



BULLETIN

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Religious Studies Department
336 Bannan

Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, CA 95053

Editor: Frederick J. Parrella, Secretary-Treasurer, NAPTS

Telephone: 408.554.4714 FAX: 408.554.2387

fparrella@scu.edu

www.NAPTS.org

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A NEW NAME...

It is the same old Newsletter and the same old editor, but the Board of the Directors of the NAPTS unanimously voted to change the name of the “Newsletter” to the “Bulletin of the NAPTS.” This was done in order to reflect more accurately the nature of the publication at the present time. *Plus ça change...*

The editor hopes you like the new name and the slightly revised format. Comments, publication announcements, and book reviews and may be sent to the editor by email or regular mail. Thank you.

THE NORTH AMERICAN PAUL TILlich SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society took place in Atlanta, Georgia, Friday, November 21, and Saturday, November 22, 2003. As always, the meeting was held in conjunction with the meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature from November 22 to 25, 2003. The two sessions of the *Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group* at the AAR met on Sunday and Monday afternoons, and a joint meeting of *Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group*

with the *Pragmatism and Empiricism in American Religious Thought Group* took place on Saturday afternoon.

Congratulations and a hearty thank you for an excellent program this year to John Thatamanil. Thanks to Mary Ann Stenger and Robison James who serve as co-chairs of the AAR *Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group*.

The Bulletin wishes to thank Paul Carr, Don Arther, and Mary Ann Cooney for their three years of service on the Board of Directors. A special thank you to Michael Drummy for his excellent two years of service to the Society as Vice President and President this past year. Thanks also to Robison James who served as Past President and Chair of the Nominating Committee for the meeting.

Congratulations to the new officers and board members. The following people were elected at this year's business meeting on November 23:

John Thatamanil, Vanderbilt University

President

Matthew Lon Weaver, Duluth, Minnesota

President Elect

Terence O'Keefe, University of Ulster

Vice President

Frederick J. Parrella, Santa Clara University

Secretary Treasurer

Michael Drummy, Longmont, Colorado

Past President, Chair, Nominating Committee

The following four members were elected to the Board of Directors of the Society with terms expiring in 2006:

Loye Ashton, Milsaps College

Rachel Sophia Beard, Princeton Theological Seminary

Sharon Peebles Burch, San Rafael, California

Jonathan Rothchild, University of Chicago

MY JOURNEY INTO THE WORK OF PAUL TILlich

JEAN RICHARD

Editor's Note: This is the address delivered at the annual banquet of the NAPTS in Atlanta, Georgia, Friday evening, November 18, 2003.

Let me say first how grateful I am for this invitation. It gives me the opportunity to do a retrospective on our Quebec Research Program on Tillich, which is celebrating this year its twentieth anniversary. However, I hope the occasion will also be beneficial for you. Each one of us could tell about his or her own journey into the work of Paul Tillich, that is, the particular path each of us has found into his work. These different ways bring about distinctive understandings of Tillich. Moreover, since our special endeavor in Quebec has been the translation of Tillich into French, our own experience of success and failure might be of some benefit for a similar project that is now beginning in the NAPTS, under the dynamic leadership of Rob James.

From Thomas Aquinas to Paul Tillich

To start from the beginning, I must say first that I never heard about Tillich during my theological

studies in Rome. There were many references to Barth, Bultmann, Cullmann, and to other important Protestant theologians, but never to Tillich. He was not part of the game: perhaps because he was no longer a contender within the debates going on in the European arena; or simply because he was thought to be primarily a philosophical theologian.

Be that as it may, my first encounter with Tillich happened through John A. T. Robinson's *Honest to God*. And I would like here to pay a tribute to Bishop Robinson, who was not always taken seriously by scholars. I think, for my part, that he was very clever, and that he gave us a very accurate as well as a relevant introduction to Tillich.

From the outset, Robinson was pointing directly to one of Tillich's crucial tenets, his critique of supernaturalism, especially as this critique applied to the doctrine of God. Properly speaking, God does not exist, since he is not a being among others. Thus, theology does not rest upon the proofs for the existence of God. Likewise one might say that theology does not rest on a special revelation from God, since the God who might give such a revelation would be himself a particular being, like the God at the conclusion of the proofs. Rather, the principle or starting point of theology consists in the intuition of the ground of our being and of all being. Robinson was saying that beautifully: "the fundamental theological question consists not in establishing the existence of God as a separate entity but in pressing through in

ultimate concern to what Tillich calls the ground of being.”

I don't know exactly how I understood those words forty years ago, at the acme of my Thomistic formation. But I am quite sure that I did not catch their full significance. I did not realize that it meant a drastic upheaval of St. Thomas' *Summa*, a drastic break with the religious vision of the Middle Ages.

Reading the first volume of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* at that time, I noted, instead, the junction-points with the thought of St. Thomas. For instance—and it was for me primordial—both notions of God looked very similar. Tillich's "being itself" seemed to be a compact translation of St. Thomas' "esse ipsum per se subsistens." Such an understanding allowed me quite easily to combine Thomas Aquinas and Paul Tillich.

More especially, in the doctrine of God, which was the subject I was then teaching within the theology curriculum, Tillich added to St. Thomas an important complement, that is, the subjective-existential perspective. For St. Thomas, God's being is the well-spring of all being. So it is with Tillich's power or ground of being. However, to the objective-dogmatic side of theology, Tillich adds the subjective-existential dimension. The power of being resists and overcomes nonbeing; in the same way, the courage to be, which is rooted in the ultimate power of being, conquers the anxiety of nonbeing.

Both sides of the divine, the objective and the subjective, the dogmatic and the existential, are comprised in the typical Tillichian phrase "ultimate concern." For a long time I struggled with that phrase, until I realized it was used by Tillich equally for God and for religion, for God and for human faith. So "ultimate concern" designates both sides of a single reality, the objective and the subjective, the dogmatic and the existential, God and faith.

But one still has to know which side comes first. Once again, for a long time I followed the orthodox-Thomistic way, from God to faith. Finally, I realized that the modern-liberal way, from Schleiermacher on, was the other way around: from the religious-revelational experience of faith to God as God now understood as the objective expression or projection of such an experience. This is, I think, the radical understanding that Tillich himself is expressing when he writes, in the opening section of his doctrine of God, that "God is the name for that which concerns man ultimately," which "does not mean that first there is a being called God and then the

demand that man should be ultimately concerned about him.”

From a Catholic to a Protestant View of Tillich

I might have stayed there, confining myself to the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*. But I was not fully satisfied. Like the apostle Paul who wanted to meet the first disciples of Christ in Jerusalem, I felt the need to have a personal contact with the authentic tradition of Tillich in this country. So, in 1978-1979, I spent my first sabbatical leave at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, under the direction of Langdon Gilkey.

Langdon, who likes stories, will allow me, I am sure, to tell the story of my first encounter with him. When I came to Chicago, I asked students how I should manage to meet with Gilkey. They told me: "Go to the Coffee Shop at 8:30, and there you will find him." So I did. He was there and we talked together for an hour and half. This was the first lesson I received from Gilkey, a lesson that inspired me for a long time. Since that time, I have often received students knocking at my door at an untimely moment, and each time I remember Gilkey receiving me, without appointment, for an hour and half.

From that first conversation, I remember one special topic. Very politely, referring to someone else, Gilkey told me: "Reinhold Niebuhr used to say: You Catholics, you don't know what sin is!" I did not reply, but within myself I was thinking: "Dear man, after hearing confessions for so many years, you think I don't know what sin is?" But after hearing Gilkey's lectures on Tillich, I realized that we Catholics knew very well what sins are, but that we had much to learn from Protestants about what sin is!

So, Langdon Gilkey introduced me to the second volume of the *Systematic Theology*, which I still consider as the core of the system. There the immediate question is about sin and the salvation that comes in Christ. But through sin and salvation, the idea and the question of history are raised, and as soon as we encounter history, we find ourselves caught up in everything that is involved in the social dimension of existence.

From the American to the German Tillich

When I came back from Chicago, I decided to set up a research program on Tillich, which might be subsidized by federal and provincial endowments,

and which might serve as an academic framework for M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations. For a while, I hesitated between two main topics. Since I was much concerned with liberation theology, I was inclined towards the question of "Liberation and Salvation." But since the Province of Quebec was, by that time, undergoing an accelerated process of secularization, I finally settled on the theme of "Religion and Culture." This however was throwing me on the side of the German Tillich.

In this respect, I was often referring to James Luther Adams' edition of Tillich's early articles under the title: *What is Religion?* And I was lamenting the lack of French translations of those early writings on the theology of culture. Then, I ventured into a rather daring enterprise. I convinced five students of my Tillich Seminar to learn German in order to translate Tillich's writings for their M.A. thesis. So, after four courses of German, each one undertook to introduce, to translate, and to comment upon a particular article of Tillich from the early twenties.

This gave rise to the first volume of the collected works of Paul Tillich in French. Under the title: *La dimension religieuse de la culture* (The Religious Dimension of Culture), this volume includes eleven writings of Tillich on the theology of culture, from 1919 to 1926. I still believe we were right about the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem*. The 1919 article "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture" sketches a theological program that is somewhat fulfilled in the 1926 book that was translated into English by H. Richard Niebuhr as *The Religious Situation*. Moreover, the 1919 article was written in the enthusiasm of a new *kairos*, while the article on "The Spiritual World in the Year 1926" concludes on a very different tone: "As far as the spiritual is concerned, 1926 is a year of calm, of weariness, of resignation..."

I must say, however, that today I am not fully satisfied with the selection of the material of that book. Of course, it is not easy to make a sharp distinction between philosophy of religion and theology of culture in the writings of Tillich at that time. But it seems to me now, that a few articles of that book would rather belong to philosophy of religion: for instance, the 1922 article on "The Conquest of the Concept of Religion in the Philosophy of Religion," and the 1926 article on "The Demonic." As a matter of fact, we did not know at that time if we would publish a special book on Tillich's philosophy of religion, because his well-known *Religionsphilosophie* of 1925 had already been translated into

French. The situation is different now, since the publication by Erdmann Sturm (in German) of the 1920 lectures of Tillich on philosophy of religion. These lectures would certainly deserve a translation, and they might go along with the 1925 *Religionsphilosophie*, which would seem to be a summary of the lectures .

From the Existentialist to the Socialist Tillich

While doing our selection of articles for the volume on the theology of culture, we carefully put aside all Tillich's writings on religious socialism. Those became actually the contents of another volume on "Christianity and Socialism." This second volume of the series comprises thirty articles, from 1919 to 1931. This was for us, in the late 1980s a wonderful time. We had in our team a new, very talented collaborator, Lucien Pelletier, who had worked on Ernst Bloch in Tübingen, and who was writing a beautiful French; on the whole, the ideal translator. For me also, this venture into Tillich's German socialist writings was very significant. There indeed my natural bent for socialism took shape in a rational form. Then especially I found a bridge from socialism to liberation theology. It is indeed amazing to see such similarities between religious socialism and liberation theology at a distance of half of a century, despite the large differences in geographical and political situation.

A first (external) similarity is their conflictory situation within their respective Churches. We are all familiar with the struggle between liberation theology and the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. Reading the first articles of Tillich on Christianity and socialism, in 1919-1920, we find the same uneasy relation with the Lutheran Church. There is, however, an important difference. Liberation theologians will fight within the Church, because the poor they are committed to belong to the Church. By contrast, Tillich, from the years 1920 on, will not bother the Church any longer about socialism. Instead, he will carry on the battle, along with colleagues, within the Berlin Kairos Circle, advocating the hidden community of the Kairos.

In both Churches, the reason for the conflict is the same; it is the atheist ideology of Marxist socialism. Liberation theologians argue that they make use of the Marxist sociological analysis, as distinct from the Marxist philosophical ideology, while the Roman theologians hold that Marxist philosophy cannot be separated from Marxist social methodol-

ogy. Tillich here makes an important break. In his 1924 article on "The Religious and Philosophical Elaboration of Socialism," he argues that Marxist ontology not only can, but also must be separated from socialism, because such an ontology does not cohere with the socialist political thought. As a matter of fact, the materialist and atheist philosophical basis of Marxism is nothing other than a liberal capitalist ideology that has been mistakenly taken up into socialism.

Liberation theology and Tillich's religious socialism are also congenial in their scope. In his seminal book, *A Theology of Liberation*, Gustavo Gutiérrez advocates a radical upheaval of the extant social order, a social revolution that might lead to a new society, a new society that would be socialist. This is exactly what Tillich had in mind concerning socialism in the twenties. It would be the new theonomous society that he was then calling for.

Another similarity I would like to mention is a certain point of connection between the social and the religious, between the political and the theological. This is the idea of the demonic in Tillich, a phenomenon that finds its equivalent in the sinful social structure that the liberation theologians are talking about. The Church's supranaturalist theologians often raise the objection that we should not mingle the natural with the supranatural, the political with the theological, nor human liberation with divine salvation. Against such a view, liberation theologians contend that there are social injustices, and thereby sinful social structures. Consequently, striving for the liberation from such a sinful situation means fighting for the Kingdom of God. That is exactly the argument of Tillich in his 1923 article on the "Basic Principles of Religious Socialism." There, for the first time I think, he mentions the demonic, saying that "theonomy stands in opposition to the predominance of the demonic."

I said that the volume on "Christianity and Socialism" includes writings from 1919 to 1931. From 1932 on, Tillich's perspective is somewhat different. At that time, the battle is not so much against bourgeois society as against the Nazis, who have become an impending danger. So, the next volume in the series of our French translations was devoted to the "Writings against the Nazis," from the 1932 ten theses on National Socialism to the dispute with Emanuel Hirsch in 1934-1935.

Of course, the most important writing of that volume is "The Socialist Decision" of 1933. There we find a great social theory, where nationalist,

bourgeois, and socialist elements are compared, criticized, and coordinated. In this work, Tillich does not speak any more about "religious socialism," but the religious connotations are quite evident. In the foreword, he says that "the religious roots of [his] ideas have by no means been severed... but, he continues, the religious element now remains more than before the subsoil from which the ideas arise, rather than the content of the ideas themselves." This is why a theology of the political is possible and relevant in the thought of Paul Tillich. The reason is that there is no split of the natural and the supernatural. Rather, the religious is the root and the subsoil of political ideas.

From a Theology of Culture to a Theology of the Church

Only after this long route through the theology of culture and the philosophy of religious socialism, did we (our group of translators) take up the translation of the 1925 Marburg *Dogmatik*. This might be misleading, since it might imply that Tillich was first of all a philosopher, and that he only came later to theology proper. Of course, this would be wrong, since he was really theologian from the beginning. However, this was not clear for us at that time, because of the very large scope of his theology.

In the Introduction to the third volume of the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich refers to these Marburg lectures as the beginning of his work on systematic theology. The surprise is great, however, when we come to the text of the *Dogmatik*. The systematic structure of question and answer, the correlation of philosophy and theology is not to be found there. The system is built according to another epistemological frame, which correlates the philosophical, the historical, and the normative. Thus, "theology is the concrete and normative science of religion," as we read in the first section of the 1919 lecture. It is correlated with philosophy of religion on the one hand, and with the philosophical history of religions on the other. It should not be surprising then that the theses of the long Introduction of the *Dogmatik* are characterized as philosophy of religion with respect to the universal form, and as theology with respect to their contents of faith. For Tillich, indeed, a genuine philosophy of religion cannot be severed from its religious basis.

In that Introduction, which includes a wonderful chapter on revelation, I would like to point out another type of correlation, that is, the correlation of

revelation (*die Offenbarungs-Korrelation*). This is the correlation of the objective and the subjective side of revelation. The divine manifestation in history is not revelation as long as the human consciousness is not reached and shaken. Therefore, the Christ event, in so far as it is merely an event of the past, is not yet revelation. It becomes revelation at the moment when the correlation is alight (when it lights up), when Christ breaks through and shakes us, along with our religion. So, a theology that is really conscious of revelation cannot do otherwise than to correlate the Christ event with the present cultural and religious situation. This, of course, will become more evident in the *Systematic Theology*, with its method of correlation.

Following the translation of the Marburg *Dogmatik*, we took on the "German Theological Writings." Under that title, we include the theological papers published by Tillich in Germany from 1919 to the early thirties. In this connection, it is amazing to realize that, in 1919, Tillich was writing at the same time on theology of culture, on socialism, and on the Protestant principle. We are sure of that now, thanks to the recent edition of Erdmann Sturm, that, as early as 1919, Tillich has written a complete article on "Justification and Doubt." Tillich's Protestant principle, I think, is the key to understand his very wide perspective on theology. Justification by grace means that divine salvation is active in the world, free from all religious conditions: so, it is active in the secular as well as in the religious realm.

Working on the corpus of Tillich's German Theological Writings, I was also surprised to find a specific move in Tillich's theology that took place under the influence of the Berneuchen movement. This was at the end of the nineteen-twenties and the beginning of the thirties. I would characterize it as a move from the critical to the constructive side of Protestantism; or, in Tillich's own words, a move from "Protestantismus als Kritik" to "Protestantismus als Gestaltung."

Here we confront an interesting problem of translation. At that time, Tillich is fond of the words "Gestalt," "gestalten," "Gestaltung," three words that are a great problem for translators, especially for French translators. In a recent conversation, Robison James reminded me very appropriately that one of Tillich's own preferred English translations for "gestalten" is "to shape," and that "gestaltendes Prinzip" might be well translated also by "formative principle." This is correct, but it is not very helpful for us, since we have no direct equivalent of "to

shape" in French, and today we cannot use the French "formateur" or "formatif" in that context.

In this situation, I think we are compelled to use different translations according to the context. The English word "shaping" works well when we are contrasting "shaping" with "grasping." However, in social matters, Tillich uses the term "Gestaltung" to refer to some kind of transformation or social change, in contrast to our simply upholding existing order. For instance, in the 1930 article on socialism, there is a subtitle that reads: "Der Sozialismus als Kraft der Gestaltung." We translated this, correctly I think, as the French equivalent of "Socialism as Transforming Power," that is, "Le socialisme comme force transformante." But in the case under consideration, I believe we should understand the German "Gestaltung" as the third moment of a dialectic that comprises the following three moments: first the religious law, second the irruption of grace through the law, and third the concrete realization (the "Verwirklichung") of this irruption of grace. Of course, genuine Protestantism will never stand at the first moment of the dialectic, that of the religious law. But what about the other two moments? Tillich usually considers the second moment to be specifically Protestant: that is, "Protestantismus als Kritik." But, especially during the Berneuchen years, he tries to get Protestantism to become an active force at the third moment also: that is the moment of "Protestantismus als Gestaltung," roughly, "Protestantism as a Constructive, Formative Reality." When we understand Tillich's term "Gestaltung" in this way, as the third moment of the dialectic, it agrees nicely with the title of his marvelous book from 1930: *Religiöse Verwirklichung (Religious Realization)*, which means, of course, "Protestant Realization."

Finally, I would like to share with you a treasure I found from that same time. It comprises four papers: a lecture on "The Church and Humanist Society," given by Tillich at a meeting of the Berneuchen movement in 1930; two rejoinders by members of the movement, Wilhelm Stählin and Wilhelm Thomas; and the answer of Tillich. The whole document was first published in *Neuwerk*, the journal of the Berneuchen movement; and it is now available in the *Gesammelte Werke*, volume IX. The objections of Stählin are formulated by way of questions, which Tillich proceeds to answer one by one. Most interesting here is the reaction of Wilhelm Thomas. He fully understands the thought of Tillich; he even goes further along the same path, against Stählin.

The result is that Tillich says he has nothing to reply to Thomas, that he fully agrees with him.

The dispute bears mainly on the last point of Tillich's lecture: "Die Doppelgestalt der Kirche" ("The Dual Figure of the Church"): the official, the manifest Church; and the latent Church, which is constituted by the humanist groups in which the Church is alive although in a non-explicit way. According to Tillich, it is necessary, among these humanist groups, to build and to structure (*zu gestalten*) lives and communities in the direction of a genuine Church.

This is how Tillich was challenging the Berneuchen movement at that time. I believe the

challenge still confronts us, and that it is even more relevant for us today, since the necessity to build a Church outside the walls of our churches is still more evident in our time. Such a Church will not be Catholic or Protestant. It will not even be Christian, according to the narrow and exclusive sense of the term. It will be, in the words of Tillich, "the one and universal Church" (*die eine und allgemeine Kirche*). This is, I think, the last conclusion (and the last endeavor) of a theology of culture: the building of the latent Church on the soil of humanist society.

IN MEMORIAM

John Clayton

Born: April 18, 1943

Died: September 21, 2003

The North American Paul Tillich Society lost one of its astute commentators when John Powell Clayton (1943-2003) died this summer after a short but valiant battle with cancer. He worked extensively with Tillich's method of correlation. His book, entitled *The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology*, is an elegant excavation of ideas and related concepts that explore the scholarship pertinent to his topic yet offering a carefully crafted exposition of his own convictions. The balance of precedent and risk profoundly honors Tillich's contribution to the philosophy of religion.

John grew up in Texas as a Southern Baptist. He went to Cambridge, England to do his doctoral research on Tillich with Dorothy Emmet. He dedicated his book on Tillich to her. Christoph Schwöbel, in his excellent obituary that appeared in *Religious Studies News-AAR Edition* (January, 2004, vol. 19, 1, 16-17) suggests that her approaches, which included using "...methods of analytical philosophy while still remaining faithful to the perennial questions of the Western tradition..." were instrumental to his development as a scholar.

As way leads on to way, he was appointed by Ninian Smart to a position as lecturer in the Religious Studies Department at University of Lancaster. It tickled John no end that his title was "Lecturer in

Religious and Atheistic Thought." His Texas roots were all aquiver. Talk about being on the boundary!

John shared with me the anomaly he faced when he wrote on Tillich during this time in Britain. Although there was a resurgence of interest in Tillich's work in Germany in the mid-1970's, John gambled on his ability to insist that Tillich's ideas were worthy of exploration at a time when there was no guarantee that he would triumph because of low scholarly interest in Tillich's ideas.

After twenty-five years, he left the University of Lancaster as Professor and Head of the Department of Religious Studies. In 1997, he became the Chair of the Department of Religion and Director of the Graduate Division of Religious and Theological Studies at Boston University, College of Arts and Sciences. He brought with him an understanding of the field that enriched the Department. His erudition regarding the state of his field in its many foci (he had been active in religious studies in Germany, Austria, and France and worked with the German Troeltsch Society as vice-president) led him to introduce a Graduate Symposium that served to put students in conversation with one another and provided a venue for talks by scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. It enriched the mix of ideas already in place at BU, and helped students and scholars hone their ideas as only learned interchange can.

John and I became acquainted through the NAPS. When he arrived at Boston University, I was a junior professor involved in getting tenure. Needless to say, neither of us had much time, but we managed such things as a tour of the New England countryside one Fall, an occasional conversation in his office, and now and again we even took time to have lunch together. When I was installed as a pastor

in a nearby church, he honored me by attending the ceremony.

He fought a rare form of leukemia the year before he died, and recovered. But it was not long before another rare sort of cancer challenged him. He died on September 21, 2003, just 60 years old, and still in his prime. He leaves his wife June, his daughter, Emma, many friends, and his scholarship. The world is a lesser place without him.

SHARON BURCH

ON THE CALENDAR

**Paul Tillich Lectures
Harvard University**

Gerald Holton

Mallinckrodt Professor of Physics
Research Professor of the History of Science
Harvard University

**“Paul Tillich, Albert Einstein, and the Quest
for the Ultimate”**

Monday, April 12, 2004
5:15 PM
Science Center B

Professor Holton is one of the world's pre-eminent authorities on Einstein. He knew Paul Tillich personally as faculty colleague and had numerous discussions with him. Instrumental in establishing the Einstein Archive, he serves on the editorial committee of the *Collected Papers of Albert Einstein* (Princeton). Among his recent books are *Einstein, History and Other Passions* (2000), and *Physics, the Human Adventure: From Copernicus to Einstein and Beyond* (with S. G. Brush, 2001). Both Einstein and Tillich emigrated to the United States in 1933, and the interchanges between them, both public and private, in Europe and in this country, are of continuing philosophical and religious significance. Professor Holton's lecture takes place on the fiftieth anniversary of Tillich's appointment as University Professor at Harvard. The centennial of Einstein's theory of relativity and his other high achievements of 1905 will be observed worldwide in 2005.

The Paul Tillich Lectures are sponsored by the Harvard Divinity School and the University Marshal's Office. For more information, contact the di-

rector of the Paul Tillich Lectures at Harvard, William Crout, by FAX at 617.876.0798.

PAUL TILlich AND ERICH PRZYWARA AT DAVOS

THOMAS F. O'MEARA

Editor's Note: Thomas F. O'Meara is the William Warren Professor of Theology Emeritus at the University of Notre Dame and the author of several books on the history of modern German theology. He has written this piece especially for the Bulletin. For a longer version of this article, see Thomas O'Meara, "Paul Tillich und Erich Przywara in Davos," *Davoser Revue* 78 (2003) 18 – 22.

At Davos, Switzerland, from 1928 to 1931 something new in European intellectual life took place: the *Davos Internationale Hochschulkurse*. The "Davoser Hochschulkurse" were originally conceived as supplemental university education for students who were patients in the Swiss town's sanatoria trying to recover from tuberculosis. Soon the project for university students expanded considerably to include teachers and intellectual, and the successful invitations to international scholars of a high order encouraged professors and scholars from other cantons and countries to attend. Among the almost fifty speakers during the talks and seminars being held from March 18 to April 14, 1928, were Paul Tillich, a well-known Protestant theologian, and the Catholic writer and philosopher of religion, Erich Przywara, S.J.¹

At Davos, Tillich discussed contemporary philosophies of religion with the Catholic Przywara. One article described Przywara as "the leading mind in German Catholicism,"² while Fritz Medicus, teacher and friend of Tillich and a seminal figure in the revival of interest in Fichte and Schelling after 1890, described Tillich as "the coming figure" in philosophy.³ The conservative Protestant theologian wrote, "Paul Tillich and Erich Przywara were invited to explain the religious problem of the modern person. The question was: is there for the modern person a form of religiosity which leaves liberalism far behind and penetrates into the truly deep levels of human existence? Does this enable a coming closer of Protestant and Catholic thought?"⁴

Przywara lectured at Davos in 1928 on "Das religiöse Problem und die Philosophie" and "Das katholische Apriori," and he returned to Davos in

1929 to offer “Das religiöse und metaphysische Problem der Existenz.” Erich Przywara was born in 1889 in Kattowitz in the German Upper Silesia. He entered the Jesuits in 1908, and after his ordination, he was sent to serve on the editorial staff of their journal, *Stimmen der Zeit*. Bibliographical sources list over 800 publications with about fifty books. In 1930 the Jesuit reviewed Tillich’s recent publications, all from 1929—*Kairos*, *Protestantismus als Kritik und Gestaltung*, and *Religiöse Verwirklichung*—praising the Protestant theologian’s use of a variety of sources ancient and medieval even as he re-expressed dogma in a contemporary language.

An article in a Zurich newspaper reported “extensive discussions” between the lecturers and the audience. “Prof. Tillich discussed on Monday in the Rathaus his philosophy of religion, and, since the Munich Jesuit Przywara and the Barthian Eberhard Grisebach also spoke, the following exchanges were not only lively but had the character of a conversation on faith.”⁵ Tillich went beyond both the liberal Protestantism of the late nineteenth century and the new dialectical theology of Karl Barth, while Przywara sought to leave behind a sterile neo-medievalism for a new philosophy of revelation drawing on Thomas Aquinas, John Henry Newman, and Max Scheler.⁶

Tillich was the first German university professor not of Jewish blood to flee Germany, finding a position at Union Theological Seminary in New York City and then becoming University Professor at Harvard University. He would appear on the cover of *Time* (March 16, 1959) and be invited to deliver addresses at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Przywara, too, survived the war, although by the late 1950s he began to be physically and mentally ill. While there were many days of withdrawal and emptiness, he published after the war well over a dozen books including *Kirche in Gegensätzen*, advice for the coming Council, Vatican II whose era he did not experience.

Tillich must have remembered Przywara, for a volume composed in 1958 for Tillich’s seventieth birthday included Przywara’s imaginative essay comparing Tillich with Origen and Luther, Jakob

Böhme and Schelling.⁷ In 1963, the editors planning a Festschrift honoring Gottfried Salomon, the founder of the Davos seminars, wrote to Przywara about his time at Davos. In his response, Przywara observed that the themes of those years were still important in 1963: for instance, anxiety as the characteristic of the age or an exchange of Catholic and Protestant theologies. The dialogue between Tillich and Przywara at Davos was an early moment of ecumenism, a forecast of a lasting and expansive change among the Christian churches long at enmity with each other. The perspective (in Tillich’s words) of Protestant protest and Catholic substance anticipated the decades of ecumenism that lay ahead. The two theologians set a course which (unlike many movements in the twentieth century) altered the world for the better in ways that lasted and were not to be set aside.

¹ Timothy Nelson, “Gruppenbild mit Damen,” *Davoser Revue* 77 (2002) 45-50, is a rich source for the first gathering.

² Eric Brock, “P. Przywara S.J. spricht in Davos,” *Neue Zürcher Nachrichten* 87 (March 30, 1929) 4.

³ Medicus in a Swiss journal cited in R. Albrecht, *Ein Lebensbild in Dokumenten, Gesammelte Werke* 5 (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1980), 181.

⁴ Gerhardt Kuhlmann, “Allmächtigkeit oder Alleinwirksamkeit der Gnade. Ein theologisches Nachwort zu den Davoser internationalen Hochschulkursen,” *Theologische Blätter* 7 (May, 1928): 122.

⁵ Margarethe Driesch, “Davoser Hochschulkurse,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 149 (March 29, 1928), 1.

⁶ On Przywara and Tillich, and Barth, see Thomas F. O’Meara, *Erich Przywara, S.J.: His Theology and His World* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

⁷ “Christian Root-Terms: Kerygma, Mysterium, Kairos, Oikonomia,” in *Religion and Culture. Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich*, ed. Walter Leibrecht (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959; republished in T. F. O’Meara and C. D. Weisser, eds., *Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought* (Dubuque: The Priory Press, 1964), 197-214.

**IN GOD'S IMAGE THEY WERE
CREATED: HUMAN AUTONOMY AND
THEONOMY**

MICHAEL KESSLER

Even with the widespread destruction of war in recent memory, Tillich closed his 1923 essay, "Basic Principles of Religious Socialism," with a hopeful vision: "The consciousness of Kairos in the sense of an emerging theonomy creates a community of those who are filled with the same import and who strive for the same goal" (PE 87).¹ Here Tillich claimed that a theologically attuned view of history could show us that time is ruptured and pregnant (kairic), "and the kingdom of God is at hand" (PE 61). He does not mean to invoke imagery of final battles between angelic hosts and demonic forces. Rather, he intends to suggest that modern humanity is coming closer to the possibility of filling the present, finite moments of time with unconditional meaning. How? What allows for this progressive view, even as he saw the growing potential for destruction?

Like Kant, Tillich thought that the age of enlightenment was happening around him, although an enlightened age had not yet been achieved. New democratic forms were being built, technology was emerging that could unshackle humans from the chains of subsistence, and the social order contained the seeds of general emancipation. These advances all developed from the unfolding of autonomy, yet it was not so clear that freedom brought with it necessary progress. For, as he ended his 1932 essay, "The Socialist Decision," Tillich insisted that, "Only expectation can triumph over the death now threatening Western civilization through the resurgence of the myth of origin." Political romanticism, raw grabs for technological and political power, and institutionalized disdain for human dignity were increasingly pervasive. Tillich's concern was to raise consciousness among the human community that they needed law motivated by humane concern, not simply unbridled freedom.

But the question remains how autonomy relates to this so-called theonomy? In the process of salvation history, in which autonomy is replaced by theonomy, what use is there for the process of enlightenment and why does Tillich privilege it as he does? Tillich asked anew why one whose sights are set on ultimate reality should concern him/herself with passing earthly affairs? How Tillich answered this question bears significance not only for the

strictly theological issue of the relation of natural and theological life, but for how the relation between religious concern for the dignity of created life is configured with the need for autonomous political orders that stand as checks against vicious forces.

I propose in this paper to read Tillich's account of the Fall in order to disentangle his conception of autonomy from his reading of the Genesis narrative. In his account of the Fall, the moment traditionally held to be the inception of universal sin and the depravity of human will, Tillich saw autonomy awakened. With the Fall, humans literally tumble into their own possibility² and can only then embark on a path of actualizing their nature. Even while the Fall into self-actualization is an estrangement from their essential nature, humans can now become outwardly creative and self-expansive in their task of life. Such outward creation is for Tillich a fulfillment of life's imperative and thus an affirmative stance toward being. Indeed, Tillich held all such affirmative forms of life to be in some basic sense a confirmation of the value of being and thus in some way religious. My analysis aims to expose the paradigm of autonomy at the heart of his theological anthropology. Tillich built upon the enlightenment understanding of autonomy and it framed his interpretation of the Christian story of the Fall. He could thus be concerned about the depths of human depravity and, at the same time, share in Kant's optimism for the future, *if only people would emerge from their self-imposed immaturity and dare to use their own understanding* (WIE 35:41).³

Tillich's Conception of the "Fall"

The Christian narrative strikes a distinction between the original creation of humanity—their "essential" state—and their post-lapsarian state of "existence." Created in the image of God, humans were originally united to God (ST II:33-6). Their essential nature was to be obedient creatures in harmony with the divine ground of their being. This state, which Tillich metaphorically called "dreaming innocence," means that humans were in a state of un-actualized potential in their original essential state. They had capacities of reflective thought and creative action, but had no need to exercise them, nor did they make motions toward actualizing their capacities. The implication is that humans in this pre-lapsarian essential life were not awakened to their own most powerful potential, which was the freedom to act on their own power as full creatures in loving concert with

their Creator. For a time, they were content with their position of rest and a disruption occurred that tarnished this relation to the Divine. Humans “fell” into finite existence, bound to the anxious state of life within mortality, space, and time, removed from immediate relation to God. This Fall, an estrangement of humankind from their Divine Creator, disrupted humanity from its childlike essential life.

Tillich asked what “destroyed [the] primitive theonomy,” of this dreamy innocence? “The answer is the always present, always driving, always restless principle of ‘autonomy’” (PE 44). Tillich explains that the doctrine of creation—in which humans are created in the image of God—means that humans have the power thereby to separate themselves from God (ST II:33).⁴ The “freedom of turning away from God is a quality of the structure of freedom as such” (ST II:32). Mythologically, humans in their dreamy innocence were caught between their desire to actualize freedom and their desire to preserve their dreamy innocence. They opted for actualization, which removed them from innocent connection to God, making them reliant on their own limited resources.

What is this condition that humans are thrown into after their estrangement from God? The post-lapsarian state is existence wherein one is a finite, self-determining agent. All life actualizes itself within and through the structures of being (ST III:30) and as such is limited by space and time and the particularities of their form of being. Human life, however, can adapt to given structures and forge new ones. The Fall entails that humans must now come to mold themselves. Tillich called this process self-integration. Individuals, through creative lives, expand their horizons beyond their own immediate orb, expanding outwardly, returning to themselves, and reintegrating in a synthetic process (ST III:30).

Yet, this created life is finite and humans are keenly aware of their mortal state. For Tillich, the perception of the threat of losing one’s existence is the motivation to drive toward fully realized autonomy. The “only way of dealing with [non-being] lies in the courage of taking it upon one’s self” (ST I:189). Existence is thus a “standing out” of oneself into the world, a basic projection that transcends the place in which one finds oneself thrown (ST II:21). All action becomes a kind of projection, but self-integrated action—autonomous action—is fully self-imposed and *makes* the self because the intentions

and actions instill structure and content within the individual.

For Tillich, existence that acts under the direction of its own reason to affirm and actualize its possibilities is most fully autonomous. Autonomy requires acting toward self-integration under the laws of reason. That is, to utilize reason and the structures of being to freely achieve decent ends within the finite realm is the end of reason and the highest goal of autonomy. This requires the acceptance of reason as the law of freedom: autonomy does not mean lawlessness. It means the acceptance of the structures and laws of reality as they are present in human mind and in its structures and laws. Autonomy means obedience to reason, i.e., to the ‘logos’ immanent in reality and mind (PE 44).

For Tillich, following Kant, freedom is based in the deliberative, rational capacity to judge arguments and decide upon courses of action. For Kant, autonomy specifically designates the capacity of a rational agent to legislate moral laws for him/herself, and thereby be subject to no external laws. This freedom is responsible in that a free will *responds* to its own freedom by taking up its own actions under its own imperatives, guided by objective reason. An autonomous subject is constrained by no laws except those imposed upon him/herself by his/her own will. The human subject alone is responsible for what emerges out of his/her life and thus is creative even of the very notion of what it means to be human:

The freedom of the human is the possibility [it bears] of transcending its nature...From this it follows that it is impossible to formulate a definition of human nature...For man has the possibility of changing the nature which has been defined in such a definition. Man is able to break through the limitations of every definition of man...Therefore all definitions of human nature and freedom which try to establish a human nature or a nature of freedom above history are impossible. Man’s historical existence makes them impossible...only those can be called men who possess this freedom and participate in the self-determination of man through history.⁵

The essence of humanity, to freely be and act as the image of God—a free and active subject—is thus awakened in autonomy. For Tillich, the moral life is not a heteronomous response to some set of precepts or external law, “but an act in which life integrates itself in the dimension of spirit” both as a person and in a community (ST III:38). Morality is the “function of life in which the...self constitutes itself as a

person; it is the totality of those acts in which a potentially personal life process becomes an actual person" (ST III 38). This possibility is moral freedom, the possibility of deciding and integrating one's own life on the basis of one's capacities. The limitation of this freedom is the responsibility to recognize the value of other life and respect it rather than destroy it. Freedom is manifest under law; the moral law given in reason is the limit condition upon human freedom. The "encounter with another person implies the unconditional command to acknowledge him as a person" (ST III:45).

The surprising and fundamental claim that Tillich made here in interpreting the Fall, largely counter to the prevailing understanding of human freedom, is that "autonomy is not necessarily a turning-away from the unconditional" (PE 45). "The Fall is not a break, but an imperfect fulfillment" (ST II:30). Indeed, he claimed: "Creation is fulfilled in the creaturely self-realization...through a break between existence and essence" (ST I:256).⁶ By this he indicated that autonomy is the obedient acceptance of the unconditional character of the form, the logos, the universal reason in world and mind. "It is the acceptance of the norms of truth and justice, of order and beauty, of personality and community. It is obedience to the principles that control the realms of individual and social culture. *These principles have unconditional validity. Obedience to them is obedience to the logos-element in the unconditional*" (PE 45, emphasis mine).

This means for Tillich that the "fall" into existence and estrangement is the major step toward the possibility of the fulfillment of the human essence. The created goodness of essential life is not actualized until it is enacted through the trials of human existence. "Existence is the fulfillment of creation; existence gives creation its positive character" (ST I:203-4). To take up one's freedom, however partially, is to become part of what one is essentially, even if for the time being it is a move away from the ground and source of one's being. Thus, Tillich read the idea of autonomy to be at the core of the Christian tradition. Tillich embraced autonomy, along with creatureliness, as central to Christian anthropology. In this way, again, Tillich echoes Kant, who had argued that in the Bible "man...is *not basically corrupt* (even as regards his original predisposition to good) but rather as still capable of an improvement...For man, therefore, who despite a corrupted heart yet possesses a good will, there remains hope

of a return to the good from which he has strayed" (Religion 39).

In the end, Tillich claimed that forms of autonomy—those capacities for self-determination, moral action, and the creation of culture—could be united with the unconditional ground of being. Even as Tillich insisted that the modern age and its time-bound forms of creativity were yearning for spiritual substance, he did not reject these finite modes of autonomy as irredeemable. Rather, he interpreted them as channels through which humans seek and gain fulfillment, even in their mundane movements.⁷ In this way, Tillich claimed that the process of developing one's autonomy is an intrinsic and necessary component of the achievement of essential life united to God. Humans must be on the way to self-actualization before they can be made actual in their essence as creatures of God, reunited with the source of their being.

Further, Tillich's claim is more radical. Since humans share the capacity to shape and create with the divine ground of being (ST I:256), the divine creation "is fulfilled in the creaturely self-realization which simultaneously is freedom and destiny" (ST I:256). That is, any life that creates and lives for value "*in itself*" is a life that in some way transcends itself. Such life becomes aware of its own limits and recognizes the grasp of that which is ultimate and beyond one's own finitude. Such a being, *within finite conditions*, lives in some relation to its depth or the ground of its being. Thus, Tillich claimed in *Morality and Beyond*, that a religious dimension, religious source, and religious motivation are each implicit in all morality, acknowledged or not. Morality does not depend on any concrete religion: it is religious in its very essence."⁸ Insofar as we deem life to be worth carrying on, insofar as we strive to value and create, we bear a judgment upon the value and dignity of life. This is a theologically significant act, an act of implicit faithful existence. Tillich could say that all modes of responsible life, even those not explicitly religious in content, could achieve creative truth and relation to the unconditional: "The unconditional is never a law or a promoter of a definite form of the spiritual or social life. The contents of the historical life are tasks and ventures of the creative spirit. The truth is a living truth, a creative truth, and not a law" (PE 51).

Conclusion

Thus, Tillich's interpretation of the Christian narrative of the fall reveals autonomy to be the human essence, even from the theological point of view. As autonomous forms of reason and being create better modes of human being and institutions, Tillich thinks that there is more possibility for the dignity of persons to be secured. With this result, Tillich could hold that we were progressing in history even while dangers lurked. History bears meaning for human beings since the passing of historical time leads them from states of subjection under determining nature and extant authority into rational and external freedom. As Kant had argued in the "Enlightenment" essay:

...once nature has removed the hard shell from this kernel for which she has most fondly cared, namely, the inclination to and vocation for free *thinking*, the kernel gradually reacts on a people's mentality (whereby they become increasingly able to *act freely*), and it finally influences even the principles of *government*, which finds that it can profit by treating men, *who are now more than machines*, in accord with their dignity (WIE 35:41)

It is hard today to remain as optimistic as Kant. Indeed, Tillich was cautious to suggest that nature can't be so simply conceived as the kind and gentle hand directing humans to better lives. Nor can we glorify free-thinking as necessarily leading to dignified and respectful actions. In fact, autonomy that refuses laws for its actions, and marshals resources and technology, can lead to disastrous consequences; this autonomy is prevalent today. But Tillich would argue that such actions are not autonomy at all. Autonomy requires the recognition of the rational, unconditional law, a task to be shared by rationalists *and* religionists alike. Dire and disastrous situations can be avoided only if we come to see our own task as the vocation of free thinking, responsible action, and the treatment of our fellows in accord with their dignity—in short, our obligation to be just.

¹ Paul Tillich, *Political Expectation*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), hereafter referred to in textual citation as PE.

² In the Heideggerian sense.

³ Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, Ted Humphrey, tr., (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), hereafter referred to in textual citation as WIE.

⁴ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, I:1951, II:1957, III:1963), hereafter referred to in textual citation as ST with vol.

⁵ Paul Tillich: "Freedom in the Period of Transformation," in *Paul Tillich: Main Works: Writings in Social Philosophy and Ethics*, vol. 3, Erdmann Sturm, ed., (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1998), 458-9, hereafter referred to in textual citation as HWFreedom with page.

⁶ For a discussion of the problematic nature of this claim, see Joel R. Smith: "Creation, Fall, and Theodicy in Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology*," in *Kairos and Logos: Studies in the Implications of Tillich's Theology*, John J. Carey, ed., (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 141-65. Smith's contention that Tillich makes the Fall into a structural necessity misses the essential point of Tillich's theory of freedom, (163): if the Fall was a structural necessity, the Fall *could not* be the result of human freedom. Rather, for Tillich, it is always a "leap" (STII 44) and not a structural necessity, even if every human is incited by desire to actualize his/her potential freedom. Indeed, for actualization of finite freedom to occur, it undergoes transformation from dreamy innocence—essence—to existence and this becomes estranged under the conditions of finitude until being reunited to the Divine ground of being in theonomy. Estrangement is not necessary, logically speaking, but is factually always present. In other words, phenomenally speaking, the fall into finite freedom is always estrangement even while the possibility of essential theonomy exists from the start of a human life.

⁷ See Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, Robert C. Kimball, ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

⁸ Paul Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 64.

**THE SOCIALIST ÉMIGRÉ: MARXISM
AND THE LATER TILlich BY BRIAN
DONNELLY
(MERCER UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2003),**

REVIEWED BY GUY HAMMOND

Anyone who has dipped into Paul Tillich's writings prior to his 1933 immigration to the USA knows that in those years he was a strong advocate of a socio-political movement called "religious socialism." And anyone with more than a passing acquaintance with these works knows that he credited Karl Marx with important insights vis-à-vis the economic, political, and religious crisis of early 20th century Europe, and that he saw Marx as in significant ways a successor of the Hebrew prophets. But the common wisdom has it that after Tillich came to the States he recognized that socialism had no future in the USA, and that most American theologians and philosophers had little interest in pursuing themes introduced by Karl Marx. Tillich therefore (again, so goes the common assumption), forsook his love affair with socialist/Marxist thought, and turned his attention to other matters, especially to the writing of his *Systematic Theology*. He did attempt to introduce his American readers and hearers to European existentialism, but he shied away from any effort to rehabilitate socialism or Marxism for American consumption.

Brian Donnelly, a priest and scholar in Northern Ireland, sets about in *The Socialist Émigré: Marxism and the Later Tillich* to correct the record in this regard. To develop his argument, Donnelly states his thesis in a variety of ways, in the process perhaps revealing the elusiveness of the project. At times, the thesis takes shape as a valuable but uncontroversial enterprise: "what we seek to prove is a continued Marxist influence in Tillich's work" (p. 4). At other times, the claim seems to be much stronger: the attempt to determine "to what extent was the later Tillich still a Marxist?" albeit a surreptitious one (p. 16), with the implication that the extent was quite considerable. On the one hand, Donnelly wants to show "the depth and indispensability of the contribution Marxism makes to the fabric and tenor of Tillich's later thought" (p. 243). On the other hand, "Tillich was discriminating and selective about Marxism. Only some insights found their way into his work" (pp. 25-26). At what point, one might ask, do we stop speaking of influence and begin to claim identification? Was Tillich a Platonist, a Hegelian,

or an existentialist in the same sense that he was a Marxist? Or is the claim something stronger?

Other ambiguities arise to complicate Donnelly's project. "Marxism" is by no means a unified thought system; distinctions must be made between the early and the later Marx (not to mention the still later Marxism of Lenin and Stalin). Here our author is reasonably clear: Tillich, he suggests, was much more impressed by the early, Hegelian Marx than by the later, "scientific" Marx (pp. 13, 15). Also, the term, "socialism," has more than one meaning; not all socialists are Marxists. On this point, it is perhaps regrettable that Donnelly did not say more about the possibility of a non-Marxian socialism; more often than not, he elides this distinction. (However, it may well be true that Tillich does the same.)

These things having been said, it is this reviewer's opinion that Donnelly is notably successful in the task of refuting those "who believe in an abrupt break between the early and later Tillich" (p. 26), especially regarding the influence of socialism and of Marx on his later thought. In making his case, Donnelly introduces a useful distinction: he proposes that the later Tillich appropriates "Marx-theologian" rather than Marx the political thinker or the economist, or even Marx the latter-day Hebrew prophet (of course the reference is to Marx as a *philosophical* theologian; Tillich is able to get beyond Marx's atheism by use of the language of "ultimate concern": cf. pp. 17-18).

Donnelly proceeds to an analysis of six Marxist themes—ideology, the proletariat, history, praxis, revolution, and materialism—"to illustrate their reference to and evolution in Tillich's theology" (p. 21). Though, as Donnelly grants, the themes overlap, by unraveling them he finds a number of interesting lines of connection between Tillich's earlier socio-political analyses and his later theology. In two instances, Donnelly makes detailed comparisons of specific earlier and later texts: "Kairos and Logos" (1926) compared with "Participation and Knowledge" (1955); and "The Problem of Power" (1926) with *Love, Power and Justice* (1952). By this method, he goes a fair way toward achieving his goal of "prying open a number of condensed and obscure arguments" in the later work (p. 167). In the course of investigating these six themes, Donnelly calls attention to portions of Tillich's work that have received relatively little attention in the English-speaking world, casting them in a new light by finding in them heretofore unexamined theological implications. To this reader, reconsideration of the

essay, "The Class Struggle and Religious Socialism" (1929), found in *Paul Tillich on Creativity* (edited by Jacquelyn Ann Kegley [University Press of America, 1989], pp. 93-118)—expressly omitted by Tillich from his collection, *The Protestant Era*—was especially instructive in this regard.

We might single out one of Donnelly's themes for brief further elaboration. He asserts that, "the concept of the proletariat informs Tillich's thinking about the church" (pp. 22-23). More to the point, "proletarian consciousness" was for the early Tillich a crucial bearer of history, both as an embodied awareness of estrangement and as a vocational consciousness calling for struggle to bring about the ideal, classless society. Tillich saw that there was no proletarian class as such in post-World War Two America. However, he concluded that the concept of proletarian consciousness can be broadened, and, as it were, "existentialized." According to Donnelly, "what Tillich claimed is that the posture of the church [and this can encompass Tillich's "latent" church: GBH] vis-à-vis society is proletarian, if by proletarian we mean the 'locus of the deepest estrangement and at the same time the protest of true humanity against that estrangement'" (p. 89; Donnelly is quoting Tillich, "Christianity and Marxism," in *Political Expectation* [New York: Harper and Row, 1971, pp. 90-91]). While it may be questioned, whether and in what sense the church can be characterized as "the locus of the deepest estrangement," still it is instructive to follow Donnelly as he compares what Tillich says about the proletariat with what he says about the church.

It can be argued that what Marx afforded Tillich more than anything else was an avenue back to Hegel (the early Hegel and the Hegel of the philosophy of history). In the first lecture of Tillich's *Vorle-*

sung über Hegel: Frankfurt, 1931/32 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), he recalls his great surprise upon returning from the war to discover that Hegel's reputation had been radically reversed, and that he was once again being regarded as one of the greatest figures in the history of philosophy. And Tillich remarks that the Berlin Hegel-Congress, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the death of Hegel (1931), with "typical idealist" oversight failed to take note of the importance of the decisive influence Hegel had on the thought of Marx (cf. pp. 31-33). (We all await with interest the English translation of this large volume.) Tillich read Hegel at least in part through Marxian lenses. Is it not possible to see Donnelly's six themes as Hegelian ideas (even materialism, seen in dialectical counterpoint with idealism), but read through the lenses of Marx's social existentialism? To say this does not diminish the value of Donnelly's reading.

It must be remarked that Donnelly's writing style is not always felicitous; occasionally his sentences lack precision or focus. ("Marxism remains an important polemic in the agitation of Tillich's thinking in the criticism of assumed theological ideas, society and culture": p. 26.) In substance if not in style, however, the book is an important contribution to Tillich scholarship.

Errata: James Luther Adams should surely be identified as a Unitarian, not as a Lutheran, scholar (p. 1); the distinguished Catholic scholar who authored "The Kingdom of God as Utopia" in *Paul Tillich: A New Catholic Assessment* is George H. Tvard, not Harvard (pp. 141-142).

**IS CHRISTIANITY THE MOST
UNIVERSAL FAITH?
A RESPONSE TO ROBISON B.
JAMES'S TILlich AND THE WORLD
RELIGIONS: ENCOUNTERING OTHER
FAITHS TODAY**

KENNETH ROSE

I

Robison James has written a carefully argued book in which he brings a wealth of new insights to

the vexed question of the proper relationship between religions. This nuanced book attempts to come to grips with what appears to be a personal concern of his for the salvation of people other than Christians. In a book that attempts, among numerous other objectives, to make Paul Tillich's theology appealing to evangelicals, James sets for himself the thankless and impossible task of persuading evangelicals to adopt a new kind of exclusivism that allows independent validity to religions other than orthodox Christianity. There is much to be welcomed in this book, though the continuing insistence upon

the supremacy of orthodox Christian doctrine—a claim that reemerges with force in the second half of the book—renders James’s theology of religions unusable by those of us who can no longer credit Christian triumphalism in any form.

This book suffers from a serious inconsistency: in the first half of the book, James strives to articulate a pragmatic rationale for a limited, contextual exclusivism, one which is best deployed in the personal, existential encounters with the sacramental images, doctrines, and personages of one’s home tradition. In the second part of the book, however, James articulates a forceful but sketchy argument for the supremacy of the Christian message, one that tries swiftly and cleanly to neutralize all of its opponents because they fail to value history in the way orthodox Christianity does.

So different in intention and tone are these sections that this reader wonders if they have been written by the same person or at the same time. For example, James suggests in the first part of the book that the mutual practice of reciprocal inclusivism by followers of different religions will result in the recognition that each faith is “equally and independently valid and potent” (118). This pluralist stance, however, is compromised by the claim in the second half of the book that “the Christian message has a stronger claim to be the universal faith of humankind than does the message of any other faith” (128). James knows that “the apparent imperialism” of this claim is “offensive” and will “raise the hackles of many generous-spirited and ecumenical people” (128)—a prediction that is not likely to be proved wrong.

In an effort to rebut the charge that his view of Christianity is imperialistic, James claims that the religion with “the strongest claim to be the universal faith of humankind...ideally should have the *least* domineering, the *least* arrogant, and the *least* imperialist message of all. It should be the most self-surrendering of all” (128). As evidence that it is the most universal, a religion must neither subjugate nor obliterate other faiths while being able to “most fully include” and “most effectively foster” them (128). It is clear that Christianity as a whole cannot by this standard be construed as the most universal religion. But with the slenderest of historical and theoretical consideration of the other religions, James sets out to show that Christianity is the most universal of human religions and the one to which they all point. He offers summary evaluations of some of the other religions in light of two criteria: whether they value

history and whether they can avoid “demonic” self-absolutizing.

With respect to the first criterion, James writes that “Christianity proves itself superior to Buddhism. Actually, there is no contest” (130). Because Buddhism does not embrace the “ultimate meaningfulness” of history, it is simply “out of the running” (130). With respect to the second criterion, Christianity loses to Buddhism because it has, as James admits, “wrought a huge share of the havoc brought upon the world through its arrogance and religious triumphalism” (139). Because it refuses to absolutize “the lofty pretensions of any person, group, or cause” (138), Buddhism has, in James’s view, a built-in corrective against demonic self-inflation. James thinks that this alone would render Buddhism the more universal religion, except for the fact that James already eliminated Buddhism from the running for that title by showing that it failed to give the same value to history as Christianity does (138).

A few points can be made about this argument. One is that if Buddhism fails the historical test, then surely Christianity fails the self-absolutizing test. On James’s own approach, then, it would seem as if Buddhism cannot be so quickly brushed aside.

Second, claims of this weight about the other religions cannot be made so lightly and with so little attention to their specific histories. Indeed, such attention to the actual histories of these religions should characterize so proudly a historical view of religions as James’s.

Third, James seems to think of history as a kind of absolute time through which the intentions of his God clearly run, from the first Adam to the New Jerusalem, and in which there arises a religious organization that prophetically discerns the endpoint toward which history, or God’s plan of salvation, moves. It is not inaccurate to say, as James does, that Buddhism does not live by this culturally constructed version of time. I hope that it is not too unkind when I say that this way of viewing the passing of events on this planet and in this galaxy seems a bit self-absorbed and self-important. Indeed, the larger cosmic framework within which Buddhism operates, and which is closer to the cosmology of science, along with Buddhism’s analysis of all conceptions into emptiness dissolves not only the petty absolutes of the Godman Jesus Christ, the Holy Bible, and Heaven and Hell, but also the prison of a history forcibly centered upon the doings of one small nation and its most successful heretics.

Fourth, James attempt to show that Christianity is the universal faith of humankind is nothing more than a new version of the old missionary propaganda about Jesus, for orthodox Christianity is as likely the bearer of the last human word about the divine as are the Latter-Day Saints, Islam, or the Jehovah's Witnesses. To think in this way is like saying that people who speak French would be happier if they spoke English, but since they don't, we English-speakers will strain every nerve to show them that French is actually an English dialect. Or it is like saying that your mother is actually my mother, and that since you will be happier when you realize that, then I will strain every nerve to help you see that your mother is actually my mother. The most stubborn forms of Christian particularism show a persistent inability to understand that believing that Jesus is the final truth is only a presently verified truth for those who are already inclined to think that way. To insist that this dogma is true against every objection is to reveal oneself as a hardened dogmatist who bends everything to the verification of the dogma—like a no-tax advocate calling for tax cuts even when the treasury is empty. This dogmatism closes Christian particularists off to the deeper and more challenging dialogue that puts this claim at risk and entertains the possibility that some other religion may have a more comprehensive truth than Christianity.

Fifth, no genuinely pluralistic theology of religions will make conclusive claims about which religion is final or most universal, since the verification of this claim requires universal knowledge, something not available to human beings. Consequently, a reciprocal inclusivism in which competing absolutisms are allowed to coexist is a fiction, since no absolute claims can be substantiated. For unyielding particularists who have, however, become convicted by the irreducible values present in other traditions, the final stop before opening up to pluralism may be a reciprocal inclusivism in which religions are viewed as competitors, each of which thinks of itself as more likely than the others. But this stance fails, since a conclusive verdict about which religion, if any, is supreme remains unavailable. Thus, a degree of self-doubt and hesitancy in making broad claims about any religion is more appropriate in interreligious dialogue than the kind of absolutizing discourse suggested by reciprocal inclusivism. The stilted, self-protecting dialogue of reciprocal inclusivism is reminiscent more of cagey business competitors exploiting weaknesses than of

friends in the process of deepening their bonds. True, pluralistic dialogue can only occur in a context devoid of authoritarianism and the epistemological immodesty that already knows that it knows the truth. The deepest piety is consistent with doctrinal uncertainty, a stance associated more with genuine pluralism than with any kind of inclusivism, reciprocal or otherwise. This is the actual, pluralistic stance of the religions in relation to each other, which becomes obvious when the reality of plural religions is accepted, and is not the privileged outlook merely of ahistorical mystics or of detached, theoretical on-lookers, as James claims (120).

II

I want now to sketch a pluralistic theology of religions, one that can release Christianity from the bias that it is the universal faith of humankind. But first I need to respond to the potent criticism that pluralistic theologies of religions are themselves particularistic, or inclusivistic, and so fail to live up to the ideal of pluralism. According to this criticism, the exclusivistic pluralist dogmatically claims that due to epistemological and/or metaphysical indeterminateness, no particular religious viewpoint can be final, while the inclusivistic pluralist narcissistically allows that perhaps eventually particularists will come to see that a kind of metaphysical indeterminateness is the deeper meaning of Christ, *shunyata*, Brahman, and so forth.

To view pluralistic interpretations of religion as particularisms that have universalized themselves cuts two ways. If, for the sake of argument, pluralists accept this charge and agree that it undercuts any negative, universal claim that they might make about, for example, Jesus, then the particularist will also have to admit that this charge also undercuts any positive, universal claim they would like to make about Jesus. So the price of giving up the negative, pluralist claim about Jesus is a price that pluralists may be willing to pay in order to undercut the universalizing of positive and inclusivistic claims about Jesus—such as the claim that he is the hope of the world, the one way to the father, and so on.

Another response to the charge that pluralism is merely another form of inclusivism is to point out that pluralism does not necessarily assume that the many religions tend toward non-dualism or mystical irrealism, for that would be as paternalistic as any other kind of inclusivism. All that pluralism needs to claim is that the truth or falsity of religious beliefs is

not presently determinable. To go beyond that is to move beyond what evidence and human finitude allow into confessions of faith—which are excellent in themselves, but, given our present limitations, remain a matter of personal or communal preference.

The objection to pluralism as just another form of inclusivism that has the quality of a sterile argument in which the winning of merely logical points is accompanied by the exclamation of *touché!* It betrays a narcissistic mentality that refuses to grant the same degree of reality to the other as it grants to the self. It shows a real inability to place oneself in the shoes of the other, for if we were to do this with the kind of radicalness that would allow us to inhabit a competing inclusivism, then we would break free from the tyranny of our own unmediated particularisms and take the first real step toward pluralism.

Against the final refusal of the other that is represented by an obstinate particularism, there can be no further discussion. This is a brute self-assertion and refusal of the other that is logically isomorphic to racism and ethnocentrism. The pluralism advocated in this paper differs from narcissistic particularism in its openness to conversion to the standpoint of the other. It is this radical risk of openness to the point of identity with the other that constitutes the specific difference between pluralism and the varieties of particularism.

With this objection overcome, I would like to suggest what an apophatic and pluralistic theology of religions may look like. When the religions learn to apophatically unsay their central teachings, when they can unsay themselves with the same passion that they say themselves, then they will be ready to engage in what Douglas Pratt calls “a collective religious quest”¹ and give up the struggle for supremacy. As human organizations engaged, among other things, in a quest to understand the spiritual nature of life, religions should interact pluralistically with each other as formal equals engaged in a mutual search for adequate responses to the spiritual dimension of life. A pluralistic theology of religions is a common quest for wisdom that is less the dialogue of cagey players thinking about hidden agendas and more the enthusiastic bonding that occurs among people from different countries on pilgrimage together. Each pilgrim will have laid aside the idea that my religion is unquestionably the truest and best way for others as well as for me. This is not relativism, because there is no denial that it is logically possible that from an absolute standpoint one of these religions may be more comprehensive than

another. It is the humble recognition that there is no infallible means given to human beings in this life to establish conclusively the supremacy of any one of the many religious ways available to us. Rather than trying to make converts or prove the supremacy of one religion over the others, it would be truer to the actual limitations of human knowledge to see followers of other religions as fellow pilgrims with whom we can share our tips about the journey and pick up theirs as we travel on together.

Christian particularists, such as James, can demonstrate that they are ready to be just one pilgrim among many others by becoming willing to remove Jesus from the center of the religious life of humanity. I am not saying that Christians ought to remove Jesus from the center of the Christian life, nor am I saying that Christians ought to stop thinking that Jesus is of the utmost importance for Christians. What I am saying is that Christians have an ethical and theological obligation to refrain from claiming or implying that people who worship at other altars worship false or lesser divinities. This moral and theological criticism is directed not only at the obvious case of the many conservative Christians who think that Jesus is the only way and that those without explicit faith in Christ are destined for eternal damnation. It is also directed at moderate Christians who tolerate and even appreciate other religions while never doubting that Jesus is the hope of the world.

This call to deparicularize Christianity will be disturbing to particularistic Christians who have raised their beliefs and practices into universal truths that are asserted as valid and binding for all human beings. Disturbing as this call may be for some Christians, it is a necessary step that Christianity must take if it wants to live up to its own deepest truth and the demands of justice. Alongside these theological and ethical reasons for deparicularizing itself, Christians should also consider that deparicularization is inevitable in any case, since it is an unavoidable result of the ongoing movement of time and history and emphasizes what is true about religions when seen as products of human culture. Against the background of hundreds of thousands of years of prerecorded and recorded human history, to claim that any particular religion is the final religion and essential to the spiritual life of humanity is like saying that one particular society is the final society and essential to the social life of humanity. As influential as Rome was, and as important as the United States may be to many of us today, neither is final

nor essential to human well-being. If human life continues for another 100,000 years or more, will any significant trace of either of these societies remain? One can only wonder at what the successor religions to today's religions will look like a hundred millennia from now—if humans survive that long. Will any significant trace of today's religions persist in those future religions?

Viewed against such a broad vista, departicularization can be seen as Christianity's future, whether it creatively embraces it for theological and ethical reasons or whether the passage of time forcibly departicularizes it. At this point in its own journey, then, Christianity must decide whether it will remain particularistic or will embrace pluralism. The Chris-

tianity of the future will, I believe, thrive to the degree that it chooses pluralism and, obeying Jesus' apophatic and kenotic command to take up the cross and die to self, renounces particularism. Out of this death, there will emerge a new, inter-spiritual Christianity that no longer relies upon the fiction of its supremacy over other religions. That will be a Christianity worth seeing.

¹ Douglas Pratt, "The Dance of Dialogue: Ecumenical Inter-religious Engagement," *The Ecumenical Review* 51 (July 1999): 281.

A WORD ABOUT DUES

Once again, it is time for a gentle reminder about dues. The Society survives on the generosity of its members, both to keep up their dues payment and contributions. The secretary treasurer wishes to thank those who donated to the Society with their 2003 dues payment.

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Prof. Frederick J. Parrella
Dept. of Religious Studies
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, CA 95053

408.554.4714
fparrella@scu.edu

FUTURE BULLETIN

Important Request: If you presented a paper at the NAPTS or the AAR sessions, "Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group," please send your paper by disk or email to the editor as soon as possible.

The Bulletin can continue to make recent Tillich scholarship available to members of the Society only if presented papers are submitted to the editor.

Many thanks.

Coming in the Spring *Bulletin*, papers by Paul Carr, Ron Stone, and others.

WEB SITE

Please consult our website, NAPTS.org. Our webmeister, Kevin Bailey, is working on a new design. The Bulletin and a small number of old Newsletters as well as some photographs from the Atlanta meeting are posted on the web.



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