



BULLETIN

The North American Paul Tillich Society

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NEW OFFICERS

The annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society took place on 29–30 October 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia. New officers of the Society were elected:

President

Russell Manning, University of Cambridge

President Elect

Courtney Wilder, Midland Lutheran College

Vice President

Echol Nix, Furman University

Secretary Treasurer

Frederick J. Parrella, Santa Clara University

Past President

David Nikkel, University of North Carolina, Pembroke

New Members of the Board (Term expires 2013)

Nathaniel Holmes, Florida Memorial University

Bryan Wagoner, Harvard University

Wesley Wildman, Boston University

The Society wishes to extend its most sincere thanks to Dan Peterson, Pacific Lutheran University, Jonathan Rothchild, Loyola Marymount University, and Francis Yip, Chinese University of Hong Kong, for their three years of service on the Board of Directors of the Society. Congratulations to the new officers and their willingness to lead and direct the Society.

The annual banquet was held this year at Pitypat's Porch Restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia. The speaker was Durwod Foster, Professor Emeritus of Christian Theology at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. The title of Professor Foster's outstanding address was "Merging Two Masters: Tillich's Culminating Years at Union." It is printed in this Bulletin. David Nikkel, President of the society began the banquet with this prayer:

"Ground of being, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, we gather in gratitude for many gifts: friendship, fellowship, intellectual stimulation and growth, and delicious food.

Bless the work of this Society and bless this special time together this evening.

In the Spirit of New Being. Amen."

Please Mark Your Calendars

The 2011 Annual Meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society takes place on Friday, November 18, and Saturday, November 19, 2011 in San Francisco, California, U.S.A. The American Academy of Religion and the "Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group" will meet November 19 to November 22. (See Call for Papers below.)

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Weaver, Matthew Lon. *Religious Internationalism: War and Peace in the Thought of Paul Tillich*.

Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2010.

This book assembles and assesses for the first time the ethics of war and peace in the writings of Paul Tillich. It sketches the evolution of Tillich's thought from the period of his service in the German Imperial Army through the time of the Cold War. The work begins by analyzing Tillich's theological roots and his World War I chaplaincy sermons as the starting point for his thoughts on power and nationalism. Then, *Religious Internationalism* looks to his post-war turn to socialist thought and his participation in religious socialism, fueling his cultural analyses and culminating in his forced emigration under Hitler.

Next, it probes the American interwar period, giving special attention to Tillich's self-described boundary perspective as well as the one treatise he wrote on religion and international affairs. The book then examines his Voice of America speeches, written and broadcast into his former homeland during World War II. It next considers Tillich's message to his English-speaking audience of that period, emphasizing social and world reconstruction. The discussion continues by examining his vision of a path toward personhood in a bipolar world. Finally, the book constructs Tillich's ethics of war and peace as an ethic of religious internationalism, suggesting adjustments intended to give it more universal significance. The study concludes that Tillich's thought has provocative contributions to make to debates regarding civilizational conflict, economics and international justice, trade and globalization, the defense of unprotected minorities, and immigration policy.

• From Paul Carr: Although this is not a new publication per se, please note the following URL. With great affection and appreciation for Tillich, he includes some important elements of Tillich's life and career:

—"Is Religion Irrelevant? Paul Tillich's Answering Theology"

—Photos of the Paul Tillich Memorial Park

—His 1959 TIME magazine cover article

—"Guernica" which Tillich considered the greatest Protestant painting of his time

—His major publications

—Tillich's Influence on Carr and his family

<http://mirrorofnature.org/TillichLectASPEC.pdf>

NAPTS: CALL FOR PAPERS

The North American Paul Tillich Society (NAPTS) welcomes proposals for its annual meeting that will take place on November 17-19, 2011 in connection with the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in San Francisco, California, November 19-22, 2011. We welcome proposals for individual papers and panels on the following issues:

1. Tillich and pedagogy, particularly teaching *Dynamics of Faith*.

2. Papers in response to *Religious Internationalism: The Ethics of War and Peace in the Thought of Paul Tillich* by Matthew Lon Weaver.

3. Tillich and Judaism/Jewish thinkers.

4. Papers in response to *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*.

Proposals should be sent to the Vice President and Program Chair of this year's meeting (electronically preferred):

Dr. Courtney Wilder

wilder@midlandu.edu (please put NAPTS Call in the subject line)

Midland University

900 N. Clarkson

Fremont, NE 68025

AAR GROUP: CALL FOR PAPERS

The American Academy of Religion Group—"Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture"—welcomes proposals for its sessions at the Annual Meeting of the AAR in San Francisco, California, November 19-22, 2011.

We welcome proposals for individual papers and panels on the following issues in theology, religion, and culture that engage with Tillich or post-Tillichian thought:

- The concept of individual selfhood in cognitive psychology and neurotheology.
- Radical doubt and ultimate concern in the postmodern matrix.
- Does secularism have religious dimensions?
- Theological consequences of the economic crisis.
- The turn to (Neo)Platonism in recent theology

Other Tillich-related proposals will be seriously considered. Unless otherwise requested, proposals not scheduled are automatically passed onto the North American Paul Tillich Society for possible inclusion in their Annual Meeting. A winning student paper receives the \$300 Annual Tillich Prize.

This AAR Group fosters scholarship and scholarly exchanges that analyze, criticize, and interpret the thought and impact of Paul Tillich (1886-1965), and that use his thought—or use revisions of, or reactions against, his thought—to deal with contemporary issues in theology, religion, ethics, or the political, social, psychotherapeutic, scientific, or artistic spheres of human culture. The group cooperates with the North American Paul Tillich Society (a Related Scholarly Organization [RSO] of the AAR), which is also linked to the German, French-speaking, and Latin American Tillich societies. Papers at Group sessions are published in the Society's quarterly Bulletin without prejudice to their also appearing elsewhere.

Proposals should be sent by email (preferably as attachments) to the group's co-chairs:

—Dr. Russell Re Manning, University of Cambridge, at rrm24@cam.ac.uk

—Dr. Sharon Peebles Burch, Interfaith Counseling Centre, at spburch@att.net

Proposals should be of no more than 1000 words and be accompanied by a 150-word abstract. Please indicate if eligible for the student prize.

Proposals must be received by 1 March 2010.

For further details, please see:

<http://tinyurl.com/6ymrodj>

Please feel free to circulate this Call for Papers.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Fred,

It's always wholesome for one's clarity about Tillich to be challenged by Rob James, and I welcome the dispute he launches in the October Bulletin (Vol. 36, 4) against my view that our mentor changed his position (in the Introduction to ST II, 1957) regarding the one possible (and necessary) non-symbolic statement about God. After a critique of his earlier pan-symbolism by W. M. Urban, Tillich had been saying for some years this statement was "God is being-itself." The new statement that appeared in ST II (p. 9) was "everything we say about God is symbolic."

Airing this issue should be helpful, for it does appear there is widespread failure to recognize the change Tillich made, as pointed out in my letter to the editor to which Prof. James was responding. A further recent instance of the failure I have since noted in John Thatamanil's otherwise excellent contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, edited by Russell Re Manning.

In the introduction to ST II, Tillich focused very intently upon major issues evoked by ST I, one of which was whether there can be a non-symbolic statement about God. He says expressly (p. 9) that this issue had arisen in public discussion, and indeed it had, notably, for example, through John Herman Randall, Jr., Charles Hartshorne, and Dorothy Emmet in the Kegley-Bretall volume in 1952. They all impugned the proposal that "God is being-itself" could serve as the one non-symbolic statement about God.

I plead with everyone following this squabble to reread the short section in ST II. Can we really imagine that Tillich, straining for utmost precision on this precise point, could have made the regretta-

ble “bit of a slip” Prof. James conjures up? I cannot. Even though he apparently can, there is a further clincher some thirteen lines further on (ST II, p. 10) which Prof. James entirely ignores, viz., Tillich’s statement that “If we say God is the infinite, or the unconditional, or being-itself, we speak rationally and ecstatically at the same time.” He further elucidates that these predications “precisely designate the boundary line at which both the symbolic and the non-symbolic coincide.” How could anyone assert more definitely that they will not serve as the one un-symbolic statement?

In his first enumerated point, Prof. James recalls the contention that Tillich’s new statement (the “bit of a slip”) is not a statement about God but a statement about statements. I have always regarded this as completely fatuous. Of course, it is a statement about statements—that are would-be statements about God. But if one construes it as a statement about God, as Tillich expressly intends it, then Prof. James insists it commits suicide—cancels itself—because it says all such statements are symbolic. Here we are back with Plato confronting the Cretan who asserts Cretans always lie. Can we believe him? There is a paradox here in formal logic, requiring the notion of protocol statements that govern a realm of discourse. I don’t see this as comprising a real problem for what Tillich is up to at this point. Compare, e.g., the pious utterance, “We are all sinners and the truth is not in us.” Is that sentence self-invalidating? I doubt my brainy Baptist really thinks so.

However, I think Tillich was somewhat discouraged, not to say intimidated, by the barrage of argumentation instigated by his 1957 formulation of the “one non-symbolic statement.” He did retain it in the German translation (1958), which John Clayton aptly called a second edition of the ST, but otherwise his “answering theologian” instinct motivated him to seek more readily communicative formulations, without giving up the thought. I cite one such below.

Prof. James’s second enumerated point is that Tillich continued after 1957 to espouse his earlier version of the one un-symbolic statement. I don’t think so! The sole instance in support of his opinion that Prof. James adduces is the following from ST III, 294: “The first (not the last) statement about God is that God is being-itself or the ground of being.” I submit that this assertion is irrelevant to the issue in question. It pertains to the discussion of the personal attributes of God, not to the issue of symbolism.

Prof. James’ third enumerated point is one I simply do not get. The citation from the Kegley-Bretall volume (1952) says the one un-symbolic statement is that God is being itself. This merely reiterates the position Tillich changed from in 1957.

Prof. James’ fourth point adduces the important clarification Tillich undertook for the *Journal of Religion*. That it did not appear till after his death is irrelevant. Tillich held there were two indispensable elements in the thought of God, the first being that of ontological unconditionality. “Being-itself” remained his preferred (though no longer unique) way of expressing this, while the *Journal of Religion* discussion shows that he now conceded *esse ipsum* is also bipolar—both a concept (going back to Aristotle) and a symbol connoting unforespeakable mystery. Contrary to Prof. James, the JR piece is entirely consistent with the ST II formulation and again shows Tillich has given up the univocal claim that “being-itself” is an unsymbolic statement about the wholeness of God. Early on he had held “God without grace becomes a demon.” Therefore the symbolizing personal divine attributes prevent the onto-theological element (*esse ipsum*), absolutely indispensable as it is, from possibly being the “one un-symbolic statement” it could otherwise be on its strictly conceptual side, while also, on its mystery side, it too functions symbolically. I recommend John Thatamanil’s essay (cf. supra) for further elucidation of what all is at stake here.

Prof. James (in his first point) says he isn’t aware of Tillich ever again championing the precise ST II formulation of 1957. Apart from the German edition the following year, neither am I. But from then on it seems clear to me that Paulus abided quite strictly by the substantive meaning of the changed version. Nevermore did he assert that being-itself is the one unsymbolic statement, and as a concluding example I would cite the eloquent asseverations of the third Earl Lecture of 1963 (*Irrelevance and Relevance of the Christian Message*, pp. 60-1) culminating in the insistence that “Yes and No” is “the foundation of all speaking about the divine.” The entire paragraph that this sentence climaxes is a forceful conversion of the ST II “non-symbolic” statement into the idiom of pastors and the religiously questing.

—Durwood Foster

**MERGING TWO MASTERS:
TILlich'S CULMINATING YEARS AT UNION**

DURWOOD FOSTER

Tickled pink by the invitation, I worried about those who heard me at the banquet in The Big Easy (as New Orleans *then* was) in 1995. Could I dredge up anything new? No problem it turned out—our mentor grows ever more appreciable. Since the previous panegyric, I imbibed more Tillich than realized, while his image grew in complexity in the brine of post-modernity and bilge of my subconscious. Doubtless for you too, both the Paulus of history as well as the Tillich of faith has grown larger through the years. Fact and interpretation cannot be split, as Kähler said—though working at the facts hones comprehension. In my view, COMPREHENDING our guru has light years to go. Shaken by rereading him, Hannah, and others, I've come to think mapping his mentality could take from now on. That's reason, though, to be glad for our Society and the fun we share together. It is nice to be with you this one more time.

I am asked to recall the Paulus of history in his last stretch at Union, when I was there—'46 to '53. He said those were some of his best years. They were of mine, when theology went to the moon. The giants were having their era. From lower land we see their tallness, and our hero's flag flies high. Trying to sketch him tonight can allow but stabs: one entree, really, with some salad. And, yes, my sightings were through one lens of hundreds angled at "Mr. Theology"—as he began widely to be known. Also, grinding my lens had just begun. Nor had I come to The Big Apple to study Tillich. No one had. Niebuhr was *prima*, till his stroke in 1951, among several aces on that team. But for none was there a personality cult. A Tillich Society at the time was unimaginable. We were pursuing issues and preparing for ministry, prompted by MacArthur's dictum that after the Bomb, human solutions must be theological.

With other schools pulling me too, I had opted to study *with* Tillich and Niebuhr for their cutting edge. Both Niebuhr brothers had pointed me to Paulus on the scandal of particularity: I was baffled how the Absolute was revealed in the historical Jesus. In my head and heart, evangelical Methodism sparred with biblicism, and Emory's Leroy Loemker had enamored me of philosophy. At Union's orientation, Ivy League classmates cowed us novices by quoting Eliot and Rilke. But I was more intimidated having

to get Tillich to okay an advanced course. Sure my gall would be shamed; at his door I tapped faintly, and eager to retreat heard "Ja, komm." A German friend was due from downtown. Of course I wouldn't bother him. No, he drew me in, cleared books from a chair. He noticed my face, he said, among new students when the faculty was introduced. Wanted to meet me! What? Our eyes had locked a time or two. Later I learned how he surveyed audiences, beguiled by Angst or bumptiousness. Where was I from? He liked the South, hoped to know it better. No problem about the course. Desire was the thing. On the desk lay a volume by Whitehead, on whom I mentioned to him that I had done a paper. "You have to tell me then," he replied, "what he really is saying." My mind went blank, but the friend came. I bowed out perspiring, somehow never since dreading to be with Paulus.

My naïveté lessened through windfalls like the East Hampton summer with the Tillichs and Roberts. Starting thesis work under Paulus, an instructorship let me sit with the faculty and savor their banter with him: about the labor pains of the system, assumed intact already in his head; the wrangle over expelling gays, which Paulus opposed almost alone; or why he thought Reginald Prenter too traditional to succeed him, and wondered obversely about Macquarrie. What I wouldn't take gold for was the *privatissimum* Paulus convened to unpack sticky issues, loosened by Mosel in his living room. John Smith sparkled in those sessions, with characters like Sam Laeuchli from Basel, who memorized the *Church Dogmatics*, or Heywood Thomas from Oxford, catching us in category mistakes. Visiting from Cambridge, C. H. Dodd contended with Paulus, vainly, that Jesus posed an historical risk as well as one of faith.

Thinkers often aren't lecturers. Tillich was both, but his most enjoyed gift may have been dialogical pedagogy. Just ordained, he and Dox Wegener launched their "culture evenings" for small groups in Berlin. Paulus wrote in the leader's guide: "Possessing truth only in a relative way, [the leader] enters discussion as a partner, as a fellow seeker after truth. With truth alone the object of the dialogue, he stands ready to rethink and modify his own position, as well as critically test the position of the discussion partner. He is able to enter the conversation as a partner, rather than as a teacher, because of his realization that truth is not his private possession and because of his conviction that no truth is ultimately incompatible with Christianity" [GW XIII, 41-2].

It's uncanny how that description predicts the *privatissimum* four decades later. A visceral need for Paulus, for me it was interacting with Plato in the mode of Socrates.

Since those semesters when I saw the loaded, intent, beset, benign, serious, humorous, lightly gray-ing, just my height, very slightly starting to bulge 60 till 67 year old Paulus—in chapel, class, some forum almost daily—a lot about him has been etched out more fully, like photos in developing fluid. Feelings ripened like wine, and intuitions were marinated by conversational basting. My eyes saw, but I knew others who knew Paulus better. Most of these catalysts now rest in the transcendent union of unambiguous life [Tillichian for “church triumphant”]. Dave Roberts, Richard Kroner. Renate Albrecht, Langdon Gilkey, Jerry Brauer, and John Dillenger, were among unique witnesses I was close to. Tillich's prodigious capacity for relationships was diversified, holistic, and forgiving. He could be haplessly funny with alpha types—as in the Gilkey anecdotes—or suavely directive with the stumbling. One I never heard cited was Georgia Harkness. A story went around Union that Paulus was explaining to a theological society his view that God doesn't exist, when Georgia asked, “Well, Dr. Tillich, doesn't that make you an atheist?” to which the riposte was, “Yes, I am an atheist.” We heard this as connoting hostility, since Georgia was a protégé of Edgar Brightman, the personalist champion who never made peace with Niebuhr or Tillich. A decade later Paulus was in Berkeley to lecture and accepted my offer for sightseeing. But he came an hour early to find Georgia, then my colleague at the Pacific School of Religion with her office next door. I was startled to perceive his voice and their camaraderie through the thin wall, and we wound up driving around the Bay together as they warmly reminisced. Georgia was an alpha type and redoubtable theologian who bore lifelong physical pain with a wry smile. In ten collegial years, I never saw her so emotive as with Paulus.

Sadly such a world of witness to Tillich is now beyond access. On the other hand, for me, published sources have freshly opened. In that vein, as a primer for the stint at Union, let me stress “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture,” spoken to Berlin's Kant Society 14 years before the Tillichs debarked in New York. Go back again to that bold lecture and wrestle with why Vic Nuovo regarded it as Tillich's epochal breakthrough. It bears on tonight because it placards graphically the kind of theologian the blos-

soming Paulus had opted to be—and got well started being at Dresden and Frankfurt—but never could freely be at Union, except off at Yale with the Terry Lectures and then in last hurrahs at Harvard and Chicago.

Hermeneutically, to construe the Tillich I've come to realize I knew at Union, picture *two* theologians indwelling *one* cerebrum—two keenly intent theological mindsets, both hugely erudite, both potently creative, sharing, though never evenly and sometimes contentiously, a single frenetic career nearing high tide. There was indelibly in Paulus what the 1919 lecture dubbed the “theologian of culture,” his calling from deep down, *and*—though repudiated as *his* path in 1919—there was also—with unsparing resolve and contextual necessity *once at Union*—the “theologian of the church” whom the seminary hired. The first Tillich I read was *The Religious Situation*, the masterful cultural commentary of 1926 that seemed to collude supportively with at least neo-orthodox church theology. I took for granted what the Christian analyst of culture could be, and was needed as, a co-functionary of the churchly teacher of doctrine—as with Christopher Dawson or Reinhold Niebuhr. But theology of culture in *that* sense is *not* the agenda of Tillich's 1919 breakthrough work. Nuovo saw this sharply as few others have, not even that most erudite of Tillich scholars, John Clayton.

The theology of the church, Tillich reminded the Kant Society, is governed by the norm of its tradition. But the theologian of culture, he fervently averred, “is not bound by any such consideration.” Emancipated from all traditional norms, this theologian “is a free agent in living culture open to accept not only any other form but also any other spirit” [*What is Religion*, ed. J. L. Adams, 178]. For this species of theologian, which 33 year-old Paulus says is *his* vocation, theology is not about “God as a special object” but about religion everywhere as “directedness toward the Unconditional,” or in the phrase later settled upon, “*was uns unbedingt angeht*.” Such “unconditional concern” is the core of every culture, the culture being its varied forms. Unnamed, what *Theologie der Kultur* is can be seen in Hegel and Nietzsche—or all the great philosophers. It is the only theology that is really *wissenschaftlich*, meriting university status—as Tillich's 1923 *System der Wissenschaften* further expounds. This theology (resembling our American “religious studies”) is *not* “the presentation of a special...revelation” like the Christian revelation [Adams, op. cit., 157]. To think

it could be buys into the discredited notion of a supernatural revelation. Theology of culture and church theology (the usual dogmatics or systematics) not only *differ* but in 1919, for Paulus, they *exclude* each other.

No wonder Union, getting wind of *this* Tillich, dragged feet on tenure. Dr. Coffin was brought around, not by Reinie and students (though they helped), so much as his own reading of Tillich. For notwithstanding the 1919 pledge to the culture kind only, by the mid-twenties the church kind of theology had reinvaded Tillich. Grounded staunchly in the paradox of God in Christ, it had reestablished itself in Paulus's vocational identity *alongside* the total openness of culture theology. *Two* theologies would henceforth be using the same nominal brain, one nearer Barth, the other Emanuel Hirsch. Paulus's examiners for the licentiate had said he was "*grillhaft*"—given to cricket-like jumps. In the climactic phase of his career, just after leaving Union, he himself soberly assured Grace Cali he was "schizophrenic" [Cali, *Paul Tillich First Hand*, 20], *his* word, not mine. More existential than Nicholas's coincidence of opposites, or paradox in Luther and Kierkegaard, it conjures up the (obscure) wartime "nervous breakdown" and the analysis Paulus later underwent, not to speak of Hannah's lurid laments that we must studiously avoid tonight.

In any case, a bipolar syndrome went on being stressfully manifest in Paulus's theologizing. The two kinds of theologian, divorced in 1919 for incompatibility, moved back under one roof, or one pate. Not even John Clayton could decide just when. Certainly by 1924, Paulus embraced the Christ norm as co-absolute with ultimate concern. The 1919 lecture had accorded *Kirchentheologie* a *lower* place, outside the university. Apart from the ensuing maelstrom of conceptual debate, this created a practical bind. If the two theologians were irreconcilable, how would they jointly earn a living? There were no chairs of "Theology of Culture" as projected in the lecture. If its pure form contradicted church theology, which did offer jobs, it would have to stay mostly out of the workplace *or* conflate with the faith of the church. For our evolving mentor it did both. Union Seminary, while I was there, was ever and again shocked by theology of culture suddenly showing up naked, while many were also spellbound to descry a majestic new theological synthesis being chiseled and sanded into shape.

Tillich's turbulent life amid the Weimar upheavals landed him at Marburg—to teach church theol-

ogy. He was more than adequately equipped for this from youth up. Authoritative "Little Father," conservative Lutheran cleric with philosophic flair, held his son accountable. Never outright rebelling against his *Vaterchen*, despite mystic sensibility and autonomous intellect, Paulus took holy orders, did ministry, then battlefield chaplaincy with preaching and pastoral talent. As early as 1912, he outlined a systematics with Wegener, later a church apologetics. Now in 1925 was delivered in a classroom near Heidegger's the *Marburg Dogmatik*, filled with churchly and cultural insights we still are measuring. Long unpublished, the lectures were regrettably unavailable to Clayton as he traced the would-be correlation of our two masters. Categorical in the *Dogmatik* is allegiance to Christ as final revelation. As in the grand opus to come, and as was loud and clear at Union, Paulus by the mid 1920s propounded as universal the concrete norm of Christianity. This sold Henry Coffin, without a word of the 1919 mandate being recanted. That mandate burst out sporadically at Union, even while creatively mutating, igniting furious argument in dining hall and dorm.

Compelling in chapel, Paulus preached on Galatians 6:15: "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." Circumcision, it was jolting to hear, meant RELIGION—not only Judaism but the "churchianity" we were to be ordained in. Nothing of that mattered, any more than irreligion. Some mavericks cheered, but more students insisted Tillich couldn't be Christian. Some faculty obviously agreed—though politeness ruled. Most of his colleagues said they couldn't decipher Tillich, though they liked him and were proud Union had two world-class theologians. I did not then know how ignorant seminary faculties are of each other's theology, but this was especially true in regard to Tillich.

At a forum, Paulus clarified that Christ, not the church, is our axial loyalty, while the form confessing Christ is unavoidably idolatrous. Discussion fulminated, involving manifold other issues as well. Did Tillich pray? Did he believe in the Resurrection? Memorable was Ed Cherbonnier lambasting the impersonal Ground of Being. Paulus defended atheists as attacking idols and held pantheism was caricatured; its true sense was Spinoza's *natura naturans*, which as infinitely holy was his own God. Sometimes exasperated by rejection, as when the faculty discussed the first volume of his *Systematic Theology*, he endured as wholesome anything that fueled serious questioning.

The biggest challenge for the Christian identity of Tillich came from “God beyond God” in 1952. Could the author of *The Courage To Be* really place his own ultimate trust in the biblical personal God who “disappears in the flames of doubt.” We asked Paulus about this, and he explained the Terry Lectures were addressed to unfaith, outside the theological circle. We chuckled at Yale’s philosophy department, where John Smith went, being equated with unfaith. But hermeneutical issues were surfacing that could be disputed till the cows came home. Could faith address unfaith unfaithfully while genuinely being faith? We didn’t really know how to ask that question at Union, if we do today.

Even while his job was seminary theology, Paulus always had fans for his theology of culture, whether in the stark form of 1919, or beginning to comport with the Christian foundation. Rollo May was a Unionite who found in *The Courage To Be* Paulus par excellence. Ruth Nanda Anshen, with her avant-garde salon, was a notable outside booster of our theologian of culture, along with stars of the Frankfurt School like Adorno and Horkheimer. Jonathan Z. Smith, in his AAR presidential address some years ago, even credited Paulus (meaning, of course, the cultural lobe of the dual cortex) with inciting the AAR. Nor can we be unaware that 45 years after Tillich’s death, there is today up-surg-ing endorsement for *just* his theology of culture. Last year at Montreal, Glenn Whitehouse wanted to parry the likes of Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris with the kind of theology prescribed in *System der Wissenschaften*, and in the summer Tillich Bulletin—wow!—from Marc Boss on Fichte to Richard Grigg on scientific atheism, the ball is being run with as hard ever. Fichte is a superb example of Paulus’s 1919 culture theologian. And those two mystics Grigg features—Ursula Goodenough and Sharman Russell—would surely have received *our* theologian’s imprimatur. It seems more and more fitting that Paulus’s ashes were handed to the Dalai Lama, and some sprinkled in the Ganges. Some, however, were also deserved, I believe, by the Jordan.

Tom Altizer used to recall a smiling Paulus whispering “the real Tillich is the radical Tillich,” and when I taught ST III with Bob Kimball, close to Paulus at Harvard, Bob argued what was authentic in that just-out consummatory Christian tome was the “Death of God.” Union-bred, I couldn’t down this without a mixer. I am nearer Gilkey, whose exposition of the mature Paulus, beginning 80 pages into his Tillich book, is in my judgment the best presen-

tation yet of the full-blown Christian intention of our mentor. Its main failing is not to recognize the complementary partial truth of Altizer and Kimball.

And the truth, one must add, of Alex Irwin. When published in 1991, Irwin’s *Eros Toward the World* put me off by crediting *too* carte blanche Hannah’s complaints against Paulus. I overlooked at first the thoroughness with which the book shows the sweeping role of Platonic *eros* in Paulus’s thought at and after Union. Walter Leibrecht had flagged this. Irwin offers nuanced documentation deserving place in any critique of Tillich. For here too was massive exercise of theology of culture, exemplifying as much as “being itself,” an openness to thought unprovided by the revelation in Christ. In this case what is adopted from outside Christianity’s foundation—originally from Plato’s Symposium—is subsumed supplementally into Paulus’ fourfold thematizing of love, with *agape* as norm but *eros* exalted dynamically. This was in the teeth of Nygren’s formidable study of Agape and Eros as mutually exclusive. I remember Gustav Aulen at Union about 1949, fencing uneasily with Paulus about the quarrel with Nygren, who had become Aulen’s bishop.

I now grasp, as I didn’t then, how Paulus, beginning to be mutedly older and medicate his angina, was exerting a titanic effort to fuse the two master theologians at home in his head and heart. With Langdon one must agree the effort gelled magnificently, for which the clincher is the *Systematic Theology*. Don’t forget we didn’t have anything like all of it during the Union years, only Volume I, and this not till summer of 1951. There was the handout for philosophical theology—interesting for seeing how far Paulus still was from the finished symphony or the unfinished one! Move over Schubert. Peter John gives us a memo of Paulus seriously wondering in the early fifties whether he shouldn’t desist from the impossible systematic commitment and settle accounts with epistemology. Thank the Ground of Being he perseveres with the System. But at Chicago he wistfully thinks of starting over and doing greater justice to world religions. Twenty pages from the end of the *Systematic Theology* III itself, he inserts the odd coda on essentialization, hitherto unmentioned, re-exposing the jumbo issue of creaturely freedom influencing God. Here fuller orchestration of fourfold love with the unfore-thinkable power of being is clearly called for.

Langdon’s synthesis of Tillich the Christian is more finished than Paulus’s was. Those culminating years at Union were egregiously hectic for our hero.

You have to infer this from his Frau's memoir, into which we dare not saunter now. Some knew her scorn for Christianity, but the only hint most of us at Union had of Hannah's domestic woe was her persistent glumness. It was natural though that Paulus often looked besieged, would twiddle paper clips, and grit his teeth. He was becoming absurdly overbooked—always ready to counsel throngs of the needful, helping refugees, lecturing near and far, pressured to get on with the opus, and scads of other projects incited by widening fame. Despite extra-curricular earnings, the Tillichs felt financially pinched in America till Harvard—Hannah's nirvana and his too, though with an undying attachment to Union—called. Paulus couldn't be for me the thesis advisor Rollo May winsomely portrays fifteen years before. I recall an appointment at 6 p.m. one evening. Knocking on the door, sobs were audible. It was opened by John Herman Randall, Jr., from Columbia. Tillich's often-sarcastic critic was in tears. He wondered would I please mind coming back, since he much needed a while longer with his friend.

Doubtless an immense postwar weight was Paulus's solidarity with kith and kin who stayed in the Fatherland. The bond held with Hirsch, who hailed Nazism as a kairos, and Herman Schafft remained his best friend, despite living with the New Order. It's a revelation to read Paulus's *Travel Diary of 1936* where you see the vigorous 50-year-old a decade before I met him, touring Europe on holocaust eve, enjoying Paris nightclubs along with scholarly conclaves, swimming when he finds a lake, and writing to beloved wife and kids. He poignantly avoided German soil, but argued day and night with friends who came to meet him. Convivial loyalty was steadfast under ideological chasm, and nostalgic pain marked his August birthday, as the anti-Nazi indelibly patriotic German recalled his regiment's band in 1916 saluting their chaplain near blood-soaked Verdun. In the late forties, disclosures of the barbaric crimes of the Nazi state and of *Wehrmacht* SS made almost daily headlines. Most Americans were appalled at what seemed the shared guilt of Germans subservient to Hitler. This must have been a crucifixion for Paulus, though most at Union had no feel for it, just that his somberness was sometimes melancholic, even with unquenched festivity. During this time, he was framing what Gilkey rates as dark a doctrine as we have of *human* sin, offset only and conjointly by indestructible being-itself and the joyful miracle of the New Being.

The *Systematic Theology* emerged slowly, under constant harassment, rife with glitches, yet gloriously unique among the prime Christian systems. Gordon Kaufman asked of it: "Can one *serve* two masters?" For me, the more telling image is *merging* them. For the two masters were not *outside* heteronomously but theonomously *inside*, shaping the work and person of a dyadic genius. The Roofless Church in New Harmony bespeaks this, even as we honor Jane Owen. Art for her was the cardinal epiphany in which the first pole of Paulus's mastery was expressed, which accords profoundly with him, while culture, philosophy, science, political ethics, *Religionsgeschichte*, and depth psychology likewise serve as synonyms or supplements focusing his humongous range. The wide-open sky captures this, as the unroofed *church* registers his existential roots: so ardently decking the Christmas tree, binding wounds of any he met, proclaiming newness of life, beholding through the pictured Christ a real Jesus as unsurpassable love. Paulus *was* the enfleshed universal where the poles coalesced. Reread the encomium for Buber, a year before Paulus's own farewell. In early-twenties Berlin, the stubborn Jew had taught the heady theologian of culture that you can't dispense with the biblical personal God. Paulus praises Buber as *his* paradigm because the colossal Jew knew how to be free *from* and free *for* his own tradition.

Fast-forward to Chicago, September of '65, the final address. His subject is the history of religions and systematic theology, a nomenclature connoting theology of culture and church theology in 1919. Meanwhile, as the cookie of life crumbled, church theology—systematics—claimed equal status, even became the *name* of the most labored and most exalted Tillich writing, without though its counterpart—existence radically open to living culture—at all fading out, rebounding rather to the crescendo of Harvard and Chicago. As his career seesawed, Paulus melded. Creative integration occurred. But he once warned Barth dialectical theology must *not stop* being dialectical. Paulus's theology didn't. His last public utterance is the plea for "freedom, both *from* one's own foundation and *for* one's own foundation" [*Hauptwerke*, VI, 441]. This puzzled Gert Hummel, editing for the *Hauptwerke*. I daresay it puzzles—and challenges—us. But there in a nutshell is the Tillich I knew at Union: irreducibly *two* top theologians in the *uniting* dialectic of a matchless mentor.

Thanks and God bless!

Ashland, Oregon, October 2010, delivered in Atlanta, Georgia, 29 October 2010.

**HISTORICIZING GOD À LA TILlich AND
BARTH (BOTH!):
FORMULA FOR GOOD THEOLOGY**

ROBISON B. (ROB) JAMES

In May of 2009, during a scholarly conference in Paris, I made a rather non-Tillichian confession. I was a little surprised that I did, because I had not really thought the matter through, and because the people at the conference were mostly *admirers* of Paul Tillich.

My confession was that I was “a closet Barthian.” Or rather, as I proceeded to rephrase my confession: when we deal with the transcendence of God, I thought we are generally well-advised to take our cues from Barth, whereas, when we grapple with the immanence of God, Tillich may be more helpful.

That two-sided confession provides one of two distinct motives for what I do in this paper. I seek to produce some useable theology by letting Tillich help us with our understanding of divine immanence, and by letting Barth help us understand God in God’s transcendence. The other motive for this paper is the fact that this paper was originally conceived and proposed to be part of a panel on “Tillich’s Theology or Philosophy of History.” This panel did not materialize, but my proposal was selected and scheduled for the 2010 meeting in question. This background may explain why I have chosen “historicizing God” as a common element in Barth and Tillich, and why I have proceeded to show, *in regard to that theme*, how the two thinkers can help us understand the divine immanence and transcendence, respectively. Granted, other commonalities between Tillich and Barth are equally promising, if not more so. But “historicizing God” is the one that attracted me. And it produces results that I find religiously and intellectually exciting.

Thus, we shall look to Tillich for help in thinking how God is historicized as a dynamic, driving presence *within* the social and historical affairs of humankind, while we shall turn to Barth for help in understanding that living, active *beyondness* out of which God ever gives Himself to us in grace.

Obviously, I am engaged in an experiment in adding some Barth to Tillich, and vice versa. It is (Is there an extra space here?)

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worth noticing, perhaps, that I have tried something similar before. Early on in my struggles with Tillich, I discovered that, if I were going to make much use of his thought, I had to *adapt* it. I needed to make it more fully hospitable to Martin Buber’s I-Thou thinking.

Presently, I am at a much earlier point in an effort to combine elements of Tillich with Barth, and vice versa. I am emboldened, however, by the arguable fact that my earlier effort was attended by some success. Something from Buber *was* grafted into the body of Tillich’s thought. Buber’s “a priori of relation” was transplanted into Tillich’s “basic ontological structure of self and world,” and that a priori is basic to Buber’s category of the I-Thou relationship. To the extent that the transplant did “work,” and I found that it did, Tillich was now safe for Pietists. They need not be put off by what I called the “personal encounter deficit” in his thought.¹

I. Tillich Historicizes the Immanent God

Turning to Tillich and to the task we have assigned him, we observe the following. In a first and *not-yet-adequate approximation*, Tillich’s God is Hegel’s God.² Hegel’s God is the God of the unfolding Life of Spirit. That deity, that divine life—at least in Hegel’s not-so-humble view of the matter—is centered in the dialectically unfolding attainments of the world-historical process, *and* in the minds of human beings who grasp and re-grasp this process as it unfolds from stage to stage. The minds in which this grasping happens are collectively and corporately the mind of God and the minds in which God comes to consciousness.³

Still using this not-yet-adequate characterization, we see the Tillichian deity as an evolving historical pantheism. God is the grand, all-inclusive Process that surges ever forward, expressing and actualizing itself by simultaneously expanding itself *and* consolidating itself. My language about “expanding and consolidating” alerts us to something important. Being as a whole, and each being within it, is “put together” out of opposed tendencies. That is what we all essentially *are*: counterposed tendencies—tendencies that at any given instant are being well or poorly integrated.⁴

As this suggests, a fully meaningful life is a matter of actualizing our two-sided potentialities in some maximal, unified way. It is only by achieving such a living, ongoing unification of contraries—the contraries out of which our essential being is constituted—that we find a fully meaningful life. And if we wish to speak once more of the Whole Show, that is, in religious terms, of God, we should envision God as the totality of all these quests for synthesis, or as a stupendous forward rush of countless unifications.

But is God actually achieving this? And is God “pulling it off” *within the historical process*? For Hegel, the answer is “Yes” to both questions. God is making it happen, and God is doing it within the historical process. For Tillich, however, the answer is “No” and then “Yes.” God is always “trying,” always “striving,” so to speak; but God never “pulls off” all these unifications—at least not within the historical process. Not fully. And the reason is that in Tillich freedom plays a stronger role than it does in Hegel. For Tillich, freedom is the power of the created either to *go with* the grand design, in a finite and fallible way, or to *turn against* the cosmic concert of the All, that is, to turn against God.

Thus, we have our “No” answer in Tillich’s case. Within the socio-historical order that we creatures inhabit, God *does not* fully achieve a Hegel-type unification, except at the center of our history in Jesus as the Christ. But we get a “Yes” answer if we ask about the transcendental “upswelling” and “structuring” that *underlie and enable* the historical process, and if we ask about the transcendental *lure* that draws and commands the historical process *toward* its fulfillment. In these three “places” the answer is “Yes,” the unification of contraries is real.⁵

Here then is the principal difference between Tillich and Hegel on God and here is why Tillich is not a pantheist in any usual or expected sense. For Tillich, God transcends the world insofar as the world in its freedom turns against God and falls short of His glorious life. As Tillich says, “[t]he divine transcendence is identical with the freedom of the created to turn away from the essential unity with the creative ground of its being” (ST II, 8). Our historical world thus fails ever and again to achieve the full, living meaningfulness that is—or that *would be*—the essential unity of God-and-world. Despite our participating always in fragmentary ways in the sought-for, divinized “All in All,” that Consummation lies always eschatologically ahead of us (ST III, 30-110; 401-406).

Thus we may say that our history, in its distorted and estranged fallenness, “sags below” the beneficent onrush of God’s enabling life (ST II, 29-44, but my language). This is the state of affairs at every point in our human story—except for those infrequent, transient, tantalizing bursts of theonomy that brighten and guide our way. Whereas for Hegel the potent and sometimes-wonderful (but sometimes-horrible) unifications, concretizations, and syntheses are happening “all the time,” in Tillich’s thought God is always seeking but never more than partially actualizing the fullness of the potential of what *could* be concretized at any given stage of the world process.

One way I have long worded this state of affairs is to say that Tillich offers us an *everlastingly* frustrated, but not an *eternally* frustrated, essentialism. In so speaking, I take “everlasting” to mean “always continuing within the created, temporal order”; and I take “eternal” to refer to the divine reality that transcends the created order in the threefold way I have described, namely, as “underlying, structuring, and forward-drawing or forward-driving.” In these terms, then, Tillich’s theology is an *everlastingly* but not an *eternally* frustrated essentialism. It is not eternally frustrated inasmuch as, in its eternal depths and heights, reality is un-estranged, un-fallen, and even fulfilled.⁶

Pulling things together, we can say that, on the account given here, God is certainly *historicized* and God is *immanent*, immanent within our socio-historical affairs. The spatial language I used earlier is of course not literal. Our human history does not literally “sag below” the beneficent onrush of God’s enabling life. There is no space between God and ourselves. In every circumstance, in every episode, in every entity that helps to make up the course of human events, God is robustly, actively present. Our history is shot through with the muscular presence of God.

II. The Theological Usefulness of Tillich’s Historically Immanent Deity

Does this way of looking at things provide us with some useful theology? For me, it has clarified immensely how I ought to proceed in a religious fight in which I find myself. My fight is for the historic Baptist principle of church-state separation. I got into this fight when I was asked to chair a Virginia Baptist committee. I should explain that I am a so-called “Moderate” Baptist. We Moderates operate

in congregations and institutions that were *not* taken over in the 1980s when Fundamentalists captured most of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The setting for the fight in which I am involved is marked by at least two important facts. First, the rank and file members of our Moderate churches are rather conservative, politically and religiously. Thus, many are influenced, and some are persuaded, by a certain “anti-separationist” view that has long been promoted within conservative circles nationwide.

According to the more extreme versions of this anti-separationist view, church-state separation is something a group of liberal, activist judges concocted in the mid-twentieth century; it is *not* what the Founders of the nation intended; and it is being used as a weapon to “separate” religion from the state in the following sense: to drive religion out of the public square and eradicate its influence upon government. This anti-separationist view is a gross misunderstanding. “Separation” is well-recognized as a metaphor. Its literal meaning is that government is to be neutral toward all religions and non-religion as well.

The second fact is that, despite energetic efforts of Moderate leaders in upholding church-state separation, we Moderates are not doing very well so far as keeping the members of Moderate churches loyal to the principle of church-state separation. I doubt we are holding our own even in our stronghold of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

Coached by Tillich’s idea about a nation’s “vocational consciousness” (among other ideas of his), I am convinced that a decisive reason why we Moderates have been having such meager success in our church-state fight is that other Moderate leaders have for years engaged in a routine and nearly across-the-board attack upon American civil religion (or “ACR,” as I shall often call it). Yet one of the central elements of our ACR is what Tillich would call our “vocational consciousness,” that is, our belief that this nation has a “calling,” or a God-given special role to play in history.

The practical effects of these rather indiscriminate attacks on ACR are predictable. Most members of Moderate churches, like most Americans, are much inclined to suffuse their patriotism with religion, and to find ways to express this mixture from time to time. In other words, they are strongly inclined to participate in ACR. If church-state separation stands in the way of this, then so much the worse for church-state separation—and so much the worse for anyone who tries to get us to like it.

On the other hand, there are countless places where Tillich is pellucid and emphatic that such a sense of “exceptionalism” (as we might call it today) can be dangerous and destructive. But he also sees it as an essential ingredient—an ingredient without which the group cannot indefinitely persist—in the life of any nation or historic group that becomes significant on the stage of history. Three of his many examples are Great Britain’s perceived calling to bring all peoples under the hegemony of Christian humanism, Spain’s dream of the Catholic unity of the world, and, for the United States, our “belief in a new beginning in which the curses of the Old World are overcome and the democratic missionary task fulfilled” (LPJ, 99-106 and ST III, 310, whence the quoted language).

The pervasive presence and influence of this belief or feeling about ourselves as a nation has very likely made the difference in our entering and winning our “good wars.” I have in mind at least our Revolution, the Civil War from the Union side, and World War II.⁷ So far as our more questionable wars are concerned, I associate myself with what we have just heard from Tillich, namely, the way he recognizes the potential dangers of this belief.

In the above remarks about Tillich, one of the most characteristic and pervasive features of his thought is plain. It is the “dialectical” or yes-and-no recognition that any worthy and valuable idea or historical “cause” for which we might contend will become dangerous and even demonic when we make it ultimate—when we make it our god instead of God.

Usually without attributing it to Tillich, I have used this dialectical Tillichian insight in helping my fellow Moderates to realize that, just because ACR can be dangerous when it makes the nation, its policies, or its government ultimate, that does not mean ACR must in all cases function in that way. Rather, we may participate in it with gusto, and may even encourage our people to do so, as long as the meaning of this nation’s being “under God” is heeded in the best of its possible meanings.

It is at least indirectly from Tillich that I have learned to advance this “dialectical” Tillichian idea in some of my polemics. This is done by using the Pauline notions of “principalities and powers.” Beginning with Colossians 1:16, there are passages in Colossians 1-2 and Ephesians 3-4 that make it convincing, at least for many Baptists, when I say: See, there are some very fine possibilities in life—ACR is one of them—that can become downright demonic

when people yield their lives utterly to these things, that is, when these people fail to love and serve God, and instead yield their lives to these things, with all their heart, mind, and strength. Paul never called the Mosaic Law a Power in this sense. But, in a way that doubtlessly pleased the Lutheran Paul Tillich, Paul argues in the passages mentioned that the Law *functioned* as such a Power. At least he did so in effect. This happened when people lived compulsively subservient to the Law rather than serving God in that freedom opened for them in Christ's victory on the Cross.

This appeal to Paul has been helpful in allaying my colleagues' suspicions that I am not sufficiently alert to the evil possibilities of ACR. I try to top them by using the word "demonic," which they are usually not eager to use in condemning ACR.

The dialectical insight from Tillich that I am here discussing has been especially valuable in relation to a particular false assumption that my Moderate allies tend to make. Whether consciously or not, they assume that there is an exclusive either-or choice to be made: If one remains true to the principle of church-state separation, one does not get involved in ACR, or not often, not deeply, and not with any relish. This assumption can be shown to be false in two ways. First, by directly using the dialectical insight from Tillich that we have just remarked: if in our practice of ACR we refuse to let the nation or its policies become ultimate, then we are in a position to subject the government and its policies to principles that transcend and judge the government and its policies. And one of the principles that is ready-to-hand to limit government, is church-state separation. That principle tells government to stay out of the sphere of organized religion, the area where we commit ourselves to God who is really God. Ergo, church-state separation and ACR do not stand in an exclusive either/or relationship to one another.

But second, the underlying either/or assumption can be demonstrated to be false on empirical grounds. Some of the nobler versions of ACR include a strong commitment to church-state separation as part of the ACR itself. Thomas Kidd organizes much of his fine religious history of the American Revolution around five "religious beliefs that had public, political implications." These "public beliefs" made up Americans' "civic spirituality" (Kidd's term for ACR). One of these five beliefs or principles was "the disestablishment of state

churches."⁸ But this principle is none other than the principle of church-state separation.⁹

Given the light shed by some of the Tillich principles I have recited, I hope fully to persuade some of my colleagues, and thus to have a better chance of winning our church-state fight, even in our own backyard.

These Tillich insights also open the way for us to do something else. If we are careful to abide by the safeguards that are implicit and explicit in the Tillichian ideas I have advanced, we can with good conscience approve our ACR, or another nation's civil religion, when we or they recognize that the God whose presence and actions are immanent in history can use our nation or theirs as a divine instrument to do some of God's work in the world.

III. Barth Historicizes God in God's Transcendence

Meanwhile, what is going on in the encountering transcendence of God that we have commissioned Barth to tell us about? Can it be fairly said that "historicizing God" is involved? It can.

Beginning with his *God's Being is in Becoming*, Eberhard Jüngel has made this kind of thing convincing for many.¹⁰ But it is on the work of Bruce McCormack that I am dependent. I am deeply indebted to him. (Or perhaps he's indebted to me. I had to pay \$97.00 for a copy of his dissertation.)¹¹ McCormack's writings,¹² along with the writings of others,¹³ have been field-changing in Barth studies. He has shown that, in a gracious eternal act that for us who dwell in time has never not already happened (sic), God determines God's self as "for" humankind and "with" humankind. God does this by electing us in Christ in a covenant of grace. This is an act whereby and wherein God determines Godself, in one of God's three ways of being God as, in all eternity, the Son or Word, namely, as Jesus Christ. And yes, by contrast with much of the Christian tradition, ancient and modern, for Barth there is no pre-incarnate Son distinct from Jesus Christ. The Son or Logos is Jesus Christ from all eternity.

Thus, God's being is self-determined as "*to be incarnate in our time and history*"; and our earthly human history has, by God's free decision and act, been made ingredient in the very being of God. This is so because God's experiencing temporality in Jesus Christ the Son is something that belongs to God's own Trinitarian being. From all eternity, time

and history belong to God's own way of being God as God the Son, Jesus Christ.

This is a historicizing of God because the modalities of time and history belong to the being of God. They belong to God in what we might call a "teleological way." That is to say, at least from our *temporal* perspective, God's entering into history as the man Jesus Christ belongs to God's goal or *telos*—as that which will come to pass in the fullness of time—or so we see it from our temporal perspective. Clearly, Barth's theology historicizes God, and clearly, it is the transcendent God who is thus historicized, rather than the immanent God we looked at in discussing Tillich.

Further, if I understand this correctly, there is a distinguishable second sense in which Barthian theology historicizes the transcendent God. Not only is it the case that the reality of the *historical man* Jesus belongs to the being of God the Son; it is also the case that, when God freely decides and determines himself to be Father, Son, and Spirit, it becomes clear that the historical quality of "free decision-making" belongs to the very being of God. Here again we have the "historicizing of God" in God's transcendence.

How can such Barthian ideas contribute to good theology? In God's electing, gracious decision and act of self-determination as self-differentiated—as self-differentiated in Trinitarian form—God will be and is Our God in Christ; and for Barth it is the case that we, sooner or later, are to be God's People. God historicizes Godself in a decision of free choice, and it is out of that choice that God creates the order of finite reality that we indwell as historical beings.

Thus, as the Bible keeps telling us and showing us, God is not some immovable, changeless Monad. God is decisionally and historically alive and active, just as we ourselves are decisionally and historically alive and active.¹⁴ Thus, it is the case that God can be and is faithfully and truly *with* us, now and always.

IV. Taking Barth in a Tillichian Way

Up to this point, I have dealt only with the way Tillich and Barth each separately historicize God, and with how that quality of each man's thought has theological promise. I turn now to the question what happens if we try, with whatever muscle it may require, to force these two bodies of thought into some kind of embrace. This is not going to be easy.

People influenced significantly by Tillich—"Tillichians" in the very broad sense in which I shall henceforth use that term—will immediately be smitten with the perception that Barth's narrative about the self-determining decision of God in eternity is... myth! This is plain. But that need not and should not be a dismissal of Barth, however much it may send Barthians running for the exit.

Why is it not the end of the matter for Tillichians? Because Tillich has a powerful doctrine of religious symbols and—please note this!—it is precisely the *mythical* symbols that are the central, pivotal, and potent ones. According to Tillich, if symbols are alive for a given group, and if these symbols are seriously tended to in a religious setting, they are able not only to *represent* religious Realities—which is where most analyses of Tillich's religious symbols leave off. In addition, these live symbols are also able to make the religious Realities *present and effective*. Or, more adequately stated, symbols *yield to that to which they point*. In this case, they yield to the God who sets his heart upon us by electing us in Jesus Christ. Thereby these symbols become conduits—conduits through which are unimaginably more than mere tokens—through which this God becomes here and now operative in an explosion of reconciliation and transformation.

Recognizing here that Barth has massively and magnificently grounded his narrative in the New Testament, and recognizing that Barth has also made a historic and winsome change in the Calvinistic notion of election—that is, he has gotten rid of double-edged predestination so far as we human creatures are concerned—recognizing all this, I say, Tillichians can see, in this grippingly mythical narrative, that Barth has rendered something at the core of the Christian message. And he has done it in a highly sophisticated, dramatic, and moving configuration of symbols, a configuration that makes narrative sense of large, crucial portions of the New Testament. Thus, nothing prohibits Tillichians from taking his narrative as symbolic. And, taking it so, nothing prohibits Tillichians from teaching and preaching it with transforming power.

V. Making Tillich's Christology More Historical, with Help from Barth

In 1954, Tillich delivered one of his liveliest speeches. It was in German.¹⁵ In its spritely, vivacious English translation, it is entitled "The Importance of New Being for Christian Theology."¹⁶ The

title of the German original is more revealing. Directly translated, that title reads, “New Being as the Central Concept of a Christian Theology.” In this speech, now an article, Tillich urges that Christian theology—at least the theology that he would produce—should make the concept of New Being its central idea. Tillich spells out what that involves. In particular, he clarifies what he means by the concept of “the new,” and he points out that Eastern religions do *not* find the new to be ultimately meaningful. Rather, they seek to escape from the new, or to reverse the new in a return to Origin.

Then, very much in passing, he drops one of those Tillich statements that have the capacity to get beneath the surface and detonate, like a depth charge, sending up a shower of new insight. When we accept or reject the new, he says, it amounts to the same thing as our affirming or denying the “historicity of history,” *die Geschichtlichkeit der Geschichte*.

There you have it! At least in crucial part, history is history by virtue of the fact that the genuinely new comes into *being* there, and by virtue of the fact that the newly actualized existent is *honored and valued*—honored and valued *because of* its newness and uniqueness. Or, if we can restate this now in personal terms, we may say that *this individual*, whoever she may be, is valued, loved, and cherished, not or not only because she repeats something universal and well-known, and not or not only because she embodies this or that recognized object of everyone’s desire, but because she is the singular, unrepeatable person that she is. We are close here to the biblical and the Barthian idea of election, the idea of our being chosen by God. I shall come back to that in a moment.

What I want to call attention to now is the fact that we encounter a problem in Tillich at this point. Despite the fact that he champions the new in the emphatic way we have seen, and despite the fact that he wants and intends his theology to be historical in the fullest sense, when Tillich tells us what Jesus must do in order to be the Christ, the bearer of New Being, and thereby to fill his role as the center of history, it is precisely the actualized newness and individuality of the man Jesus that must be sacrificed—obliterated, surrendered, given up on the Cross. Tillich is surprisingly persistent and emphatic on this point. He is famous for insisting that, as he puts this point in *Dynamics of Faith*, “Jesus could not have been the Christ without sacrificing himself as Jesus to himself as the Christ” (DF 97-98).

I am aware why Tillich took this stand. One reason was to avoid the idolatry of a finite being’s claiming infinite status, which would unleash a stream of demonic destruction. And another reason was to insure that historical research would not be able to destroy the historically factual basis of Christian faith: if everything particular about him is jettisoned, it doesn’t matter who this obliterated figure may have been.

Nevertheless, I believe that—with some significant reconstruction of his thought!—Tillichian theology can hold on to the emphasis upon Jesus’ self-sacrifice and *add to* it an affirmation of the unique historical individuality of the man Jesus. And I believe that a properly Tillichian theology can give to the figure of Jesus an ethical role, and some role in sanctification if not also a soteriological role, as well.

In fact, Tillich took some steps in this direction in 1963—doubtless without intending to—when he set forth a doctrine that at least *seemed* new to Tillich scholars. The apparently new doctrine was that of “essentialization.” I do not have space to pursue that matter here, but I have pursued it in some detail, with a similar end in view, in the paper that I cited in the introduction above.¹⁷

But there is one more shift I should like to suggest for Tillich’s system. If I may personify his system of thought as a living being, I might urge Tillich’s system to listen to some of the music of Barth’s doctrine of election, and to *let that music resonate* throughout the body of Tillichian thought—not least to let it resonate in the Tillichian idea of love.

As some of my earlier language has suggested, when we say that divine love sets its heart upon each of us unique individuals (and I certainly believe this happens), we are not far from what the Bible and the Christian tradition have in mind when they speak of God’s choosing, or God’s *electing* the new, unique individuals that we are—the new individuals who have been produced by the historical process, and who have actualized themselves within that process.

If we should wish now to tune in to this musical motif as it sounded near the origins of the biblical-Christian idea of election, we may listen to the following from Deuteronomy, chapter 7, a passage that I suggest we hear in a properly symbolic key, as good Tillichians should:

The Lord did not set his love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peo-

ples; but because the Lord loves you, and because he would keep the oath which he swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage....

So come to table, if you will. I pass two plates, one called Tillich, one called Barth. Take and eat.

Abbreviations for Frequently-cited Works by Paul Tillich

- CtB *The Courage to Be*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952.
- DF *Dynamics of Faith*. New York: Harper & Row, 1957.
- MW *Main Works / Hauptwerke*. Edited by Carl Heinz Ratschow with the collaboration of John Clayton, Gert Hummel, Erdmann Sturm, Michael Palmer, Robert P. Scharlemann, and Gunther Wenz. Six volumes. Berlin and New York: W. DeGruyter-Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmbH, 1987-1998.
- ST *Systematic Theology*. Three volumes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963.
- PK "Participation and Knowledge." In MW 1: 382-89.
- LPJ *Love, Power, and Justice*. New York/London: Oxford University Press, 1954.
- TC *Theology of Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959

¹ I explain in some surgical detail how one may transplant this Buberian a priori into Tillich's basic ontological structure in Robison B. James, "Dealing with the Personal Encounter Deficit in Tillich, Especially vis-à-vis God," in *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society*, 33:4 (Fall, 2007), 6-20. In a less developed way I do the same in the last chapter, "Is Ultimate Reality Personal?," of my *Tillich and World Religions: Encountering Other Faiths Today* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003).

² This is shown by the following: Among the several types of God-idea that Tillich identifies, his own type of God-idea, he tells us, is "trinitarian monotheism" (ST I,228-30). The "philosophical analogue" or "philosophical transformation" of trinitarian monotheism is "dialectical realism" (ST I,234). Dialectical realism "presupposes that reality itself moves through 'yes' and 'no' and 'yes'

again." It is "the logical expression of a philosophy of life" (ibid). Tillich's thought is most certainly a philosophy of life (ST III,5), and Tillich refers to the young Hegel as representative of this understanding of reality (ST I,234-35).

³ For this paragraph, see Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Simon and Schuster: Touchstone Books, 1968 [preface 1972]), 414-429.

⁴ Tillich may be at his most expressive and most understandable where he characterizes the self-actualization of all life as the twofold movement of "going beyond itself" and "returning to itself," or "expansion and consolidation," as I have worded it. This two-moment description of the Actualization Process is found in the magnificent little speech, "Dimensions, Levels, and the Unity of Life (1959)," MW VI,402-410. However, at ST III,30-110 (which comes from 1963), Tillich analyzes the manner of life's self-actualization more precisely as a three-moment rather than as a two-moment movement. It is clearly the same process, however. The third moment of life's self-actualization in ST III is the union of the two moments that he sets forth in the 1959 speech.

One thing that forces Tillich to be more precise in ST III is the fact that, in 1959, he was using "self-transcendence" to mean both (a) "going beyond one's self" in the sense of expansive "growth" within the order of finite reality, and (b) something that I would call "reaching beyond the immanent order into divine transcendence." In ST III, by contrast, Tillich corrects this ambiguity of the term "self-transcendence." Thereby he arrives at three moments in the actualization process, as I have noted.

For people trying to "get the hang" of Tillich's metaphysical vision, the ambiguity of 1959 is fruitful. And preferable. It facilitates the intuitive leap whereby one may grasp the big picture that Tillich is painting. In other words, "Start with the 1959 piece and then read ST III." I am using the ambiguity of "self-transcendence" when I speak of the "unification of contraries" above. Without this simplification I fear my exposition would slow to a crawl. The trees we might see, but the forest, not.

⁵ As to "these three 'places'": In this essay I shall several times advert to the threefold character of the living God, or of (the religiously intuited) Reality-as-a-living-Whole. Tillich gives a one-paragraph description of this trinitarian character of the Real where he describes the three ways in which "Eternal Life, which is the inner aim of all creatures," is "in" God. There are three meanings of this "in," Tillich points out. First, there is "the 'in' of creative origin"; second, there is "the 'in' of ontologi-

cal dependence,” or of “the permanent divine creativity” that is often understood as “the presence of the essences or eternal images or ideas of everything created in the divine mind”; and third, there is “the ‘in’ of ultimate fulfillment, the state of essentialization of all creatures” (ST III,420-21).

More minutely, Tillich characterizes this “Gestalt of the Real” (as I might call it) in his “trinitarian principles” (ST I,249-252). Although the full reconciling union of all contraries is never consummated in our historical order, as I say above, this grand overcoming of negativities is in differing senses “there,” in Father, in Son-Logos, and in Spirit, respectively.

(a) This overcoming of negativities is “there” in God, first, insofar as God is the Power-to-Be that upholds the world from within. This is something God does as Father or Ground. (b) The sought-for union of contraries is “there,” second, in the rational or meaningful structures that are creatively given to us beings by virtue of our inhering – in our essential reality – within the Son or Logos.

And third, (c) the overcoming of contraries is “there” in God as the Spirit. Although the Spirit is upliftingly and energizingly present in our life now in history, sometimes more so, sometimes less, in Her fullness She – and therewith our “fully meaningful actuality” – is the transcendently demanding-and-evoking Lure that draws us and our world always toward its fulfillment. She lures and commands created reality toward the full actualization of its ever-ramifying possibilities.

Extra space here?

⁶ And this leads to something else, although I do not wish to feature it here. If we can use the term “pantheism” in a descriptive and non-pejorative sense – rather than in the name-calling sense that Tillich had to fight against – we may say that Tillichian theology is an everlastingly but not an eternally-frustrated pantheism.

Actually, Tillich is not terribly far from what I have just said when he calls his thought an “eschatological pantheism” (ST III,421). I would be willing to settle for that term alone if I had to. But I still think “frustrated pantheism” can also be used. It is more expressive, and accurate enough, as I hope I have made clear. People who are trying to catch Tillich’s vision of the Real need expressive images and concepts, given the fact that Tillich’s metaphysical vision, although it is awesome, can be elusive.

⁷ The American Revolution will serve as an example. In his excellent *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), Thomas S. Kidd makes it clear beyond quibble how decisive was Americans’ belief in “providentialism” in their taking on and defeating the British.

⁸ Thomas S. Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 6-10, 243-54. The quotations come from pages 6 and 9.

⁹ This non-establishment principle provided the decisive reason why Virginia’s dissenters, perhaps a third of the population at the time, were willing to join the revolutionary cause. New research shows that, although both sides obscured the fact later in the histories they wrote, Virginia Baptists in particular made what amounts to a “deal” with the Virginia Anglican gentry who were running both the revolutionary state and the still-established church. The bargain they struck amounted to their saying, “We will help you fight the British if you will free us from the restrictions imposed upon our preaching and our church life by this dreadful church establishment that is so dear to your hearts.” John A. Ragosta, *Wellspring of Liberty: How Virginia’s Religious Dissenters Helped Win the American Revolution and Secured Religious Liberty* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3-13.

And this piece of American history also shows that ACR is *not destined in every instance to be an idolatrous worship of the nation*, as has been charged. For the bargaining Virginia dissenters, their civil spirituality clearly put God above country, not the reverse. They were American patriots because and insofar as the new nation would allow them to serve God and preach the good news of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰ Eberhard Jüngel, *Gods Being Is In Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth. A Paraphrase*, trans. John Webster (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmann’s Company, 2001).

¹¹ Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, c.1995, 4th printing 2004).

¹² I refer especially to Bruce L. McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, 2008). I am indebted to and dependent upon the following article for my exposition of Barth: Ibid, Bruce L. McCormack, “Grace and Being: The Role of God’s Gracious Election in Karl Barth’s Theological Ontology” in *ibid*, 183-200.

¹³ E. g., in Walter Kreck, *Grundentscheidungen in Karl Barths Dogmatik: Zur Diskussion seines Verständnisses von Offenbarung und Erwählung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), cf. 212-219.

¹⁴ Of course, in reality the analogy runs the other way. We can be decisionally and historically alive and

active only because the decisionally and historically alive and active God freely chooses to create us.

¹⁵ “Das neue Sein als Zentralbegriff eine christlichen Theologie,” MW VI, 363-83.

¹⁶ Paul Tillich, “The Importance of New Being for Christian Theology,” *Eranos Yearbook*, XXX, Bollingen Series, 2d printing, 1972, trans. Ralph Manheim, 161-78. The translator uses some unaccustomed terms for the standard Tillichian English, for example, “essential Being” instead of “Being-itself,” 169, and “transcending” instead of “overcoming” the non-fulfillment of our essential being, 165-66 et passim. I like the fact that this translator speaks not of “the New Being,” but of “New Being” – *without* the Germanic definite article.

**“BEYOND A DISAGREEMENT ON
CRITERIA—PAUL TILlich AND KARL
BARTH ON INTERRELIGIOUS
ENCOUNTERS”**

SVEN ENSMINGER

Introduction

The skew-whiff¹ (Should we not restart notes here) friendship between Paul Tillich and Karl Barth is one of many disagreements and a certain—of course, well-tempered (at least most of the time)—animosity. Indeed, Barth’s reference to Tillich’s “abominable theology,”² could most certainly fail to provide a basis for an amicable relationship.

This paper seeks to overcome this fundamental difference by searching for a number of points of contact (*Anknüpfungspunkte*) in the way the two theologians understood and approached non-Christian religions. It will be argued that despite a whole range of formal disagreements—none of which will be dismissed or denied—there exist some helpful parallels in this particular area of theology. These will be examined in the main part of this paper. In a conclusion, some area of further research will be suggested, providing a basis for Tillich and Barth scholarship alike.

Part 1: Finding a forum for discussion

Before embarking onto the main part of the discussion, some general comments are necessary to find a forum for the discussion between Tillich and Barth. Their disagreements have been well attested

It has long been clear to me that much of the existential force of Tillich’s theology is dissipated for his English readers when Tillich speaks of “the New Being,” using the definite article, when he says such things as: “Jesus is the power of *the* New Being for those who receive him as the Christ.” In idiomatic, hard-hitting English, he should have said, “Jesus is the *power of New Being* for those who receive him as the Christ.” It is a great loss that Tillich’s English-language coaches did not get him to speak in this idiomatic way well before he began to publish his system in 1951.

¹⁷ See note 1 above.

and do not have to be re-rehearsed in this context.³ Instead, we will focus here particularly on the late writings by both theologians, i.e., within the broader context of the late 1950s and 1960s. While such as restriction might seem artificial at first, it seems necessary for the following reasons: first, both theologians engaged with much more pressing issues in the early and middle stages of their lives. In Tillich’s case, this meant the exile to the United States, in Barth’s case, it led to his dismissal from Germany and the close witnessing of the Second World War from Switzerland. While this could be considered as self-evident, this experience put both theologians into their individual contexts, and had a deep impact upon both men.

Second, the period after World War II provides a fertile ground for both theologians to go beyond this experience. We find during this time, Barth’s numerous trips to the United States and all across Europe, as well as Tillich’s well-known trip to Japan and his time there. The later years of life for both theologians are the context in which the engagement with non-Christian religions is most likely to happen. This does not make them specialists in non-Christians’ religions;⁴ however, it points to the mere acknowledgment that different religions are not something to be dismissed, but a topic to be fully engaged.

Before embarking into the main section, I would like to point out one further aspect required by the very nature of the subject. As it will be seen, I will not assign particular classification labels to either Tillich or Barth with regards to their approach to non-Christian religions. While the widespread classification regarding approaches to non-Christian religions into exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism

provides a broad framework, the usefulness of the classification has been questioned repeatedly.⁵ I will therefore avoid an explicit labeling along these lines.

Part II: Tillich and Barth on Protestant Principle and Revelation

So, what are possible points of contact between Bart and Tillich? I want to suggest two main areas of convergence in this part: first, the Protestant Principle, as suggested by Tillich, yet also present implicitly in Barth's thought on religion, and second, the respective doctrines of revelation developed by the two thinkers. It should be remembered throughout that I am *not* trying to smooth out differences between the two theologians, but offer these two broad areas for a starting point of conversation on this particular topic.

The Protestant Principle

First, let us turn to the "Protestant Principle." By this, I am referring to, "the principle of putting oneself under the same judgment under which one puts others."⁶ Tillich suggests this as guiding principle in the approach to other religions (and quasi-religions). Despite the fact that it has been argued that, "to grasp precisely what Tillich understands as religion is probably one of the most difficult points in the interpretation in his work,"⁷ Tillich concludes here and from a historical review of the Christian attitude to other religions in a different context: "Christianity is not based on a simple negation of the religions or quasi-religions it encounters. The relation is profoundly dialectical, and that is not a weakness, but the greatness of Christianity, especially in its self-critical, Protestant form."⁸ Tillich justifies his approach by trying to overcome three main—what he calls—provincialisms: first, "Christian provincialism," which is a result from the fact that the realities of other religions cannot be denied anymore. Second, Tillich suggests the provincialism that calls religion only those relationships that have the idea of a God at the centre. Third, Tillich refers to the provincialism that ignores powerful quasi-religions.⁹ It needs to be emphasized here the two senses of religion that Tillich touches upon: on the one hand, we find religion defined in the narrow sense, i.e., "entering a temple, going to a church, belonging to a church sect or religious movement, and having particular symbols or ideas about God, particular sacramental and ritual activities."¹⁰ More broadly speak-

ing, however, "religion—namely, an ultimate concern about the meaning of one's life and the meaning of 'being' as such—also appears in other forms. It may appear in a painting...in philosophy...or it may appear in a political idea."¹¹

Similarly, Barth suggests in the infamous §17 of the *Church Dogmatics* that Christianity, or the "Christian religion" is, "only a particular instance of the universal which is called religion,"¹² and in this way, Christianity exhibits special features, peculiar to that articulation of the phenomenon religion, yet, it is not unique simply based on the fact of *being religion*. Green speaks to this tension by arguing that, "as such, Christianity is surely 'peculiar' (*eigenartig*) but not 'unique' (*einzigartig*)."¹³ Instead, Barth emphasizes that, "the elements and problems in the basic outlook of all religions [are] the same as those of Christian doctrine: the world's beginning and end, the origin and nature of man, moral and religious law, sin and redemption."¹⁴ The existence of different religions raises the question, "whether theology as theology, whether the church as church, and finally, whether faith as faith are willing to take themselves or rather the basis of themselves seriously, and are capable thereof."¹⁵ This forms the foundation of Barth's argument in favor of interpreting religion *in light of* revelation and *not* vice versa as it had been suggested by Neo-Protestantism, a point to which we will return below in the section on revelation.¹⁶ Against this background, Barth moves to his second section arguing that, "religion is unbelief." Indeed, he goes as far as refusing to find criteria, "which [one] can then use as a gauge to weigh and balance one human thing against another, distinguishing the 'higher' religion from the 'lower,' the 'living' from the 'decomposed,' the 'calculable' from the 'incalculable."¹⁷ The truth of any religion will always depend solely on the "grace of revelation," and, "through grace the Church lives by grace, and to that extent it is the locus of true religion,"¹⁸ a theme to which Barth will return when arguing for Christianity being the true religion.

Therefore, we note the following: Tillich and Barth have certainly a different understanding of religion as such. As Werner Schüßler reminds us: "Tillich evaluates religion not in purely negative terms. He also sees the negative in it; nonetheless, religion for him is not pure error, *hubris*, or the attempt at trying to save oneself. This is what distinguishes his understanding of religion decidedly from that of Karl Barth."¹⁹ One might, for the sake of simplification, argue that Tillich's concept of religion is

broader. Nonetheless, the two theologians subscribe to a form of and agree on the “Protestant principle.” This means that the approach to one’s own religion and different ones is not one of arrogance and self-absorption, but rather one of humility and openness.

The Concept of Revelation

Secondly, and linked to our first point, let us turn to the concept of revelation. Tillich’s concept of revelation is undoubtedly a complex question, not in the least for reasons of the unusual language used to describe it. In his *Systematic Theology*, revelation is a “mystery,” always accompanied by “ecstasy” and “miracle.”²⁰ In sum, “revelation is the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately. The mystery which is revealed is of ultimate concern to us because it is the ground of our being.”²¹ Tillich moves on to distinguish between the subject of revelation (“the revelator”), and the medium of revelation. The revelator is the “ground of being,” the answer to what is, to religious questions.²² Regarding the medium of revelation, Tillich says: “There is no reality, thing, or event which cannot become a bearer of the mystery of being and enter into a revelatory correlation.”²³ Tillich criticizes Barth here explicitly for the over-emphasis on the “Word of God”²⁴ (which will we turn to just below). In a different context, Tillich argues: “Media of revelation are those things and happenings in the history of religion which have been considered holy, holy object, holy person, holy book, holy word and so on.”²⁵ In the context of different religions, Tillich now moves to his central question: “How can we judge between all these manifestations, be it a primitive fetish, be it a holy book, be it a prophetic personality...is there a criterion, and, whosoever it is, what is the criterion?”²⁶ Tillich concludes in this context that the criterion can only be Jesus the Christ. This is not an option amongst others, but necessary consequence: “Christianity must manifest that in the Christ, particularly in the Cross of Christ, it has a principle which transcends religion, which is the end of religion.”²⁷ Tillich simultaneously maintains that experiences of revelation are present in all religions; it is a universal experience that the Christian religion cannot claim exclusively for itself.²⁸ The criterion of the Christ, or more precisely even, the cross of Christ, however, is the one to be pointed to; in the spirit of the Protestant principle that we encountered, this also applies to Christianity. For Tillich, we arrive at a position that espouses, on the one hand, a very clear Christo-

centrism (particularity), yet also a certain degree of universality by allowing “revelation” to happen outside of Christianity.²⁹ The relation between revelation and religion is thereby as follows: “All religion is based on revelatory experiences, even the lowest sacramental ones...at the same time, every religion is a distortion of the revelation on which it is based.”³⁰ We also note that Tillich introduces a “dynamic typology,” a typological undertaking in active tension that, “drives both to conflicts and beyond the conflicts to possible unions of the polar elements.”³¹ This is what directs Tillich’s approach to interreligious dialogue.

We should not be surprised that, for Barth, the criterion against which all revelation has to be tested can only be explicitly Jesus Christ. He is the starting point of the examination of revelation as such for otherwise, revelation is not revelation.³² Revelation is, thus, not open for discussion; it is, “God’s sovereign action upon man or it is not revelation.”³³ However, this does not completely negate human engagement with revelation, as, “the concept ‘sovereign’—and in the context of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit we can presuppose this as ‘self-evident’ (although not at all self-evidently)—indicates that God is not at all alone, that therefore, if revelation is to be understood, man must not be overlooked or eliminated.”³⁴ However, there is also a later development in Barth’s doctrine of revelation. While Barth’s doctrine of revelation stresses emphatically the divine initiative of this revelation, there is also Barth’s theory of lights, a “new teaching [that] is a positive extension of his old critique of religion and not a retraction of it.”³⁵ For Barth, “the fact that Jesus Christ is the one Word of God does not mean that in the Bible, the Church and the world there are not other words which are quite notable in their way, other lights which are quite clear and other revelations (*Offenbarungen*) which are quite real.”³⁶ It would be a limitation of God’s freedom to restrict the capacity of revelation only to the church, to Scripture, to the Apostles and Prophets: “If the whole world of creation and history is the realm of the lordship of the God at whose right hand Jesus Christ is seated, so that He exercises authority in this outer as well as the inner sphere and is free to attest Himself or to cause Himself to be attested in it.”³⁷ The relationship between the lights and the light of Christ are multifaceted, yet it becomes more complex when turning to the written attestations (words) about Jesus Christ (the Word of God).³⁸ The question becomes, “whether there really are other words which in this

sense are true in relation to the one Word of God.”³⁹ There is then no reason for the Christian community to display arrogance by turning away from the worldly sphere: “We must thus be prepared to see His sovereignty at work in these other spheres, even though we cannot see or understand it. We must be prepared to hear, even in secular occurrence, not as alien sounds but as segments of that periphery concretely orientated from its centre and towards its totality, as signs and attestations of the lordship of the one prophecy of Jesus Christ, true words which we must receive as such even though they come from this source.”⁴⁰ Certainly, Barth argues against blind trust to receive revelation in the secular sphere and there will always be some fear and reservations; yet, “in no case must they be stronger than our confidence, not in the potentialities of world history, nor in individual men, but in the sovereignty of Jesus Christ [under which those in the worldly sphere also stand]. In no case must it be stronger than the readiness to hear, and to test whether what is heard is perhaps a true word which Christianity cannot ignore as such.”⁴¹ This means that whereas Barth allows for “revelations” to occur outside the Christian sphere, he will deny a similarly generous typology as Tillich has.

We can therefore argue the following: Tillich offers a more generous typology than Barth, and also allows non-Christian revelation to occur, happily calling them exactly by this term. For both theologians, it is furthermore essential to distinguish between religion and revelation—in Barth’s case, revelation is the, “sublimation of religion,”⁴² in Tillich’s case, “it is wrong to identify religion with revelation.”⁴³ Simultaneously, Jesus Christ remains a central tenet in the engagement with non-Christian religions, although in a different way: for Barth, Jesus Christ as *the* revelation against all revelations will have to be tested. For Tillich, on the other hand, the cross of Christ is *the* criterion that transcends all religions. Both theologians affirm, therefore, the universal character of the Christ event. It can be argued that, through a completely different method and certainly a disagreement on criteria along the way, both theologians arrive at a strikingly similar position in the end: for them, as Christian theologians, Jesus Christ is the only valid criterion in the engagement with other religions.

Conclusions

This paper has suggested points of contact in Tillich and Barth on the question of the relation between Christianity and the non-Christian religions. Put differently: this has been an exercise in Tillich’s dynamic typology, resulting in the argument that despite methodological differences, the Protestant Principle and the respective doctrines of revelation at their very cores provide areas of convergence in the thought of both theologians. The conversation between Tillich and Barth on how to relate to non-Christian religions begun in this paper illustrates one thing: Skew-whiff friendships can still be friendships. Beyond a basic and fundamental disagreement on criteria, Barth and Tillich arrive at surprisingly similar conclusions; a dialogue between the two is possible despite the disagreement on criteria. Therefore, dialogue does not mean to be completely closed to any truth—“Skepticism does not unite people”⁴⁴—but instead, the call remains clear for, “a respect for the beliefs of others and the readiness to look for the truth in what strikes us as strange or foreign; for such truth concerns us and can correct us and lead us farther along the path.”⁴⁵ This is what can be derived from this paper about the dialogue between Barth and Tillich; yet, even more importantly, it also applies to the ongoing question today of the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions.

¹ See Petr Gallus, *Der Mensch zwischen Himmel und Erde. Der Glaubensbegriff bei Paul Tillich und Karl Barth*, (Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig 2007), 566.

² Barth *In Adelaide B. McKelway*, (Hanover, New Hampshire, USA, 1963). In Barth, *Briefe 1961-1968 (GA V.6)*.

³ Compare their exchange regarding the Christian paradox in the early 1920s, “*Von der Paradoxie des positiven Paradoxes*». *Antworten und Fragen an Paul Tillich, 1923*,” in Barth, *Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten 1922-1925 (GA III.19)*, 349-380. See also the summary given by Werner Schüßler in “Paul Tillich und Karl Barth. Ihre erste Begegnung in den zwanziger Jahren, in his “*Was uns unbedingt angeht*”—*Studien zur Theologie und Philosophie Paul Tillichs*, (Münster, Germany: LIT Verlag, 1999), 119-130.

⁴ Arguably, this is not the case. Tillich, for example, used a number of sweeping generalizations in discussing Islam or Buddhism (compare Tillich, “Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions,” in Paul Tillich, *Main Works/ Hauptwerke*, vol. 5, “Writings on Religion/

Religiöse Schriften,” ed. Robert P. Scharlemann (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter—Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1988), 291-325. For Tillich on Buddhism, see particularly section III, “A Christian-Buddhist Conversation,” 309-317. For Tillich on Islam, see particularly the argument that Christianity only became exclusivist in the light of the Crusades, 304-305.) The same can be said about Barth’s engagement with Amida Buddhism, see *CD I/2*, 340-343; *KD I/2*, 373-376.

⁵ Compare here, for example, Gavin D’Costa, ‘The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions,’ *Religious Studies* 32, June 1996, 223-232, where D’Costa argues that, “pluralism must always logically be a form of exclusivism and that nothing called pluralism really exists” (225). See also his discussion with Terrence Tilley in “‘Christian Orthodoxy and Religious Pluralism’: A Response to Terrence W. Tilley,” *Modern Theology*, 23, 2007, 435-446 and the ensuing debate in the same journal on this topic.

⁶ Tillich, “Christian and non-Christian revelation,” in Paul Tillich, *The encounter of religions and quasi-religions*, ed. Terence Thomas, Toronto Studies in Theology, 37 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon, 1990), 59.

⁷ S. Wittschier, quoted in Werner Schüßler, *Jenseits von Religion und Nicht-Religion: Paul Tillich*, (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1989), 27, my translation. (“Das präzise zu erfassen, was Tillich unter Religion versteht, ist wohl einer der schwierigsten Punkte bei der Interpretation seines Werkes.”)

⁸ Tillich, “Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions,” *MW* 5, 309.

⁹ See Tillich, “Christian and non-Christian revelation,” 60.

¹⁰ Tillich, quoted in D. Mackenzie Brown, *Ultimate Concern—Tillich in Dialogue* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Green, “Introduction: Barth as Theorist of Religion,” in Barth, *On Religion*, 13. See also his note 37 at the end of the sentence: “The translation in the *Church Dogmatics*—‘singular, perhaps, but not unique’—is misleading since ‘singular’ like ‘unique’, means one of a kind. It also misses Barth’s confident tone: he says not ‘perhaps’ but ‘to be sure’ (*zwar...aber doch nicht*)” (130).

¹⁴ *CD I/2*, 282. *KD I/2*, 307.

¹⁵ *KD I/2*, 308, my translation. The passage in *CD* simply states that the question is, “whether theology and the Church and faith are able and willing to take themselves, or their basis, seriously.” (See *CD I/2*, 283). Green’s translation (see Barth, *On Religion*, 36) comes

much closer to the original by the repetition of “theology as theology...church as church...faith as faith,” yet misses Barth’s argument for a common basis (*Grund*) of theology, church and faith, reflected in the plural reflexive pronoun (*sich / ihrer selbst*).

¹⁶ Regarding the relation to the question of revelation, see the second part.

¹⁷ *CD I/2*, 298; *KD I/2*, 324. I am suggesting the change of “ponderable” as a translation of “ponderabel” to “calculable” in order to denote the issue of control that Barth has in mind here. True religion will always be beyond human control in Barth’s theology, as it is solely dependent on the grace bestowed upon it by the Word of God.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ See Werner Schüßler, *Jenseits von Religion und Nicht-Religion: Paul Tillich*, 229, my translation. (“Tillich wertet die Religion nicht rein negativ. Er sieht das Negative in ihr zwar auch, trotzdem ist Religion für ihn nicht reiner Irrtum, Hybris oder der Versuch der Selbsterlösung. Das unterscheidet Tillichs Religionsverständnis wesentlich von dem Karl Barths.”)

²⁰ Compare Tillich, *ST I*, 108-118.

²¹ *ST I*, 110.

²² Compare Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 12.

²³ *ST I*, 118.

²⁴ Compare *ST I*, 122.

²⁵ Tillich, “Christian and non-Christian revelation,” 66.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 67. Note that Tillich asks “whosoever.”

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁸ Compare *ibid.*, 73.

²⁹ Compare here particularly Pan-Chiu Lai, *Towards a Trinitarian Theology of Religions: a Study of Paul Tillich’s Thought* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1994), particularly 54-65.

³⁰ Tillich, “Christian and non-Christian revelation,” 70.

³¹ Tillich, “Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions,” 310.

³² This is an illustration of McCormack’s argument for a transfoundationalist epistemology in Barth. See Bruce McCormack, “Revelation and History in Transfoundationalist Perspective: Karl Barth’s Theological Epistemology in Conversation with a Schleiermacherian Tradition,” in: *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (Jan., 1998), pp. 18-37. McCormack here traces the relationship between history and revelation, and sees revelation as indebted to Christology (cf. 33), with particular attention to Barth’s earlier writings.

³³ *CD I/2*, 295; *KD I/2*, 322.

³⁴ *CD I/2*, 295-6; *KD I/2*, 322.

³⁵ Eberhard Jüngel, *Karl Barth—A Theological Legacy*, trans. Garrett E. Paul (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 50. Jüngel points in this context to Barth's engagement with the first article of the Barmen Declaration, which reads: "We reject the false doctrine that the Church can and must, as the source of its proclamation, recognise other events and powers, forms and truths, as the revelation of God outside and alongside this one Word of God." (see e.g. *CD IV/3*, 86; *KD IV/3*, 95-96. For a full discussion of the article, see also *CD II/1*, 172-178; *KD* 194-200.).

³⁶ *CD IV/3*, 97; *KD IV/3*, 107. The German indeed uses the term *Offenbarungen* for the translated term "revelations." This is not contrary to Barth's restrictive understanding of revelation, but is also reflected in the difference between Word of God/words and Light/lights.

³⁷ *Ibid.* See also *CD I/1*, 55; *KD I/1*, 55. ("God may speak to us through Russian Communism, a flute concerto, a blossoming shrub, or a dead dog. We do well to listen to Him if He really does.") See also in this context

on the relation between divine freedom and sovereignty *CD II/1*, 505-515; *KD II/1*, 568-579.

³⁸ One needs to note here that the context of § 69 is examining Jesus Christ's "Prophetic Office" (*munus Christi propheticum*) (see e.g. *CD IV/3*, 14; *KD IV/3*, 13). Jesus Christ is not only a prophet, but indeed, *the* prophet. (*CD IV/3*, 49; *KD IV/3*, 53).

³⁹ *CD IV/3*, 113; *KD IV/3*, 126.

⁴⁰ *CD IV/3*, 124. *KD IV/3*, 139.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* The text in brackets corrects the translation in *CD* as the German says ("Vertrauen...in die Souveränität Jesu Christi, der auch die Menschen da draußen unterstehen.") which cannot be translated as, "confidence...in the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, who also understands those who are without."

⁴² Compare again the title of §17 of Barth, *CD I/2*.

⁴³ Tillich, *ST* 2, 80.

⁴⁴ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger [Benedict XVI], *Many Religions—One Covenant—Israel, the Church and the World*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 109.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

**RELIGION AND MODERN CULTURE:
CONSIDERATIONS ON THE THEOLOGY
OF CULTURE OF PAUL TILlich
AND KARL BARTH**

CHRISTIAN DANZ

In the 1923 published second volume of the journal *Theologische Blätter*, one could follow a controversy between theologians that had begun after the First World War and had increased during the course of the 20s of the last century. This public controversy had been initiated by the editor of the journal, the New Testament scholar Karl Ludwig Schmidt, who had asked his friend Paul Tillich for a comment on the theologies of Barth and Gogarten which had been published under the title *Kritisches und positives Paradox. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Karl Barth und Friedrich Gogarten*. On this comment of Tillich about the theological conditions in the beginning of the 20s, which, as he said, he had only unwillingly written, Barth responded with an energetic replica with the title *Von der Paradoxie des "positiven Paradoxes."* *Antworten und Fragen an Paul Tillich*. His extremely ironical answer on Tillich's contribution in the *Theologische*

Blätter compelled Tillich to make a further statement.

What is it about in that argument between Tillich and Barth? In his article, "Kritisches und positives Paradox," Tillich makes clear—as in all his consensus to the theologies of Barth and Gogarten—that their dialectic theology is based on the fact of a hidden precondition. "Thus I should like to venture the attempt at a debate that, along with its acknowledging the critical negation, seeks to set forth the position on the basis of which alone negation is possible."¹ Barth and Gogarten apply to a non-dialectical standpoint which is not negated itself but respectively overridden dialectically. If the conditions of the dialectic theology are not understood dialectically, then theology exposes itself as bad supernaturalism. For this reason the hidden base of the dialectical theology must be understood as a paradox itself. "The theology of crisis is right, unqualifiedly right, in its fight against every unparadoxical, immediate rendering of the Unconditional. Such theology is not something transitional, but rather something enduring, an essential element of every theology. However, it presupposes something that is not itself crisis, namely, creation and grace."²

Karl Barth has forcefully contradicted this correction of Tillich on his theology. His (that is, Tillich's) meaning would only show that he has not understood his (that is, Barth's) request.

The (make this into a block quote?) "generalizing that Tillich so generously carries out, this insistence upon relations between God and everything and anything between heaven and earth, this broad, universal steamroller of faith and revelation that—I cannot help myself—I see accomplishing everything and nothing as it rolls over houses, people, animals; it is as if it is supposed to be self-evident that everywhere, everywhere judgment and grace hold sway, that everything, simply everything, is drawn into the conflict and peace of the 'positive paradox.' What is treated in this way, with all of its 'imperceptibility' (bei aller 'Unanschaulichkeit'), is really a paradox, a paradox that has no similarity to the God of Luther and Kierkegaard, but a very marked similarity to the God of Schleiermacher and Hegel."³ Barth's criticism on the theology of Tillich and his demand of a positive paradox aims in its kernel to the concreteness and contingency of the happening of faith.⁴

Following the controversy of Tillich and Barth, held in the *Theologische Blätter*, it seems that both theologies are a long way away from each other. This impression has been intensified in the first half of the 20th century. While Tillich in the final form of his *Systematic Theology* understands revelation as an answer to the question of human being on himself,⁵ Barth deals with any kind of starting-point of the revelation in human being. No mediation between revelation and human being is possible.

Regardless of these differences, Tillich and Barth have also a great deal in common. Tillich understands revelation as criticism of religion, and, like Barth, he sees the starting-point of theology in the concept of God, not in religion.⁶ For Barth, it is a question of overcoming the crisis of modern culture and he is with Tillich in complete agreement that this crisis of modern culture is overcome only by theology.

In my following considerations, I will pursue the commonalities of the theologies of Tillich and Barth, and I want to show that, in the face of their differences, both theological programs should be understood as theologies of culture that aim to overcome the modern antagonism between culture and religion. This thesis I want to explain in three steps. I begin with a short draft of the theology of culture of Paul Tillich. In my second section, it is a

question of the theology of culture of Karl Barth. Finally I will bring some considerations on commonalities of both theologies, how we can see them in retrospect in the works of both great antipodes of the 20th century.

1. Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture

In his controversy with Paul Tillich in the *Theologische Blätter*, Barth has classified Tillich's theology all in all as a philosophy of culture and has it described with the metaphor of "revelation-roller" (*Offenbarungswalze*). This objection means contingency and concreteness of the individual faith are suppressed in a general system of culture. In his dissertations on Schelling, Tillich already has elaborated on the main features of a theology of culture and has programmatically drafted his version of a theology of culture in his famous lecture in Berlin *Über die Idee einer Theologie der Kultur* of 1919. His first description in detail we find in his lectures on *Das Christentum und die Gesellschaftsprobleme der Gegenwart* that he delivered at the same time at Berlin University. In essence, it aims at the overcoming of the antagonism of religion and culture. In his early writings, the features of Tillich's understanding of a theology of culture were already visible. But, these texts are only a programmatic draft because Tillich does not have the medium for converting his program of a theology of culture yet. At this time, he could not connect his theory of meaning with a philosophy of spirit. Such a philosophy of spirit on the basis of a theory of meaning we find primarily in Tillich's writings, *Das System der Wissenschaften nach Gegenständen und Methoden* of 1923 and in his *Religionsphilosophie* of 1925.

His lectures delivered between 1919 and 1920 at the University of Berlin show very meaningfully how Tillich has wrestled with the methodical bases and with the conceptual interpretation of his theology of culture.⁷ Only on the basis of a philosophy of spirit is he able to describe the relation between religion and culture acceptably. Because the basic elements and the specific form of his theological program best presents the result of his philosophy of spirit on the basis of a theory of meaning, we have to focus this philosophy of spirit on the whole.

Looking for determinations of the spirit in the *Wissenschaftssystem* and the *Religionsphilosophie*, we notice a close connection between the concept of spirit and the concept of meaning:

Every spiritual act is an act of meaning; regardless of whether the realistic theory of knowledge speaks of a meaning-receiving act or the idealistic theory of knowledge speaks of a meaning-bestowing act, or the metalogical method speaks of a meaning-fulfilling act; regardless therefore of how the relation between subject and object is thought of in the spiritual act, spirit is always the actualizing of meaning (*Sinnvollzug*) and the meaningful system of interconnections that is intended in spirit (*das im Geist Gemeinte Sinnzusammenhang*).⁸

Every act of the spirit is an act of meaning, and intellectual life is life in meaning. However, for this reason Tillich's understanding of spirit is not described completely yet. Two aspects are still absent. First, in its realization of meaning the spirit knows about itself. To the spirit thus belongs constitutively its self-relation. "The fundamental characteristic of spirit is this consciousness, this self-observation and self-determination of thought in the creative act."⁹ The other aspect is this: for Tillich spirit is, in its self-realization, characterized by an irreversible contrariety between the general and the individual. The general and its validity could be set by the spirit only as individual and concrete. "The spiritual act can be directed to the universal form only when it intuits the universal in a concrete norm, in an individual realization of the universal."¹⁰

On this basis, Tillich builds up his understanding of history. With Neo-Kantianism, Tillich distinguishes the acts of the spirit in theoretical and practical acts and distinguishes them again: theoretical acts in science and art, and practical acts in law and community. Of these four functions of meaning, result the basic schema of culture. Tillich understands culture as realization of these so-called functions of meaning of the spirit. "The system of all possible systems of meaning we call objectively *world*, subjectively *culture*."¹¹ The human spirit realizes itself as culture.

Nevertheless, what does Tillich now understand as religion? Where is the place of religion in the building of the spirit and realizing itself in culture? In his "Kulturvortrag," his lecture on culture in 1919, Tillich understands religion as dialectical experience of the unconditioned, but in his second version of his "Kulturvortrag," he has already replaced the concept of experience because of its indetermination through the phenomenological concept of directedness towards the unconditioned. With it, it is possible to describe more closely than

with the wide category of experience, the place and function of religion in building of the spirit.

Next, we have to deal with the matter of the place of religion. Tillich has repeatedly pointed that religion is not any form of culture beside others and therefore a specific religious function doesn't exist. As Tillich says in his *System of the Sciences*: "The presupposition of this view is that *religion* is not one sphere of meaning alongside the others; it is an attitude within all spheres: the immediate directedness to the Unconditioned."¹²

But religion cannot be a distinct sphere of meaning beside other cultural spheres, if it is understood as realization in spirit and by functions of meaning of the spirit. This happening in spirit, which Tillich calls as direction toward the unconditioned, can be described more clearly as self-understanding of the spirit in its cultural activity. In religion, the spirit understands itself in its own deep structure. That happens with cultural forms and functions that become the medium of the structure of spirit in fact in a conscious act. Yet, with this Tillich's determination of religion in direction towards the unconditioned is not completely described.

We have to introduce another aspect now: the categories of a theory of meaning of Form und Gehalt, form and content. In his *Religionsphilosophie* Tillich writes:

If consciousness is directed toward the particular forms of meaning and their unity, we have to do with *culture*; if it is directed toward the unconditioned meaning, toward the import of meaning, we have *religion*. *Religion is directedness toward the Unconditional, and culture is directedness toward the conditional forms and their unity.*¹³

In his theology of culture, Tillich understands religion as a happening of a self-understanding of the consciousness of culture in culture in its own structure. However, this does not make religion identical with a specific form of culture. Connected to this construction of the relation of religion and culture are two consequences that could give an answer on the criticism of Barth on Tillich.

At first, there is a double concept of religion in this construction of philosophy of spirit. Religion, in its true meaning, is expressed in cultural forms, but not as its own function of meaning. From this, Tillich differentiates religion in its true meaning from religion as cultural form. And this form criticizes Tillich as well as Barth. Secondly, Tillich

understands true religion as happening in cultural forms, which is also contingent and always concretely determined. The critique of Barth that Tillich's understanding of revelation would present a "revelation-roller" is then not founded.

2. Karl Barth's Theology of Culture

In his statement, Tillich has criticized Barth that his theology not only puts the whole culture under a "No" but also that it comes from a non-dialectical position. Tillich's demand on a positive paradox aims at that condition in the theology of Barth. The "No" against the whole of culture that Barth has used since the 1920s is the result of his own theological development since 1910. For a better understanding of Barth's theology of culture, it is necessary to take a brief look at this development now. Before World War I, Barth had already elaborated a program of modern theology following the Marburg Neo-Kantianism that aims to overcome the antagonism of religion and modern culture—as Tillich does it.¹⁴ Referring to the relation between religion and culture, a short text from 1910 with the title *Ideen und Einfälle zur Religionsphilosophie* is important.¹⁵ Barth wrote it as a possible dissertation topic to Wilhelm Herrmann.

This draft shows the fundamentals of theology aiming to overcome of the antagonism of culture and religion. This happens by understanding religion as a realization of the consciousness of culture. In other words: Barth connects the methodical concept of the theology of Wilhelm Herrmann—religious experience—with the systematic base of the philosophies of culture of Herman Cohen and Paul Natorp. He connects both in a way that he understands individual experience as individual realization of consciousness of culture towards the, as idea understood, truth of consciousness.¹⁶ Barth also affirms his early neo-Kantian elements of theology of religion after 1916 because he sees God as the absolute ethical determined will, *quasi* as the epitome of the practical reason.¹⁷ However, he makes some modifications referring to the concept of God, to religion, and theological anthropology.

As a main modification, we notice: Barth understands the realization of the kingdom of God as implicature of the concept of God Godself. Human acting is not able to satisfy the will of God in an absolute dimension because of the human self-centred attitude and egoism. For this reason human ethics and its religious foundation is accompanied

by a fundamental critique. The will of God and the will of human beings are diametrical. "God's will is not a better continuation of *our* will. It stands over against our will as something totally other."¹⁸ From here results not only a new determination of the concept of God and the concept of faith, but also the criticized negativity of Karl Barth's theology by Paul Tillich.

Now let's consider some fundamentals and main elements of the dialectical theology of Barth. I refer to Barth's famous Tambacher lecture, *Der Christ in der Gesellschaft*, of 1919 because it summarizes very concisely all relevant aspects of Barth's theology of culture. In a letter to Eduard Thurneysen of September 1919, Karl Barth characterized his Tambacher address, *Christ in Society*, as a "not altogether simple machine running forward and backward, firing in all directions with no lack of hinges, open and hidden."¹⁹

What is it about? What does Barth understand under religion and under culture? Like Tillich in his lecture *Über die Idee einer Theologie der Kultur* of the same year, Barth sees the main problem of the time in the coexistence of religion and culture in modern society.²⁰ In this coexistence of religion and culture and in the separation of religion from culture, religion has lost its true meaning. It has become a form of objective knowledge beside other cultural forms of knowledge and a part of society. From this follows the conflict of religion and modern culture.

Today there are many, taught by the experience of the times, who perceive behind this religious aloofness mere religious indigence. And the fact that the indigence seems unavoidable, and that even philosophy has not spoken a word to overcome it, is leading us to believe that the meaning of so-called religion is to be found in its relation to actual life, to life in society, and not in its being set apart from it.²¹

True religion for Barth, as well as for Tillich, is not a cultural form beside others, but rather a happening or movement within cultural forms. He thus distinguishes two concepts of religion: on the one hand the cultural field and on the other hand the happenings in cultural forms. True religion for Barth is an understanding of God (*Gotteserkenntnis*) in which not only religion as a sphere of culture among others but also the contrast between religion and culture are dissolved.

What does Barth now understand of God (*Gotteserkenntnis*)? As he says:

I mean a movement from above, a movement from a third dimension, so to speak, which transcends and yet penetrates all these movements and gives them their inner meaning and motive; a movement which has neither its origin nor its aim in space, in time, or in the contingency of things, and yet is not a movement apart from others: I mean the movement of God in history or, otherwise expressed, the movement of God in consciousness, the movement whose power and import are revealed in resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.²²

In distinction to religion as cultural form, Barth's understanding of God (*Gotteserkenntnis*) is a contingent happening in culture. Accenting the transcendence and otherness of God should be characterized as the contingency of happening of the knowledge/understanding of God. The concept of God—what Barth describes as “breakthrough of the divine into the human”²³—shall point out that revelation is only possible by the actual realization of the understanding of God (*Gotteserkenntnis*).²⁴ In human beings, this understanding of God (*Gotteserkenntnis*) corresponds to faith. “God in *consciousness*, in this aspect also, is God in *history*—no mere imaginative idea but a new compulsion from above.”²⁵

With faith as a contingent happening, the true understanding of God (*Gotteserkenntnis*) connects Barth's two aspects again. In the first instance: with faith is connected the understanding of the true, generally accepted, norm. God is the only origin of the good. Thereafter, the understanding of human being is that all his behaviour and action is self-referential and egocentric; consequently, all his activities and ethics are no longer possible of realizing the divine will.²⁶ Here we can recognize Barth's new understanding of faith. Namely, he understands faith as the occurrence of true self-knowledge of a human being, whereby the human being is aware of the brokenness of his actions. Therefore, the understanding of God (*Gotteserkenntnis*) connects Barth with negation and judgement on the whole culture.²⁷ Nevertheless, Barth does not exclude the realization of the will of God, just he does not connect the realization of the kingdom of God with human acting, but understands it as a part of the concept of God. “God judges the world by setting over against it his own righteousness.”²⁸

He determines Christology in quite a new way: In Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God has become

reality in history. Barth's Christology is an expression for realizing the general good, the kingdom of God, only by God himself.²⁹

God in history is *a priori* victory in history.

This is the banner under which we march. This is the presupposition of our being here. The real seriousness of our situation is not to be minimized; the tragic incompleteness in which we find ourselves is not to be glossed over. But it is certain that the last word is the *kingdom of God*—creation, redemption, the perfection of the world through God and in God.³⁰

The understanding of God (*Gotteserkenntnis*) in faith is for Barth the hope for setting up the kingdom of God by God Godself. This means for human cultural activity consequently hasn't a religious legitimation anymore. The will of God does not act as a reason for any human action. In the contingent happening of the understanding of God (*Gotteserkenntnis*), the true self-understanding of the human being emerges. This exists in the differentiation between the kingdom of God, realized only by God, on the one side, and the action of human beings, confined to objects and intentions inside of the world, on the other side. Because human action overall is set under divine judgement by the understanding of God (*Gotteserkenntnis*), the antagonism between religion and culture is overcome. Barth further developed this concept of faith, which represents the foundation of his theology of culture, in the 1920s until his *Church Dogmatics*.

3. Conclusion

We began our considerations with the controversy between Tillich and Barth on the critical and positive paradox carried out in the *Theologische Blätter* in 1923. There we confronted the critique of Tillich on the theology of Barth: Barth puts the whole culture under the divine No, and, therefore, theology runs the risk of supernaturalism. The only possibility to avoid this problem lies in substituting the critical paradox through a positive paradox. This proposal of Tillich Barth has rejected—and he has further accented the contingency of the happening of faith.

In interpreting this controversy between Tillich and Barth as antagonism of faith and religion, we would have to say: Barth represents a biblical theology of revelation and Tillich a philosophical theology of culture. But to my mind this description of the existing contrast is insufficient.

We have already seen that both theologians—Barth as well as Tillich—work at a common problem, namely, the difference between religion and culture. Both understand true religion not as a special cultural form beside others, but as a contingent happening in all cultural forms. This religious act so understood is connected to the fundamental criticism of religion as cultural form. Therefore, theology becomes a medium for the criticism of religion. True religion is the place in culture in which culture understands itself in its deep and inner structure. We could find still more other comparisons of the theologies of Barth and Tillich in the 20s of the last century.

However, it should be made clear that Barth and Tillich deal with a common horizon of problems; likewise, their solutions are comparable to a high degree. Nevertheless, there are also significant differences between their theologies: While Barth put the whole of culture and all human activity under the divine judgement, Tillich tries to elaborate a dialectic positive paradox. Finally, how we could understand Barth's negative answer to Tillich's positive paradox is the result of his understanding of the contingency of faith.

¹ P. Tillich, *Kritisches und positives Paradox. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Karl Barth und Friedrich Gogarten*. In: *Gesammelte Werke Bd. VII*, Stuttgart 1962, p. 216 (trans. R. James). I express my thanks to my wife, Uta-Marina Danz, for translating this paper and Rob James for translating some quotations.

² P. Tillich, *Kritisches und positives Paradox*, p. 224 (trans. R. James).

³ K. Barth, *Von der Paradoxie des „positiven Paradoxes“*. In: P. Tillich, *Gesammelte Werke Bd. VII*, Stuttgart 1962, p. 234 (trans. R. James).

⁴ See also the critique from Martin Heidegger in his early lecture *Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion*. M. Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens* (= GA Bd. 60), Frankfurt/Main 1995, p. 19. See C. Danz, *Religion der konkreten Existenz. Heideggers Religionsphilosophie im Kontext von Ernst Troeltsch und Paul Tillich*. In: *Kerygma und Dogma* 55 (2009), pp. 325-341.

⁵ See P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, Chicago 1951, pp. 59-66.

⁶ See for example P. Tillich, *The Conquest of the Concept of Religion in the Philosophy of Religion*. In: *What is Religion?*, ed. by J.L. Adams, New York/Hagerstown/San Francisco/London 1973, pp. 122-154 = *Die Überwindung des Religionsbegriffs in der*

Religionsphilosophie. In: P. Tillich, *Ausgewählte Texte*, ed. by C. Danz/W. Schüßler/E. Sturm, Berlin/New York 2008, pp. 63-80.

⁷ See W. Schweiker, *Theology of culture and its future*. In: R. Re Manning (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 138-151.

⁸ P. Tillich, *The Philosophy of Religion*. In: P. Tillich, *What Is Religion?*, edited with an introduction by James Luther Adams, New York: Harper & Row, 1969, p. 56 (trans. altered by R. James).

⁹ P. Tillich, *The System of the Sciences according to Objects and Methods*, translated with an introduction by Paul Wiebe, Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1981, p. 146.

¹⁰ P. Tillich, *The System of the Sciences*, p. 144.

¹¹ P. Tillich, *Church and Culture*. In: *The Interpretation of History*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936, p. 222.

¹² P. Tillich, *The System of the Sciences*, p. 156.

¹³ P. Tillich, *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 59.

¹⁴ See J.F. Lohmann, *Karl Barth und der Neukantianismus. Die Rezeption des Neukantianismus im „Römerbrief“ und ihre Bedeutung für die weitere Ausarbeitung der Theologie Karl Barths*, Berlin/New York 1995; G. Pfeleiderer, *Karl Barths praktische Theologie. Zu Genese und Kontext eines paradigmatischen Entwurfs systematischer Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen 2000; C. Danz, *Ursprungsphilosophie und Theologiebegriff. Heinrich Barth im Kontext der dialektischen Theologie Karl Barths*. In: *Existenz. Facetten, Genese, Umfeld eines zentralen Begriffs bei Heinrich Barth*. Hrsg. v. H. Schwaetzer/C. Graf, Regensburg 2007, S. 104-122.

¹⁵ K. Barth, *Ideen und Einfälle zur Religionsphilosophie*. In: *Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten 1909-1914* (= Karl Barth, GA III. *Vorträge und kleinere Arbeiten*), ed. by H.-A. Drewes/H. Stoevesandt, Zürich 1993, pp. 129-138.

¹⁶ K. Barth, *Ideen und Einfälle zur Religionsphilosophie*, p. 135. „*Wie wird die realitätsbezügliche Lebensgestaltung (das Problem von Religion und Kultur!) wirklich?* 1.) *Cohen* lehnt die Frage ab, als innerhalb der Kultur nicht stellbar, da es sich in der K[ultur] um *Bewußtwerden*, nicht *Bewußtsein* handelt.“

¹⁷ K. Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (Erste Fassung) 1919, ed. by H. Schmidt (= Karl Barth, GA II. *Akademische Werke* 1919), Zürich 1985; *Der Römerbrief* (Zweite Fassung) 1922, Zürich ¹⁵1985.

¹⁸ K. Barth, *Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes*. In: *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*. Gesammelte Vorträge, München 1929, p. 15 (trans. R. James).

¹⁹ Letter from Karl Barth to Eduard Thurneysen, 11. September 1919. In: Karl Barth – Eduard Thurneysen. Briefwechsel Bd. 1. 1913-1921 (= Karl Barth, GA V. Briefe), ed. by E. Thurneysen, Zürich 1973, p. 344 (trans. R. James).

²⁰ See K. Barth, *The Christian's Place in Society*. In: *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, translated by D. Horton, The Pilgrim Press, 1928, pp. 272-327, here p. 275: "What does 'the Christian' suggest to us? What *must* it suggest to us? It can suggest only a holy domain set apart by itself, – whether we explain it more in terms of metaphysics or psychology."

²¹ K. Barth, *The Christian's Place in Society*, 275f.

²² K. Barth, *The Christian's Place in Society*, 283.

²³ K. Barth, *The Christian's Place in Society*, 287.

²⁴ See K. Barth, *The Christian's Place in Society*, p. 284: "What we are now trying to speak of must be produced, brought out, made actual – else it is not what we are trying to speak of."

²⁵ K. Barth, *The Christian's Place in Society*, 289.

²⁶ See K. Barth, *The Christian's Place in Society*, 289.

²⁷ K. Barth, *The Christian's Place in Society*, p. 290: "When we are under its power, we can but issue a categorical challenge to all the authorities in life; we cannot but test them by that which alone can be authoritative."

²⁸ K. Barth, *The Christian's Place in Society*, 294.

²⁹ See F. Wittekind, *Geschichtliche Offenbarung und die Wahrheit des Glaubens*. Der Zusammenhang von Offenbarungstheologie, Geschichtsphilosophie und Ethik bei Albrecht Ritschl, Julius Kaftan und Karl Barth (1909-1916), Tübingen 2000, p. 250.

³⁰ K. Barth, *The Christian's Place in Society*, 297.

**SELF-AFFIRMATION AND SELF-DENIAL IN
THE ETHICS OF PAUL TILlich AND
DIETRICH BONHOEFFER**

BRUCE P. RITTENHOUSE

Some ethicists hold that a life of self-affirmation is morally normative. For others, it is a life of self-denial, and, for a third group, it is an individual's social location determines whether he or she should adopt a moral norm of self-affirmation or self-denial. Despite this disagreement, representatives of all three groups commonly agree that self-affirmation and self-denial are mutually exclusive norms of the moral life. Several of the participants in this ethical debate have sought to enlist Paul Tillich or Dietrich Bonhoeffer as ally or antagonist. These interpreters typically portray Tillich's thought as representing an ethic of self-affirmation and Bonhoeffer's thought as representing an ethic of self-denial.

My claim in this paper is that Tillich and Bonhoeffer cannot accurately be portrayed as participants in a debate between the ethics of self-affirmation and the ethics of self-denial because neither views self-affirmation and self-denial as mutually exclusive movements within the moral life. I will argue that these two thinkers treat self-affirmation and self-denial as a polarity in which both norms are present in dialectical relationship,

and, furthermore, that this is the consequence of their ethics' Christomorphism.¹ That is, the moral human being is formed according to the pattern of Jesus the Christ, whose life is understood by both Tillich and Bonhoeffer to exemplify both the fullness of human self-affirmation and self-realization and the fullness of human self-denial and self-sacrifice for the sake of others. This Christomorphic position is seen most clearly in Tillich's *Systematic Theology* and Bonhoeffer's *Ethics*. Before exploring those works, however, I will sketch some of the interpretations that I claim misrepresent Tillich and Bonhoeffer as participants in the debate between self-affirming and self-denying ethics.

Glenn Graber is one interpreter who reads Tillich's ethic in terms of self-affirmation. Graber interprets Tillich's statement that "Morality is the *self*-affirmation of our essential being" as a claimed right to discover for oneself the structures of one's essential nature, without outside interference. Since individuals err in their self-interpretation because of their fallen nature, Graber views the practical import of Tillich's ethic as self-affirmation, without regard for whether the "self" affirmed is or is not one's essential being. This is particularly problematic, in Graber's reading, because he views Tillich's ethic as deriving duties towards other persons from the primary obligation of reuniting with one's essential self. On this reading, then, the norm of neighbor love is subordinated to affirming one's self, regardless of the nature of the "self" that is affirmed.²

James Wall's reading of Tillich is similar to Graber's. Wall writes: "Paul Tillich told us...to seek authenticity.... Individuality was the focus, self-realization the process."³ The norm of authenticity that Wall ascribes to Tillich is universally self-affirming, no matter what the substance of the self.

For Richard Grigg, empowerment--moral empowerment in particular-- is at the heart of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*. Grigg defines empowerment "as the experience of being enabled to overcome a conflict between an identity goal and a barrier within oneself to reaching that goal."⁴ Thus, Grigg interprets Tillich's ethic in terms of individual psychological development. Empowerment is facilitated, in Grigg's reading, by the conceptual symbols of God as Supreme Being, Jesus as the Christ, and the Spiritual Presence. Viewed as mere concepts, these symbols remain under the direction of the individual psyche, and, accordingly, the agent of empowerment in Grigg's reading is the self.⁵ Thus, Grigg also describes Tillich's ethic as an ethic of self-realization.

Elias Bongmba is an example of those who interpret Bonhoeffer as advocating an ethic of self-denial. In Bongmba's reading of Bonhoeffer's *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer's ethic, like that of Emmanuel Levinas, is grounded in the encounter with the radically Other human being, who makes an absolute moral claim on the self. Bongmba thus writes, "We are confronted...in both cases, with a new personalism which calls for recognition of otherness as a precondition for ethics while, at the same time, positing within this separateness a radical transcendence of the Other who stands over and above the subject."⁶ In Bongmba's interpretation, "the Other's presence compels the subject to recognize the Other's claims in dialogue... The presence of the Other is an absolute demand for ethical life."⁷ By attributing to Bonhoeffer an absolute demand for recognizing others' claims without placing conditions on the legitimate claims that an Other may make, Bongmba represents Bonhoeffer's ethic as an ethic of self-denial.

Lisa Dahill is another interpreter who reads Bonhoeffer's ethic through his description of the encounter with the Other in *Sanctorum Communio*. She focuses on Bonhoeffer's statement that responsibility is an absolute demand in response to the You, and the person claimed by this absolute demand is totally claimless. Dahill interprets Bonhoeffer's statement as a norm of complete and uncondi-

tional self-surrender to the demands that another person makes upon the self.⁸

Now that I have briefly sketched some of the more one-sided interpretations of Tillich and Bonhoeffer's ethics, I would like to offer, instead, a dialectical reading of their ethics that arises from their ethics' Christocentrism. In Tillich's writings, and especially in his *Systematic Theology*, the norm of the Christian moral life is given by the symbolic expression New Being in Jesus as the Christ. The moral life for the Christian is the life in which one is grasped in ecstatic union by the life of the Christ. This ecstatic union, which Tillich refers to by the symbol of the Spiritual Presence, appears as both faith and love. The Christ, for Tillich, is the one in whom New Being is fully, decisively, and normatively present, the one who fully enters historical existence without becoming existentially estranged from essential human being. Since the Christ participates in unbroken relationship with God, other human beings may participate in unbroken relationship with God through ecstatic participation in him.⁹

In Tillich's Christology, the Spiritual Presence infuses Jesus' entire life. Therefore, to be formed, morally, by ecstatic participation in Jesus the Christ, means to be formed in relation to his whole being, not merely his ethical teachings or his actions, his sufferings or his interior life.¹⁰ The life of Jesus as the Christ represents a polarity. On the one hand, it is the paradigmatic and normative expression of essential humanity, which entails unbroken relationship with God. On the other hand, it is the paradigmatic and normative expression of full participation in existence, which entails suffering and self-sacrifice.¹¹ Tillich's ethic of New Being is therefore a polarity of self-affirmation and self-denial that arises through ecstatic participation in the self-affirmation and self-denial present in the being of Jesus the Christ.

As the paradigm of self-affirmation and self-realization, Jesus the Christ, in Tillich's Christology, is the one whose spirit is grasped and driven unambiguously by the Spiritual Presence, God within him. Tillich writes that his "unity of God and man within the divine life...is a community between God and the center of a personal life which determines all utterances of this life and resists the attempts within existential estrangement to disrupt it."¹² Tillich describes Jesus' unbroken unity with God as theonomous. Theonomy unites the perfect freedom of Jesus' creative center with the destiny by which he consents to the directing creativity of God. The

symbol of the Resurrection means that in Jesus the Christ New Being is not negated by human finitude. He is in undisrupted union with God, self, and others.¹³ “Out of his unity with God,” Tillich writes, “he has unity with those who are separated from him and from one another by finite self-relatedness and existential self-seclusion.”¹⁴ In other words, it is out of his own unbroken unity with God that Jesus is the Christ, the one who mediates the reconciliation with God in New Being to other human beings.

As the paradigm of self-denial and self-sacrifice, Jesus the Christ, in Tillich’s Christology, experiences in full the conditions of human finitude. He is tempted by *hubris*, concupiscence, and doubt, but he does not give in to these temptations. He experiences the existential anxiety of having to die, but he has the courage to conquer this anxiety. Even on the cross, as he experiences doubt and despair over the meaning of his work, his despair does not prevent him from calling upon the God who appears to have forsaken him.¹⁵ Jesus’ sufferings are essentially related to his union with God in the New Being. Tillich observes that “the suffering on the Cross is not something additional which can be separated from the appearance of the eternal God-Manhood under the conditions of existence; it is an inescapable implication of this appearance.”¹⁶ The sufferings of Jesus the Christ are an expression of self-denying love. Not only, Tillich argues, is the power of the New Being found in Jesus’ undisrupted unity with God, it is also found in his “self-surrendering love which represents and actualizes the divine love in taking the existential self-destruction upon himself.”¹⁷ Jesus’ self-denial is essential to the revelation of the New Being in him that enables others to participate in New Being. As final revelation, Tillich writes, the Christ “becomes completely transparent to the mystery he reveals. But, in order to be able to surrender himself completely, he must possess himself completely. And only he can possess—and therefore surrender—himself completely who is united with the ground of his being and meaning without separation and disruption.”¹⁸ Thus, Jesus the Christ’s total self-surrender is possible only in conjunction with his total self-realization.

Tillich describes New Being in Jesus the Christ as the norm for New Being in the Christian. Since “the divine Spirit was present in Jesus as the Christ without distortion...this makes him...the decisive embodiment of the New Being for historical mankind.”¹⁹ Therefore, Tillich writes, “every new manifestation of the Spiritual Presence stands under the

criterion of his manifestation in Jesus as the Christ.”²⁰ Since, for Tillich, the Christian moral life is ecstatic participation in the New Being of the Christ, it is characterized by the same polarity of self-affirmation and self-denial that are found in the New Being of the Christ.

As the affirmation of essential being, Tillich writes that “the characteristics of the New Being are the opposite of those of estrangement, namely, faith instead of unbelief, surrender instead of *hubris*, love instead of concupiscence.”²¹ In the New Being, the self is reunited with God, and in union with God, Tillich observes, the self is “reunited with one’s self, not in pride and false self-satisfaction, but in a deep self-acceptance. One accepts one’s self as something which is eternally important, eternally loved, eternally accepted... There is a center, a direction, a meaning for life.”²² In this transcendent unity with the divine being, the moral law is fulfilled, validated, and transcended in love, which is the creative activity of the Spiritual Presence. To the degree that the self is governed by the Spiritual Presence, she or he is freed from the moral law to judge the situation and to act with the courage of faith to risk a wrong decision.²³

In Tillich’s description, New Being not only unifies the personal moral center and frees it for theonomous moral action, but it reunites the self with others in love. The New Being is not created in atomistic individuals, but personally-communally in the polarity of integrated Spiritual selves and Spiritual Community. The Spiritual Community is Tillich’s symbol for the place where New Being comes into being as community, where the self is reunited with other selves.²⁴ Since the other human being who participates ecstatically in the New Being participates in the same essential being as the self, Tillich describes the other as an estranged part of the self. “Therefore,” Tillich writes, “one’s own humanity can be realized only in reunion with him—a reunion which is also decisive for the realization of his humanity... Neither surrender nor subjection are adequate means of reaching the other one... He can be reached only through that which elevates him above his self-relatedness,” namely the Spiritual Presence.²⁵ Tillich’s normative account of community, therefore, is one in which the distinction between self-assertion and self-negation is transcended.

The normative moral life, for Tillich, contains not only the affirmation of the self’s essential being, but also the self-denying elements of the New Being in Jesus the Christ. Like Jesus the Christ, the life of

the self in the New Being becomes transparent to the divine Spirit through a unity of self-surrender and self-possession. The self who is determined by faith and love in the Spiritual Community is transparent to the divine ground of being and meaning, and is thus an example of the embodiment of the Spirit in a personal self to others in the churches. Saintliness is the *telos* of every Christian, according to Tillich, and it entails the sacrifice of one's subjective self-affirmation, which would otherwise prevent the union of the self with another. In this union the self is neither determined by the self nor by the other but by the Spiritual Presence which transcends self and other.²⁶ Tillich insists that "an increase in awareness, freedom, relatedness, and transcendence [in the New Being] does not imply a decrease in vital self-expression," but rather a harmonious self-realization that acknowledges the limits that human finitude place on the actualization of the self's potentialities.²⁷ According to Tillich, the sacrifice of potentialities entailed in this acceptance of finitude "is indirectly creative in all directions of truth, expressiveness, humanity, justice—in the picture of the Christ as well as in the life of the churches."²⁸ Tillich argues that the sacrifice of potentialities is necessary for the Christian moral life, but that this sacrifice must not entail the loss of a self worthy of being sacrificed. Rather, the autonomous potentialities that are sacrificed are received back in the dimension of the human-divine relationship, creating a theonomous personal fulfillment.²⁹

In Bonhoeffer's writings, and particularly in his *Ethics*, the Christian moral life is expressly Christomorphic. "The subject matter of a Christian ethic," he writes, "is God's reality revealed in Christ becoming real [*Wirklichwerden*] among God's creatures."³⁰ The Christian's life is to be formed into the form of Christ. The form of Christ, Bonhoeffer writes, is the real human being. It is "the one who Christ uniquely is, the God who became human, was crucified, and is risen."³¹ As with Tillich, the Christian moral life in Bonhoeffer's account is effected by the power of Christ, and consists in ecstatic participation in Christ.³² Thus, Bonhoeffer writes, "My life is outside myself, beyond my disposal. My life is another, a stranger, Jesus Christ."³³ As with Tillich, Bonhoeffer's understanding of this ecstatic participation in Christ is both self-affirming and self-denying, and these two elements are inseparable.

In Bonhoeffer's thought, self-understanding, self-realization, and self-affirmation are possible only in relation to Christ. In his 1933 Christology

lectures at the University of Berlin, he contends that the limit to the self-recognized in the encounter with the transcendent Christ is the source of true self-understanding. Thus, he maintains, "man only knows who he is in the light of God."³⁴ The self who asks who Christ is finds his or her own identity called into question. Christ is both judgment and justification and thus the center of the self's new existence.³⁵ Thus, as Bonhoeffer writes in *Sanctorum Communio*, "the human person originates only in relation to the divine."³⁶ In the ecstatic union with Christ, "only when God does not encounter the person as You, but 'enters into' the person as I," does the self realize its essential nature.³⁷ This is because Christ expresses human beings' essential nature. In his *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer identifies Christ as the new human being. Other human beings only become the new human being by being conformed to him. They become the new human being not as isolated individuals, but as church. What is this essential nature, for Bonhoeffer? It is life in which "pretension, hypocrisy, compulsion, forcing oneself to be something different, better, more ideal than one is—are all abolished."³⁸ It is "the Yes to what is created, to becoming, to growth, to flower and fruit, to health, to happiness, to ability, to achievement, to value, to success, to greatness, to honor, in short the Yes to the flourishing of life's strength."³⁹ To live in Christ, Bonhoeffer claims, is to live with a free conscience, yet in unity with oneself because of the concrete simplicity of action that arises from obedience to the will of God.⁴⁰

Bonhoeffer holds that Jesus Christ, in whom the Christian participates ecstatically, expresses a dialectical tension between covert self-realization and overt self-denial. Accordingly, in Bonhoeffer's Christology lectures, he observes, "We have the Exalted One only as the Crucified, the Sinless One only as the one laden with guilt, the Risen One only as the Humiliated One... Even the resurrection is ambiguous... Only the disciples who followed Jesus saw the resurrection. Only blind faith sees here."⁴¹ Not only Christ's divinity, but his human perfection is concealed. His sinlessness is concealed beneath the appearance of guilt. His triumph over injustice is concealed beneath the appearance of failure and humiliation. Only thus, Bonhoeffer argues, can Christ witness to a God who is God *for us*.⁴²

The Christian moral life, as Bonhoeffer describes it in his *Ethics*, reflects the tension in Christ between covert self-realization and overt self-negation. Life in Jesus Christ is not only the Yes to

essential humanity, “it is the No to the falling away from the origin, essence, and goal of life... It is the No that means dying, suffering, poverty, renunciation, surrender, humility, self-deprecation, and self-denial.”⁴³ Because the person who lives in Christ is in a relationship of self-affirmation and self-denial in relation to Christ, he or she lives in comparable relationships of self-affirmation and self-denial in relation to other human beings. Bonhoeffer holds that “only the relation to Jesus Christ is the basis for our relation to other human beings... Just as Jesus Christ is our life, so we may now also say—from the vantage point of Jesus Christ!—that other human beings ...are our life. This means, of course, that our encounters with others are subject to the same Yes and No that is present in our encounter with Jesus Christ.”⁴⁴ Thus Bonhoeffer’s portrayal of the Christian moral life as life in Christ is both self-affirming and self-denying, both in relation to God and in relation to other human beings.

The self-affirming and self-denying relationship to God and other persons, lived in response to Christ, is what Bonhoeffer calls responsibility. The responsible life is self-affirming because it entails freedom to act without the support of other persons or abstract principles. In Christ, the free responsible person “affirms God’s will out of his very own insight, with open eyes and a joyful heart; it is as if he re-creates it anew out of himself.”⁴⁵ The responsible life is self-denying because, like the life of Christ, it is characterized by vicarious representative action (*Stellvertretung*). Bonhoeffer understands Jesus’ entire living, acting, and suffering as vicarious representative action. Christ takes on guilt to bear the guilt of others. “By going to the cross, bearing sin, and dying,” Bonhoeffer writes, “mankind is crucified, dies, and is judged in him.”⁴⁶ The Christian, whose life is in Christ, does not contribute to Christ’s atoning work, but participates in an ethical vicarious representative action, which Bonhoeffer describes as “the voluntary assumption of an evil in another person’s stead,” and as the complete devotion of one’s own life to another person.⁴⁷ The Christian represents Christ before other human beings, and other human beings before Christ. The Christian overcomes other human beings’ guilt before Christ by forgiveness, and forgiveness entails suffering.⁴⁸ In vicarious representative action, the self suffers for the sake of the other human being, but not, Bonhoeffer argues, by absolutizing the self or the other person. He writes,

In the first case, the relation of responsibility leads to violation and tyranny. This case ignores the fact that only the selfless person is able to act responsibly. In the second case, the welfare of the other person for whom I am responsible is made absolute while ignoring all other responsibilities. This leads to an arbitrariness in my action, which makes a mockery of my responsibility before God, who in Jesus Christ is the God of all people. The origin, essence, and goal of responsible life [that is, one’s true humanity in Christ] is denied in both cases, and responsibility has become a self-made, abstract idol.⁴⁹

Action in accordance with Christ, Bonhoeffer argues, is action in accordance with reality, and “in any action that is truly in accord with reality, acknowledgement of the status quo and protest against the status quo are inextricably connected.”⁵⁰ This means that the Christian moral life must affirm and deny the world as it exists at the same time as it must affirm and deny the self as it exists.

Despite the fact that Tillich and Bonhoeffer are often characterized as taking opposite sides in a debate between self-affirming and self-denying ethics, my brief analysis of their writings has shown that their positions regarding the Christian moral life are remarkably similar. How, then, are we to account for the divergence of the interpretations of Tillich’s ethic as an ethic of self-affirmation and the interpretations of Bonhoeffer’s ethic as an ethic of self-denial? The interpreters that I have selected as examples appear to have neglected the Christology at the center of Tillich’s and Bonhoeffer’s ethics, either because of their philosophical hermeneutics or because their readings within the body of Tillich’s or Bonhoeffer’s works are concentrated in these theologians’ less explicitly theological writings. Graber, for example, interprets the relationship between the self and the neighbor as an essential unity of God, self, and neighbor in being. Thus, he wrongly imputes a pantheism to Tillich that, he claims, makes Tillich’s ethics independent of his theology.⁵¹ Grigg’s interpretation of Tillich founders on the meaning of the term “symbol.” Grigg understands Tillich’s use of “symbol” as mere concept, but Tillich describes it as something that “participates in the reality of that for which it stands.”⁵² Grigg thereby excludes the possibility of revelation, in Tillich’s sense, and thus the possibility of participating in the one who is revealed as the Christ.

Both Bongmba’s and Dahill’s interpretations of Bonhoeffer focus on the phenomenology of the

Other in *Sanctorum Communio*, and they miss the formative and mediating roles of Jesus Christ in Bonhoeffer's ethics. Bongmba and Dahill also overlook Bonhoeffer's clarification in *Sanctorum Communio* that the self comes into being and encounters an absolute ethical demand only in relation to the You who is the holy and absolutely transcendent God. The other person becomes a You who makes a moral claim on the self only insofar as God brings it about. The claim of the other person does not arise from the personhood or will of the other person but from God alone, and it is God before whom one is totally claimless.⁵³ It is not the encounter with the other human being, but the encounter with Christ that, according to Bonhoeffer, overthrows the subject's self-preoccupation. The absolute demand that is thereby created is not recognition of another human being, but an absolute responsibility to God that is fulfilled in relation to other human beings.

The interpretations of Tillich's ethics as purely self-affirming and Bonhoeffer's as purely self-denying are shown to be misunderstandings that have failed to grasp the full range of these thinkers' ethical thought. Both Tillich and Bonhoeffer see the Christian moral life as Christomorphic because both represent that life as arising from an ecstatic participation in the life of Jesus the Christ. Neither Tillich nor Bonhoeffer views this life in Christ as advocating a transcendence of one's humanity. Rather they understand this life as a realization of true, essential humanity. For both Tillich and Bonhoeffer self-affirmation and self-denial are necessarily entwined in the life of Christ, which establishes the form for the Christian moral life.

¹ I am appropriating the term "Christomorphism" from Langdon Gilkey, who in turn borrows it from Richard R. Niebuhr. Langdon Gilkey, "The New Being and Christology," in *The Thought of Paul Tillich*, ed. James Luther Adams, Wilhelm Pauck, and Roger Lincoln Shinn (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 329n.

² Glenn Graber, "The Metaethics of Paul Tillich," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 1, no 1 (1973): 120-125 (emphasis is Graber's); citing Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 136.

³ James M. Wall, "Tracing the Yuppie from Adam 'til Now," *The Christian Century* 102, no. 29 (Oct. 2, 1985): 851.

⁴ Richard Grigg, "The Experiential Center of Tillich's System," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53, no. 2 (June 1985): 251

⁵ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁶ Elias Bongmba, "The Priority of the Other: Ethics in Africa — Perspectives from Bonhoeffer and Levinas," in *Bonhoeffer for a New Day: Theology in a Time of Transition*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 191

⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁸ Lisa E. Dahill, "Jesus for You: A Feminist Reading of Bonhoeffer's Christology," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 34, no. 4 (August 2007): 251-252; referring to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol. 1, *Sanctorum Communio*, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss and Nancy Lukens (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 54.

⁹ Paul Tillich, *The New Being* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 16; Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 116-119; Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 112, 117, 129, 144.

¹⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 121.

¹¹ My position modifies that of Langdon Gilkey, who interprets Tillich's Christ as representing two polarities: first, essential humanity and the conditions of existence, and second, unbroken unity with God and self-surrender. Gilkey, "The New Being and Christology," 324.

¹² Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 146; Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 148.

¹³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 130; Tillich, *The New Being*, 22, 103.

¹⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 134.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 125-132.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 123-124.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁸ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 133.

¹⁹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 144.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

²¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, 177.

²² Tillich, *The New Being*, 22.

²³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 232-233, 272.

²⁴ Tillich *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 156, 159; Tillich, *The New Being*, 23.

²⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, 261.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 211, 217.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 240.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 271.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 43-44, 271.

³⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol. 6, *Ethics*, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 49.

³¹ Ibid., 99.
³² Ibid., 53, 93.
³³ Ibid., 250.
³⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 31.
³⁵ Ibid., 34, 63.
³⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 49.
³⁷ Ibid., 56 (original emphasis removed).
³⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 91, 94, 97.
³⁹ Ibid., 251.
⁴⁰ Ibid., 281, 317-320.
⁴¹ Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 116.
⁴² Ibid., 113-114.
⁴³ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 251-252.
⁴⁴ Ibid., 254.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 254, 283, 287.
⁴⁶ Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 49; Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 258.
⁴⁷ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 156n; Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 259.
⁴⁸ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 256; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol. 4, *Discipleship*, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 88.
⁴⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 259.
⁵⁰ Ibid., 261.
⁵¹ Graber, "The Metaethics of Paul Tillich," 114-119.
⁵² Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 239.
⁵³ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 54-55.

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