appreciated Bernie Sanders? As Kirk successfully shows, for Tillich, socialism was the alternative to government overreach into the religious, economic, and educational realms.

Yet, socialism then and now still seems like a dirty word. The American political right has, fairly successfully, positioned socialism as the stuff of

⁵⁶ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 80.

⁵⁷ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 80

Venezuela. In the mid-twentieth century Venezuela was one of the wealthiest countries in the world, whereas today it is one of the poorest. How did this happen? Socialism of course! Or so some would argue. Socialism has become synonymous for many with extreme poverty, government overreach, and dictatorships. Of course, this is a far cry from the kind of socialism that Sanders and Tillich imagine. But the disintegration of so-called socialist nations happened after Tillich's death. I wonder, Dr. MacGregor, how you imagine Tillich would respond to the common associations with socialism today? Of course, Tillich writes elsewhere about symbols that need to be refurbished and those that need to die because they are unrecoverable. Is the word 'socialism' so fraught in American politics that it needs to be replaced with another term, or can we recover the true meaning of socialism, as Tillich desires? Would calling it 'religious socialism' be different and appealing enough? Would including the word 'religion' appeal to twenty-first century Americans who might associate 'religion' with the Religious Right? Would we need say 175 pages to describe religious socialism to a contemporary audience before it could be persuasive? What would be the symbols that would characterize religious socialism today?

And if we were to try to reinvigorate something like religious socialism today, how would we do so in practice. I must confess that in your chapter on Tillich's understanding of power and ethics, I found myself writing 'is this naïve?' in the margins several times. How can we understand power that is rooted in justice? In American politics today, it seems so clear that power is held for the sake of power and the electorate has refused to displace those who wield this kind of power. Tillich believed that authorities must place themselves underneath their own laws to rule successfully, but that hardly seems to be true in our context. There seems little appetite for the overarching justice concerns Tillich points us toward. Are you more optimistic than I am on this front?

Metaphysics

My second appreciation and line of inquiry for the book is on the topic of metaphysics. And of course, my interest here is again, personal, as I also recently published a book that discusses Tillich's metaphysics. Although I just wrote a book arguing that we Protestants need to re-engage the topic of metaphysics for the sake of doing bioethics well, I was surprised how often metaphysics came up in your own book. For those of you who haven't read Dr. MacGregor's book, Tillich defines metaphysics as 'an independent, essentially religious attitude of direction toward the Unconditioned; as such it makes use of scientific concepts in order to express symbolically that element of transcendence which is effective in and which supports knowledge.'⁵⁸

Tillich understood, perhaps better than any other Protestant theologian of his time that everything is metaphysics. Metaphysics and ethics — really two sides of the same coin, since in order to understand how we ought to act and how we ought to treat others we must also understand who we are and how we are essentially connected — are the two fields which directly manifest theonomy.⁵⁹ Tillich's use of metaphysics is unusual in part because metaphysics had fallen out of favor with Protestants by the 20th century. The demise of metaphysics in liberal Protestantism is multiple: It is a response to Kant and the rise of rationalism, which liberal Protestants responded to by locating religion in the subjective, and, subsequently, the ethical. It is a capitulation to natural philosophers' changing understanding of how God reacts to nature and the subsequent bracketing of final and formal causes. But in Dr. MacGregor's summarization of Tillich's work on religious socialism, metaphysics comes up again and again. Tillich uses metaphysics to critique capitalism — "capitalism placed blind faith in the notion that progress would come through humans acquiring increased and more technologically advanced possessions. But such possessions, as mere finite entities, are, at best, just as destructive as they are beneficial and, at worst, more destructive than they are beneficial. This is part of what it means for such entities to be finite."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 80.

⁵⁹ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 123.

⁶⁰ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 80.

How do we counter this drive toward the accumulation of meaningless finite things? We counter the myth of technological progress with the metaphysics of history, focusing on what the world should be. Progress for the sake of progress is meaningless. When we ignore the formal and final causes of things, we ignore their ultimate foundations and purposes. In his own time, Tillich saw the quest for technological progress without thought to its ends most clearly in the development of nuclear weapons. In this, of course, the destructive possibilities of technology are obvious. And of course, nuclear disarmament is still terribly important today.

On the flip side, Tillich notes that technology can certainly have a role in true progress such as in the medical and psychological fields. But he notes that even these technologies must enable sacramental joining of human beings with their creative ground. Today, I think it is more of an open question whether medical technologies are enabling humans to do this. With the advent of genetic screenings, CRISPR and bioenhancement technologies, we might begin to question if medical technologies are helping to unite human beings with their ultimate concern or moving us toward a new question for infinite progress and denial of our own finitude. Two of us on the panel (myself and Dr. Adam Pryor) are writing about such things, but I wonder if you, Dr. MacGregor, have any thoughts about how Tillich might view our increasingly medicalized and technologized culture and its effects on the poor. You write that "In the Kingdom, technology is used to satisfy human needs rather than create human wants."⁶¹ I doubt Tillich has medical technology in mind when he speaks of technology and the Kingdom of God this way, but there is something about cosmetic surgery, drugs that increase stamina and athletic performance, genetic manipulation, and brain stimulation devices that seem to drive our desires for our bodies more than merely than healing their ailments. Moreover, I wonder how Tillich might consider the drive toward autonomy in modern medicine. As someone who was always pressing us to recognize theonomy rather than autonomy, how would he assess the current situation in which medical patients are

increasingly seen as clients who can ask for the medicines and treatments they believe suit them best? I agree with Tillich that we must not fall into a romantic anti-technological stance, but most of American culture seems far from that. We are technophiles in ways I think Tillich could not have even imagined. What about technology today do you think would have concerned Tillich the most? And conversely, what might he have celebrated as signaling the Kingdom?

Again, Dr. MacGregor, I thank you for this wonderful and compelling book. I have no critique, just appreciation and questions I'd like you to channel Tillich in answering.

"Utopian Limits and Religious Socialist Probabilities:

Considering Kirk McGregor's account of Tillich's Religious Socialism"

Adam Pryor

It is difficult to give an adequate summary of Kirk MacGregor's work here. A short response hardly does justice to the erudite work of a scholar who not only has an unparalleled understanding of Paul Tillich's work, but the apparent prescience of a soothsayer. I cannot imagine a more appropriate time, dare we say kairotic moment, for a scholar to take seriously the theological and social significance of Tillich's approach to religious socialism. So many of the allusions to the demonic power of capitalism, the complacency of political romanticism, and the critique of a utopian vision of Marxism feel like they could have been written as Op-Ed pieces for the New York Times in America today, rather than being reflections on the work of a young theologian in a nation-state groaning under the weight of a collective ennui.

For the Tillich scholar, what is most notable about MacGregor's work is the ease with which he moves between what he calls "early Tillich" and "later Tillich." Taking the works of Ronald Stone, Brian Donnelly, and Francis Ching-Wah Yip on Tillich as

⁶¹ MacGregor, *Tillich*, pg. 89.

axiomatic, MacGregor contends in the introduction that Tillich's religious socialism "always remained in the background when he discussed ontological and ethical issues."⁶² MacGregor takes a historian's and literary critic's care in his concern for Tillich as an author: looking to pull on the developmental strings of his thinking that form through-lines. The result is the construction of a plausible narrative and theological arc that indicates how connections lie between the concerns of an army chaplain seemingly with symptoms of PTSD, to a youngish professor witnessing a Nazi rally as demonic but nonetheless a kairotic inflection point, to the established professor seeking to make ontological meaning out of the liminal spaces and aspects of precarity that characterized his academic career. As a scholar, MacGregor has done many of the rest of us a great favor with his copious footnoting. He has provided us a roadmap to linking Tillich's political leanings with his later theo-philosophical reflection that could be constructively built upon in a variety of ways.

For instance, in chapter three MacGregor pairs Tillich's analysis of the self-refuting logic of both conservative and revolutionary political romanticism with an account of idolatry. The conclusion of the chapter helps spell out in clearer terms how the "ecclesiastical capitulation[s]"⁶³ of the German church, which the early Tillich clearly identifies, represent a broader logic by which a preliminary concern is inappropriately imbued with the status of ultimacy, and that the later Tillich clearly uses as a definition of idolatry. The connection here is perhaps not new, but MacGregor carefully develops Tillich's point that justice as the ontological element attacking idolatry is never abstract or ungrounded.⁶⁴ Even as it can appear in Tillich's later work that his account of justice is merely theoretical and aloof from the American political context that is teeming around him, MacGregor makes a compelling case that concrete concerns are always in the background. In short, this is one of many instance where MacGregor provides a robust analysis to refute ham-fisted critiques that are too often lodged at the later

Tillich by novice students of his work: that Tillich is simply too philosophical and disconnected from reality to be theologically relevant.

While I have used MacGregor's analysis of idolatry as an example, each chapter provides analysis akin to this. This is why Tillich scholars will owe MacGregor such a debt: he has admirably created a way of connecting Tillich's early and later writings on some of the most discussed topics in Tillich's corpus today. Still, there are two related questions about 'utopia' and 'depth' that are worth investigating in a more critical way.

MacGregor makes the case that, like the scholars who later made up the Frankfurt School, Tillich identifies utopia as an ideal that serves as a standard of critique for the present, not a realizable future plan. Making this the role of prophetism and prophetic critique, MacGregor emphasizes repeatedly that for Tillich utopia functions as a limit concept (even making reference to a mathematical limit at least once). *Utopia is a concept that can be asymptotically approached but never touched.* Quoting Tillich, MacGregor refers to this idea as "the spirit of utopia that conquers utopia."⁶⁵ MacGregor further contrasts utopia with the Kingdom of God for Tillich. While utopia is never realized, the Kingdom of God is "actualized temporarily, though not permanently, in history when the vertical and horizontal dimensions pass through one another."⁶⁶ In this reading, the depth dimension does something critical. It temporarily pierces the veil of utopian impossibility to manifest the Kingdom of God in an authentic way. I would describe this with a musical analogy—as a Tillichian tune of realized eschatology played out in an economic and political key.

MacGregor's lauding of this depth dimension and its role in revealing the infinite through finite symbols leads to what I find is one of the most compelling passages of the book, a case for paying attention to the ways the eternal is a source of future events.⁶⁷ Shades of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen

⁶² Kirk R. MacGregor, *Paul Tillich and Religious Socialism: Towards a Kingdom of Peace and Justice* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 1.

⁶³ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 73.

⁶⁴ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 59.

⁶⁵ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 22.

⁶⁶ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 23.

⁶⁷ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 42ff.

Moltmann seem to proleptically appear in MacGregor's analysis of Tillich on this point (or perhaps better put Tillich haunts Pannenberg and Moltmann more than either might let on at this point). In any case, MacGregor gives an economic example of how the depth dimension can transform everyday items into sacramental objects when workers are freed from basic concerns for health and safety so that they pour themselves into a style of production that allows the goods produced to be representations of themselves. It is a transition of making everyday objects into treasured instances of artistry. Labor, in such a system becomes "a participation in the divine"⁶⁸ and these sacramental objects of the everyday become vested treasures that foster an anti-capitalist attitude. No longer are these items merely disposable goods to be tossed aside in the procurement of ever fancier wares. These items draw us into the divine through the compassion and care that are imbued into their genesis.

The sentiment here is lovely and, frankly, I find it deeply compelling. So, I want to genuinely ask MacGregor *has this account actually crossed over into the utopian at this point instead of being connected to a depth dimension of the Kingdom of God that is realizable; or, in a way that reflects Tillich's theological language, are we at our own kairotic moment in which the window of possibility for realizing the depth dimension of labor in the way you have described is quickly closing?* It may be easy to simply dismiss my question as a matter of the dour perspective of a brooding administrator reflecting on the hopeful perspective of a robust theologian, but I wonder if there is a more profound issue at stake here that relates to a different mathematical concept than asymptotes and limits: probability.

In reflection on the socialist principle of expectation, MacGregor makes the case that Tillich's account of

religious socialism is simultaneously prophetic and rational: a "practical ontology"⁶⁹ that is rooted in a "now and not yet"⁷⁰ quality of the Kingdom of God. It expects new being and looks for its partial realization in history by overcoming the objectification of subjective individuals which inhibits the development of spiritual freedom.⁷¹ For Tillich, religious socialism, at least potentially, had the power to bridge the gap between existential and essential being by reaching into the depth dimensions of reality.⁷² This may occur economically, politically, socially, historically, or in any number of other ways. In fact, one might be able to specifically extrapolate from MacGregor's argument that religious socialism works as an expectant eschatological force insofar as it reveals the depth of any aspect of the multidimensional qualities of human being. Both the freedom associated with the spiritual dimension's self-integration through regeneration, justification, and sanctification and the justice associated with the historical dimension's lifting up of the temporal into the eternal are given a pride of place in such an account.⁷³

Regardless, MacGregor makes the case that in the expectation of religious socialism for Tillich, there is a synergistic combination of "divine and human effort, each of which are indispensable for the accomplishment of its aim. The divine effort is the constant attempt by being-itself at self-fulfillment.... However, Tillich emphasized that this motion occurs via human effort... 'No miracle nor any natural process can produce the fulfillment of being if human action is bypassed.'"⁷⁴ Extrapolating from this synergy of divine and human action, while invoking Tillich's doctrine of *apokatastasis panton* by which everything temporal returns to the eternal, MacGregor makes a probabilistic analogy: "Given a long enough period of time, anything with a positive probability will eventually happen."⁷⁵

⁶⁸ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 44.

⁶⁹ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 112.

⁷⁰ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 111.

⁷¹ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 113.

⁷² MacGregor, *Tillich*, 106–7.

⁷³ I am not sure this is an argument MacGregor wishes to make in depth given the focus of his text. However, he has laid the groundwork for a constructive theological proposal that might differ in tone and scope from his concluding chapter if one

fleshed out this argument such that one could make a case that particular forms of political theory entail eschatological expectation by building off of the *Systematic Theology* more explicitly. To do this, one would need to examine how religious socialism impacts a reading of the later Paul Tillich in *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 17–30; 38–41; 217–43; 362–74.

⁷⁴ MacGregor, *Paul Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 115.

⁷⁵ MacGregor, *Tillich*, 115.

I do not think MacGregor is wrong in his assessment or his analogy, but there is a paradox that emerges for me here. In a good libertarian account of freedom that respects the radically serious nature of human effort and action, *not* all possibilities can be realized even with a long enough period of time. I think of this like connecting links in a chain. As we choose between free possibilities before us, possibilities seem endless; however, the more choices we make and solidify a path through history, the more our choices become constrained. What was available as a positive possibility initially, may be closed off by the choices that we have made. Which leads me to a series of vexing questions.

If we take seriously that human action cannot be bypassed in Tillich's account of self-fulfilling freedom, then are possibilities foreclosed by the series of moral and social decisions we make? If possibilities can be foreclosed when a positive probability no longer exists, then do the terms of what constitutes fulfillment change? Finally, if this is the case, is there a need to critique Tillich's religious socialism in our current context as unworkable now in a way that it was not 100 years ago because the choices we have made to integrate the idolatrous and demonic features of capitalism are so ingrained into the ambiguity of our lives that the theonomy Tillich envisions becomes unrecognizable in its adaptation to contemporary political and economic contexts? Is the idea of self-integration today the same as it was 100 years ago? If it is, does human action and the freedom represented therein really contribute to fulfillment of being in the way Tillich envisions or is it subjected to divine effort in a more robust way than MacGregor's account of Tillich might indicate?

While MacGregor's text moves toward the political, I could not help but think of the ecological over and over while reading MacGregor's text. I fully recognize that ecology is not the focus of MacGregor's work and so a critique from this vantage point is artificial. Nonetheless, what I wonder is *do the sorts of human actions and freedoms being analyzed change the way possibilities of eschatological realization are or are not foreclosed?* In short, does an analysis of human freedom in politics yield different eschatological significance and a different reading of Tillich's work

at this point than an analysis of human freedom in relationship to topics like climate change or the Anthropocene? I have no doubt that MacGregor can offer a self-consistent response to this line of questioning, but it perhaps points to an interesting point of divergence in how one can use Tillich's work constructively.

Author Response to Book Panel

"Response to Pryor, Song, and Stahl"

Kirk R. MacGregor

Let me begin by expressing my profound thanks and appreciation to Dr. Adam Pryor, Dr. Bin Song, and Dr. Devan Stahl for their participation in this panel and their outstanding engagement with my book. Many of their questions I found myself asking as I was doing the research for and writing of the book.

I concur wholeheartedly with Adam's suggestion in describing Tillich's political project as realized eschatology. I commented to a colleague last year at AAR that I regard Pannenberg as drawing upon Tillich in ways he did not realize, as Tillich's work at the relevant points predated Pannenberg's. I would say the same for Moltmann. Both Adam and Devan ask whether it is naïve to think that the synthesis I find between the early Tillich and the later Tillich is feasible. This is the one question I kept wondering as I was working on the book. Whether naïve or not, I strongly believe, philosophically speaking, that it is the logically accurate synthesis which emerges from the Tillich corpus. If correct, this point alone is worth the attention of Tillich scholars. Here I am reminded of the dispute in philosophical theology between dogmatic universalists and hopeful universalists. A dogmatic universalist would insist that eventually all must be saved, while the hopeful universalist would be content to say that eventually all might be saved, where "might" is different from "could" in representing a live option rather than a bare possibility. So I would describe myself as a hopeful advocate of Tillich's political project. I truly appreciate Adam raising the issue of probability. He correctly points out that what mathematicians call

the agglomeration step does not apply to a chain of events if there is only one opportunity to start the chain. In other words, while any atomistic event will happen given enough time, a conjunction of atomistic events that is constructed by successively adding one link to another may well be ruled out by the failure of an event from happening at the right time. This especially deserves to be underscored when discussing the choices of agents possessing libertarian freedom. I choose to remain hopeful that humanity has not yet acted in such a way as to close off the present chain to a just and equitable global society.

And even if we have, I think, and Tillich would agree, that a new chain can begin. In *Systematic Theology* Tillich writes,

A last question arises as to whether there are periods in which no *kairos* is experienced...the experience of the presence of the Kingdom of God as determining history is not always given. History does not move in an equal rhythm but is a dynamic force moving through cataracts and quiet stretches. History has its ups and downs, its periods of speed and of slowness...The Kingdom of God is always present, but the experience of its history-shaking power is not. *Kairoi* are rare.⁷⁶

But he also reminds us that “although the prophetic Spirit is latent or even repressed over long stretches of history, it is never absent and breaks through the barriers of the law in a *kairos*.”⁷⁷ The present political situation in America could be described in Tillichian terms as an abyss that we may have to endure between kairotic moments, in an attempt to work within flawed systems for the sake of their gradual improvement. As the latter quotation illustrates, Tillich does believe God, as being-itself, is responsible for the emergence of each new *kairos*. But so long as God acts through free human decisions rather than through supernatural intervention—which makes sense in view of my

robust defense elsewhere of the doctrine of divine middle knowledge—there is no need for a tension between divine and human effort.⁷⁸ This fact accounts for, as Devan points out, the centrality of metaphysics in Tillich’s political theorizing. The notion of a teleological chain ultimately being actualized through repeated starts is precisely how multiverse theorists avert the agglomeration problem. Proponents of the multiverse maintain that, even though in the vast majority of universes that have existed or will exist the chain of life-permitting successive events breaks such that the resultant universe winds up being life-prohibiting, the fact that the chain restarts in endless new universes has led us to now find ourselves in a life-permitting universe. My hope that what happened with a life-permitting universe will happen with a global society, which, not perfectly but far better than now, exhibits justice, peace, and equity, empowers my conviction that we should attempt to implement such a society. Regarding global climate change, let me add to my comments yesterday on the panel celebrating the ninetieth anniversary of *The Socialist Decision*. I recognize that, in view of past human decisions, averting some of the horrific prospects of climate change is no longer possible. But I still believe that it is possible to gradually reduce overall global temperatures and the parts per million of CO₂ in the atmosphere. Nonetheless, we may have to suffer some terrible events before we see the payoff of this reduction, as we linger in the abyss between kairotic moments.

Bin draws attention to the tension between Tillich’s perception of the free market as “a zero-sum game” and his desire to maintain the free market outside “the realms of real property, heavy industry, major manufacturing, major banks, and foreign trade.”⁷⁹ I think Tillich would resolve this tension by arguing that the free market as encompassing all economic domains—namely, a complete *laissez-faire* system—is a zero-sum game, but that the free market as encompassing domains other than the

⁷⁶ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. in 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 3:371–72.

⁷⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3:370.

⁷⁸ For two examples see Kirk R. MacGregor, *Luis de Molina: The Life and Theology of the Founder of Middle Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015) and Kirk R. MacGregor, *Molinist*

Philosophical and Theological Ventures (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022).

⁷⁹ Kirk R. MacGregor, *Paul Tillich and Religious Socialism: Towards a Kingdom of Peace and Justice* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2021), 82, 150.

aforementioned “positions of economic power held by private enterprise” and overseen by a democratic power accountable to the people is a win-win situation for ordinary people and small businesses.⁸⁰ It seems to me that Tillich could then argue that a coalition of governments working as he suggests could “increase productivity and” decrease “unemployment...in the world’s most impoverished regions.”⁸¹ So now the question, as Bin and Devan ask, comes down, in effect, to who gets to define socialism, Marx or Tillich? In particular, given the fact that the Marxist conception of socialism has proven much more widespread globally and its application particularly notorious in the Soviet Union, Maoist China, Venezuela, and so forth, leading to dire poverty, governmental intrusion, and dictatorships, shouldn’t we call what Tillich denominated “religious socialism” something other than socialism? Particularly in the United States, has the term socialism become so poisoned by the American political right that it has become an ineffective symbol? I think the answer is yes. My answer is reinforced by Bin’s observation that no nominally socialist nations have ever practiced true democracy. However, I suspect Tillich would disagree with me, since he still said in his final book, *My Search for Absolutes*, that “if the prophetic message is true, there is nothing ‘beyond religious socialism.’”⁸² Nonetheless, if I could invent a term that might prove better today, I would describe Tillich’s political hope as “democratic ethical and spiritual egalitarianism.” Bin inquires whether calling this hope ethical or spiritual capitalism is appropriate given the historical development of capitalism. Here I would avoid the term “capitalism” due to the negative connotations which have historically accompanied capitalism. I think that, as Devan quoted, capitalism as it exists today indeed presents people with a “false ultimate concern,” namely the concern “of accumulating more” and more “possessions” that they don’t actually need, thus

employing human creativity to rob people of what gives them eternal significance.⁸³ Accordingly, capitalism still meets Tillich’s definition of the demonic. So any Tillichian-sanctioned capitalism should be controlled so as to meet “human needs rather than to” satisfy unending “wants.”⁸⁴

I agree with Devan that Tillich would have appreciated Bernie Sanders and other democratic socialists. However, Tillich would have exhorted them to integrate religion into their public platform. This exhortation applies to many on the political left today. If a political ideology “forsakes the churches and instead...all[ies] itself” purely with secular movements, I concur with Tillich that the ideology “will lose all spiritual power and become even more spiritually impotent than...fundamentalist religious groups.”⁸⁵ In the United States, political leaders should work alongside church leaders to show how the teachings of Jesus and the symbols of Christianity find fulfillment in a society that operates along Tillichian lines. This spiritual engagement is necessary to convince voters not to elect people who hold power for power’s sake or otherwise exhibit narcissistic traits. It is also important in convincing church members not to tolerate overt and covert narcissism in the leadership of their congregations, which scandals across American religious groups prove to be all too common. I see the simultaneous rise of narcissistic church leaders and narcissistic political leaders in America as symptomatic of the same anti-spiritual trend, made all the more noxious by the mutual alliance of such immoral leaders. This unholy alliance is clearly seen in the tweet Devan referenced in which a pastor threatened Christians who vote Democratic with church discipline. Bin perceptively queries if what I have called democratic and spiritual egalitarianism should be described as classless. It depends on how great an economic gap between individuals needs to exist in order for there to be class distinctions. In the book I approvingly cite

⁸⁰ Paul Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, trans. Franklin Sherman, rep. ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 159, emphasis in original; quoted in MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 147.

⁸¹ United Nations, “Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all,” <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/>,

accessed April 22, 2020; quoted in MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 173.

⁸² Paul Tillich, *My Search for Absolutes* (New York: Touchstone, 1967), 40; quoted in MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 98.

⁸³ MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 80.

⁸⁴ MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 89.

⁸⁵ MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 144–45.

the philosopher and scholar of religion Glen Martin. Martin suggests that the lowest wage-earners in a society should earn what is now considered a middle-class wage and that the highest wage-earners should be legally prevented from earning any more than four times as much.⁸⁶ Even if this situation is not classless, it at least prevents the degree of political control by the wealthy few ("the one percent") wherein they can "engage politicians in *quid pro quo*" through "exorbitant campaign contributions," "publicly disseminate their positions," "and...establish think-tanks which generate propaganda favoring those positions."⁸⁷

As suggested by Bin and Devan, I think Tillich would be mortified by the Religious Right today and would call attention to the racist origins of the movement, astutely analyzed by Randall Balmer in his 2021 book *Bad Faith: Race and the Rise of the Religious Right*.⁸⁸ On Tillich's view of abortion, one needs to philosophically extrapolate from the anthropology articulated in his *Systematic Theology*. As a philosopher of religion, I conclude that Tillich would have subscribed to a progressive traducianism in which the potential for the spirit, but not the spirit itself, is present at the moment of conception. The spirit only moves from potentiality to actuality at the moment of live birth. Since Tillich regarded the presence of spirit as what renders a physical organism a person, I think Tillich would deny that abortion is homicide and "champion...reproductive rights...for women."⁸⁹ I surmise that Tillich would find theologically groundless the association of Christianity with the pro-life movement. I appreciate Devan's warning about lightly drawing analogies to Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, I agree with Bin and Devan that the Religious Right and Trumpism constitute forms of political romanticism that blend elements of the conservative and revolutionary varieties, the latter of which Nazism exemplifies *par excellence*. Regarding the slogan "make America great again," I wonder when Trump and his supporters believe America was great. To what

period are they trying to return the United States? I strongly suspect the answer is sometime prior to the 1940s, when segregation was legally sanctioned and the separation of church and state a legal fiction unenforced by the Supreme Court.

Bin raises the important issue of knowledge workers. In Tillich's estimation, knowledge workers would be small business owners, managers, medical researchers, scholars, and technological developers. Like Devan, I think we are technophiles in a way that would have deeply concerned Tillich. Any professor who attempts to implement a no-smartphone or no-laptop policy in the classroom realizes the frightening dependence most of our students have on technology. Such dependence leads them, I believe, to replace authentic interpersonal relationships with artificial relationships to games and other impersonal entities.⁹⁰ Accordingly, technology often facilitates and amplifies the alienation of persons from one another and thus stands opposed to the Tillichian ontological element of love. Similarly, I believe that Tillich would regard cosmetic surgery, performance-enhancing drugs, genetic manipulation, and brain stimulation devices as idolatrous attempts to deny human finitude. These are placebos that people use to avoid coming into communion with being-itself, which alone affords qualitatively eternal life. Moreover, they direct monetary and scientific resources away from the poor and, through the waste that they generate, perpetuate conditions of environmental racism.

Again, I would like to express my sincerest thanks to Adam, Bin, and Devan for their incisive analysis of my book. If only every author could be so lucky. Thank you all.

⁸⁶ Personal correspondence with Glen Martin in 2008.

⁸⁷ MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 171.

⁸⁸ Randall Balmer, *Bad Faith: Race and the Rise of the Religious Right* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021).

⁸⁹ MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 153–54.

⁹⁰ This is not to deny, as Benjamin J. Chicka points out, that video games can be used to cultivate authentic interpersonal relationships; it is only to say that games sometimes have deleterious relational effects. See Chicka, *Playing as Others: Theology and Ethical Responsibility in Video Games* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021).

Member Spotlight

The Adventures of Frederick Parrella

Verna Marina Ehret

This inaugural spotlight in the *Bulletin* is on Dr. Frederick J. Parrella, Professor of Theology Emeritus in the Department of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University. Fred was also the Secretary-Treasurer of the NAPTS for more than 20 years, making him a particularly fitting choice. Perusing Fred's CV, it is a truly stunning display of Tillich scholarship. I knew he was an outstanding and prolific Tillich scholar, but even I was amazed at the depth of his work. But perhaps most importantly for me, Fred has been my friend and mentor for so long I cannot remember when it started. His stories of researching the Tillich archives and his relationships with the great Tillich scholars of the first generation are captivating. His wit and charm, his life experiences that will "someday be in the memoirs" amuse and inspire. Fred's publications and talks are extensive, including three edited volumes on Tillich's thought. But his most recent work is what I would like to highlight. *The Idea of Church: Historical and Theological Perspectives* is coming out this year from Mercer University Press, and Fred will be signing books at the AAR in the book exhibit. As impressive as his scholarly work has been and continues to be, what stands out even more for me is his work as a teacher. While I have never had the benefit of taking a class from him, I envy those who have. In his own words, "To be a teacher is to try to be present at all times: first, to the students, each one a unique individual; second, to the subject matter that ideally has become a part of one's soul as a teacher; finally, to one's own life with as much integration and self-knowledge as one can attain." I see this teaching philosophy unfold in every conversation we have. He is present, he knows what he's talking about, he knows who he is, and he builds me up every time. Fred goes on in his teaching philosophy (and he has won numerous teaching awards with this philosophy) to say that "Education is nourishment of the mind, heart, and soul; most important, just like physical nourishment, the nourishment of the mind is a life-long need." Fred Parrella is, in so many ways, at the heart of the Tillich society and Tillich scholarship. His

continued engagement with the society inspires, guides, and transforms young scholars. We look forward to his future projects.

Member News

New Publications by Members

Parrella, Fred. *The Idea of Church: Historical and Theological Perspectives*. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2023.

Parrella, Fred and Stephenson, Christopher A. Revision and republication of portions of Fred Parrella's "Symbol, Sacrament, and Spirit(s): Paul Tillich in Recent Pentecostal Theology." *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society* 35, no. 2 (2009): 25-29 in a monograph for Oxford University Press, with the tentative title "Contours of a Pentecostal Liturgical Theology."

Stahl, Devan. *Disability's Challenge to Theology Genes, Eugenics, and the Metaphysics of Modern Medicine*. Notre Dame Press, August 2022.

Burton, Kathleen. *The Nazi Religion and The Rise of the French Christian Resistance*. Rowman and Littlefield, September 2022.

If you have news to share about your own work or about members of the society, please email me at vehret@mercyhurst.edu. If you have sent a paper that has not yet been published, it will be in the Spring-Summer issue, but please reach out to me at the above email address to make sure I have it.