



BULLETIN

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IS THIS THE FINAL ISSUE OF THE BULLETIN?

Is this the last issue of the Bulletin? As secretary-treasurer of the NAPTS and editor of the Bulletin since 1997, I certainly hope that the answer is a resounding no. However, you the reader are to decide. The summer issue is the annual dues issue, and we need everyone who reads the bulletin, either electronically or by hard copy, to send in his or her dues as soon as possible. *The back cover of this bulletin is available for your convenience.* Please send in any change in address or e-mail.

Anyone who can afford a tax-deductible contribution to the Society for the Bulletin is urged to do so. (The tax-free number of the Society is available upon request.)

The Society has been running in the red since the Spring Bulletin. In fact, the Spring Bulletin's copy and mailing expenses were covered as a courtesy to the Society by the Religious Studies Department of Santa Clara University. The NAPTS expresses its sincere thanks to Vicky Gonzalez of the Religious Studies Department for her support and assistance.

**So please remember: Dues are due!
And many thanks.**

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Lounibos, John B. "Paul Tillich's Kenotic Tendency," in *Self-Emptying of Christ and the Christian: Three Essays on Kenosis*, pp. 66-84. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011. www.wipfandstock.com. Prof. Lounibos is Professor Emeritus of Religion and Ethics at Dominican College, Blauvelt, New York.

THE 19TH COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL DE L'ASSOCIATION PAUL TILlich D'EXPRESSION FRANÇAISE

The 19th Colloque International de l'Association Paul Tillich d'Expression française was held in Brussels at the Eglise Protestante de Bruxelles-Musée on 27–29 May 2011. The theme of the conference was "Tillich interprete de l'Histoire/ Tillich's Interpretations of History." Participants delivering papers in French were from Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Brazil, and Canada. Two sessions were devoted to papers in English, with participants from the U.K., the U.S.A., and Austria. Participants were welcomed by Anne Marie Reijnen, President of the APTEF. Professor Jean Richard (Laval) delivered the plenary address and public lecture, entitled "L'histoire a-t-elle un sens?" His lecture, in the Chapelle Royale, was followed by a short organ concert. Attendees were invited to a chapel service at the Chapelle Royale on Sunday, May 29. The service was followed by a "petite promenade" through Brussels, to observe sites of interest in the history of Protestantism. Information will be forthcoming regarding publication of the Proceedings of the Conference.

—GUY B. HAMMOND

TILlich'S EMULATION OF BUBER

DURWOOD FOSTER

Buber and dialogue are nearly synonymous, and Tillich too showed proclivity for it—from the 1912 *Kulturabende* for doubting Berliners to the Union *privatissimum* and Chicago's finale with Eliade. The salient encounters with Urban and Hisamatsu are tips of what we glimpse in the 1936 *Travel Diary's* orgy of conversations. As Paulus

avers of ST I, the published theology hums throughout from "underground" wrestling with contemporaries [ST I, 1951, vii]. These were many and diverse, and one of the more under-noticed, but long-term was the icon of dialogue himself. Arguably, after 1920, no thinker had a greater impact on Paulus more persistently than Martin Buber did.

Tillich and Buber are mostly mentioned together at loggerheads; the point was that Paulus *should* have but did *not* listen to the Jewish pundit. As Robison James likes to put it, there is a "deficit of the personal" in Tillich's God that ought to be corrected by Buber's *I-Thou*. [*Tillich and Inter-religious Dialogue*, 141ff.] Rob's plaint deserves a hearing, but beyond as well as within the issue of the "Personal God," we need to register the manifold positive import for Tillich of interaction with Buber—a phenomenon not duly appreciated. Go back to fulminating Berlin, 1924. The eight-years-old, once Zionist scholar, established ally of Franz Rosenzweig, had just authored *I and Thou*. His impingement on Dozent Tillich began dramatically at a religious socialist rally. With concessions and counterpoints it swelled sporadically till 1965, when Buber died and four months later Tillich—though not before penning a remarkable eulogy to the Jewish friend now envisaged as prime ideal of his own career. [The original publication was in *Christian News from Israel*, XVI, 3, 25-8. I have used the German translation in GW, XII, 320-3]. Barely three pages, this document should be must reading for all who would understand Tillich.

Anchored in the homage to Buber is Paulus's vocational "last will and testament." By this I mean the final public utterance in Chicago, calling for experience rooted universal openness—a theology free "both *from* one's own foundation and *for* one's own foundation" ["The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," *Main Works*, 6, 441]. Gert Hummel found freedom "for one's own foundation"—"ganz unklar und aus Tillichs Werken...nicht zu erschliessen..." [Ibid, p. 445]. Actually, I think the meaning is discernible in view of Tillich's work as a whole, as explained in my 2010 NAPTS banquet address in Atlanta [Now available on the Tillich website]. "Theology of culture," unbound by any traditional norm, was Paulus's first great vocational passion. But then (somewhat bigamously), he also espoused as a systematic thinker his own tradition's

birthright, the concrete norm of Jesus Christ. For most of his life and work, the two freedoms—both *from* and *for* his Christian heritage—were for Paulus not smoothly in sync. Nor intriguingly was what he owed Buber acknowledged through the main decades of the celebrated career—in the autobiographical *On the Boundary* of 1934, as well as in citing sources of his thinking. In 1954, and again in 1960, Paulus does not mention Buber. However, grateful awareness did blossom on the Israel visit, October 1963, to come forth with poignant emphasis in the climactic tribute. In any case, it seems incontestable that manifold indebtedness to the Jewish luminary was pivotal in blazing the challenging trail our mentor left us.

In 1924, addressing Berlin's religiously mixed would-be socialists, Dozent Tillich, known for his beacon essay, "On a Theology of Culture," maintained the ideal that socialism must indeed be religious but avoid the trappings of particular religions. The term "God," for example, should be supplanted by general concepts like "what concerns us ultimately." This was in tune with the 1919 essay. But from the audience arose a figure looking like a biblical prophet—as Buber did—loudly protesting "abstract facades" could *never* bear the meaning of "God." "He was right," Paulus affirms in 1965 [op. cit., p. 320]. Whatever was said that frenetic earlier night, the point sank in that the biblical, personal God is conceptually untranslatable, fueling decades of internal Tillichian struggle but also enfranchising afresh what Paulus in 1919 had demoted—the parallel normativity, alongside cultural ontology, of church theology. In his encomium for the Jewish prophet, Tillich is even convinced the dramatic buttonholing by Buber enabled resumption of his Christian preaching—without which he would not be our Tillich [op. cit., p. 321]. Further, the following year, the Marburg *Dogmatik* firmly maintains that God is always experienced as "*personhaft*"; absoluteness is required, but the Absolute could not be God for us without personalness (which of course does not mean being "a" finite person) [*Dogmatik*, Schüssler edition, pp. 162-67]. Paulus had moved from Berlin and the strict allegiance he once pledged to theology of culture. Rehabilitated not only as Christian preacher but also as church theologian, Paulus taught systematics at Marburg, destined to attain in that genre too, as well as in cultural theology, creative eminence. The unsettled unity of the two genres bespeaks graphically not

only of the bifocality of Tillich but also of Buber, lifelong a witness to the Mosaic covenant, but equally if not more so, a philosopher of unbounded import. Both scholars were lauded yet somewhat distrusted by in-house constituencies. Both were banned by the Nazis and attained professorial renown abroad. Both hoped to wed, more than reality would grant, the mystical with the political, but kept on insisting the vertical and horizontal are not dis-joinable. Soulmates they manifoldly were, yet with many differences.

1. From Tillich's own witness, the first and lasting Buberian influence on him is clearly the restitution to top normativity of the biblical personal God, along with or corresponding to—or somehow primordially identical with—the ontological absolute. The latter was already in place for Paulus, a lifelong intuitive certitude. The "somehow" of its identification with the biblical God was never totally clarified—naturally enough since the linkage was seen to be grounded in unforethinkable (*unvordenklich*, as Paulus would sometimes cite from Schelling) transcendence. But after 1924, the Christ norm was never given up by Tillich either, though it was obscured by the episode of the "God beyond God," as expounded in *The Courage to Be* of 1952.

2. Inseparable from this first point is the way Buber compels Tillich early and again later and finally to embrace pansymbolism with respect to conceptual expression of God. Some, including I surmise Rob James, have been horrified at the thought, but Tillich was persuaded by Urban to repudiate pansymbolism for only several years, during which "being-itself" was proposed as "the only non-symbolic" expression for God. Then came in 1957 the introduction to *Systematic Theology II*, with its unambiguous insistence that the sole expression is that "all statements about God are symbolic." This is pansymbolism, but a sophisticated version in which there is lucid conceptual awareness that the unforethinkable Origin of all is uniquely uncontainable in any finite word or notion. As Augustine classically said, "*si comprehenderit non est deus*." Where does Buber come in? Tillich's 1957 change from "being-itself" back to (a more recondite) pansymbolism was prompted in part by the contentions of Randall, Hartshorne, and Emmet, as found in the Kegley-Bretall volume. But a rereading of Buber's *Eclipse of God* of 1952 has convinced me these lectures by the Jewish sage (mainly given just across the street from

Union Seminary) were in all likelihood the most effective solvent in Paulus's demotion of *esse ipsum* to a border status, both symbolic and non-symbolic, more or less on a par with several other expressions such as "the unconditional." Buber forcefully rejects "being itself" as equal to the role Heidegger would assign it, setting forth his own pansymbolism with respect to God in the same context.

3. A third and incontestable influence on Tillich was Buber's thematization of how the moral self is constituted through personal encounter—the I-Thou relationship. Here unconditional obligation reveals itself; the usage of "things" would otherwise have no limit [ST III, pp. 40f]. Tillich saw this as a fundamental contribution to modern culture, one which he definitely accepted.

4. Deserving place in our list is also the existentially enacted, that is, lived union of the vertical and the horizontal. Many teach the conjunction of religion and ethics, but Tillich names no one as saliently as he does Buber for the inspiring incarnation of their merger. Paulus perceived and emulated in his Jewish friend a numinous prophetic presence in which the religious dimension was mystically personal and the ethical laden with socio-political relevance.

5. I am unaware of notice in the literature of how Buber's *Two Types of Faith* of 1951 bears upon Tillich's 1957 *Dynamics of Faith*, though surely this is a matter that invites study. The former lifts up *emunah* (the root of "Amen"—meaning acceptance of what or who grounds one's life) as the original biblical type of faith, over against the "holding for true" (*Fürwahrhalten*) of incompletely provable factual allegations, which Buber links to *pistis*. There is obvious congruency here with Tillich's contrast of faith and belief. One could easily imagine, in fact, that Paulus's treatise was authored partly with the intention of disarming Buber's view that Christian faith tends to forsake Hebraic *emunah* and be of the second (*Fürwahrhalten* or "belief") type. I hope further exploration of Tillich's unpublished archives will someday illuminate this matter.

6. Finally, not to be omitted from any such list is the "From and For" one's own tradition mandate, Tillich's consummating formula for the way forward in theology and religious studies. He sees this ideal finely achieved in Buber and wishes his own career might have better served it. It means presumably that those who share his vision should

earnestly espouse *both* the goal of theology (critically re-appropriating one's own most spiritual roots) *and* at the same time the goal of religious studies (the wider ecumenical academy, world dialogue, etc.). True, this may not *in toto* seem practical and may require a kind of tentative schizophrenia. A synthesis of aim or means is indeed remote. Yet, many of us are committed to the struggle, and we do have at least two great role models.

TILlich's KAIROS AND ITS TRAJECTORY

RONALD STONE

Paul Tillich's intimate discussion group in Berlin after World War I came to bear the name of the Kairos Circle. The term *kairos* has continued through history to be affirmed by circles of Christian believers and their allies who have wanted to radically change their societies.

Within the Kairos Circle, it was a resolution to the debate between activists and determinists who insisted that history would carry its own solutions forward. Action was needed, but it had to be in tune with the properties of the contemporary history, which were open to radical change. Theologically, Tillich meant the term to bear the weight of the intersection of eternity and historical action. For him it meant in 1922 that history was ripe for the fulfillment of the ideas of the religious socialists. By 1932, he understood religion would have to radically change to be open to socialism, and socialism would have to radically change to be open to the ultimate claims of religion.

In Berlin in 1951, Tillich would say that the religious socialist ideas of the interwar period were basically correct. He expressed the *kairos* as the Kingdom of God that was both transcendent and historical. In history, the Kingdom of God was only fragmentarily present. He thought the concept of the Kingdom of God pointed to fulfillment only in its vertical dimension. Still it encouraged historical action in its immanent dimension. In his personal opinion, the *kairos* lay ahead only in the distant future. He was speaking in Germany under American and Russian domination, but in decolonization and the civil rights movement elsewhere in the world, moments of *kairos* were producing significant breakthroughs in mixtures of socialism, religion, and liberalism. Maybe the 1922 statement was more utopian than he admitted. The 1951

statement was unnecessarily confined to the context of the cold war, but, as he said in the *Systematic Theology* of 1963, the concept of *kairos* had a life of its own. There he admits the term was partly, and only partly, confirmed in the period of its emergence. His definition was: "Its original meaning—the right time, the time in which something can be done—must be contrasted with *chronos*, measured time or clock time. The former is qualitative, the later quantitative."¹ He argues that its use in the *New Testament* shows it to reveal the maturity of time in which the Kingdom of God may manifest itself. But he notes the power to resist the Kingdom can also be magnified at the same time. He correctly notes the Biblical attribution of the term to both Jesus and Paul, and mistakenly to John the Baptist.²

Tillich notes the term has other Greek uses than the New Testament use, and he does not enter into any particular exegesis of the term. Lon Weaver has developed the exegesis of different connotations to the term in the *New Testament* and noted its rare usage in the *Septuagint*.³ Weaver notes how Tillich was partially wrong in his expectations of *kairos*, and he believes Tillich attached positive moral meaning to the term that it did not deserve. Tillich is careful in the *Systematic Theology* to note the concept can be used destructively, and, in sentences reminiscent of his quarrel with Emmanuel Hirsch, he mentions the demonic distortion of the idea by the Nazis. The apprehension of *kairos* is in vision and involves risk as one or a group may be mistaken. An examination of the trajectory of the concept risks judgments on whether a group was correct in its perception of the *kairos* or not. For Tillich a correct perception required correlation to the reality of the Christ in Jesus, including the willingness to sacrifice the self for the cause. Prideful, self-serving movements could not be expressing an authentic *kairos*. Finally, he said the true *Kairos* is unique and the *kairos* or lesser expressions of historical fulfillment are rare. History often proceeds without glimpses of *kairos*.

Contemporary use of the term different from Tillich's includes the consort of singers from the Holy Cross Monastery (a young adult retreat center), many prison ministries, a publishing house, a Canadian relief agency of the churches, a technical agency, and studies in rhetoric that find the term being used by various ancient Greek authorities, including Protagoras and Hippocrates. An alterna-

tive connotation of the term is associated with Kairos, the youngest of Zeus's offspring and the god of opportunity. This apparently led to financial consulting firms taking the title. The inquiry of these reflections focuses on six theological groups encouraging action fit to the times.

Kairos and Peacemaking

The Presbyterian General Assembly may have been the earliest Church body to pick up the symbol of Kairos and make it part of its official teaching. In 1980, in a period of national discouragement over the retreat from Vietnam, Russian assertiveness, the revolution in Iran, and economic stagnation, this Church saw an opportunity for a new emphasis upon peacemaking. It launched a program of peacemaking, sponsored an all church special offering to support it; it hired additional staff to work on the issues to change the consciousness of the church to equip its members to engage in peacemaking, and to witness for peace to the nation. Its founding policy, *Peacemaking: The Believer's Calling*, called Presbyterians to claim their vocation as peacemakers and announced peacemaking as a priority for the church. It recognized the structural disorders of the world, which left 1.2 billion people near starvation and wasted its treasure in the arms stampede. It decried the 450 billion dollar world expenditure for arms and called for new thinking to replace the old reliance on national interest, security, and power in a more interrelated world. It estimated that one-third of that armament cost was born by the United States. The statement was important as it challenged individuals and the church to respond, change, and create an institution within the church dedicated to peacemaking. Significant votes in local congregations chose to support the program and the offering, and maybe one-third of approximately 11,000 congregations chose to support the new effort. The language of *kairos* was used three times in the document to assert that this was the time for the church to act decisively with new thinking, new budget, and new actions.

The nation, however, thought otherwise, entering into a period of arms build-up and assertive militancy under the Reagan administration. Chief of Army Chaplains, a Presbyterian, resigned in fear that the new military was planning to fight a nuclear war rather than merely adequately to deter one. The Church officially considered a policy of

resistance to the increasing militarism, but by 1988, it concluded to work against the militarism with renewed use of ordinary means—meaning witness and politics—rather than to engage as a church officially in resistance. Still individual members were to be supported in their acts of resistance. Gradually the sole super-power role of the U.S. turned into more arms exports, less foreign aid, sporadic attempts to relieve world suffering and, after 9/11, more wars. The Peacemaking Program declined more rapidly than the overall church and while it presently exists, it remains anemic. The most recent General Assembly of 2010 called for a review of the program and its foundation in *Peacemaking: the Believer's Calling*. In retrospect, although *kairos* was an important concept in the Church policy, the Church probably misjudged 1980 as a time of peacemaking significance since the country went the other way. The writing of the task force, though adopted by General Assembly, was not shared by the Church as a whole. Polls showed that the majority of Presbyterians voted Republican. Tillich's religious socialism was ignored and the Presbyterian Church advocated religious welfare-capitalism.

South Africa Kairos

Kairos is more central in the *Kairos Document of South Africa* than it was in the Presbyterian document. In the 1986 edition, it is defined as "Kairos is the Greek word that is used in the Bible to designate a special moment of time when God visits his people to offer them a unique opportunity for repentance and conversion for change and decisive action."⁴ The nation was in crisis and many were being killed in the movement to end apartheid. The document was drafted in a theological center, referred to many groups for amendment, published, criticized, and then in 1986, republished in a second edition. It recognized the divisions in the country and within the church. It criticized the theologies of state and church then dominant in the country and called for a prophetic theology that was very specific as to the social diagnosis of apartheid and then offered methods for Christian action against apartheid. Arguing that God sides with the oppressed and wants to liberate the people, the document called for participating in the struggle, transforming regular church activities into social change, the initiation of special campaigns against the apartheid system in churches,

activities of civil disobedience against a tyrannical government, and the provision of moral guidance, including counseling the liberators against those who would act "thoughtlessly and wildly."

The prophetic theology was articulated in terms of classical reformed arguments against tyranny. A government that acts against the common good that it is to serve is no government and needs to be replaced with a just government. The document recognized that the majority of Christians in the country were oppressed by the present apartheid ideology and the government, and had already chosen to replace it. It set itself against the theology of both the apartheid ideology and the temporizing opposition to apartheid of the English churches. In this case, church participation in the struggle deepened and within five years change came to South Africa, and the theological contribution in this predominantly Christian nation was recognized. The document also helped Christians abroad think through the situation in South Africa and assist in supporting the struggle through divestment activities, boycotts, and civil disobedience.

Kairos Central America

The *Kairos Central American* document of 1988 evolved through a process in which hundreds were involved in the midst of civil wars. It was a time of the height of liberation theology and the document expressed many of its themes. The sensitive reader picks up more Marxist themes than in the South African one and, to that degree, it is closer to the language of Tillich's circle than its predecessor.

The American empire is the enemy that allies with the church and the establishment to keep the poor in their exploited position. Jesus, the prophets, and Mary who identify with the suffering of the poor are called into service as enemies of the empire. God's Kingdom, a utopia, is to be built on earth by the exploited masses of Central America, and the process is seen in the success of the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua. The exploitation began with the Spanish conquest, and resistance against it has occurred for 500 years, but now, in the present, opposition to the evil of the establishment is rising and can succeed in restoring peace and justice to Central America. Readers of the document are asked to take sides in the struggle with the poor to overthrow the rulers. The hour is seen as decisive by the writers. More than 200,000

had been killed in the previous ten years of struggle and the writers believed history was coming to a climax. "This historic hour in Central America is a Kairos, the passing of God incarnate in Jesus, through the burning waste of Central America, calling us to fight for the Kingdom, to the cross, to unwavering hope, to invincible unity, to resurrection triumph."⁵

The appeals of the theologians assisting in the revolutions were heard abroad during the cold war. In a peacemaking presentation in the University of Berlin, I met theologians who were studying Spanish to better grasp liberation theology and who proudly presented me with Nicaraguan coffee in 1983. But when I asked Bernard Häring in the Vatican how many were studying liberation theology there, he replied two, one of my students and myself! The Vatican with its campaign to free Poland was not about to support any leftist revolution against the United States in Central America. The Reagan Administration, acting for the United States, thought it was fighting the cold war there and not that it was aligning against a genuine, long standing revolution of the poor. The document dismisses this overreaction from the United States, but it was real and to a degree as determinative, as the opposition of the Catholic Church or the Latin American establishment. My own visits to Central and South America out of sympathy with the revolutionaries and the liberation theologians in 1990 led me to believe the fall of the USSR had negative consequences for the liberation movements in Latin America. As the Vatican encouraged the hardening of the hierarchy against liberation theology, the local authorities often responded to discredit the movement. Even within Peru, Father Gustavo Gutierrez's movements were limited. I agree the revolutionaries found a moment of personal and communal kairos, but the progressives were up against fierce opposition, which they named as anti-kingdom forces. For the most part the establishment won the battles leaving a progressive remnant to work in more modest ways to hope for the future, but the radical change was defeated and murdered. Before the fall of the Soviet Union, decision makers in the U.S. were pushed to extreme measures. Congress tried to shut down support for overthrowing the Sandinista government. President Regan and his cohorts attempted to supply the Contras through the Iran-Contra deal, thereby discrediting their foreign policy and proving several of them guilty of illegal

acts. The denial of the humanity of the poor continued. The resultant migration continues to threaten Republicans in the United States where the latest census records 50 million Hispanics, many of whom are refugees from those wars and poverty. My colleague, Gonzalo Castillo-Cardenas, and I toured Latin American Liberation projects in 1990 from Nicaragua to Chile. Recently, in reflecting on the Central American experience, he suggested: "Our hopes for change were too high." There has been little improvement in the condition of the poor.⁶

While Robert MacAfee Brown sees similarities to the Barmen Declaration in these theologies, I see more cultural analysis characteristic of Tillich. The analysis is more of the church than Tillich's use of *kairos*, and the church is called to action in a way that Tillich could only have hoped for. However, the wider and more dramatic social critique is much more characteristic of Tillich than of Barth. The Barmen Declaration, for all of its power is mostly confined to the argument for the freedom of the church to follow only Christ.⁷ Brown began his story of *kairos* with Tillich's use of *kairos*, and then in an ending, he challenged the North American churches included the Barmen Declaration in the book.

Kairos and Church Struggle: Two Documents

Two church documents written in the last score of years take the struggle straight to the church while not neglecting the social and historical context. *The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion* was published deliberately on the tenth anniversary of the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, July 19, 1989. It represented, according to the document, the reflections of hundreds of people in Africa, Central America, and Asia. It is framed in terms of liberation theology and thousands of persons indicated by signing the document that it reflected their will. It focused on the conflict between the left wing and the right wing within the Christian community. This conflict, resulting in oppression and murder, is the *kairos* of which the document speaks. The theme of Paul's conversion from a persecutor to an apostle on the Damascus Road carries the proclamation on into the conflict within the communities of the church. The Church's absorption into the Empire is regarded as apostasy leading to idolatry, and right-wing Christianity is denounced as heretical.

We have wished to make it quite clear that those Christians who side with the imperialists, the oppressors and the exploiters of people, are siding with idolaters who worship power, money, privilege and pleasure.⁸

Kairos Europa flowed from the Ecumenical Assembly of European Churches in Basel in 1989. It is a movement interpreted as attempting to gather the churches into a *Status Confessionis* against neo-liberal economics and its consequences. Ulrich Duchrow models his remarks after the Barmen Confession and treats neo-liberal economic practice in national economies, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund as similar to Nazism and apartheid of the 20th century, even though its consequences of death and exclusion are more indirect.

The churches are called to redirect their investments and property to serve ecological and social welfare causes and away from banks and other institutions supporting capitalist globalization. A socially responsible economy is sought which practices ecological responsibility. The movement calls for combating speculation, structural adjustment policies, lower taxes for the wealthy, the 1979 monetary policy, and privatization. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, in its organization, has developed many studies around Confession and economics, and finds the means of confession palatable to many of its leaders. Resistance to the trend is high among Reformed Christians in the U.S., placing more trust in the market mechanisms of the economy and its host of international institutions. The *Kairos Europa* tends toward the sharpness of *The Road to Damascus* document but with more of an emphasis upon economic theory. Earlier attempts to move toward a *Status Confessionis* against recent neo-liberal economic trends have been led by Czech theologians more sympathetic to socialism than the Reformed populations of the United States. Tillich's Kairos Circle concentrated less upon international economics, but the economic directions of that circle are distantly echoed in this form of *Kairos* document. The author admits to less direct involvement with these two documents than the previous three and turns now toward the *Kairos Palestine* document "A Moment of Truth." The publication of the document and conversations with two of the authors inspired this paper.

Palestinian Kairos

The 2009 call to faith and action by the writers of *Kairos Palestine* honors the model of the South African document, and it hopes to contribute to the liberation of Palestine. My visitations and study of Palestine since 1980 contribute to my support of their reading of the facts on the ground. They are occupied, subjected to apartheid like oppression, humiliated, and impoverished. Like the North American Native Americans, their land has been taken, their homes and crops destroyed, and they have been confined to reserves where they are dependent upon the welfare of others for their survival. The writers of the document do not see signs of immediate or near-time relief. They fear they may be close to losing hope for their own state despite the world's clamor that their rights be recognized. For them the *kairos* is a moment to speak, to tell the truth, and as they say: "Kairos is the moment when we see God's gifts in the midst of our suffering."

The document is less on economics than on political theology. It lacks the socialist tendencies of the previous three documents; rather it is asking for the use of capitalist or mixed-economic means of boycott, divestment, and sanctions to dislodge Israel from its occupation. To this extent, it is quite different from the political-economic theology of the original Kairos Circle, yet it focuses on time.

As Tillich, later as a supporter of Zionism, shifted from the "Time" interpretation for Israel to the "Space and Time" interpretation, this document is pushing for a Space-Time perspective. Jerusalem or Al-Qids is central to the document, and it is claimed as the future capitol of Palestine. I read a paper on the pro-Zionism of Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr to a Christian audience including Arab scholars at Tantur between Jerusalem and Bethlehem in 1980. As the 2009 Christian document asserts, their perspective is that the sins of Europe should not have been repented at the expense of the Arabs, as I was informed at that time. The issue is the land, and as an old Sioux chief in Iowa said before he was murdered: "The white man wants all of the land." To the Palestinian farmers, shepherds, and olive grove workers I have visited, that is the issue here. In the United Nations, only the United States of America supports Israel's daily expansion of its control of the land and water of Palestine.

Beyond the facts of Israel's occupation and expansion on the ground, the document moves to its theology. It presents a Palestinian interpretation of faith, hope, and love as its foundations. Biblical criticism is accepted and fundamentalism rejected. While theological themes are discussed, the idea that political policy could be read directly out of scripture is rejected. The Bible must be interpreted in a living way, and in accordance with the rejection of repression, slavery, and the domination of one people over another at their expense. The document seems to me to be less utopian than some of the predecessor documents, and, if in their enthusiasm for political change they slipped into romanticism, this document avoids those illusions. It is most Tillichian in its use of love, power, and justice, though it does not use Tillich's ontology at this point. Its one is that of the mature Christian realist Tillich who is demanding political change, perhaps in a tone like his denunciation of Hitler in 1933 or Senator Goldwater in 1964. It is most unlike Tillich in its rejection of Zionism and avoidance of socialist terminology.

The occupation is denounced as sin. Resistance to oppression is to be carried out under the ethic of love. Such an ethic based in an understanding of Jesus must reject fighting evil with evil, but hue to non-violent resistance. The history of resistance includes trying to defend their land through Israel's courts. Political petitions are reissued while being beaten and rebuilding their homes. I have eaten in homes destroyed by Israel four times, and in tents removed regularly and re-established. To hold onto their land, they have built dwellings in caves when home-rebuilding is forbidden. Their resistance includes civil disobedience, and I have joined with other Christians, Jews and Muslim demonstrators in actions both tolerated and repressed by Israel. Resistance has included violence as a response to violence, but the writers and signers of the document reject the evil of violence and call for non-violent suffering. Their major call for solidarity from the world churches is a request that they come on pilgrimage to Palestine and they pledge to show them the reality of Palestine while they pray with them. Sabeel, the ecumenical liberation theology center in Jerusalem, has developed its own liturgies for such pilgrimages, but adjusts its use of its rather political liturgy to the needs of visiting groups. They also ask churches to join with the Palestinian

Christians in supporting boycotts, divestment, and sanctions against the occupation.

While rejecting the concepts of religiously based states, they pledge to work with their enemies and allies to build states for all that are based in justice and civil liberties. Within Sabeel, which is involved in the document, and often blamed for it, the debate between their policy of two states and a one state solution continues. While there are articulate Palestinian voices for the one state solution, as Israel's aggression with U.S. support seems invincible, this would be a reluctant recognition of reality. The preferred outcome would be two states with Jerusalem divided or internationalized, refugees repatriated or compensated, and the 1967 boundaries restored. The language of reconciliation and forgiveness in the document seems consistent with the characters of the writers I know listed on the document.

The document, though prophetic in its denunciations and strategies, has been endorsed by the heads of many of the churches in Palestine and for study by North American churches. It is part of the struggle within North American Protestantism to begin the divestment from American corporations that support the occupation that is against international law. Israel and Jewish denunciations of the *Kairos Palestine* are frequent, and they are available on the internet with entries under Kairos. Similarly Protestant churches in the United States are subjected to heavy Jewish lobbying when they consider divesting from selected firms that refuse to withdraw their support from the occupation. Though the Presbyterian General Assembly called for the study of the document and partially endorsed it, some local Presbyteries, afraid of Jewish pressure, avoid studying it. These debates and interventions are reminiscent of the divestment debates around apartheid in South Africa. I am not certain of which stage of the debate they represent. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) finally divested from firms involved in supporting apartheid in South Africa, but I received anti-divestment literature, particularly from the *Wall Street Journal*, from the President of the Seminary at which I taught until Nelson Mandela became president and apartheid was abolished. At present, many in that same economically conservative denomination including financial leaders regard divestment as a last resort rather than as a normal, useful tool of non-violent social change from massive evil toward justice. The denomination officially and

practically supports the state of Israel and is committed to its protection; it has not yet found an effective way to support the rights of the Arab (Christian and non-Christian) populations suffering under that country's occupation. In this, its response differs little from the official policies of the United States. To refer to the distinctions of the South African document of state, church, and prophetic theologies, my denomination is still caught in church theology with only echoes of prophetic theology. In its mildness, it covertly supports the state ideology, although, while unable to divest its own funds, it has called for the ending of U.S. foreign aid to Israel's military.

In conclusion: Tillich was correct in his *Systematic Theology* that the *kairos* theology has its own life. Political, economic, theological, and ideological elements are all involved in social change as are non-violent and violent means of change. The Palestinian document inspired these reflections, but as it recognized, its time is not immediate, and it differs from the more socialist documents in being less involved in economic analysis. On the other hand, the *kairos* as eternal meaning intersecting the present is certainly evident in the Arab speaking world, and Palestine may not be immune in ways not previously perceived by the authors of the Palestinian document. Religion and socialism are reconciled in many places and Tillich's early theology is relevant, but it must remember that it was pre-New Deal. New developments of it may become relevant under social-welfare and mixed-market economies. Likewise, *The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion* and *Kairos Europa* are realized more as critical utopias than as immediate actionable historical projects. *Kairos Central America* was defeated by state and church, but the poverty and suffering of Latin America still cry out for revolutionary change. The American Presbyterian dream of countering American militarism has been eclipsed by militarism and economic interests, and the *kairos* they perceived has been buried under church bureaucratization and national security concerns. The South African *Karios Document* has approached the closest to fulfillment. Tillich saw his vision in the twenties as relevant to small groups, but it has grown to where it calls forth church responses and sometimes these come close to realization. When our movements fail or nearly fail, those still nurturing aspects of Tillich's vision

are saved from cynicism by the same Spirit that prompted them in the first place.

¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* III (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 369.

² Matthew Lon Weaver, *Religious Internationalism* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2010), 291.

³ He categorizes 88 uses of the term in the New Testament and finds 55 illustrations relevant to Tillich's use of the term. *Ibid.*, 289. I think he misjudges Tillich when he criticizes Tillich for attaching a moral approval on the occasion of its use. *Ibid.*, 292. Tillich is aware of its moral ambiguity and says so clearly in *Systematic Theology* III, 371.

⁴ "The Karios Document: Challenge to the Church" in Robert MacAfee Brown, *Kairos: Three Prophetic Challenges to the Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 26.

⁵ "Kairos Central America," *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶ Gonzalo Castillo-Cardenas phone call on April 4, 2011.

⁷ See: Matthew Lon Weaver, "Theology of Resistance in Bonhoeffer and Barth," in Robert L. Stivers and Ronald H. Stone, eds. *Resistance and Theological Ethics* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 299-312.

⁸ *The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion* in Brown, 137.

⁹ *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth*, (www.kairopalestine.ps, 2010), 4.

UPDATING TILlich ON RELIGION AND ART

DAVID NIKKEL

Paul Tillich wrote much about art and religious symbolism and experience. As I have argued elsewhere, despite the diversity of these writings, one can discern a positing of three basic artistic styles: idealism, naturalism, and expressionism—the latter divided into a negative variety, where subject matter and forms are broken apart and judged, and a positive variety, where the ordinary is bent but form and surface content are in some way affirmed. While idealistic or naturalistic art can become the occasion for experiencing the divine according to Tillich, they are also quite liable to convey a "self-sufficient finitude" that obscures the depth dimension. Expressionism by contrast stands as the style most conducive to an inbreaking of the divine. Tillich reacted favorably to a

European movement of the 1930s known as the new objectivity or realism, also labeled “belief-ful realism” by Tillich, which came on the heels of Expressionism in the narrow sense of the early twentieth-century movement. However, Tillich found strong expressionistic stylistic elements in the new realism, positioning it far from any self-sufficient realism. Tillich first thought—or hoped—that this new realism might constitute a positive expressionism, theonomously affirming its own form and surface content (1929:65ff; 1956:57ff). However, he concluded that, like Expressionism before it, it merely succeeded in a negative expressionism of judgment on contemporary culture (1987:99, 124, 152, 169-70). Tillich’s fondest hope was that one day Western culture would attain again a theonomous culture—a culture where positive expressionist art could affirm symbols of ordinary reality as well as of expressly religious reality, bending them to allow the divine to break through, instead of a culture that permitted such a divine inbreaking only through their destruction in negative expressionist art.

Tillich wrote relatively little about art that followed Expressionism and the new realism, that is, the art of the mid-twentieth century. “Religious Dimensions of Contemporary Art,” probably Tillich’s last lecture on art, represents an exception. In this piece, he notes a general movement away from expressionism—“a revolt against the disruption of the surface reality”—to a new naturalism that “attend(s) to the conventional aspects of experience” (1987:180). In particular Tillich cites figural painting, pop art, and op art. Nevertheless, Tillich continues, these three movements bear strong expressive elements; we cannot return to older representational painting. (Here one can discern a certain similarity of these latter movements to the new realism.) Tillich acknowledges it is too early to make any considered judgments about such art.

Furthermore, in the article mentioned above, I broach an additional stylistic category pertaining to relations between the finite and the infinite in art. Naturalism and idealism (unless complemented by some expressionism) default to self-sufficient finite content that neglects the infinite; with expressionism, by contrast, finite content reveals infinite depth. If we exhaust the abstract logical possibilities, we have the following stylistic type: infinite depth that attempts to eliminate finite content (as much as possible). I add the parenthetical remark because visual art by its very

nature involves an indispensable finite medium. In fact Tillich, in “Art and Ultimate Reality” (originally published in 1960), once explicitly refers to such an arguably counter-intuitive style, designating it as a “mystical” artistic style (1987:145ff). He here analogizes this style to “the mystical type” of religion, which “tries to reach ultimate reality without the mediation of particular things” (145). He then proceeds to analyze several works of art that manifest such a mystical style.

Having provided a background on religion and artistic styles, I propose to do a Tillichian critique of key artists and movements primarily from the middle of the twentieth century. “Religious Dimensions” includes a brief history of modern Western art before coming to the three above-mentioned “contemporary” movements. This history concludes with a representative of abstract expressionism (Hans Hofmann’s *Magenta and Blue*) and with examples of Piet Mondrian’s abstractionism. Since I regard some examples and exemplars of abstract art as exhibiting a minimalism consonant with the “mystical style” that Tillich identified in “Art and Ultimate Reality,” I will draw on both these articles to assess abstractionism and abstract expressionism. As I take on this task of appraisal, I will be willing to analyze some of Tillich’s own evaluations as inconsistent with his best insights on artistic style. Finally, I will not assume, with Tillich, that art can become the occasion for an immediate awareness of the divine beyond the subject-object scheme. Nor will I assume with Tillich that an individual artist must have an ultimate concern—informed by his or her society’s ultimate concern—that must find expression in every cultural creation. The plausibility of this second Tillichian assumption is not only undermined by the possibility that some art is just concerned with mundane beauty and/or practicality, but also by the irony of some forms of postmodernism.¹ Nevertheless, I will assume that art can powerfully symbolize the divine and, with Tillich, that certain styles are more conducive to such symbolism than others.

I will first consider two of the three movements that represent for Tillich a relative return to naturalism and representation. Tillich offers just one example from “figural art,” Willem de Kooning’s *Woman I*. Tillich rightly sees in it “stylistic elements of the expressionists” (1987:180; see also 1987: 169). This work distorts and exaggerates features of the female face and body. Further Tillich finds “an absolute rejection of any attempt

to return to the idealistic or naturalistic styles before Expressionism” (1987:180). In fact, many works of Expressionism proper were centered on the human face and figure. In particular, I felt a sense of sadness expressed in this woman’s face similar to the respective faces in Rouault’s *Head of Christ* and *Clown*. Indeed, one might judge that an expressionistic style dominates in *Woman I*. Thus, the naturalistic elements of this painting and similar works appear to gain their salience from being part of a wider trend of increased representation, rather than from within the paintings themselves.

This brings us to the next movement, pop-art. Tillich notes that many pop-art paintings are collages or collage-like. In this vein, he cites Lichtenstein’s *Engagement Ring*, Wesselman’s *Still Life*, Johns’s *Out the Window*, and Oldenburg’s *Interior* (Installation, Green Gallery, New York, 1962). He claims that this type of artwork attempts to depict “banal reality,” yet with expressionistic and surrealist elements (1987:180-81). I do find these latter elements in Wesselman, Johns, and Oldenburg. Wesselman’s *Still Life* and *Great American Nude* series make use of colors, often deep or bright, in shades and combinations we do not find in actual settings and situations, reminiscent of some post-Impressionists and Expressionists. Tillich refers to *Still Life* as “repulsive” (1987: 181); I see a parallel to the glaring or oppressive colors in some of Van Gogh’s works, for example. When each piece is viewed as a whole, Johns’s collage pieces—often with colors overlaid with letters of the associated color-word—strike me as quite abstract expressionistic. They lie somewhere between the static colors of a Rothko and the swirling activity of a Pollock. Oldenburg certainly manifests a surrealist quality in depicting certain objects as similar to quite different objects, while Wesselman sometimes achieves the same through unusual juxtapositions of objects with parts of the female body.

In keeping with his general unwillingness to make judgments about the three movements, Tillich leaves to the future the question of whether such pop-art contains “something creative, original and brilliantly new” (1987: 181). To the extent these three artists portrayed everyday objects, one might conclude that the surface object is affirmed but distorted enough to allow a depth dimension to break through—at least in some of their paintings. Yet I have to conclude that their works yield more of a negative than a positive expressionism.

In the case of Wesselman, I sense recourse to elemental forms, which Tillich found in Cezanne and in cubism. That is, the elements of Wesselman’s collages tend to be basic shapes in basic colors. Tillich opined that a return to elemental forms stemmed from the inability to affirm our present cultural reality (1987: 94-95, 168). In cubism, a negative expressionism clearly reigns, with its destruction of ordinary forms of reality. Granted, it is not quite the same with Wesselman. One could argue that his paintings affirm the individual objects of his collage-like scenes. However, there is no affirmation of the reality of the scene as whole, of our contemporary reality holistically. Finally, I find Lichtenstein’s comic-strip figures, which Tillich labels as “all surface” and showing “the most vulgar daily reality,” to accept complacently banal, surface reality. In this I disagree with Tillich, who judged the *Engagement Ring* as “in some sense” “still expressionistic” (1987: 181).

My judgment regarding Lichtenstein segues into my consideration of the man who became the most famous of the pop-artists, Andy Warhol. I do not know if Tillich’s neglect of Warhol stemmed from lack of acquaintance or from a negative impression of his work. Warhol represents an interesting case vis-à-vis religion. Raised Byzantine Rite Catholic, he continued to attend Mass almost daily, though never taking Communion (Dillenberger, 16–17). This may reveal something of a spectator attitude.² When he himself was shot in an assassination attempt, he reflected:

Before I was shot, I always thought that I was more half-there than all-there—I always suspected that I was watching TV instead of living life. People sometimes say that the way things happen in movies is unreal, but actually it’s the way things happen in life that’s unreal. The movies make emotions look so strong and real, whereas when things really do happen to you, it’s like watching television—you don’t feel anything. Right when I was being shot and ever since, I knew that I was watching television. The channels switch, but it’s all television (Warhol 345).

Critics divide on whether his paintings of consumer products and celebrities serve as a critique of, or a paean to, American commercial culture—though most cast their vote for the latter. One can readily identify a naturalism in such works, in that they render rather accurate, recognizable images of the products or celebrities. Also, one can read

an idealism into or from the larger-than-life size of these objects or subjects. Harder to detect in these works is anything that would constitute a critique of American mass culture. The pieces of art themselves do not appear to express negativity either in the way a critical realism would pass judgment on society or through a destruction of content and forms a la negative expressionism.

Before concluding my coverage of Warhol, I want to address another portion of his oeuvre, a part holding religious ramifications, even if negative ones: the *Death and Disaster Series* (*Saturday Disaster*, for example). Warhol once confessed, "I never understood why when you died, you didn't just vanish and everything could just keep going the way it was, only you just wouldn't be there" (web). To me this suggests a flattening of the reality of death and life. And that is what Warhol's reproduction of headlines and images related to deadly disasters or tragedies conveys to me. One could instead argue that Warhol was attempting to wake us up to the reality of that to which mass media had inured us. Yet his reproduction of headlines and photographs and his repetition of images such as the late Marilyn Monroe and the grieving Jackie Kennedy, usually with unobtrusive secondary colors in the background, suggest the banality and even meaninglessness of death.

No doubt, Andy Warhol enjoyed consuming Campbell's soup and Coca-Cola (and I share his taste, at least on the former). One can conceivably interpret him as attempting to sacralize, to express the ultimate significance of, everyday mass culture (see Romaine). And I will grant that he may well have harbored the hope of finding something sacred or ultimate in the products and celebrities he captured. Unfortunately, however, I have to conclude that instead he ended up conveying another aspect of himself and his worldview: the flatness, disconnectedness, and fleetingness of surface reality. In its own way, his oeuvre paints a self-sufficient finitude by failing to point to anything deeper. Rather than the thickness and depth of the interconnectedness of reality in space and time, we get the fad of the moment with its "fifteen minutes" of ultimately empty fame. Rather than a sense of the continuing influence of the deceased on persons and their environments in the present, the departed's significance vanishes. In this Warhol's art accords with some forms of subsequent radical or deconstructionist postmodernism. Thus, the secular contents of Warhol's work

lack expressive affirmation of anything of deep value.

As something of an epilogue to Warhol, I will touch on his late religious paintings, in particular the *Last Supper* series. Though inspired by da Vinci's famous piece, I find his images of Christ and surroundings bland and banal, lacking any interesting expressiveness. Warhol's religious images fail in conveying judgment on human sin, whereas some negative Expressionist efforts succeeded. Some members of this series point to the saving power of Christ's suffering as foreshadowed in the meal, and some foreshadow Christ's resurrection—for example, the one with the General Electric and Dove Soap logos. Yet these fall under Tillich's negative judgment concerning religious art that attempts to affirm positive religious content, art depicting "symbols of glory." According to Tillich, such symbols have failed to achieve their intended effect (1987: 124; see also, 1987: 69, 170).

Before directly considering modern abstract or non-objective art, I will say more about the above-mentioned "mystical style" that attempts to minimize finite content, to minimize "the mediation of particular things" (1987:145-46). General and specific examples of such a mystical style cited by Tillich include: (1) "Chinese landscapes in which air and water symbolize the cosmic unity, and individual rocks or branches hardly dare emerge to an independent existence"; in particular, Ashikage's *The Landscape* and works by Tai Chin; (2) some Impressionist paintings with their "dissolution of particulars into a continuum of light and colors," specifically Seurat's *Fishing Fleet*; (3) "(m)ost radically," "non-objective painting," for which Tillich invokes Klee's *Equals Infinity*, Kandinsky's *Improvisation*, and Pollock's *Number 1A, 1948* (1987: 146-47). Tillich has more to say in assessing such abstract art; however, I will save Tillich's comments to intersperse with my own Tillichian assessment of non-objective art.

Given its expressionistic intentions, abstract expressionism would seem to be the presumptive candidate for a non-objective art conducive to expressing religious depth. But I will first consider earlier "radical abstractionist" art touched upon by Tillich, in particular as represented through works by Mondrian (1987: 180) and Kandinsky (1987: 146-47). Both artists moved more or less from representational painting to pure abstraction. Interestingly, Tillich warned about the following danger with non-objective art: "The spatial empti-

ness of some pictures indicates merely artistic emptiness. The attempt to express ultimate reality by annihilating reality can lead to works in which nothing at all is expressed" (1987: 146). I do find Mondrian's later oeuvre featuring sharply defined lines, colors, and rectangular shapes to be cold and empty (for example, *New York City I*). In contrast I generally find Kandinsky's abstractions to be interesting—but to express "nothing at all" of ultimate reality. The interesting configurations of colors, shapes, and patterns leave me strictly in finite reality. Some of Kandinsky's *Improvisation* series represent a possible exception to this judgment. In mentioning one particular *Improvisation*, unfortunately Tillich does not specify the number. I do find *Improvisation 7* to be quite different from many of Kandinsky's abstract works. In contrast to the sharp delineations of many of the others, *Improvisation 7* uses rounded, blurring lines with greens and browns, yielding a harmonious effect.³ While it does not quite succeed in conveying the divine for me, it might for some. Tillich indicates that the viewing of a Kandinsky, "similar to" whichever one he was referring to in "Art and Ultimate Reality," constituted "a liberation for me to be freed from the individual things and to be in a realm which at that time was very near to my own religious thinking" (1987: 146-47).

As I begin to tackle abstract expressionism, I will invoke another angle of Tillich's thought concerning a possible "mystical style." In "Art and Ultimate Reality," he indicates that we find a mystical style "in the background of Asiatic and Western paintings, even if the foreground is filled with figures" (1987: 146). Earlier he refers to gold as "the transcendent color" and notes how the gold background of Byzantine and medieval art in general and that of the baptistery of Ravenna, in particular, can "mediate the feeling of transcendent blessedness." In keeping with his later musings on a mystical style, he adds that "there is no special object which is beautified" on the baptistery (1987:113). To the extent one's focus is on the golden background, artistic minimalism would effectively reign. For me such a gold background would invite a time of meditation or contemplative prayer where I kept my gaze trained upon it. This line of thought leads me to the Abstract Expressionism of Mark Rothko's color-field painting or "color abstractionism." Rothko's use of few colors in each painting, their deep hues and dark luminousness, and the subtle variations within a particular color-field all strike me as highly con-

ducive to contemplation where one can get lost in a painting (for example, *Green and Maroon*). (In contrast, Barnett Newman's one-color abstractionist works evoke from me at most a glance and at worst a turning away from their garishness.) However, neither the Byzantine gold nor Rothko's color abstractions will likely convey a divine depth dimension upon viewing of normal duration. As suggested, they conduce to extended periods of mediation or contemplation. Given serialism's use of basic geometrical shapes and relatively few colors, one might ask about its suitability to contemplative viewing. I judge that Albers's art involves significant enough color contrast, as the geometric shapes differentiate themselves through the contrasting colors, such that one will probably not lose oneself in his works (for example, *Homage to the Square: Ascending*). Rather, they constitute somewhat interesting geometric and color patterns which remain ensconced in the finite. (I would extend this judgment to the above-mentioned *Magenta and Blue* by Hoffman.) While serialism's *raison d'être* points to a never-ending artistic process, the process is still a finite process, not reaching or attempting to reach an eternal dimension in Tillich's sense. I will render a more positive judgment about the serialism of Frank Stella. While *Sinjerli Variation IV* utilizes a large variety of colors and hues, its circular shape and its complex integration of both colors and patterns yields a balance and a harmony that invite meditative gazing. Indeed, I find it quite reminiscent of mandalas.

As mentioned earlier, Tillich does identify one of Pollock's pieces as an example of a mystical style (*Number 1A, 1948*). Apparently this reference to Pollock and the earlier-cited reference to Hans Hoffmann constitute his only preserved comments on abstract expressionists. The Dillenbergers attribute Tillich's relative unfamiliarity with abstract expressionism to the slowness of museums to procure representative works from this movement (1987: xx). Tillich's succinct assessment of Pollock follows: "I must say I found it difficult to evaluate him, but since seeing some of his very best pictures at the Brussels Exhibition, I have become very much reconciled with this fullness of reality without a concrete subject matter" (1987: 147). Tillich's categorization and evaluation of Pollock suggests that he believed such "mystical" non-objective art represented a likely candidate for conveying divine "fullness." My preliminary expectation was that, like Tillich,

I would come to a positive assessment of Pollock in terms of expressing divine depths. Contrary to certain popular kneejerk reactions to Pollock's art, one could never achieve his effects by throwing paint on a canvas. Scientific analysis of Pollock paintings has revealed the organization of highly complex dynamical systems (Taylor). Indeed, Pollock's works express a sense of highly complex movement. Thus, I do find his paintings interesting. Yet, the relative lack of color contrast within his art results in a kind of minimalism in that particular dimension. For me, ultimately nothing of divine depth comes through. On the other hand, the complex movement evidenced in his works is not conducive to the meditative contemplation that some other abstract expressionist styles invite.

Tillich came to believe that non-objective art could expressively convey something of ultimate reality. Besides the above comment regarding Pollock, he opined: "Of course, one cannot show ultimate reality directly, but one can use basic structural elements of reality like lines, cubes, planes, colors, as symbols for that which transcends all reality—and this is what the non-objective artists have done" (1987: 147). In such cases, one could say that, of the three elements Tillich stipulates in a work of art—form, content/substance (*Inhalt*), and style, content collapses into form. That is, there is no content from outside the work itself. Of course, I have shown myself to be much less sanguine than Tillich on whether non-objective, more or less minimalistic, art serves as a credible candidate to express the divine for most viewers. I have judged them to be too empty, such that "nothing at all is expressed" of ultimate reality, at least with viewing of normal duration. Yet even given his late openness to the divinely expressive possibilities of non-objective art, such art would seem to fall short of his ideal of a theonomous culture and art, wherein some identifiable object of a culture, whether religious or secular, is affirmed. As I have indicated elsewhere as well as earlier in this piece, Tillich concluded that contemporary art with explicit positive religious content failed in attempting to affirm both itself and the depth dimension. As seen above, Tillich was at one time hopeful that the new realism's secular content could represent a positive expressionism—that is, that it could affirm the divine through its affirming something of our finite world. But he abandoned that hope. I would conclude that if we follow Tillichian principles to

their likely dénouement, that the non-objective art Tillich analyzed can at best represent a negative expressionism—or alternatively in some cases conduce to prolonged meditative gazing.

I will now nominate several paintings, unknown to Tillich, as excellent candidates for a positive expressionism with secular content. American artist Charles E. Burchfield was a representative both of "low art" through his wallpaper designing and of "high art" as a painter of scenes from American life and from nature. Some of his works strike me as examples of negative expressionism. Several of these, with nature as their subject, I find reminiscent of Van Gogh's *Starry Night* in terms of shapes and lines (*Orion in December*, for example). Others, with American life, work, and technology as subject seem to presage the European new or belief-ful realism Tillich admired (for example, *Black Iron*). The color scheme of such examples of negative expressionism generally consists either of black, white, and gray or of dark colors with little contrast. Often enough they convey a sense of foreboding. On the other hand, the positive expressionist paintings utilize curving lines and a subtle sense of color, with the colors yielding a harmonious effect. Generally of nature, they do sometimes depict human artifact or construction as it blends with nature. Several hail from early in his career: *Sunlight* (1916), *Late August Sunset* (1916), and *The Sun through the Trees* (1917). Here already we can see Burchfield's interest in light and shadow, yet unlike Impressionism, these works do not draw our attention to the finite subject and object. Four later paintings also draw upon curving lines and a subtle, harmonious color palette: *Sultry Afternoon* (1944), *Song in the Rain* (1947), *Country Road in Spring* (1947/1955), and *Dream of a Flower* (1960-1966). My favorite, however, comes from his middle period: *In May* (1939). This work conveys a profound sense of shadow and light. Additionally, it powerfully expresses depth of field of vision through shapes, patterns, and colors more than through perspective.

I will now attempt to expand upon a previously mentioned Tillichian insight: post-Impressionism, most notably Cezanne, Expressionism, and cubism worked to reduce reality to basic components, whether shapes and/or colors. The focus tended to be on the parts in contrast or separation because an integrated reality could not be affirmed. I believe Burchfield, in at least these

eight works I have highlighted, does succeed in bending the surface reality of instances of nature and of human culture, in a manner that affirms them as integrated realities, while expressing the divine source behind and within them. Thus, I deem him to have created works conducive to conveying the deep mystery and meaningfulness of human life and of nature. Recently, I ran across an art exhibit commentary consanguine with my evaluation: “In the 1940’s,” Burchfield “shifted to an expressionistic phase that saw a return to depictions of nature, but the frightening, dark subject matter of his earlier work gave way to fantastic or sublime content treated in a way that recognizes and extols the divine in nature” (“Selections from the Nasher Museum of Art,” 13).⁴ Burchfield then may represent a postmodern positive expressionist art transcending not only a superficial naturalism or idealism but a negative expressionism as well.

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- (1) *Engagement Ring*: The Roy Lichtenstein Foundation at: www.lichtensteinfoundation.org/engagering.org.htm
- (2) Roualt’s *Head of Christ and Clown*: Tillich, 1987: plates 49 and 50, respectively (in black and white).
- (3) Kandinsky’s *Improvisation No. 7*: WebMuseum, Paris, www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/kandinsky.
- (4) I could not locate any image of Ashikage’s *The Landscape*.

¹ Russell Manning insightfully sees artistic presaging of postmodern irony in the movements of figural, pop, and op art. Bouncing off of Manning’s insights, I would attribute Tillich’s difficulty in making even preliminary judgments about this art to its difference from earlier art that took ultimate meaning—or the apparent absence of ultimate meaning—seriously (Manning 8-11, 15-17). Tillich does ask, “Are we now in a period in which not only encountered reality has become unfamiliar to us, but in which even the concepts with which we have dealt with reality have become impossible? Is this new art an art of nonart?” And Tillich confesses that “(a) metaphysical dizziness grasps us” (1987:182).

² On the other hand, he volunteered at homeless shelters and financed a nephew’s education for the priesthood (Romaine).

³ I have encountered four different works with “*Improvisation No. 7*” in or as the title—Kandinsky clearly not only numbered a series of *Improvisations*, but could do considerable “improvisations” within a given number! One is a woodcutting. *Study for Improvisation No. 7* and *Improvisation No. 7 (Storm)* measure about the same size (roughly 2.3 by 1.6 feet), but with significant differences in coloration. The latter can be found at the Yale Art Gallery. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, holds the one to which I refer—plain *Improvisation No. 7* shall we call it? (measuring roughly 4.3 by 3.2 feet). The coloration I cite in my text comes from viewing the electronic image of the Web Museum, Paris. The image of ARTstor.org shows significantly different coloration.

⁴ However, in terms of chronology, the ten Burchfield paintings I analyze indicate that the return to nature began by at least 1939, while positive expressionistic depictions of nature occur in his early works and at least one “dark” negative

expressionist effort numbers among his later works (*Orion in December*).

EXILE, SYMBOLS, AND THE COURAGE TO BE: THE INFLUENCE OF PAUL TILlich ON THE WOMANIST THEOLOGY OF DELORES S. WILLIAMS¹

STEPHEN BUTLER MURRAY

Delores Williams, who stands along with Katie Cannon and Jacquelyn Grant as the academic and spiritual godmothers of the influential womanist theology movement, retired in 2004 as the second scholar to hold the Paul Tillich Chair in Theology and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York. Her predecessor was her own *doktorvater*, Tom Driver. When one reads Williams, especially her tour de force *Sisters in the Wilderness*, it is apparent that Williams has woven the tapestry of her constructive theology from the strands of the different theological traditions that inform her life, her worship, and her intellect. Williams is a black woman living in the United States, raised amidst systemic racism in Louisville, Kentucky. She was a social activist and newspaper reporter during the most vibrant years of the Civil Rights movement, and her scholarship has uncovered the dimensions of faith and oppression experienced by black people throughout the history of the United States. In addition, Williams is a liberal, lay Presbyterian raised in an evangelical household, who has enjoyed a career as a strident ecumenist, and whose doctoral students have hailed comfortably from throughout the many mansions and nations of Protestant and Catholic Christendom. Finally, while Williams pursued her graduate work and learned amidst the neo-orthodox, process, and black liberationist theological movements that dominated the times of her studies, she consistently has found fertile ground in the work of a theologian whose work is equally constructive to her own: Paul Tillich. Tillich's legacy continued from 1991 to 2004 at Union Theological Seminary due primarily to Williams' triumvirate courses on his theological corpus. In this article, I intend to discuss how the multifaceted theological work of Williams has been influenced by her familiarity with Tillich. This influence is shown especially through her admiration for his

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desire to construct a socially relevant theology, and the "courage to be" which defines his response to the trials and tribulations of individual and social human life. These themes underscore Williams' constructive theology of culture that provided womanist theology with its authoritative, defining first forays into systematic theology.

It is my privilege to have been the last of Williams' doctoral students to defend his dissertation before her retirement from the faculty of Union. During those years, I explored the theology of Tillich with Williams through her courses, as her student and her Tutor teaching assistant, via independent studies conducted in her office, and amidst friendly conversation in the hospitality of her faculty apartment (which by the way, was Tillich's residence before his departure for Harvard in 1955). One of the reasons that I was accepted for doctoral studies at Union was that Williams wanted to delve deeper into Tillich, and sought doctoral students whose interests reflected that orientation toward Tillich. As a result, in discussing the influence of Tillich on Williams, it will be necessary to draw upon our conversations, in addition to relying on the evidence found in Williams' writings.

In the summer of 2000, I said to Williams that I found it remarkable that so many liberationist theologians, whether writing out of black, feminist, womanist, *mujerista*, Latin American, African, or *minjung* (South Korea) contexts, found Tillich to be a valuable, reliable source for their constructive theology. This was interesting to me because on the surface, Tillich would seem to represent the masculine, white, socially and economically privileged, European-oriented theologian whose very contextuality would normally lend an aura of suspicion and unease to those regarding Tillich from a liberationist perspective. Rather than regarding Tillich with the sort of skepticism that often is accorded to Barth and Bultmann and their ilk, liberationists often embrace Tillich's theology as not only amicable, but surprisingly relevant to their own theological ruminations.

Williams' response has stayed with me. She replied that many liberationists appreciate Tillich's work because of the circumstances and choices of

his life. Williams maintained that Tillich had a personal understanding of alienation and exile, a comprehension that translated into his theological discernment of the human situation as defined by struggle with alienation from self, God, and world. Williams reminded me that as a young pastor, Tillich agonized profoundly as a chaplain to the German army in the First World War, suffering two nervous breakdowns during his years of service, only to come home to find that his first wife was cheating on him with his best friend. She pointed out that when he was the dean of the philosophy faculty at Frankfurt and expelled Nazi students who had attacked Jewish students, in concert with writing his powerful *The Socialist Decision*, Tillich was the first non-Jewish professor to lose his professorship in Germany for his political stance. For fear of assassination, Tillich and his family were forced to flee to the United States, a country where his connections and background meant little to nothing, where he did not even know the language. Having initially to accept an academic position markedly inferior to his previous prestigious post at Frankfurt, Tillich had to rely upon the kindness of strangers to supply his salary and even his furnishings, both of which were donated by the permanent faculty at Union. It took Tillich seven years until he felt able to offer his first course in the English language, and outside of his friendly walks along Riverside Park with the German-fluent Reinhold Niebuhr, Tillich found his social community almost completely among fellow German exiles in New York City. Even once he began socializing with Columbia faculty and Manhattan socialites at exclusive clubs, Tillich favored the music and culture of nearby Harlem, thoroughly enjoying the flair and melancholy of jazz.

This, this is the sort of white male, privileged European to whom liberationists could relate, said Williams. Tillich understood through his life experience what it meant to lose everything that brought meaning to his life, to have to navigate and negotiate an unfamiliar nation where adherence to one's culture and language brought only further alienation. Tillich is appealing to liberationists, said Williams, precisely because he fought for the rights of those whom his society trampled, the Jews of Germany, and thereby suffered the social, economic, and political consequences for such actions on the utmost personal level. This is the sort of solidarity that liberation-

ists can respect, and, therefore, Tillich stands as a friend in theological conversation, not as an opponent whose work must be regarded as suspect and undermining of innovations in those theologies grounded in the personal and communal experiences of those who are marginalized.

Furthermore, Tillich affirmed personal experience as a theological source unto itself, alongside such traditional sources as the Bible, church history, and divine revelation. In Tillich's method of correlation, it is possible to reach theological understanding only through an active engagement with the world whereby one asks questions of the reality which one inhabits and experiences. In effect, by requiring his theology to interact dynamically with the issues of his existence and the politics and poetics of his day, Tillich modeled a personally, socially, and societally accountable way of theologizing. For liberation theologians, Tillich exemplified the possibilities of constructive theological innovation that delved deeply in the wounds and celebrations of present, human existence. In a sense, Tillich opened the door to other theologians so that they might feel justified in articulating theologies that are relevant to their lived personal and social situations. The model of Tillich is not merely helpful but foundational in supporting the theologian who seeks to address the oftentimes brutal and untenable complexities of the societies in which they live.

Williams is such a theologian who has benefited from Tillich's groundbreaking desire to write socially responsive theology. I believe that her success as a systematic theologian is due to her uncommon capacities for infusing the qualities of what otherwise typifies prophetic preaching into the dynamism and complexities of her theological voice. I say this because her theology stands up to three important tests of prophetic preaching outlined by D. Stephen Long.² First, just as the prophetic preacher, Williams stands under the community of faith, and she is not set over and against it. Williams may have her quarrels with the Presbyterian Church as a denomination, but, in the words of William Sloane Coffin, these are lovers' quarrels. Chances are that on any given Sunday morning, no matter what she has said earlier in the week that might shake the more orthodox among her denomination, Williams can be found sitting in the pew of her Presbyterian church as a devoted lay member. Second, Williams recognizes that to be prophetic is not in opposition to being pastoral,

for the work of the prophetic often is the most pastoral of activities. In this regard, Williams and other womanists have not been content to be heard in the ivory towers of seminaries and divinity schools alone, but have struggled to bring their messages to be heard in churches (and especially black churches!) by women and men, lay and ordained. I would say that Williams' theologizing is not content to rest amidst libraries and classrooms, but demands to spill into the streets, to be relevant to the terrible loss of meaning that results from the imposition of white values upon black societies.

Third, Williams recognizes that the prophetic is never discontinuous with the past, but finds resources internal to the tradition of the community of faith to call that community to its true identity. Williams has been a paragon among liberation theologians in her diligence to unearth and claim the spiritual and experiential heritage of her forebears, connecting their faith and lives to the realities of contemporary black women and men in the United States today. Once, Williams told me that she regards herself more as a "survivalist" than as a "liberationist," and this is indicative of her conviction to hold on to the difficult dynamics of the past as educative and meaning-making, rather than desire to be freed from these histories into new realities.

It is in this way that Williams can embrace Tillich's experiences of exile and theological anthropology of alienation as those of a sympathetic journeyman alongside her altogether different life experiences and theological reflections as a black woman in the United States today who writes of her "wilderness experience." In the remainder of this article, I will explain how it is that Tillich's theological anthropology finds substance and resonance in Williams' expositions on the struggles of human life, and in particular, the lives of black women.

In this regard, it is important to review how Tillich understands what it means to be a human being living in the world. For Tillich, the structure of the human self, having a world to which it belongs and with which it can be in a subject-object dialogue, is preliminary to all other structural concepts. Constituting Tillich's basic ontological structure are pairs of elements: individuality and participation, dynamics and form, freedom and destiny. The conditions of existence not only express the power of being to exist, but differentiate essential and existential being. Finally, the catego-

ries of being and knowing are articulated as time, space, causality, and substance.³

For Tillich, any doctrine of theological anthropology must deal with humankind as historical beings in historical memory. Without this sense of history, this integration of centered self and world in subjective relationship, there is a danger. Deprived of our subjective elements, world and self crumble in the wake of a totally mechanical logic, and we struggle against this loss of subjectivity. This is a struggle against nonbeing, for the first step toward the personal annihilation wrought by nonbeing is to lose one's meaning, one's purpose, to be reduced in consideration and become merely a thing.

When we are confronted by this shocking encounter with nonbeing, we are thrown into anxiety, which Tillich defines as an awareness of our possible nonbeing through the experience of our finitude.⁴ Tillich wants to make sure that we do not confuse the ontological quality of anxiety with the psychological quality of fear. Anxiety is all pervasive, a part of being, whereas fear is impermanent and affects us through definite objects upon which we can act.⁵ Anxiety has no object, indeed is the negation of every object, and so anxiety cannot be acted upon through participation, struggle, or love. There is a certain sense, Tillich says, in which it is best to transform our anxiety into fear because graspable fear can be met by courage.⁶

One type of anxiety is the anxiety of meaninglessness, which results from emptiness and loss of meaning, impinging upon our spiritual self-affirmation. Tillich affirms that we are social creatures, participating creatively in a world of meanings.⁷ When nonbeing threatens that world of meanings, we feel irreparably separated from any ultimate concern.⁸ Since we relate to the world through meanings and values, the threat to our spiritual being is a threat to our whole being.⁹

There also is the anxiety of condemnation, by which our moral self-affirmation is tried by guilt and condemnation.¹⁰ We try to overcome our guilt through moral action, regardless of the imperfection and ambiguity of that action. Our attempts to do the moral good become demonically objective, turning moral action into a thing ungoverned by our subjectivity and not nuanced by faith. We try to do the good for our own alleviation from anxiety of condemnation, rather than for God or humanity. Thus, even moral action is transformed by anxiety into a deluding concupiscence. The result of such unchecked anxieties leads to despair,

of such unchecked anxieties leads to despair, whereby “a being is aware of itself as unable to affirm itself because of the power of nonbeing.”

Following the Augsburg Confession, Augustine, and Luther, Tillich provides the three concepts of “unbelief,” “*hubris*,” and “concupiscence” as the marks of our estrangement, the very state of human existence.¹¹ The first concept, unbelief, is that act or state in which we, in the totality of our being, turn away from God, moving toward the human center from the divine center. This is evident in the Augustinian interpretation of sin as love turning away from God to the self. That is to say, we actualize ourselves by turning to ourselves and away from God. The second concept, *hubris*, is the self-elevation of human beings into the sphere of the divine. This is evident in Greek tragedy, in which people may make themselves the center of their own worlds, not acknowledging their own finitude. For Tillich, a demonic structure drives human beings to confuse natural self-affirmation with destructive self-elevation. The third concept, concupiscence, is the unlimited desire to draw the whole of reality into one’s self.

These understandings of unbelief, *hubris*, and concupiscence bring us to the crux of the matter in our consideration of Tillich’s theological anthropology, namely his portrayal of existential self-destruction and the doctrine of evil. We are able to destroy ourselves in that we can transcend our world and ourselves through our actions and in our language. As such, we can make our world merely into an object that we behold, and we can make ourselves into mere objects upon which we look.¹²

For Tillich, in the broad sense, evil is the negative in everything that includes destruction and estrangement, the totality of our existential predicament of sin and estrangement. The first mark of evil is the loss of one’s determining center, the disintegration of the centered self by disunifying, disruptive drives; Tillich calls this “self-loss.”¹³ When this happens, our understanding of the world crumbles and we lose our power to have a meaningful encounter with the world. We approach the brink of personal disintegration as our centered self loses its integrity. Self and world are threatened, as world regresses into mere environment. As such, we are no longer human beings possessing a world, but the mere objects of “environmental impact.”¹⁴

In the state of estrangement, our ontological polarities are disrupted and they begin to separate,

undermining their interdependence.¹⁵ Freedom and destiny are distorted into arbitrariness and mechanical necessity. Dynamics and form are bent into a formless urge for self-transcendence and an oppressive legalism. Individualization and participation are distorted into depersonalization and total abstraction.

As we are estranged from the ultimate power of being, we are determined by our own finitude. Estrangement reaches out to distort and transform our understandings of the categories of finitude. Time, deprived of the power of being itself, becomes a “mere transitoriness without actual presence.”¹⁶ Space, likewise, is experienced as a “spatial contingency,” meaning that we have no definite place of our own. Due to these conflicts, we undergo certain consequences: suffering and loneliness.¹⁷ Meaningless suffering is compounded by the “aloneness” of the person, and the hostility resulting from rejection when this desire is rejected by others. Loneliness is the defilement of “solitude,” that part of our essential finitude that allows us to have communion. In existential estrangement, we are cut off from the dimensions of the ultimate and left intolerably alone, leading us to surrender our lonely self to a larger “collective” rather than participate actively in “communion.” The courage to be that Tillich espouses “is essentially always the courage to be as a part and the courage to be as oneself, in interdependence.”¹⁸ Such courage to be is impossible in such an extreme state of existential estrangement, which ravages us with a legacy of doubt and meaninglessness. These structures of evil eventually drive human beings into the state of “despair,” the boundary line beyond which we cannot go.¹⁹ It is in despair that we come to the end of our possibilities, leaving us without hope, caught in inescapable conflict.

Williams sympathizes with Tillich’s analysis of human existence, especially with regard to those people whose sense of existential estrangement overwhelms their courage to be. Williams understands as her task to “reconstruct and redeem from invisibility the life-world of African-American women,” articulating a theological voice that emerges from and is true to the ignored and suppressed religious perspective of black women in America.²⁰

As with Tillich, Williams pays close attention to the specific cultural situations that inform her theological work. Williams and other womanist

theologians understand that their position in society bears close relation to the difficulties faced by white women and black men. Yet, the specific concerns of black women are addressed neither by the social advocacy nor by the theological perspectives of either group. For instance, while white women are confronted by patriarchy, Williams argues that black women also must grapple with “the productive patriarchal intent of white patriarchy.” This refers to the protection that the white-controlled institutions of American society provide to the children of white women, while those same institutions “intend the retardation of the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, economic, and physical growth of black women and the fruit of their wombs, male and female.”²¹ Appreciating Tillich’s penchant for introducing new verbiage into the vocabulary of systematic theology, Williams coins a term that describes this white-dominated system that uses “racism, violence, violation, retardation, and death as instruments of social control”: demonarchy.²² Demonarchy is not constituted by individual acts of violence, but is a traditional and collective response by white people to black women, stemming from a belief by white people of their superiority to people of color. Due to the twin assaults of white patriarchy and demonarchy, it is understandable that Williams rejects integration as a viable option for black women in America.²³

Unfortunately, Williams finds that black communities do not offer black women any real respite from the difficulties presented by white-dominated society, stricken by a dynamic interplay of alienating forces internal to the black communities. Williams reports that black women are far from protected or nurtured within the black community, but are subject to undermining and violence by the very men with whom they live.²⁴ She points to examples in culture wherein black men view black women as frustrating their successes, as obstacles that must be overcome.²⁵ Consequently, black women may find themselves oppressed in the very places where they would seek sanctuary.

In her ecclesiology, Williams places a high value on the black church as a locale where great good can occur, both symbolically and physically, and in this way Williams demonstrates an appreciation for the capacities of the institutional church itself, which Tillich did not always share. She testifies that the church is “the foundation and spiri-

tual home of Black Christians...the creator of community, the sustainer of hope, the liberator redeeming the Black spirit from all that would destroy it.”²⁶ Yet, the black church has also been a “two-edged sword” for black women, as it has suppressed and made them invisible through the mind-set that Williams says is advocated by its “patriarchally and androcentrically biased liturgy and leadership.”²⁷ Understanding the church as devoting itself to the derogation of women while there are a plethora of social ills that need to be addressed, Williams calls on the black church to understand the means by which it is being manipulated.²⁸ This manipulation is not so much driven from the outside by white powers and principalities, but internally by black male imitations of white male patriarchy.²⁹ In Tillich’s language, this is a demonstration of the destructive potentials of quasi-religions, whereby white male values are given such priority within American society that even those who suffer under such a system take up those values as their ground of being.

Instead, Williams calls for both a rise in consciousness and conscience within the black church. She demands that the church see the fractures and fragmentation in the church and in the world, and that once aware, to address such active or implied violence directly. Williams says that, “If the church does not participate in the work of bringing social salvation to the suffering and violated ones, it has no mission to speak of. It has no life in Christ.”³⁰ Rather, Williams maintains, it is the responsibility of the black church to be the harbinger of change, the locus of organization, the backbone of the community.

Williams reflects Tillich’s commitment to examining human beings, singly and collectively, as historical beings in historical memory. One of Williams’ most significant contributions to womanist theology’s understanding of oppression is her social and theological analysis of the history of surrogacy roles endured by black women, a continual barrier to any socially-located soteriology.³¹ This continues to the present day, as black women endure the appropriation of their sexuality, procreative powers, and capacity to nurture.³² While Williams firmly places the blame for the establishment of surrogacy upon white people, she does note that black men have also had a hand in keeping black women in the service of other people’s needs and goals.³³ The recurring theme in Williams’ theological corpus is that

while white society began and continues the oppression of black women, black men have contributed to the perpetuation of black women's oppression as well.

Providing the nuances and specificities implicit to a Tillichian sense of systemic alienation, Williams argues that accompanying this imposition of surrogacy roles throughout history is the white propensity to "scapegoat" black people in the United States.³⁴ This cultural aversion to Blackness is instituted not only through culture, science, and politics, but also through the very symbols, signs, and images of Christianity.³⁵ This social conditioning has led to a national consciousness that looks not only upon blackness, but also upon black people as dangerous and necessary to suppress. Williams attributes this persistent, oppressive force to "white racial narcissism," which she sees as the overvaluation of white skin color to the "pathological point of using the [white] group's power and authority to persecute others who are not of that skin color."³⁶ This is representative of Tillich's understanding of *hubris*, whereby human beings attempt a self-elevation into the sphere of the divine. White racial narcissism sees only white skin color as being of value, of bearing a certain priority and potency, and thereby in its elevation of the self, white racial narcissism cannot witness to the *imago Dei* implicit to every human being.

This combination of surrogacy, scapegoating, and anti-black sentiment has led to societal negative stereotypes of black women. Yet, what is most disturbing about this is that the constant exposure to externally imposed negative perceptions of black women has led to a fundamental undermining of black women's perceptions of themselves. Another way that black women come to feel "unworthy" is through the indifference of governmental structures in responding to the concerns of black women. Historically, the white-dominated governance has ignored black women who were raped, lynched, and overworked by white men and white women. Williams assigns a theological verbiage to this combination, the devaluation of black women's humanity and the defilement of their bodies: "the social sin American patriarchy and demonarchy have committed against Black women and their children."³⁷ This, then, is the first order of sin as properly understood by Williams, sin in a social sense. Tillich once claimed that a person becomes a person in the encounter with

persons and in no other way.³⁸ Williams would seem to be in agreement with Tillich in this, for the evidence of our better natures and our worst proclivities emerge from our encounters with others in the communities with which we live.

Williams' analysis of social sin is historical and deep, examining three deposits of the black community's religious culture: spiritual songs, autobiographical statements, and black theology.³⁹ What she mines out of these traditions is a contemporary womanist concept of sin that can be understood in four senses. First, the womanist notion of sin takes the human body and its sexuality seriously, finding any abuse of one's body and sexuality that amounts to defilement as sin. Second, Williams equates black womanhood and humanity as synonymous, both being in the image of God, as is one's sexuality. Therefore, to devalue womanhood or sexuality is a sin. Third, contributing to the depletion of black women's self-esteem is sinful, and thereby the elevation and healing of black women's self-esteem is what constitutes salvation. Fourth, Williams parallels the defilement of black women's bodies and the defilement of nature. It should be noted that all of these constitute social sin visited upon black women by those who are not themselves black women, primarily white men, white women, and black men.

Williams is also careful to name what amounts to individual sin, claiming that when one participates "in society's systems that devalue Black women's womanhood (humanity) through a process of invisibilization—that is, invisibilizing the womanist character of Black women's experience and emphasizing the stereotypical images of Black women that prevail and are perpetuated by the larger society," one is committing individual sin.⁴⁰ To be sure, black women can also commit such individual sin. They do so when they do not challenge the social systems of patriarchy and demonarchy that defile black women's bodies and degrade their self-esteem. To succumb, to not embrace the courage to be, is the very nature of individual sin in Williams' systematic theology.

The result of this encounter with sin is exhausting for black women on a multidimensional level that affects one's spirit, comfort, health, and groundedness. Williams eloquently maintains that this "spiritual desolation yields a state of unrelieved restlessness and anxiety. A person in spiritual desolation suffers a profound emptiness, a sense of being lost in shadows."⁴¹ When black

women refer to a “wilderness experience,” according to Williams, they are depicting a place of desolation, “where one is exhausted and spent and needs an infusion of faith, a shower of God’s grace.”⁴² And when confronted by this “near-destruction situation” of the wilderness experience, a very Tillichian despair in the face of non-being, Williams maintains that “God gives personal direction to the believer and thereby helps her make a way out of what she thought was no way.”⁴³

It is in this way that Williams grounds her understanding of black women’s survival experience through the biblical character of Hagar, rather than in the exodus-based liberation experience that predominantly is lifted up by black theology.⁴⁴ What is remarkable about this survival model is the strong sense that it is not the black woman alone, but the black woman and her family (and by extension, her community) that are enabled by God to struggle on despite the forces arraigned against them. Williams finds that the liberationist model ultimately leads to hopelessness and desperation, as the models of liberation do not match the experience of black people in America. Rather, it is the survivalist model—of a people that continue on, enduring pain and hardship, directed and accompanied by a God who does not necessarily set them free—that seems most appropriate to the experience of black people, and black women in particular, in the context of the United States. In a similar vein, Tillich’s *New Being* does not promise alleviation from all of one’s trials and tribulations, but provides the means for getting through those most difficult struggles.

As the liberationist models of white women and black men fail the particularities of black women, Williams finds it important that black women undergo a process of self-invention. One of the ways that black women have undertaken this self-invention is by writing literature in such a way that the literature “makes a woman real to herself.”⁴⁵ Williams also points to certain cultural forms as ways by which black women have departed from traditional theories of atonement and sanctification, and self-invented themselves in powerful, life-enhancing ways. These include the “black is beautiful” cultural revolutions of the 1960s, the “musical form of lamentation” of the Blues, and the cultural experiences of the black church worship tradition, including gospel music, praise services and praise songs, the experience of

joy as the Spirit moves in the worship space, and the “well-organized, inspiring and energetic sermons that some of the preachers deliver.”⁴⁶ Yet, Williams is careful to assert that spiritual developments must go beyond self-reliance, instead seeking out a spiritual life that is nurtured by one’s experiences with the sacred, and through the sacred, encounters with God.⁴⁷ This too is in tune with Tillich’s advocacy for cultural forms that lead toward participation with the divine, while not supplanting the divine with our sense of wonder at our own creativeness.

Thus, an important re-valuation that black women must do in the work of womanist theology is to come to new understandings of God and to embrace new imagery invested with religiously symbolic meaning. For Williams, redemption has to do with God, through Jesus, giving human beings a new vision by which humanity might ascertain the resources of ethics and praxis that allow one to build positive, abundant, relational lives.⁴⁸ Thus, in Williams’ re-visioning of Christology, it is important to emphasize that the salvific work of Christ is accomplished not in the surrogacy-imbued symbolism of his death for other’s sins on a cross,⁴⁹ but through what he represented and worked toward in his life.⁵⁰

As with Tillich, Williams bears little patience for a church that is irrelevant to the challenges presented by world that it inhabits, meaning that the Christian message does not answer the existential questions of the humanity of today.⁵¹ Williams will not allow a continuation of the state of lethargy she observes in the Christian church,⁵² for she sees such inactivity as nothing other than a betrayal when Christians “live comfortably and passively within socially and politically constructed boundaries which prohibit community, dehumanize people, and destroy the lives and cultures of other Christians.”⁵³ Consequently, Williams calls for a “Church Without Walls,” a church which is involved in the practical economic, political, physical, and spiritual needs of the black community.⁵⁴ Such a church would ideally foster the “life-line politics” being implemented by black women, as such political strategies are implicitly supported by religious practices.⁵⁵ Such a church would work toward social salvation by developing and transforming black communities,⁵⁶ and would not become mired in intra-church struggles or the oppression of its own members.

Staying with her womanist survival/quality-of-life hermeneutic, Williams would preach among black Christians that liberation is ultimate, “but in the meantime survival and prosperity must be the experience of our people.”⁵⁷ This is in accord with the experience of Williams’ depiction of Hagar, who was not passive in the face of despair and the threats to her life and to her son’s life. How the present moment can be improved is, for Williams, a task that is undertaken in concert by the individual, by the family, by the community, and by the church.

In my reading, Williams is an example of the sort of theologian who takes on Tillich’s challenge that Christian theology must speak to the contemporary issues and questions of its day, and in so doing, systematic theology must always be in a state of revision and renewal. Recognizing alongside Tillich that human beings are historical beings situated in historical memory, Williams has worked to uncover and recover the lived realities of her ancestors, and sought to bring the contemporary situation of people, and black women in particular, into conversation with the present-day reverberations of the past. Over the course of her career as a womanist theologian, Williams has constructed a theological position and a following that demand social relevancy if theology is to be Christian at all. She has looked to Tillich’s example, for he wrote so acutely on human experience amidst the vast changes in the world from the First World War until the social revolutions of the 1960s. In this way, Williams’ work as a systematic theologian has focused not so much on the doctrines of God, Trinity, or revelation, whereby her focus would be primarily upon those theological themes dealing with the externalities that work upon humankind and Creation “from above.” Instead, Williams has grappled deeply with the particularities of what it means to be a human being living in societies that are themselves composed of many interlocking communities, focusing on theological anthropology, the doctrine of the Christian life, the nature of social and individual sin, and atonement.

Along with Tillich, Williams has authored a theology that is unafraid to confront the realities of the sinner who is sinned against and who sins against herself, all along loved by a God who does not interrupt and arrest this painful process. This theology is forged from the fires of intense realism, convinced that while liberation is an admira-

ble ideal, first it is necessary to develop the personal and faithful elements that allow survival so that one might thrive at all. To accomplish this, Williams confronts the vagaries of human life in a way that seems inspired by Tillich, but also surpassing Tillich due to her attention to the details of the particularities of black women’s lives in the United States. While their analyses may be different, both Tillich and Williams arrive at a similar place. While Tillich pointed to the despair that results from the encounter with non-being, Williams understood the importance of confronting the meaninglessness and self-doubt that is inspired by invisibility and personal devaluation of the self amidst a society that corporately devalues the self according to one’s race and gender. It is in this way that a theologian who suffered exile during a time of tremendous social and political unrest has been an important influence upon a theologian who has experienced the wilderness of her own times of tremendous social and political unrest in America.

¹ An earlier version of this paper appeared in the *Union Seminary Quarterly Review’s festschrift* for Delores Williams as “Socially Relevant Theology and the Courage to Be: The Influence of Paul Tillich on the Womanist Theology of Delores S. Williams,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*. Vol. 58: 3-4 (October 2004): 95-111.

² D. Stephen Long, “Prophetic Preaching,” in William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer, eds. *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 385-389.

³ These “categories” in the Tillichian vocabulary are reformulations of Kant’s discussion on the forms of intuition, time and space.

⁴ Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1952), 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 50-51, 53.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47-55.

¹² *Ibid.*, 60.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 61. This is reminiscent of Nietzsche’s understanding of the ethical as the comparative strength of a certain drive among other drives in a given moment, as explicated in his *Daybreak*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 62-66.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 70-72.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 89-90.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁰ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 175. It should be noted, however, that Williams understands womanist theology as "organically related" to black male liberation theology and feminist theology. *Ibid.*, xiv.

²¹ Delores S. Williams, "The Color of Feminism: Or Speaking the Black Woman's Tongue," *The Journal of Religious Thought* 43 No. 1:48-49 Spring-Summer 1986.

²² Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 52.

²³ Delores S. Williams, "Exposing False Distinctions," *Sojourners* 19:19 August-September 1990.

²⁴ Delores S. Williams, "A Womanist Perspective on Sin" in Emilie M. Townes, ed. *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 146.

²⁵ Delores S. Williams, "August Wilson's women," *Christianity and Crisis* 50:331-332 October 22, 1990.

²⁶ Delores S. Williams, "Violence Against God," *The Other Side* 32:19 September-October 1996.

²⁷ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, xiii.

²⁸ Delores S. Williams, "ReImagining Truth," *The Other Side* 30:54 May-June 1994.

²⁹ Delores S. Williams, "The Color of Feminism: Or Speaking the Black Woman's Tongue," 58.

³⁰ Delores S. Williams, "Straight Talk, Plain Talk: Womanist Words about Salvation in a Social Context" in Emilie M. Townes, ed. *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation, and Transformation*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 119-120.

³¹ While surrogacy is addressed in a number of Williams' writings, her analysis is most crisp in her book, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, and in her article, "Black Women's Surrogacy Experience and The Christian Notion of Redemption" in Paula M. Cooley, William R. Eakin, and Jay B. McDaniel, eds. *After Patriarchy: Feminist Transformations of the World Religions*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 1-14.

³² Delores S. Williams, "Women's Oppression and Lifeline Politics In Black Women's Religious Narratives," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 1 No. 2:62 Fall 1985.

³³ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 81.

³⁴ Delores S. Williams, "Could It Happen Here?" *The Other Side* 31:46-47 January-February 1995, and "Christian Scapegoating," *The Other Side* 29:43 May-June 1993.

³⁵ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 85 and "Could It Happen Here?," 55.

³⁶ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 86, 88.

³⁷ Delores S. Williams, "A Womanist Perspective on Sin," 143-144.

³⁸ Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 78.

³⁹ Delores S. Williams, "A Womanist Perspective on Sin," 130-149.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁴¹ Delores S. Williams, "Way Out Yonder, Longing For Home," *The Other Side* 32:33 March-April 1996.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴³ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 108. Williams maintains that "God's response to Hagar's story in the Hebrew testament is not liberation. Rather, God participates in Hagar's and her child's survival on two occasions... God's response to Hagar's (and her child's) situation was survival and involvement in their development of an appropriate quality of life, that is, appropriate to their situation and their heritage." *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 33, 151.

⁴⁵ Delores S. Williams, "Women as Makers of Literature" in Janet Kalven and Mary I. Buckley, eds. *Women's Spirit Bonding*. (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1984), 139. Williams understands this process of self-invention as involving three actions: "an assessment of the past, lamentation, and an affirmation of faith and hope." *Ibid.*, 141-142. She finds the literature of Alice Walker to be the most full expression of this self-invention. Delores S. Williams, "Womanist Theology," 119.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 120-121, and Delores S. Williams, "Women as Makers of Literature," 143, and Delores S. Williams, "Straight Talk, Plain Talk: Womanist Words about Salvation in a Social Context," 116.

⁴⁷ Delores S. Williams, "Keep on Climbing up," *Christian Century* 110:928 October 6, 1993.

⁴⁸ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 165.

⁴⁹ Delores S. Williams, "Black Women's Surrogate Experience and the Christian Notion of Redemption," 9.

⁵⁰ Delores S. Williams, "A Crucifixion Double Cross?" *The Other Side* 29:26 September-October 1993.

⁵¹ Paul Tillich, *The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Christian Message*, edited by A. Durwood Foster (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1996), 13.

⁵² Delores S. Williams, "Lethargy in Christendom," *Christianity and Crisis* 53:90 April 12, 1993.

⁵³ Delores S. Williams, "The Boundaries That Betray Us," *The Other Side* 31:26 May-June 1995.

⁵⁴ Delores S. Williams, "Womanist Theology," 124.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵⁶ Delores S. Williams, "Straight Talk, Plain Talk: Womanist Words about Salvation in a Social Context," 110.

⁵⁷ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 196. Williams is careful to point out that some womanist theologians favor the liberation hermeneutic to the survival/quality-of-life hermeneutic. *Ibid.*, 194.

**THE DIALECTIC OF THE HOLY:
THE EVOLUTION OF PAUL TILlich'S
UNDERSTANDING OF JUDAISM**

ROBERT MEDITZ

[Editor's Note: Robert Meditz is currently enrolled in a Theology and Ethics doctoral program at The University of Exeter (UK) and Hartford Seminary. His dissertation topic is on Paul Tillich, the Old Testament, and Judaism. This paper is published as part of an occasional series of graduate student papers; Mr. Meditz was a student of Professor Kelson Cobb of the NAPTS.]

Introduction: The Use and Abuse of Judaism

In April of 1933, soon after Adolf Hitler came to power, Paul Tillich was suspended from the University of Frankfurt for speaking out against Nazi intimidation of leftist students, and for being a "well known religious socialist."¹ Tillich was one of over 1,600 German academics that were either fired or suspended for either being Jews or critics of the Nazi regime. In May, he was initially instructed by the Ministry of Education to remain in Germany until a final decision was made on his case.² Around the same time, he was offered a position by Reinhold Niebuhr at Union Theological Seminary in New York. However, as a loyal German, Tillich hesitated, and traveled around Germany seeking advice and counsel as to whether he should leave the country. In October of 1933, as the situation in Germany deteriorated, Tillich called for a meeting with an official at the Ministry of Culture in Berlin as he was anxious to determine the final disposition of his case.

In a 1959 interview for *Time* magazine, Tillich recalls the pivotal moment when he decided to leave Germany and seek political asylum in the United States: "For a full hour, we discussed the Old Testament and the importance to Christianity of the Jewish tradition. At the end of the hour I knew it was over."³ Adolf Löwe also relates that in this interview, the Nazi official also asked Tillich to retract *The Socialist Decision*,⁴ in return for the prestigious chair of Theology at the University of Berlin. Tillich reportedly laughed in his face.⁵ The Nazi official recommended that Tillich leave Germany for a couple of years for his own safety, but that he expected things to improve within a few years so that Tillich could safely return. After agonizing over this, Tillich decided to emigrate. Aside from concern for his personal safety, this pivotal interview reveals what was most important to Tillich, what he found non-negotiable about the Nazi regime, and the importance of Judaism and the Old Testament to Christian theology.

Why is Tillich's view of the Old Testament and Judaism important? Tillich's support for the Jews and his critique of National Socialism are well documented.⁶ As for the Old Testament, Tillich is quite clear about the importance of the prophetic tradition, but he has left no explicit treatment of the Old Testament. Due to his philosophical exegesis and use of ontology, Tillich does not present an explicit doctrine of Scripture, but discusses its role in the context of other topics.⁷ As for his understanding of Judaism, it appears at key points in his career and in his written works, as will be demonstrated below.

In Europe and the West, the posture of the Christian churches toward Judaism has had major social implications for Jews. This is a vast topic,

with many historical, theological, sociological, and political dimensions. One example of an adversarial theological perspective is the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition, as analyzed by Rosemary Radford Ruether, both in a 1991 essay and in her exhaustive 1974 study *Faith and Fratricide*.⁸ This tradition became common in Western Christianity during the Patristic period, from the second century into the fifth century. The *Adversus Judaeos* tradition was initially used for polemical purposes by Christian theologians in response to Jewish efforts to delegitimize Christianity in the eyes of the Roman government.⁹ According to Ruether, the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition of patristic exegesis maintains an anti-Judaic “left hand,” which attempts to demonstrate why the Jewish community did not accept Jesus as the fulfillment of its own tradition. This viewpoint became a hermeneutical lens through which all of Judaism was condemned as the negative mirror image of Christianity.¹⁰ While the causal link between the *Adversus Judaeos* tradition and genocidal anti-Semitism may not be so ineluctable, *at a minimum* it is clear that the Christian church, at specific points in its history, has fostered an antagonistic attitude toward the Jewish religion to the significant detriment of certain Jewish communities.

In this paper, I will argue that Judaism plays three different roles for Tillich that change over time, and that each role corresponds to an important emphasis in Tillich’s thought in a distinct phase of his theological development. The first role that Judaism plays is that of a necessary, preparatory role for Christianity, which exhibits the influence of German idealism and the history of religions, and is most clearly exhibited in Tillich’s two doctoral dissertations on Schelling, written in 1910 and 1912. The importance of Schelling on Tillich’s thought, which will be discussed later, cannot be overstated.¹¹ The second role that Judaism plays is that of a permanent, prophetic critique of Christianity. Tillich’s concept of religious socialism, which appropriates prophetic expectation to challenge the nationalistic idolatry of the National Socialist regime, is expressed in “the Jewish spirit.” This clearly and forcefully is exhibited in Tillich’s *The Socialist Decision*. The third distinct role that Judaism plays, while not abandoning the prior two, is that of a mirror image the German people. Tillich engages in a psychological and sociological analysis of German culture, and of “the German personality,” in an attempt to explain the

pathological behavior of Germany in carrying out the Holocaust. This can be seen most pointedly in Tillich’s Berlin “*Judenfrage*” lectures in 1953.¹²

In the first phase of Tillich’s thought, the history-of-religions-school is foundational, but after World War I, Tillich turns his attention to wider political realities, and writes a work of true political theology. In this third phase, in light of World War II and the Holocaust, psychology and sociology emerge as new, integral elements in his understanding of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. In all three instances, Judaism is understood in a theoretical sense, but only in the second and third instances does it have significant implications for social reality. In all three instances, there is a dialectic involved, which over time has a cumulative effect, so that by the time of the *Judenfrage* lectures, the dialectic retains concepts from the first two periods, but adds new ideas as well. This is what I will later refer to as Tillich’s “dialectic of the Holy.”

Part One: The Importance of Schelling for Tillich

It is difficult to appreciate fully Tillich’s thought without understanding the influence of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854), who, along with Hegel, has become associated with German idealism. This perspective employed an evolutionary view of history to interpret the role of various world religions in deriving increasingly more sophisticated forms, typically pointing to western Christianity as the highest form. In Tillich’s autobiography, *On the Boundary*,¹³ Tillich recalls how he had voraciously read classical German philosophy, especially Kant and Fichte, and later Schelling. His interest in Schelling was stirred by both a predisposition (“inner affinity”) towards the relationship between nature, mysticism, and history, and unexpectedly found the complete works of Schelling in a used bookstore, what he came to refer to as the “the accident of a bargain purchase.”¹⁴ The importance of Schelling remained with Tillich through his entire life. For example, when he had completed the third volume of his *Systematic Theology* in 1963, Tillich remarked that Schelling was the teacher and he was merely the student.¹⁵ As part of my argument, I will show that the influence of Schelling remains in the second and third phases of Tillich’s thought,

the prophetic socialist phase and the social-psychological phase.

The first of his two dissertations on Schelling, *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Philosophy: Its Presuppositions and Principles*,¹⁶ was submitted in 1910 for his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Breslau. The second, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*,¹⁷ was submitted for the licentiate in theology at the University of Halle. In the introduction to the 1910 Dissertation, Tillich argues that while Schelling was in a sense the teacher of Hegel and Schleiermacher, the latter two became the objects of extensive scholarly commentary, while Schelling regrettably fell into neglect.¹⁸ In both dissertations Tillich seeks to rescue Schelling from relative obscurity, and explore Schelling's significance for his own thought. In the simplest terms, in the 1910 Dissertation, Tillich appropriates Schelling for *philosophical* purposes, and then in the 1912 Dissertation, Tillich appropriates Schelling for *theological* purposes, with philosophy providing a necessary foundation for theology. However, there is considerable overlap between philosophy and theology in Schelling, as Tillich observes that idealism possesses an essentially religious dimension or "self-consciousness," expressed in Schelling's concept of "philosophical religion."¹⁹

The 1910 Dissertation: Judaism as a Transitional Dialectical Participant in the History of Religion

The 1910 Dissertation has three parts. Part One discusses the epistemological and metaphysical foundations of Schelling's dialectical view of reality, focusing on the three "potencies," which are principles that characterize change within God, nature, humanity, and history. According to Tillich, Schelling's three potencies are subject, object, and spirit. In the most simple terms, subject is "what *can* be," or pure potency; object is "what *must* be," or pure act; and spirit is "what *ought to* be," or the goal.²⁰ All of reality experiences change in a progression among the three potencies, starting with "subject," which is opposed by "object," with both contributing to one degree or another, in a teleological fashion, to "spirit." However, the conflict between subject and object does not result in a simple "fifty-fifty" combination in the emergence of spirit, nor is it a simple linear progres-

sion. Rather, spirit reflects the relative success or failure of subject and object in their conflict, and neither is completely annihilated. Each potency makes an enduring contribution to spirit, with the magnitude of that contribution reflecting the relative success of each potency, subject and object, in the struggle. This is Schelling's dialectical view of reality, which Tillich largely adopts in his own thought and uses throughout his entire career. This dynamic view of reality became characteristic of 19th century Romanticism, and is like Hegel's dialectic, except that it is perhaps more volatile. In Tillich's lectures on the history of Christian thought, he says Schelling's whole philosophy of nature was an attempt to show the indwelling of the potential spirit in all natural objects and its fulfillment in man.²¹

Part Two, called "The History of Religion," employs the dialectic of the potencies in a development of the history of religion. It has two sections, the first discussing the presence of "mythology" within a comprehensive, cross-cultural view of human history. The discussion of mythology begins with "absolute prehistoric time," discussing the dialectical inner life of God. In an act of complete divine freedom, the divine emanates by essentially creating the physical world, which brings about the emergence of humanity, historical time, and human history. Schelling metaphorically refers to this as "the Fall."²² For Schelling, the history of religion demonstrates the emergence and the contributions of all major religions and philosophies and their conflict and transformation; the cumulative effect ultimately is a contribution to the emergence of Christianity.²³ Human history moves in a dialectical sequence, starting with mythological religions of the ancient Near East, Greece, and India, which are then opposed by the anti-mythological religions and philosophies of China, Persian Manichaeism, and Buddhism, which are then followed by rational religion, of which post-Exilic Judaism is one example. This dialectical sequence of mythological, anti-mythological, and rational religions is also referred to by Schelling as "paganism." Due to the limitations of human reason, in all of its historical and cultural diversity, paganism experiences a "catastrophe of the rational process."²⁴ This catastrophe prepares the way for religions of revelation discussed in the second section of Part Two, Judaism, Islam ("Mohammedanism"), and Christianity. Part Three, which discusses the religious, histori-

cal, and philosophical principles used in the construction of the history of religion, also has two parts, the first discussing the concept of religion and the second discussing the concept of history.

According to Tillich's reconstruction of the history of religion, Judaism passed through three historical stages, with the first stage having pagan, rational, and revelatory elements. The first stage is the development of Mosaic religion, which involves the receiving of the Mosaic Law, a rational element, and the temptations of polytheism, a remnant of paganism. In addition, this stage exhibits the command for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, with the idea of human sacrifice also exhibiting remnants of paganism, and the names of God alternating between Elohim and Jehovah as instances of divine revelation, as contrasted to the "nameless God of prehistory."²⁵ The second stage is that of Prophetism, or "the spiritual understanding of the Mosaic law and the prophecy of the spiritual religion of the future."²⁶ As an instance of Schelling's dialectic, the prophetic religion of Israel drew upon elements of the Mosaic law, and transcended them, in a teleological manner: "Spirit, the potency of *the future*, speaks *already in the prophets of Israel* [emphasis mine] and leads beyond the law, without, however, annulling it for the present."²⁷

The third stage is that of normative Judaism, whose specific features are not clearly delineated, except that it rejects mythology entirely,²⁸ and that it has both a rational and a revelatory dimension. In the section immediately following the discussion of Judaism and Islam, which begins the discussion of revelation, paganism and Judaism are paired together, as both having a rational dimension that fails. This paves the way for revelation: "Paganism and Judaism both pointed beyond themselves by prophesying a perfect religion of the future; and both ended in a catastrophe that realized the negative moment of the prophecy and made the positive moment an urgent demand."²⁹ In addition, further on in Part Three, Judaism and Christianity are paired together as both having a revelatory dimension: "The concept of revelation has a comprehensive significance for Schelling. It includes Judaism and Christianity within itself, and signifies the supernatural efficacy of the second potency in contrast to its natural efficacy in paganism."³⁰ The first two stages of Judaism, Mosaic religion and prophetism, can be tied to historical periods. In the third stage, that of normative

Judaism, there is no association with any specific historical expression of Judaism, such as Second Temple or Rabbinic Judaism. Further, in this paper, I will show how Tillich appropriates a similar non-historical view of Judaism in *The Socialist Decision*.

The 1912 Dissertation: Judaism's Bondage to a Wrathful God Points to Grace

Mysticism and guilt-consciousness, the feeling of unity with the absolute and consciousness of opposition to God, the principle of the identity of the absolute and individual spirit, and the experience of contradiction between Holy Lord and sinful creature: this is the antinomy for whose solution religious thought in the Church in every age has struggled and must continually struggle.³¹

The above passage is the opening sentence of the 1912 Dissertation, which summarizes the recurring problem of the contradiction between truth and morality as applied to religion. Tillich observes that there are two fundamental, common religious experiences, or impulses. The first is union between the individual and the divine, explained philosophically as "identity," and religiously as "mysticism." The second impulse is fear of the holy, explained philosophically as the contradiction between self-interest and obligation, and religiously as "guilt-consciousness." The structure of Tillich's thought is deeply indebted to Kant,³² and Tillich throughout his career responds in one way or another to Kant's three critiques: whether it be to the "prison of finitude,"³³ as determined by the limits of science, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*; the religious implications of the conflict between self-interest and obligation in the *Critique of Practical Reason*; or the manifestation of the divine in artistic expression, as in the *Critique of Judgment*. In the 1910 Dissertation, Tillich provides an extensive articulation of the history of religion, followed by a relatively brief religious and theological application. In the 1912 Dissertation, the emphasis is reversed, with most of the analysis devoted to the problems posed by Kant, with a shorter concluding section devoted to their resolution within the history of religion. In both dissertations, Judaism receives a relatively brief analysis, although its role is pivotal.

The 1912 Dissertation also has three parts. Part One, called the "Historical-Dialectical Foundation of the Problem," provides the theoretical

basis for the problem by demonstrating the recurring contradiction between the experience of oneness with God and the experience of alienation from God. Tillich begins with a discussion of pre-Kantian philosophy, which is followed by a discussion of Kant's three *Critiques* referred to above. Part Two discusses the variety of ways that mysticism and identity function within the earlier Schelling, in his speculative ("negative") philosophy, and the limitations of ethical concepts to comprehend and resolve the original contradiction between truth and morality. Part Two closes with a section called "The Destruction of the Moral Categories," in which Tillich introduces several metaphors used by Schelling to transcend the limits of traditional ethical categories. One metaphor is the "ethical genius," or "man of God," who experiences a "supra-intellectual" unity of knowledge and action (intuition), and who exercises his will with a freedom that is analogous to divine freedom.³⁴ Tillich concludes this section by showing that one pole of the original contradiction, "guilt consciousness," cannot possibly resolve the contradiction, especially if it is expressed solely in intellectual terms. This sets the stage for a fuller development of theological concepts in Part Three.

In Part Three of the 1912 Dissertation, Tillich discusses Schelling's attempt to synthesize mysticism and guilt-consciousness in his later period, where he develops his "positive" philosophy. There are two main sections, with the first discussing several overtly theological concepts, such as sin, guilt, wrath, and grace, called "The Solution in Principle." It is in the second section, called "The Religio-Historical Solution," which recapitulates some of the material from the 1910 Dissertation, where Tillich re-visits Schelling's views on history and religion, including the role of Judaism. Similar to the treatment of Judaism in the 1910 Dissertation, here Judaism plays a transitional role from paganism, characterized by its mythological elements, to Christianity, characterized by its revelatory elements. Paganism is in "bondage to God" as "grievous sacrifices are made to assuage the consciousness of guilt,"³⁵ which for Schelling (and Tillich) is an instance of heightened contradiction that calls for a forward movement in the dialectic of the potencies. Whereas paganism is "under the sway of contradiction,"³⁶ Judaism is the first historical instance of an attempt to resolve this contradiction through its revelatory elements, and therefore paves the way for Christianity.

In the penultimate section of the 1912 Dissertation, titled "The Struggle of the Law against the Contradiction: Judaism," Tillich presents Schelling as comparing paganism and Judaism, with Judaism sharing some features of paganism, but also transcending it. Both paganism and Judaism experience the divine as wrathful, although paganism experiences nature as capricious and impossible to control through rituals and sacrifices. However, whereas paganism evolves in a purely naturalistic dialectic of the potencies, Judaism experiences a revelatory confrontation of the divine self against nature, through the call of Abraham and the giving of the law to Moses. Further, while paganism subsumes the individual in a mystical union with divinized nature, Judaism cultivates individual spirituality, in relation to a transcendent God and in response to the Mosaic Law, although that spirituality is unable to transcend guilt-consciousness. In footnote 51 to this section, Tillich says that paganism and Judaism have a common starting point in that each is bound to God through God's wrath. While paganism "loses itself" in this bond, Judaism resists this bond and "creates a real solution" through a personal relationship to God in obedience to Mosaic Law, but stalls at that stage, as "guilt-consciousness remains the characteristic form of Jewish piety."³⁷

At the same time, it is this personal relationship with God, through the law, that anticipates Christianity, and enables Tillich to pair Judaism with Christianity:

It might have been possible to treat Judaism together with paganism, inasmuch as in Judaism also the contradiction has not yet been overcome. On the other hand, it cannot be maintained that the contradiction prevails there. It was resisted, and in every act of obedience to the law it was overcome. But above all—and this is decisive for Schelling—in Judaism, God confronts the contradiction through revelation, i.e., personally, so that in this connection (which is the more important one) Judaism and Christianity belong together.³⁸

Tillich concludes the penultimate section of the 1912 Dissertation by anticipating the distinct revelatory character of Christianity:

In the fullness of time mysticism in its perfect form was crushed under the burden of the moral demand and of divine wrath in paganism, and guilt-consciousness was obscured by

the highest, namely, religious elevation of the principle of selfhood in Judaism, but just then, in the pagan mysteries and in the messianic expectations of the Jews, the true God was prophesied.³⁹

Part Two: Tillich's *The Socialist Decision: Judaism as the Spirit of Prophetic Expectation*

After the trauma and devastation of World War I, Tillich returned to Germany and tapped into a deep current of anti-monarchial and anti-capitalist sentiment, in reaction to the failures of Wilhelmine Germany. While in Frankfurt from 1929 to 1933, Tillich cultivated relationships with numerous intellectuals, some of whom were Jewish, who later became known as the "Frankfurt School." Through this interaction, Tillich became a proponent of "religious socialism," which avoids the reductionism and alienation found in capitalist societies, and the totalitarianism found in Communist societies and in German National Socialism. This idea was given its fullest expression in *The Socialist Decision*.

When one first looks at *The Socialist Decision*, it is not obvious why it would be banned by the Nazis. It is a highly theoretical work since it discusses concepts that are associated with Marxist political theory, such as the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, socialism, capitalism, and historical and dialectical materialism. Communism is denounced, Hitler is never named directly, and the term *Führer* appears five times, four times in a purely descriptive capacity. The most inflammatory comment is an oblique reference to Hitler within an analysis of the socialist view of human nature about halfway through the book. Tillich observes that socialism—as opposed to *religious* socialism, which is discussed below—is unduly influenced by the bourgeois view of human nature, which valorizes harmony and rationality, and fails to account for the limits of rationality, the inevitability of conflict, and the recurring economic crises brought on by the competitiveness of capitalism and wars caused by nationalism and imperialism. In its current German context, socialism has failed to raise up powerful and charismatic leaders, and at the same time has permitted "a personality with trivial power of being" to "become the symbol and *Führer* of revolutionary political romanticism."⁴⁰ This, of course, refers to Hitler and German National Socialism. Nevertheless, this book, due to

its incisive criticisms of German National Socialism just as Hitler came to power, was immediately banned, and it was consigned to the flames in the Frankfurt book burnings of May, 1933.⁴¹ However, Tillich's unwillingness to retract it caused an irreconcilable rift between him and the German government. Tillich was quite proud of this work, and his Jewish friend Adolf Löwe remarked that it was Tillich's "most Jewish book."⁴²

As with all of Tillich's works, he begins with a statement of principles and presuppositions, and here he states that all political thought and action rests on the duality of human nature and the two roots of political thought. Human nature, in all times and places, is comprised of "being" and "consciousness." Being refers to the bodily aspect of human existence, which is subject to the cycle of birth, growth and development, and death, and is something humankind shares with all living beings. On the other hand, consciousness is distinctive to human beings, and refers to their individual and collective reflective capacity, and their ability to ascribe meaning to being, which is the cycle of birth, growth and development, and death. This anthropological duality is not unique to Tillich, but is common within 20th century Continental philosophy and has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy.

There are two roots of political thought. The first is the "origin" and the second is the "demand." All societies seek to understand their origin, as their beliefs, practices, and institutions answer the question, "Whence?" (*Woher?*), which Tillich refers to as the "myth of origin."⁴³ This universal phenomenon, also described by Tillich as the "consciousness" of a society, yields a wide variety of mythological expressions in human history and across cultures, and is reminiscent of Tillich's dissertations on Schelling. While the content of these mythological expressions varies, they all have in common the attempt to understand the natural cycle of birth, growth and development, and death. Tillich is critical of a culture when it fails to transcend this natural cycle, beyond what "is," and remains oriented to the myth of origin.⁴⁴ Tillich concludes, with emphasis, "*The consciousness oriented to the myth of origin is the root of all conservative and romantic thought in politics.*"⁴⁵ With its emphasis on tradition—"soil" (territory) and "blood" (racial purity)—German National Socialism is the boldest and most ominous expression of political romanticism, which tries to *re-*

store the broken myth of origin. This is how the duality of human nature takes the first step towards political thought, but fails to look beyond itself.

The first root of political thought, arises if a society transcends the cycle of being and becoming, and attempts to answer not simply “what *is*?”, but “what *ought* to be?” (“Whither?” or *Wozu?*).⁴⁶ This “ought” does not occur as a continuation or derivation from what “is,” but is “experienced” as an “unconditional demand” that “confronts” humanity,⁴⁷ although Tillich does not immediately tell us the source of this “demand.” When this occurs, the myth of origin, which is equated with the realm of necessity, is “broken,” and human freedom enters human history, indeed, initiating human history. Regarding the other side of the political spectrum, Tillich concludes, again with emphasis: “*The breaking of the myth of origin by the unconditional demand is the root of liberal, democratic and socialist thought in politics.*”⁴⁸

To respond to the unconditional demand with new cultural beliefs, practices, and institutions is not by itself an exercise in true political thought or activity. Tillich makes a distinction between the “actual origin” and the “true origin.” Tillich assumes that the “actual origin” of any culture or society finds its *true* fulfillment in response to the unconditional demand of answering “what ought to be?” through an awareness of its “true origin.” However, some societies never become aware of their true origin and therefore succumb to the “ambiguity of the origin.” Those societies that become aware of their true origin recognize that the unconditional demand must be concretely expressed in an “I–Thou” relationship, which recognizes the equal dignity between the “I” and the “Thou.”⁴⁹ This recognition of equal dignity is the basis of justice. Echoing the distinction between the actual origin and true origin is another distinction between “mere being” and “true being,” which elaborates on the aforementioned discussion of being and consciousness, the duality of human nature (*supra*). Mere being is “impotent”⁵⁰ since it is associated with the failure to transcend the limitations of the myth of origin and the ambiguity of the actual origin. On the other hand, true being has “power,” insofar as it is associated with the breaking of the myth of origin through human freedom, and the recognition of the true origin by embracing the equal dignity of persons. In fact, Tillich con-

cludes, with emphasis, “*Justice is the power of true being.*”⁵¹

To complete Tillich’s theoretical framework requires an introduction of two additional terms, “principle” and the “act of understanding.” Looking to Tillich’s use of Schelling’s potencies—and here in *The Socialist Decision*—there is a pervasive use of terms that reflect change, teleology, and historical specificity. For Tillich, a principle is something used to summarize the characteristics of a political group, acknowledging its historically specific and teleological features, and the impossibility of abstracting its “essence.”⁵² A principle must not be confused with an idea or a universal concept: “A principle is the real power that supports a historical phenomenon giving it the possibility to actualize itself anew and yet in continuity with the past.”⁵³ For example, the principle of socialism is not a socialist idea, but “the proletarian situation interpreted in terms of its dynamics,” referring to the complex set of historical, sociological, and political realities within which the proletarian situation exists.⁵⁴

Along the same lines, since a principle is not a purely intellectual construct but reflects historical reality, the act of understanding is not a purely intellectual exercise, but also involves an element of decision. As he says, “Thus socialism also is to be understood only in terms of a socialist principle that is gained only by a socialist decision, and which is the standpoint both for interpreting and for judging socialist reality.”⁵⁵

Now that Tillich’s theoretical framework has been established, Judaism fits into the overall argument of the book in two ways, directly and indirectly. First, in Part One, which is an analysis of the principle of political romanticism and its contradiction,⁵⁶ Judaism appears as the first historical phenomenon to break with the myth of origin as described above. Second, in Parts Two and Three, respectively on the inner conflict of socialism and the resolution of its inner conflict in religious socialism, certain features of Judaism would enable the contradiction of political romanticism to be resolved.

Part One begins with a three part analysis of the presuppositions of political romanticism. The first part discusses the myth of origin, the second part discusses how Judaism broke with the myth of origin; the third part discusses how the Enlightenment also broke with the myth of origin but was then followed by a reaction in Romanticism.

While these three parts appear at first to be a historical discussion, they speak to Tillich's immediate context as much or more than to the past. I will focus on the first two parts.

In the first part titled "Mythical Powers of Origin," Tillich uses the insights of myth research, depth psychology, sociology, and ontology to establish how all societies form their respective myths of origin. This is where he describes how a society understands its dependence on soil, blood (race), and a social group, and what kind of elites or priests it creates to preserve its traditions. Since political romanticism, in response to a modernity that has "broken" the myth of origin, tries to *restore* the broken myth of origin (the cycle of birth, growth and development, and death), the concept of time remains cyclical. Time does not achieve its true nature, and remains under the domination of space, for "the power of time lies in its irreversible forward motion towards the new, towards the 'Whither.'"⁵⁷ The dominance of space is directly related to the mythological attachment to territory, or "soil," a reference to the National Socialist preoccupation with territorial expansion. Here Tillich's view of the relationship between time and space is very important for his understanding of Judaism, and this will re-emerge later in the *Judenfrage* lectures.

The second part of Part One is titled "The Break with the Myth of Origin in Judaism." Judaism here is not any particular historical form, such as under the Davidic kingship, Second Temple Judaism, or Rabbinic Judaism, but rather the "spirit of Judaism," or "Jewish prophetism." Judaism is depicted as a permanent, prophetic critique against *any* attempt, Jewish, Christian, or otherwise, to revive bondage to the myth of origin. Jewish prophetism succeeded in conquering the myth of origin through the law and the prophets, by creating a "powerful social myth of origin."⁵⁸ For example, God used the Babylonian exile to free the chosen people from the bondage to land, and space. "God is free from the soil, the sacred land, not because he has conquered foreign lands, but precisely because he has led foreign conquerors into his own land in order to punish the 'people of his inheritance' and to subject them to an unconditional demand."⁵⁹ This freedom from bondage to the promised land also freed the Jews from the bondage to the monarchy, the priestly cult, and the temptation to ethnic triumphalism, a pre-modern version of racism. The latter is proscribed by the

command to show hospitality to the stranger: "The claim to belonging to the people avails nothing in face of the unconditional demand, on account of which the alien can be held in equal, indeed, higher esteem."⁶⁰

The most important implication of breaking of the myth of origin by Jewish prophetism is the elevation of time over space. Space is inextricably tied to the cycle of birth, growth and development, and death, and cannot transcend "the here and now," which maintains severe limitations for how a society grounds its beliefs, practices, and institutions for ethical purposes. Time, however, when it is freed from the bondage to space, enables the possibility of something truly "new" to be realized in the future, which reflects the idea of prophetic expectation:

The expectation of a 'new heaven and a new earth' signifies the expectation of a reality that is not subject to the structure of being, that cannot be grasped ontologically... The new being...cannot be derived from the original state. It goes beyond the origin into a second phase...the phase of *the new in history*.⁶¹

However, according to Tillich, the goal of religious socialism is not to *eliminate* the origin, but, in good dialectical fashion, rather to prophetically *transform* it.⁶² The myth of origin has "power," and to eliminate it is to succumb to the problems of modernity, which was identified by the dimension of political romanticism in Nazism. Tillich says that Judaism has been guilty of this at times:

Now it is the tragedy of Judaism that its historical fate not only broke the hegemony of the powers of origin, but also frequently dissolved them altogether, insofar as no new ties to the soil were created in their place (though this did come to pass in east-European Judaism). This negative element, the critical dissolution of the myth of origin instead of its prophetic transformation, gives to anti-Semitism and political romanticism an apparent justification for resisting this tendency.⁶³

In addition, Tillich says that "the spirit of Judaism" is the necessary and eternal enemy of political romanticism, and that anti-Semitism is an essential element in political romanticism.⁶⁴ Tillich is clearly presenting these principles or historical manifestations that have timeless features and inner teleological drives as competing in a dialectical fashion. Tillich concludes this section on Judaism by arguing that only a decisive affirmation of

the prophetic critique of all time-bound world-views can avoid the pagan elements that have survived in Christianity (which are Christian nationalism and magical powers attributed to the priesthood⁶⁵), and the modernist, or “negatively critical” element in Judaism. A withdrawal of Judaism (a “*secessio judaica*”) would usher in a relapse into barbarism.⁶⁶

The prior discussion summarizes Tillich’s most direct discussion of Judaism and how it fits into his historical dialectic. The aforementioned concepts of “demand,” “expectation,” and “prophetism” recur numerous times in the remainder of the book and due to the limits of space, I will confine the remaining discussion to the most important instance, in the second section of Part Three, “The Elements of the Socialist Principle.” In this section, Tillich shows that the spirit of Judaism, or Jewish prophetism, is a fundamental part of the socialist principle.

It will be helpful first to recall the above definition of a principle as “the real power that supports a historical phenomenon, giving it the possibility to actualize itself anew and yet in continuity with the past.”⁶⁷ Therefore, a principle includes the historical origin of a phenomenon, its inner driving force, and its teleology or purpose. For Tillich, socialism not only has three dimensions, it has its religious analogue in Judaism. As a dynamic principle, socialism is grounded in the interaction of: (i) the power of the origin, (ii) a rejection of the bourgeois belief in harmony, and (iii) the breaking of the bond of origin by an unconditional demand.⁶⁸ Expanding on what he said earlier about expectation as the possibility of something truly new (see *supra*), Tillich here says that these three elements taken together constitute not just the concept of expectation, but the “symbol of expectation”: “*Socialism lifts up the symbol of expectation against the myth of origin and against the belief in harmony. It has elements of both, but it transcends both.* Our discussion of the socialist principle and the power it contains, therefore, will rely on the symbol of expectation.”⁶⁹ Tillich further argues that the combination of the three elements of the socialist principle into the symbol of expectation results in a direct relationship with the prophetic tradition, by which he means each element of socialism corresponds to one of three elements of the prophetic tradition:

For in the prophets...these three elements are likewise united: the bond of origin, expressed

in the form of patriarchal religion; the breaking of the bond of origin by the unconditional demand; and the fulfillment of the origin not in a present interpreted in terms of harmony, but in a promised future. This means that *the socialist principle, so far as substance is concerned, is prophetic.*⁷⁰

At the end of the book, Tillich, who was no utopian, had great faith in the socialist principle from a theoretical standpoint, but was unsure how things would play out in Europe. In fact, the following remarks proved quite prescient, from 1932:

The socialist principle is able to solve the antinomies of socialism. It is superior not only to the bourgeois principle, but to the romantic principle as well. It alone has the power to create a future for Western civilization... The unqualified superiority of the socialist principle is, of course, no guarantee of victory of the socialist movement. There is also, as Marx saw, another possibility: chaos. If in the encounter between the bourgeoisie and political romanticism, the bourgeois principle should once again gain a complete victory, the increasingly severe crises would make chaos virtually inevitable. If, on the other hand, political romanticism and, with it, militant nationalism proves victorious, a self-annihilating struggle of the European peoples is inevitable. *The salvation of European society from a return to barbarism lies in the hands of socialism.*⁷¹

Part Three: Tillich’s *Judenfrage* Lectures—Judaism as the Mirror Image of the Frightened German Personality

In March of 1952, less than ten years after the end of World War II and the full revelation of the horrors of the Holocaust, the directors of the Deutsche Hochschule für Politik (the *Hochschule*) invited Tillich to give a series of lectures with the suggested topic, “The Jewish question—a Christian and a German problem.”⁷² The occasion for these lectures is remarkable. The directors were very concerned that their students did not fully appreciate the importance of the Holocaust by trivializing it through ignorance and denial, as it was not *their* problem.⁷³ Two of the directors of the *Hochschule* wrote to Tillich stating why he thought Tillich would be the best person to address this topic:

We do not know many people who would be able to do this thoroughly enough; in an case, you would be able to, and you would surely do us in Berlin in general and our students in particular a very great favor. I [Fraenkel] know from our common work in New York, how intensively you have dealt for years not only with the problem as an ethical-philosophical problem but as a current political problem....⁷⁴

These lectures, given eight years after the end of World War II, represent an early attempt by a Christian theologian to address the traumatic events of the Holocaust. More specifically for Tillich, they represent a culminating expression of his understanding of being a German Christian responding to the Holocaust. As Tillich's understanding of Christianity changed, first, after World War I, and then again, after the Holocaust, the role of Judaism also changed. Prior to World War I, Judaism was an abstraction that possessed certain characteristics that should be expressed in a normative view of Christianity, such as freedom from fear and bondage to a legalistic view of religion. After World War I, Tillich looked to religious socialism in the hope that something new and better could emerge from the devastation and chaos of the war. After the additional trauma of World War II and the Holocaust, Tillich was again driven to look elsewhere, beyond political structures, for answers, this time deeper into the human person, into the "psyche." His affinity for psychoanalysis is well documented, although he was never formally trained in that discipline.⁷⁵ In the *Judenfrage* lectures, he applies psychology and sociology to Christian theology,⁷⁶ and arrives at a diagnosis for the ills of German Christianity that failed to stop the Holocaust. These aspects are present in the entire series, but due to space limitations, I will focus on the second lecture, after summarizing the introduction and the first and third lecture.

The *Judenfrage* lectures are really comprised of five parts, an introduction and four lectures, with the final lecture serving as an application of the concepts presented in the prior material.⁷⁷ In the introduction, Tillich expresses the personal importance of this topic, which he has been pondering for decades, that he has had extensive discussions with Jews over the years, and that it has been his destiny to participate in the questions considered in the lectures.⁷⁸ He proceeds to outline five types of guilt for the Holocaust, which, when taken together, implicate *all* Germans, even Til-

lich. Without proper acknowledgment of guilt and corresponding levels of responsibility, there can be no justice and reconciliation.⁷⁹

The first lecture, titled "Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism," seems to reflect two unpublished lectures written during World War II,⁸⁰ insofar as it traces the historical development of theological anti-Judaism from the New Testament into the 20th century. It argues that the present period is not unlike late antiquity, in which Christianity must struggle to maintain its integrity in the face of powerful pagan and nationalistic forces. In addition, Tillich underscores the distinction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, as the former originated in the late 19th century through "naturalistic race theoreticians," and the latter, which is encapsulated in the "deicide" charge, that all Jews are responsible for the death of Christ. The Christ-killer myth has been present in all periods of church history, and represents "the continuing tragic guilt of the church."⁸¹ Tillich concludes this lecture by echoing *The Socialist Decision* on the spirit of prophetic Judaism, and the importance of the Old Testament. "In the decision against National Socialism the church experiences again what it had experienced in the decision against Gnosticism in the third century: that the spirit of prophetic Judaism is the spirit alone which can guard the church from sinking back into a national religion, that is, to paganism."⁸²

The third lecture does not have a title, but concerns the Jewish question as a religious and theological problem. For Tillich, religion is fundamentally an expression of the experience of "the Holy,"⁸³ something that "concerns us unconditionally," something that is "the ground and meaning of our Being," something that has no spatial or temporal limits, and something that we find irresistible, "from which we are not able to turn away."⁸⁴ Echoing Schelling's dialectic of the potencies (see *supra*), the Holy has two polar dimensions that are in perpetual struggle—the Priestly "Is" and the Prophetic "Ought."⁸⁵ Tillich uses this framework to explain the emergence of monotheism from polytheism, as the movement from "space" to "time," and how the history of Western Christianity, including Roman Catholicism (the priestly dimension—"Catholic substance"⁸⁶), Protestantism (the prophetic dimension—the "Protestant principle"⁸⁷) relates to Judaism. This lecture contains Tillich's most developed understanding of Judaism as "the people of time," which was first

expressed in *The Socialist Decision*, although this is five years after the creation of the State of Israel.⁸⁸ I want to underscore that, for Tillich, the historical manifestation of a religion must be distinguished from its normative expression. Therefore, Judaism, despite its uniquely prophetic dimension, can be corrupted if it falls into an idolatrous, nationalistic form. The critique of space by time is present in both Judaism and Christianity; indeed, the struggle between Judaism and Christianity is analogous to the struggle within Judaism and within Christianity.⁸⁹ Tillich concludes this lecture by asserting that “the function of Judaism in the foreseeable future is...to keep awake the spirit of prophetism, against itself, against national groups, and against the Christian churches when they fall into bondage to space. The Jews are and must remain the *people of time*.”⁹⁰ In this lecture, we see Tillich’s most mature expression of the “dialectic of the Holy,”⁹¹ as he draws upon Schelling’s dialectic of the potencies, the history of religions, Rudolf Otto’s idea of the Holy, and his own understanding, in cumulative fashion, of Jewish Prophetism, Catholic Substance, and Protestant Principle. While this framework becomes more elaborate over time, it is still traceable back to Schelling’s dialectic of the potencies.

However, in the second lecture Tillich adds a qualitatively new dimension to his analysis, a social-psychological aspect. Tillich was surprised to learn that, even after the Holocaust, there remained among German Jewish émigrés a deep longing for the Germany before the Nazis came to power; in contrast, Tillich would have expected the opposite. He was compelled to conclude: “It is astonishing how quickly after Emancipation⁹² Jews lent to German culture their creative powers and how there occurred, on the basis of a deep affinity, a fruitful reciprocal permeation. It is difficult to find an explanation for this without referring to similarities in the spiritual structure of both cultures.”⁹³ As a result, Tillich devotes most of the lecture responding to the question, “Are there structural analogies between the Jewish and German character?”⁹⁴ He concludes that there are two, although important differences as well as similarities exist. Through yet another type of dialectical analysis, Tillich tries to demonstrate that the structural similarities of the German and Jewish people, which are what might be called “corporate personalities,” have caused them to be in a peculiar relationship of attraction and repulsion. Tillich tries to

demonstrate that both Germans and Jews are affected by, or exhibit, these social-psychological features, to an equal degree, if not in an identical manner. Since my goal is to summarize, I do not want to stop at every questionable turn of the argument. However, at times it seems that the terms of the discussion are shaped more by what Tillich sees as deficiencies in the German corporate personality than what can be empirically supported by examining Judaism.

The first structural analogy is the metaphysical problem of space.⁹⁵ Both the Jews and the German people have experienced a prophetic-reform movement in their history—the Jews with the prophets culminating with the Babylonian exile, and Germany with the Protestant Reformation. They are similar insofar as both events ended periods of idolatrous nationalism, but for Germany, it created a “territorial insecurity,” that tried to remedy itself through nationalist territorial expansion. The opposite thing happened for the Jews, for since the Exile they have become and have remained the “people of time.” Despite the somewhat peculiar historiography Tillich displays here, the operative word for Germany is “insecurity,” as we will see in the second analogy.

The second structural analogy is the “psychic split” between self-hate and self-aggrandizement (“over self-valuation”).⁹⁶ Tillich says that Germans are ruthlessly critical of themselves and of their own people, well beyond a healthy, self-correcting criticism, but they manifest a kind that produces despair. As for Jews, Tillich says that the Judaism of his time possessed a strong strain of anti-Semitism, exemplified in Karl Marx’s essay, “On the Jewish Question,” as well as a stock feature of Jewish jokes (!), presumably because of their self-deprecating character. A corollary phenomenon to self-aggrandizement is the sense of being set apart, a feeling of “vocation consciousness.”⁹⁷ Whereas in the Middle Ages, the Germanic peoples believed themselves to be the national center of a unified Christianity, this had been lost in the modern period, creating a vacuum that tried to be filled by Hitler’s “absurdities of racial vocation-consciousness.” For Jews, this vocation-consciousness is religious, and is open to nationalistic distortion if the religious roots fail to maintain a self-critical, divine dimension that transcends the culture itself. Another pitfall would be for Jews to lose their distinctiveness by imitating the culture around them.

The cumulative effect of the territorial insecurity from the metaphysical problem of space, and from the psychic split between self-hate and self-aggrandizement, is despair, “the expression of an insurmountable split.”⁹⁸ Due to their insecurity, Germans indulge their “secret wish...to negate themselves as Germans,” while Jews, in expressing their “lack of self-affirmation,” adapt to any situation.⁹⁹ Tillich extends this reasoning to the phenomenon of German anxiety over “the alien” and the phenomenon of anti-Semitism. Germans are attracted to the external alien, but threatened by the internal alien, in this case the Jews:

We have seen that the Germans like that which is alien, in part because they want to get rid of themselves and lose themselves in the alien. But the alien which they have among them they cannot tolerate because it wrenches them from the certainty of their self-affirmation and because this self-affirmation is so weak that it cannot bring anything alien into itself. From this comes a feeling of anxiety... Perhaps one can say: for the German self-consciousness, the Jew is too close to be considered a welcome alien and not close enough to be experienced as one of their own.¹⁰⁰

Anti-Semitism, as a social psychological phenomenon, is an expression of the German corporate personality’s self-loathing. Tillich uses the image of the German people’s being frightened by looking in the mirror:

...Antisemitism creates in ideality and reality that against which it fights. Indeed, it must create it, since it cannot find it in reality. The antisemite...is terrified by the mirror which the Jew holds before him. There are moments—when we look at ourselves in the mirror—in which we have a dislike, indeed a loathing, of ourselves. The mirror tells what we are for others who look at us. In many remarks of the Jewish bearers of culture there is something which for Germans is a mirror. The German knows that the mirror says the truth, but cannot bear the image, and therefore reacts against those who hold it before him.¹⁰¹

Tillich concludes this lecture by stating that the particular kind of mirror that Judaism holds up to the German people is the prophetic tradition,¹⁰² which leads into the theological discussion in the third lecture described above.

In the foregoing, I have tried to illustrate how Tillich’s understanding of Judaism evolved over time, was shaped milestones of 20th century European history, and was formed by fundamental aspects of Tillich’s intellectual framework. While not all of the logical moves that he makes are easily understood, or even empirically demonstrable, it is clear that the various dialectical structures that he employs are closely related to how Judaism functions in his theological scheme. The form and the content are closely related. For Tillich, how he understands Judaism is a fundamental component of his understanding of Christian theology. As an exercise in intellectual history, this has been a fruitful analysis.

Afterword: Does Tillich Provide a Basis for Interreligious Understanding?

At the invitation of the Israeli government, Tillich and his wife Hannah visited Israel for two weeks during October of 1963.¹⁰³ During the first week of the trip, Paul and Hannah were invited to an orthodox Hasidic synagogue in northern Israel, to observe and participate in the celebration of the giving of the Law to Moses, known as *Simhat Torah*.¹⁰⁴ Both Hannah and Paul recorded their impressions, with Hannah’s being much more effusive, with imagery from the Book of Daniel, and visualizations of suffering Holocaust victims, and a description of the fervent and ecstatic dance that the participants engaged in, including Tillich!: “We returned exhausted to our motel.”¹⁰⁵ While Paul’s comments are somewhat more restrained, they are still extremely revealing:

So we attended the *Jom Hatorah*, the day on which the joy about the law is being expressed with music and dance, with Torah rolls being carried around and danced around, often in great ecstasy. This experience has shown me rather impressively that for the believing Jew, the law has not the character it had for Paul and Luther: commanding, burdening, threatening, punishing. For him, it is a gift, the great gift in which he glories and which he enjoys.¹⁰⁶

As noted above, Tillich’s understanding of Judaism is highly theoretical, and shaped by his dialectical method, and/or shaped by a particular aspect of Christianity that he is analyzing. Tillich had extensive contact with Jews, although many of them were secular Jews, such as members of the Frankfurt School. From the standpoint of interre-

ligious understanding, what Tillich and some other Christian theologians of his generation lacked, was a first hand experience of religious customs and practices of other faiths, and the willingness to incorporate this into their own conceptual framework. In this instance, Tillich spent many hours discussing theology with Jews, about the nature of faith, and whether the Messiah had come. As for faith, Tillich's understanding of Jewish law remained beholden to the Western Christian tradition, Augustine's reading of Paul, and propelled forward by Luther. Under this framework, the Law of Moses was a source of anxiety that highlighted the need for an alternative type of relationship to God, since the Law was deficient. Very late in life, Tillich experienced for the first time how the Law could be, for Jews, good in and of itself, as opposed to a means to a higher end. It is outside the scope of this essay to explore this idea further, but it is an open question as to whether Tillich's intellectual framework is sufficiently flexible enough to accommodate Jews as Jews, with Jews expressing their faith in their own terms, not as dictated by Christians.

¹ *The Manchester Guardian Weekly* (UK), May 19, 1993. Gabrielle Simon Edgcomb, *From Swastika to Jim Crow: Refugee Scholars at Black Colleges* (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1993), 6 – 16.

² Wilhelm and Marion Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought*. 2 Volumes. (London: Collins, 1977), 132 - 133. Hereafter, Pauck, Pauck, *Tillich*.

³ This incident is recounted in the feature article "A Theology for Protestants," *Time*, March 16, 1959, p. 48.

⁴ Paul Tillich. *The Socialist Decision* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977). Translated by Franklin Sherman from the German *Die sozialistische Entscheidung*, as published in Paul Tillich, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2, *Frühe Schriften zum Religiösen Sozialismus* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlag, 1962). The original German edition was published by Alfred Protte, Potsdam, 1933. Cited hereafter as, Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*.

⁵ Related by John R. Stumme, in the Introduction to Tillich's *The Socialist Decision* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), xxiv.

⁶ For a brief summary of Tillich's critique of National Socialism, see *Ten Theses*, cited in Mark Kline Taylor, *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries* (London: Collins, 1987), 116-118. For a sampling of Tillich's radio broadcasts to the people of Germany

during World War II, see Ronald H. Stone and Matthew Lon Weaver, editors, *Against the Third Reich: Paul Tillich's Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany*, transl. Matthew Lon Weaver (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). For a more detailed philosophical critique employing Tillich's *The Socialist Decision*, see Franz G.M. Feige, *The Varieties of Protestantism in Nazi Germany: Five Theopolitical Positions*. Toronto Studies in Theology, Volume 50 (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 395-443.

⁷ For Tillich's understanding of the relationship between ontology and the Bible, see *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), referred to hereafter as BRSUR. For a rare and penetrating analysis of Tillich's hermeneutical principles, see John Charles Cooper, *The "Spiritual Presence" in the Theology of Paul Tillich: Tillich's Use of St. Paul* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997).

⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The *Adversus Judaeos* Tradition in the Church Fathers: The Exegesis of Christian Anti-Judaism," in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 174-189. Referred to hereafter as Ruether, *Adversus Judaeos*. This appears to be a condensed form of chapter 3, "The Negation of the Jews in the Church Fathers," of Ruether's earlier book *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Minneapolis: The Seabury Press, 1974), 117-182.

⁹ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 166.

¹⁰ Ruether, *Adversus Judaeos*, 188.

¹¹ However, in Tillich's lectures on the history of Christian thought, at the beginning of a discussion of Schelling's critique of Hegel, he relates how originally obtained Schelling's works: "I recall the unforgettable moment when by chance I came into possession of the very rare first edition of the collected works of Schelling in a bookstore on my way to the University of Berlin. I had no money, but I bought it anyway, and this spending of nonexistent money was probably more important than all the other nonexistent or sometimes existing money that I have spent. For what I learned from Schelling became determinative of my own philosophical development." *A History of Christian Thought: From its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl Braaten (New York: Simon and Schuster Touchstone, 1967 – 1968), 438. Hereafter, Tillich, *History of Christian Thought*.

¹² Originally, *Die Judenfrage, ein christliches und ein deutsches Problem: viel Vorträge, gehalten an der Deutschen Hochschule für Politik*, Schriftenreihe der Deutschen Hochschule für Politik Berlin (Berlin: Gebr. Weiss, 1953). Subsequently, “*Die Judengfrage: Ein Deutsches und ein Christliches Problem*,” *Gesammelte Werke*, III, 128-170. These were subsequently translated into English by Glenn David Earley, as an appendix to his doctoral dissertation: *An Everlasting Conversation: Judaism in the Life and Thought of Paul Tillich* (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1983), 418 – 491. Hereafter, Earley Dissertation, “and „*Judenfrage* lectures.“ All of my references are to Earley’s English translation.

¹³ *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1966), 46 - 47. Hereafter, Tillich, *Boundary*.

¹⁴ Tillich, *Boundary*, 47. Tillich’s biographers, Wilhelm and Marion Pauck, report that Tillich purchased the set of Schelling’s works impulsively, wanting to know more about the history of philosophy, and that his romance with Schelling determined his entire philosophical point of view. Pauck, Pauck, *Tillich*, 16. Also, in Tillich’s lectures on the history of Christian thought, at the beginning of a discussion of Schelling’s critique of Hegel, he relates how originally obtained Schelling’s works: “I recall the unforgettable moment when by chance I came into possession of the very rare first edition of the collected works of Schelling in a bookstore on my way to the University of Berlin. I had no money, but I bought it anyway, and this spending of nonexistent money was probably more important than all the other nonexistent or sometimes existing money that I have spent. For what I learned from Schelling became determinative of my own philosophical development.” *A History of Christian Thought: From its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl Braaten. (New York: Simon and Schuster Touchstone, 1967 – 1968), 438. Hereafter, Tillich, *History of Christian Thought*.

¹⁵ Pauck, Pauck, *Tillich*, 236.

¹⁶ Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Victor David Nuovo. (Lewisburg, PA: The University of Bucknell Press and Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1974). Hereafter, Tillich, 1910 Dissertation.

¹⁷ Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Victor David Nuovo. (Lewisburg, PA: The University of Bucknell Press and Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1974). Hereafter, Tillich, 1912 Dissertation. While it appears that the Tillich wrote the 1910

Dissertation before the 1912 Dissertation, the Pauck’s say that Tillich began the 1912 Dissertation as early as 1908 in Lichtenrade, a rural town near Berlin that possessed great natural beauty, helping him appreciate Schelling’s nature mysticism, and had completed it by 1910, but he did not receive the degree in that year.

¹⁸ Tillich, 1910 Dissertation, 39–41.

¹⁹ The 1910 Dissertation, 40–41. “...emerging from the philosophy of religion influenced by Kant, an idealistic system of the history of religion has appeared in both the theological and philosophical camps....Idealism is not only a scientific movement, it is above all a religious movement. Theologians or philosophers may reject joining theology and philosophy in a unified and systematic world view. Nevertheless, they cannot avoid considering the Idealist Movement from the standpoint of the history of religion as an expression of Christian religious life. Idealism itself makes this claim, and therefore must be appreciated as such, at least in a purely historical sense. The religious self-consciousness of Idealism is characteristically expressed in Schelling’s concept of “philosophical religion.”

²⁰ Tillich, 1910 Dissertation, 50–54.

²¹ Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 441.

²² In the opening paragraph to his discussion of revelation in the 1910 Dissertation, Tillich elaborates on this: “Throughout the world-historical process the second potency is active: the elevation of the first potency is the starting point of the process, the realization of the third potency is the goal, but activity belongs only to the second. Just as it is necessary to distinguish in the concept of God between nature in God and the divine Self, so it is also necessary to distinguish between logos as cosmic potency and logos as personality within God. To be sure, at the conclusion of the original natural process both aspects of the logos were in perfect harmony, for God was realized in the unity of the potencies. But on account of the Fall and the separation of the potencies, nature has come to exist outside God, and in this externality the second potency has also come to dwell. At the same time, the second potency pursues God-estranged being in order to unite with it and to lead it back to God.” Tillich, 1910 Dissertation, 102.

²³ “However the mythological process is not confined to the primary bearers of its development. With every advance there is a common vibration in the entire consciousness of mankind, whose traces can be found everywhere among races that either represent a higher stage of the mythological process or among those who

do not participate in the principal development of history.” Tillich, 1910 Dissertation, 79.

²⁴ Tillich, 1910 Dissertation, 102.

²⁵ Tillich, 1910 Dissertation, 103–106.

²⁶ Tillich, 1910 Dissertation, 106.

²⁷ Tillich, 1910 Dissertation, 105.

²⁸ Tillich, 1910 Dissertation, 106.

²⁹ Tillich, 1910 Dissertation, 107.

³⁰ Tillich, 1910 Dissertation, 135.

³¹ Tillich, 1912 Dissertation, 27.

³² Wilhelm and Marion Pauck write of Tillich when he was a student at Tübingen, “Student gossip spread the rumor that he had read Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* while in the *Gymnasium*.” Pauck, Pauck, *Tillich*, 18.

³³ Tillich uses this term repeatedly in his discussion “Kant, Moral Religion and Radical Evil,” *History of Christian Thought*, 362, 363, 365, 366.

³⁴ Tillich, 1912 Dissertation, 82 – 83.

³⁵ Tillich, 1912 Dissertation, 118 – 119.

³⁶ Tillich, 1912 Dissertation, 118.

³⁷ Tillich, 1912 Dissertation, note 51, 142 – 143.

³⁸ Tillich, 1912 Dissertation, note 50, 142.

³⁹ Tillich, 1912 Dissertation, 124.

⁴⁰ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 74.

⁴¹ Pauck, Pauck, *Tillich*, 132.

⁴² May 24, 1972 interview with Adolf Löwe. Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, editor’s introduction, xxv.

⁴³ Tillich elaborates, “Every myth is a myth of origin, that is, an answer to the question about the “Whence” of existence and an expression of dependence on the origin and on its power.” Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 3-4.

⁴⁴ In the subsequent discussion of political romanticism, Tillich elaborates, “The origin embodies the law of *cyclical motion*: whatever proceeds from it must return to it. Wherever the origin is in control, nothing new can happen.” *The Socialist Decision*, 16.

⁴⁵ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 4.

⁴⁶ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 4.

⁴⁷ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 4.

⁴⁸ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 5.

⁴⁹ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 5-6.

⁵⁰ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 6.

⁵¹ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 6.

⁵² Tillich elaborates, “The logic of essence is inadequate in the face of historical realities. The ‘essence of a historical phenomenon’ is an empty abstraction from which the living power of history has been expelled. Nevertheless, we cannot dispense with summarizing characterizations when we are dealing with a

coherent movement. It is not enough to refer to historical continuity, since some selection must be made out of the infinite abundance of continuously linked events. Therefore, we must seek another method of historical characterization.” *The Socialist Decision*, 9.

⁵³ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 10.

⁵⁴ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 10.

⁵⁵ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 10.

⁵⁶ Tillich distinguishes between a “contradiction,” which is manifest in political romanticism, and an “inner conflict,” or an antinomy, which is manifest in socialism. In a contradiction, there is a subjective, accidental, arbitrary element in that which contradicts itself, and they require the surrender of that which is contradictory, to decide in terms of either/or. An antinomy or inner conflict cannot be removed by removing one alternative in the conflict, as the conflict inheres within the thing itself. An antinomy can only be resolved by changing the structure of the thing itself. Therefore, the inner conflict of socialism can only be resolved by socialism arriving at a new form of itself. *The Socialist Decision*, 66.

⁵⁷ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 17.

⁵⁸ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 20.

⁵⁹ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 20.

⁶⁰ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 20.

⁶¹ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 20.

⁶² Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 21.

⁶³ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 22.

⁶⁴ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 22.

⁶⁵ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 21.

⁶⁶ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 22–23.

⁶⁷ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 10, also 18–19 above.

⁶⁸ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 100–101.

⁶⁹ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 101.

⁷⁰ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 101.

⁷¹ Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 160–161.

⁷² Earley Dissertation, 84.

⁷³ Earley Dissertation, 84–85.

⁷⁴ March 10, 1952 letter from Herr Fraenkel and Otto Heinrich von der Gablentz to Paul Tillich. Letter-archive, Renate Albrecht, Duren, Germany. Earley Dissertation, note 171, 121.

⁷⁵ A recent discussion of the role of psychology in Tillich’s soteriology is Chapter 3 titled “Salvation as Healing: Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, and Soteriology in Tillich,” Courtney Wilder, “Existentialism and Exegesis: Being and the Bible in Bultmann and Tillich” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 2008), 115 – 171.

⁷⁶ Tillich describes the second lecture as mainly a sociological and social-psychological analysis. *Judenfrage* lectures, 455. This would resonate with Gavin Langmuir, who in his essay, "Majority History and Postbiblical Jews," observes that few words in Western society from the Middle Ages to the present have been able to elicit an emotional response at most levels of society than the word "Jew." After surveying the failure of an impressive list of "majority" (i.e. non-Jewish) historians to explore historically specific forms of Judaism in their respective periods of expertise, Langmuir concludes that historical research needs to be informed by the social sciences, and that the study of anti-Semitism must appropriate the insights of social psychology, and he wagers that the history of the Jews will be better served as the influence of the social sciences on history increases. Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996, 22-41.

⁷⁷ The *Judenfrage* lectures have been analyzed in detail by their translator, Glenn David Early, in his article, "Paul Tillich and Judaism: An Analysis of 'The Jewish Question – A Christian and a German Problem,'" in *Theonomy and Autonomy*, ed. John J. Carey (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1984), 213–237.

⁷⁸ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 420 – 421. The full quote is illustrative: "It has been my destiny to participate in the questions which will be considered in these lectures. As a Christian theologian, I have participated in Jewish/Christian discussions for decades and have experienced the entire burden of the problems which are moving theological thinking today, as in the beginning of the Christian era. I am not speaking of the many follies which occur in these debates, but of the questions which concern human beings unconditionally as human beings, and with which I have wrestled along with my Jewish dialogue partners."

⁷⁹ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 422 - 426.

⁸⁰ Ronald H. Stone, *Paul Tillich's Radical Social Thought* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), 103 – 104, Note 11, 166. Hereafter, Stone, *Tillich's Radical Social Thought*.

⁸¹ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 426 – 434.

⁸² Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 437.

⁸³ Tillich gets this concept from Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the non-rational factoring the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational*. Translated by John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 2958).

⁸⁴ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 456.

⁸⁵ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 456–458. Other interpretive polarities contained in this distinction are, in order of "Is"/"Ought": Temple/Diaspora, establishing the Covenant/breaking the Covenant, Election of Israel/Judgment, and Law/Prophets, 467–468.

⁸⁶ Catholic Substance is the dialectical partner of the Protestant Principle (see Note 89), which is not necessarily tied to Roman Catholicism, but expresses the sacramental aspects of religion, and relates to the "Is", in the Is/Ought polarity. Tillich also describes it as the "concrete embodiment of the Spiritual Presence." Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume Three, Life and the Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God*. (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 245. Hereafter, Tillich, *ST III*.

⁸⁷ According to Tillich, "The Protestant principle (which is a manifestation of the prophetic Spirit) is not restricted to the churches of the Reformation or to any other church; it transcends every particular church, being an expression of the Spiritual Community. It has been betrayed by every church, including the churches of the Reformation, but it is also effective in every church as the power which prevents profanization and demonization from destroying the Christian churches completely. It alone is not enough; it needs the 'Catholic substance'." *ST III*, 245.

⁸⁸ It is outside the scope of this paper to discuss Tillich's thoughts on Zionism and the creation of the State of Israel. These are, however, discussed in several places, most notably his speech "My Changing Thoughts on Zionism," delivered to the Christian-Jewish Colloquy on Israel's Rebirth in the Middle East, Chicago, Illinois, January 21, 1959. According to Ron Stone, the typed manuscript with Tillich's corrections is in the Harvard Tillich Archives. Stone, *Tillich's Radical Social Thought*, 170 - 171.

⁸⁹ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 470.

⁹⁰ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 473.

⁹¹ This is a term I coined to capture the historical and conceptual dimensions of Tillich's understanding of how Schelling's dialectic of the potencies, the history of religions, Rudolf Otto's idea of 'the Holy,' and Tillich's understanding of Jewish Prophetism, Catholic Substance and Protestant Principle all come together.

⁹² Starting in the Kingdom of Westphalia in 1808.

⁹³ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 439.

⁹⁴ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 438 – 439.

⁹⁵ This entire paragraph is a summary of Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 440.

⁹⁶ This entire paragraph summarizes Tillich's *Judenfrage* lectures, 440–442, except where else noted.

⁹⁷ This entire paragraph summarizes Tillich's *Judenfrage* lectures, 442 - 445.

⁹⁸ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 444.

⁹⁹ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 444–445.

¹⁰⁰ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 453.

¹⁰¹ Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 454.

¹⁰² Tillich, *Judenfrage* lectures, 454.

**RECONSIDERING COMMITMENT: A
CASE FOR TILlich IN STUDIES OF RE-
LIGIOUS VIOLENCE**

DANIEL A. MORRIS

Paul Tillich's theory of religion as "ultimate concern" has been haunting me since I encountered it years ago. While Tillich's articulation of ultimate concern is full, fertile, and theologically useful, it also poses a serious challenge to those of us in religious studies who would use it to interpret our subject matter. In what follows, I will try to explain why I keep returning to Tillich's understanding of faith, and also why I think the details of his theory must unsettle all of us in the religious studies industry. First, I will review some key points in Tillich's conception of ultimate concern (which you in the audience will find familiar, I am sure). Next, I will compare his theory with that of Robert D. Baird, a historian of religions who used the term ultimate concern as an interpretive tool. Finally, I will turn to some recent studies of religious violence to show that Tillich's theory offers some strong advantages over Baird's, even if these advantages threaten to undermine the academic identity that we in religious studies cherish so dearly.

Though he used the term elsewhere,¹ Tillich's most thorough elucidation of ultimate concern came in his 1956 book, *Dynamics of Faith*. From word one, Tillich offers a clear explanation of the term, and of its place in religious life. "Faith," he writes,

is the state of being ultimately concerned: the dynamics of faith are the dynamics of man's ultimate concern. Man, like every living being, is concerned about many things, above all about those which condition his very existence, such as food and shelter. But man, in contrast to other living beings, has spiritual

¹⁰³ Earley Dissertation, 97.

¹⁰⁴ Earley Dissertation, 98.

¹⁰⁵ Hannah Tillich, Israel Travel-Diary, p.5, cited from her book *From Place to Place*. Earley Dissertation, note 206, 127.

¹⁰⁶ Earley Dissertation, 99.

concerns—cognitive, aesthetic, social, political. Some of them are urgent, often extremely urgent, and each of them as well as the vital concerns can claim ultimacy for a human life or the life of a social group."²

According to Tillich, humans are set apart by their pursuit of spiritual—that is, non-survival oriented—concerns. Any concern, be it oriented toward survival or spiritual matters, could claim ultimacy in a person's life, and thus attain the status of faith. Already we see a universalizing impulse in Tillich's work: any religion could be described in terms of ultimate concern, as could many aspects of life that aren't typically considered religious at all.

After this initial definition of faith, Tillich explains two crucial components of the ultimately-concerned life. "If [a concern] claims ultimacy it demands the total surrender of him who accepts this claim and it promises total fulfillment even if all other claims have to be subjected to it or rejected in its name."³ These defining features of the relation between an ultimate concern and a person remain a point of reference throughout the book. Tillich's theory establishes three central elements in the life of faith: there is the ultimate concern itself, the demand that this concern makes (which I will also refer to as a person's "response" to ultimate concern), and the fulfillment that the concern promises. A person's response to the demand of total surrender can be an indicator of that person's religious commitment. This is one reason why Tillich's theory has such enduring appeal for scholars of religious studies, as I hope to show later. Scholars can use Tillich's language of ultimacy and totality to interpret acts of religious devotion and sacrifice in order to underscore the commitment of the religious people they study. This strategy is attractive for its ability to make religious commitment intelligible. But religious studies scholars are reluctant to follow Tillich in dis-

cussing all three of the important elements in the life of faith (the object of concern, the demand it makes, and the fulfillment it promises).

Although these definitions and explanations are crucial, what Tillich doesn't say is almost as important. Tillich never suggests what exactly the content of either the demand or the promise must be. That is, he never explains what human actions must come in response to the demand of total surrender, nor does he identify the content of the promise of total fulfillment. To label any of these elements "ultimate" is not to identify any particular behaviors or beliefs that ought to accompany them. Presumably these would vary based on the particular concern, person and tradition in question. With this omission, Tillich can refrain from equating any one kind of human response to the demand of total surrender with what really qualifies as ultimate.

It is not only this crucial omission that allows Tillich to guard against the possibility that one form of human response will be considered the only possible, or the highest form of commitment. Tillich's understanding of doubt as a necessary part of faith guards against this possibility, too. For Tillich, talk of certainty in the life of faith must come with significant qualifiers. "Faith is certain in so far as it is an experience of the holy," he writes. "But faith is uncertain in so far as the infinite to which it is related is received by a finite being."⁴ Finite being receives the demand from the infinite, but because of its finitude, this being cannot know with certainty whether or not its emotional, intellectual, or ethical responses are appropriate. The risk of faith is that human beings act and believe in relation to the ultimate even though we know the validity of our responses to be essentially uncertain and insecure. When human beings lose sight of their finitude, and respond to the ultimate demand for total surrender without doubt and without acknowledging risk, uncertainty, and insecurity, we are subject to pride, we become idolaters, and our faith becomes static and dangerous. Tillich concludes that this inescapable bondage to doubt must instill in religious communities a healthy dose of self-criticism.

How can a faith which has doubt as an element within itself be united with creedal statements of the community of faith? The answer can only be that creedal expressions of the ultimate concern of a community must include their

own criticism. It must become obvious in all of them—be they liturgical, doctrinal, or ethical expressions of the faith of the community—that they are not ultimate.⁵

Tillich calls this commitment to self-criticism the "Protestant Principle," because he believes that the faith of the Reformers understood best the uncertainty of humanity's reception of the ultimate's demand, and because the symbols of Protestant Christianity are the most consistently self-negating. This principle protects against the impulse to consider any particular form of human response to the ultimate the only or the most appropriate response possible.

For our purposes, one other aspect of Tillich's theory of ultimate concern is important. To have faith, according to Tillich, is to experience a union of subject and divine object. The term "ultimate concern" unites the subjective and the objective side of the act of faith—the *fides qua creditur* (the faith through which one believes) and the *fides quae creditur* (the faith which is believed). The first is the classical term for the centered act of the personality, the ultimate concern. The second is the classical term for that toward which this act is directed, the ultimate itself, expressed in symbols of the divine.⁶

Ultimate concern means, by Tillich's explanation, a kind of fusion of the faithful person and the object of faith. In less universal terms, this would mean that, for most Western traditions anyway, to speak of ultimate concern one must experience a union between self and God.

Tillich even went so far as to suggest that the only way to understand religion is to do so through the perspective of one who is ultimately concerned: "All speaking about divine matters which is not done in the state of ultimate concern is meaningless...In terms like ultimate, unconditional, infinite, absolute, the difference between subjectivity and objectivity is overcome."⁷ These passages suggest that Tillich would have mixed feelings about the prospects of "religious studies" departments, in which scholars often make a point of jettisoning their own faith commitments in the name of objectivity in an effort to understand "divine matters" more clearly. Tillich's explanation holds that one cannot understand religious symbols at all if one refuses to allow the union of subject and object.

Noting this last aspect of his theory of ultimate concern, we might say that Tillich strives for “universality,” but not “objectivity.” He seeks universality in that his project uses terms that are not solely the domain of any one religious tradition. Terms like “ultimate concern,” “ultimate reality,” “absolute,” and “unconditional” can all be applied to other religious traditions, and even to many phenomena that are not typically considered religious. But Tillich insists that “objectivity” is not possible in discussion of religious commitment. By Tillich’s argument, for true knowledge about “divine matters,” one must experience union with the object, variously imagined as “the ultimate,” “the unconditional,” or “the holy.”⁸ The detached perspective mandated by standards of objectivity is irreconcilable with Tillich’s insistence that knowledge of the ultimate necessitates a fusion of subject and object.⁹

This brings us to the other theorist of ultimate concern I would like to examine: Robert D. Baird. Baird was a “historian of religions,” and he frequently employed a “comparative” approach, examining elements of Christian religiosity alongside elements of what was called “eastern religion” in the mid-20th century. As a historian, Baird felt acutely the need to observe high standards of objectivity. In Baird’s time, no less than in our own, historical inquiry aspires to objectivity. The results of historical inquiry can be rendered dubious if a historian’s audience has reason to think she does not have sufficient distance from her subject matter and scholarship. The historian must be able to convince her audience that she has not selectively excluded relevant data, manipulated sources, or offered unwarranted interpretations due to personal bias. If she cannot convince her audience of a sufficient level of objectivity, the audience may dismiss the scholarship as overly biased or ideologically driven. I would like to register my support for high standards of objectivity before considering Baird’s conception of ultimate concern. The aspiration to meet ideals of objectivity ensures the production of trustworthy and reliable scholarship in history and other fields. For this reason, the ideal of objectivity should continue to have a normative function in history and other disciplines in the humanities, including religion. Apart from the sphere of academic research, the attempt on the part of scholars to meet standards

of objectivity is also highly important in the realm of teaching religion. Objectivity has an important pedagogical function as scholars of religious studies try to open their students’ minds to multiple religious perspectives, practices, and traditions. To lose sight of one’s objectivity in the classroom is to lead students to believe that “only the professor’s opinion matters.” Of course, when professors work in a publicly funded institution, the ideal of objectivity takes on legal significance in addition to its ever-present scholarly and pedagogical importance.

Having registered my agreement with Baird on the importance of objectivity as an academic ideal, I will now turn to his use of “ultimate concern” as an interpretive tool to study religious commitment. Baird’s use of the phrase came in 1971, 15 years after the publication of Tillich’s *Dynamics of Faith*. In the book *Category Formation and the History of Religions*, he began by making a distinction between types of definitions that historians and scholars of religion might use in their research and writing. Baird offers three possible types of definitions from which scholars can choose.

1. A *functional definition* is the act of stipulating that a certain word means a certain thing (a thing meaning any objective reality including other words, the meanings of which are already known).
2. A *lexical definition* “is that sort of word-thing definition in which we are explaining the actual way in which some actual word has been used by some actual person.”
3. A *real definition* is a true statement about things that are.¹⁰

Now Baird sees two major challenges facing historians who want to define the terms that they use. First, all words are ambiguous. They are all capable of multiple meanings. One of the primary functions of a good definition is to eliminate this ambiguity, so that historians can say definitively what is meant by a particular word in a particular context. The other challenge is that definitions can be normative, or convey a desire on the part of the user to make a truth claim. These definitions purport to find the essence of an existing reality, and declare the identification of that essence true. In the interests of scholarly objectivity, Baird clearly hopes to arrive at a definition of religion that both elimi-

nates ambiguity and avoids trafficking in truth claims.

For these reasons, he opts for a functional definition over a lexical or a real one. Baird explains that lexical definitions may allow historians to avoid making a truth claim, but they do not eliminate ambiguity. Real definitions are less desirable than lexical definitions for historians. Not only do they not eliminate ambiguity, they also force the historian into making a normative, essentialist statement. Given Baird's aspiration to meet the demands of scholarly objectivity, a "real definition" of religion is clearly a dead option. Only a functional definition eliminates ambiguity and avoids making truth claims. The definition of religion that Baird will offer is merely useful in the context in which it applies. He admits that it is arbitrary, but arbitrariness is a small price to pay for the elimination of ambiguity and the maintenance of objectivity.

In terms of content, Baird explains that his functional definition follows Tillich, but with one fairly major exception. "Religion," he wrote, "is *ultimate concern*. I am here adopting the *terminology* of Paul Tillich... But Tillich assigns a meaning to the words that I do not care to follow. He holds that both the subjective apprehension (concern) and the objective reality (ultimate) are implied when one sees religion as ultimate concern. One might point out that 'ultimate' merely modifies 'concern,' thereby indicating its importance, and that it does not necessarily require equal attention with the objective reference which is better expressed with the phrase 'Ultimate Reality.' One need not deny the reality of the objective point of reference in any given ultimate concern, but, as we will point out later, investigation of that objective reality is not itself a part of historical research."¹¹

Baird, then, accepts Tillich's general notion of religion as ultimate concern. Tillich's definition of religion as ultimate concern was likely attractive to Baird for its universality—unlike language centered on terms like "belief" or "the supernatural," Tillich's "concern" language carries the promise of universality. This would allow Baird to pursue his comparative analyses more easily. However, he rejects Tillich's insistence that to be able to speak intelligibly about religious issues, one must experience a fusion of subject and object. For Baird, one can understand religion from an unencumbered perspec-

tive—indeed, a historian must. He explains, writing:

By 'ultimate' I do not intend to emphasize the metaphysical or the *objects(s)* of ultimate concern. At the same time I do not intend to *deny* the objective reality. Neither affirmation nor denial is necessary or desirable for historical research. By 'ultimate' I am referring to a concern which is *more important than anything else in the universe for the person involved*.¹²

One of the noteworthy aspects of this last passage is Baird's attempt to define what is meant by "concern." Whereas Tillich offers a rich and extensive discussion of the various elements present in the interaction between an ultimate concern and a human being (primarily the demand of total surrender and the promise of total fulfillment), Baird's only explanation of the meaning of the term "ultimate" is that it is a "concern which is more important than anything in the universe for the person involved." On the meaning of ultimate concern, readers find nothing more than this appeal to that which is "most important." Baird steadfastly avoids Tillich's language of demand, surrender, promise, and fulfillment. I suspect this is because of his diligent regard for the standards of objectivity. These terms that Tillich employs are highly charged with normative meaning, and have a long history of usage in first-order religious discourse. To introduce them into a purely "functional" definition would likely suggest an essentialist agenda, laden with truth claims. Though I cannot marshal conclusive evidence, this is my suspicion because of Baird's terse dismissal of the term "sacred." He writes:

By defining religion as ultimate concern rather than Ultimate Reality, we have a definition that is historically useful in a way that ontologically-oriented definitions are not. If one defines religion as man's response to the Sacred, a prior theological or ontological understanding of 'the Sacred' is required. Without this it is futile to try to determine if men are responding to it.¹³

In his partial allegiance to Tillich on the definition of religion, Baird may have approximated universality. But his commitment to objectivity shackles him to the extent that his definition remains so minimalist that it cannot say

more than “religion is the concern that is most important to a given human being.”

Baird’s definitional minimalism becomes problematic as other scholars in religious studies follow his methodological lead. A number of analysts of violence and New Religious Movements use Baird’s definition and method to interpret their topics. These scholars study religious communities such as the People’s Temple of Jonestown, Guyana, and the Branch Davidian community of Waco, Texas. A brief examination of some telling passages from the scholarly literature on these communities will demonstrate the problems with Baird’s minimalism.

Catherine Wessinger has written extensively on New Religious Movements, and has explored the topics of millennialism and violence in the context of the People’s Temple Church at Jonestown. Wessinger argues that in terms of commitment, People’s Temple resonated with the examples of the early Christian church or the sixteenth century European Reformations. She makes this comparison with explicit reference to the passage from Baird I quoted earlier. “Ultimate concern,” she writes, involves

a goal that is the most important thing in the world for the believers. People may change their ultimate goals at different points in their lives, but sometimes individuals and groups may be so committed to an ultimate concern that they are willing to kill or die for it, or to do both. Early Christian martyrs are revered for dying for their faith, but today in America, we usually regard such people as fanatics, not as saints and heroes. The residents of Jonestown died in order to preserve their ultimate concern, their loyalty to each other as members of a socialist collective. Their ultimate concern was to preserve their community at all costs.¹⁴

Here Wessinger notes that “concern” must be broadly understood, and that it can change for an individual or group over time. Baird, the historian of religions would approve: the historical data shows that change is the only constant in religious commitment, and that many responses can all be conceived of as “ultimate.”

But there is an ambiguity in this quotation, too. In the second sentence, just after implying that a conception of ultimate concern must be broad enough to accommodate change, growth, and variety, Wessinger leaves the door open for

readers to think that there is really only one measure of ultimate concern: the willingness “to kill or die for it, or to do both.” If we emphasize the word “so” when reading this sentence, this interpretation could be justified. Here is the quotation again, this time with my emphasis: “People may change their ultimate goals at different points in their lives, but sometimes individuals and groups may be *so* committed to an ultimate concern that they are willing to kill or die for it, or to do both.” By this reading there seems to be a spectrum of responses to ultimate concern, with the willingness to kill or die at the end of high commitment. Presumably those other responses to ultimate concern that don’t make bodily sacrifices would be on a lower end of the commitment spectrum, or fall short of the status of “ultimate” altogether.

Wessinger is not the only scholar of NRMs to make such a suggestion. Before offering an interpretation of the events involving the Branch Davidian community at Mount Carmel near Waco, Texas, Dean M. Kelly describes NRMs as groups demanding profound levels of commitment (which he calls “the measure of human energy,”) from their adherents. This demand is welcomed by those who join: “the highly structured, high-energy group can be very attractive to people with intense needs for ultimate meaning in their lives... For those who hunger and thirst for a faith that gives meaning to life, no price is too high.”¹⁵ The invocation of “ultimate meaning” recalls both Baird and Tillich.

Here Kelly leaves the exact response to the demands of ultimacy open, but later, in his analysis of the Branch Davidians, he makes the meaning of this ultimate commitment clear. Critiquing the U.S. government’s “hostage model” approach to the Branch Davidians, he writes,

[the hostage model] discounted the commitment of the members of the religious group to their shared vision and its envisions...And the hostage model belied the cohesion within the group, the reservoir of human energy their common devotion had built up, such that they were jointly and mutually attached to their cause, prepared to prevail in its defense or go down with the ship if it failed. In fact, their apocalyptic faith convinced them the powers of the world were mobilized against them, that they were encircled by hosts of darkness,

and that their fate was indeed to be martyrs in the final battle of Armageddon that would bring on the end of the age.¹⁶

I find in this passage a clear implication that commitment can only be ultimate if it means a willingness to fight, kill, and/or die. For Kelly, this willingness—a preparation “to prevail in...defense or go down with the ship”—is a result of “cohesion,” “common devotion,” and a shared “reservoir of human energy.” What of other examples of religious commitment in which people do not kill or die? Do religious communities that are unprepared for armed conflict fall short of the level of cohesion and devotion that merits the label “ultimate”? Is the commitment of people in those communities less than “ultimate”?

Reading scholarship on NRMs and violence, one tends to the conclusion that only willingness to engage in or endure violence counts as ultimate religious commitment, and I think this is an unfortunate tendency. Though I am sure that both Wessinger and Kelly would reject the notion that only one type of human response to ultimate concern can be considered ultimate, their writing demonstrates a lack of vigilance against this conclusion. Baird’s functional definition fails to function adequately because it cannot guard against the scholarly impulse to equate death and killing with the highest form of human response to ultimate concern. Baird’s minimalism in defining the nature of ultimate concern, a result of his desire to avoid normative claims and maintain scholarly objectivity, does not give us the interpretive tools we need to ward off this inclination to equate ultimacy with violence. Tillich’s definition of ultimate concern, on the other hand, supplies readers with ample resources to resist the inclination to equate ultimacy with violence. Tillich’s silence on the question of the forms that total surrender might take is an indication that his definition of ultimate concern can account for all manner of human behavior. This scope of behavior includes, but is by no means limited to, engaging in or enduring violence. More than his silence on this issue, though, Tillich’s articulation of the Protestant Principle guards against our inclination to assume that only acts of violence can be worthy of the label “ultimate commitment.” Tillich reminds us all—philosophers, theologians, religious practitioners, and scholars of religion

alike—that we must never cease in our critical questioning of responses to ultimate demand. Once we think we have identified the proper response to the ultimate, we must immediately ask ourselves how we as finite beings can know with certainty if that response is only appropriate one. If we think that the ultimate is demanding violence as the particular form that total surrender must take, in our finitude we must doubt this conclusion and recognize the risk. Of course, Tillich would have us doubt all responses we might entertain in light of ultimate concern, not just those that incorporate violence. But this pervasive doubt is the antidote we in religious studies need if we are to avoid the implication that only one form of behavior can count as ultimate.

Alas, Baird’s honorable commitment to the standards of objectivity will keep him from asking the kinds of questions that lead to Tillich’s stance. Those of us in religious studies will not be drawn to embrace Tillich’s Protestant Principle in our scholarship or teaching any time soon. We will continue to assert that we only study history, and that what we mean by “ultimate” is restricted to what our subjects consider to be most important. But our subjectivity will not be denied, and we can never be the kind of unencumbered historian that Baird’s definition and method require. Our scholarship will always reflect our biases, and we will continue to indulge in our impulses to equate some form of response with what is really ultimate. Refusing to define the ultimate in any depth does not mean that we have no position on what the ultimate really means. I believe Tillich’s theory would help guide us to more self-critical modes of analysis, and in the case of scholarship on NRMs, would keep us from equating violence with ultimate commitment. But I also believe we in religious studies cannot follow Tillich’s lines of questioning if we care about the historian’s goal of objectivity. Tillich’s theory of ultimate concern reveals our irresolvable predicament. In the end, he offers those of us in religious studies a perfect solution that will kill us if we take it.¹⁷

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¹ Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1964), 3-9. Robert D. Baird, the second theorist I will discuss, cites Tillich's *Theology of Culture* rather than *Dynamics of Faith* when he offers his own theoretical version of ultimate concern.

² Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1958), 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁶ Ibid., 10. The "centered act" and the "symbols of the divine" are also crucial components of Tillich's theory, but unfortunately I'm not able to discuss them here.

⁷ Ibid., 10-11.

⁸ All these usages occur in Ibid., 9-16.

⁹ I am very grateful to Dr. Eric Dickman for his thoughts on Paul Tillich's relation to phenomenology and existentialism, and for his critique of my interpretation of Tillich's theory as "universal," but not "objective" (personal conversations).

¹⁰ Robert D Baird, *Category Formation and the History of Religions* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 6.

¹¹ Ibid., 18, emphasis his.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴ Catherine Wessinger, Forward to Mary McCormick Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jonestown*, 1st ed. (Syracuse University Press, 1998), x-xi.

¹⁵ Dean M. Kelley, "The Implosion of Mt. Carmel and Its Aftermath: Is It All Over Yet?" in Stuart A Wright, ed., *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 362-3.

¹⁶ Ibid., 365.

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