



BULLETIN

The North American Paul Tillich Society

Volume XXXIX, Number 3

Summer 2013

Editor: Frederick J. Parrella, NAPTS Secretary-Treasurer
Religious Studies Department, Santa Clara University
Kenna Hall, Suite 300, Room H, Santa Clara, California 95053
Associate Editor: Jonathan Rothchild, Loyola Marymount University
Assistant to the Editor: Vicky Gonzalez, Santa Clara University
Telephone: 408.554.4714/ 408.259.8225/408.554.4547
FAX: 408.554.2387 Email: fparrella@scu.edu

Website: www.NAPTS.org/ Webmeister: Michael Burch, San Rafael, California

In this issue:

- The Annual Meeting in Baltimore
- Dues are Due!
- “Stemming the Tide of Idolatrous Cultural Rhetoric” by Verna Marina Ehret
- “Paul Tillich and the Non-Christian Religions: Remarks on Tillich’s Contribution to the Contemporary Discussion of the Theology of Religion” by Christian Danz
- “Challenging the Ground of Medicine: Liberal Protestantism, Metaphysics, and a Critique of Modern Bioethics” by Devan Stahl
- “Holding the Boundary in the Midst of Absolutisms: The Missing Centre in the Culture Wars of the U.S.A.” by Mary Ann Stenger
- “New Boundaries: Tillich’s Relevance to the Millennial Generation” by Frederick J. Parrella
- “Paul Tillich among the Jews” by Marion Pauck

THE ANNUAL MEETING IN BALTIMORE

A Reminder: The annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society (NAPTS) will take place all day Friday and Saturday morning, 22–23 November 2013. The banquet will be held on Friday evening. As always, the meeting takes place in connection with the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in Baltimore, Maryland, 23–26 November 2012. In addition to the annual meeting and banquet, there will be sessions of the AAR Group, “Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion and Culture.” Our President Elect, Dr. Duane Olson, is the Program Chair of the annual meeting.

Anyone wishing to contact Dr. Olson about the Society’s program may do so at:

Dr. Duane Olson, McKendree University
dlolson@mckendree.edu

The AAR Group’s co-chairs are:

Dr. Russell Re Manning, University of Aberdeen
r.remanning@abdn.ac.uk

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

The following information is from the AAR website:

Annual Meetings Program Book Is Online

Check out the *Online Annual Meetings Program Book*. The 2013 AAR Annual Meeting is packed with excellent programming. See a session you just

can't miss? There is still time to [register](#). **Save \$50** and register for the Annual Meeting in Baltimore at the Early Bird rate.

The *Program Book*, featuring the complete program listing and room locations, will be mailed to all Annual Meetings registrants in early October. You must be registered for the Annual Meetings by **August 30** to receive the *Program Book*. (Note: Previously, a print *Program Book* was sent to all AAR members regardless of Annual Meetings registration

status; this year, you must be registered to receive a print *Program Book*.)

Additional Meetings Reservation System Is Open [Reserve](#) your reception, editorial meeting, or other business event at the Annual Meeting today through the [online Additional Meeting reservation system!](#) Additional Meetings that are requested now are published in the online and print *Annual Meetings Program Book*.

DUES ARE DUE!

With this Summer issue of the Bulletin, annual membership dues are payable to the secretary-treasurer of the NAPTS:

Professor Frederick J. Parrella
Religious Studies Department

Santa Clara University
500 East El Camino Real
Santa Clara, CA 95053

- Regular membership: 50 USD
- Student membership: 20 USD
- Retired members who cannot pay the full amount are welcome to send whatever they can afford.

Thank you!

STEMMING THE TIDE OF IDOLATROUS CULTURAL RHETORIC

VERNA MARINA EHRET

Introduction

Scholars have long self-identified with a simple maxim: Validity in argumentation is dependent on objectivity. To be an academic, in other words, is to understand and accept the limitations of one's hermeneutical vantage point in assessing volatile ideas. But in public debate, this allegiance to critical reflection can work against a scholarly point of view. While ideologues will lay claim to Truth with a capital T, extremism also takes advantage of the academic's unwillingness to make such truth claims. As a result, the ordinary person considering him or herself a traditionalist or holding to what is perceived as traditional values can be manipulated by rhetoric, not only to interpret a situation in a particular way, but also to see any other interpretation as dangerous lies. In good Platonic style, academics often seek dialectical engagement with an issue in order to legitimize an analysis, where ideologues often eschew this method in favor of highly suggestive rhetoric. The ideologues to whom I refer are those individuals who cling tightly to a single perspective regardless of whether the position can be supported by evi-

dence or may be internally inconsistent. The ideologue fears change or loss of power and privilege, and as a result will demonize any position counter to his or her own. On the other hand, the goal of dialectic is to work within the limitations of human finitude in understanding and move ever closer to a truth that may not be achieved but will open up the possibility of positive change.

The position of an ideologue uses rhetoric to make idols out of particular cultural positions, holding certain ideas to absolute and unchallengeable status. As a result, culture itself can become idolatrous, reflecting the religious nationalism Tillich saw as an idolatrous distortion of religion.¹ In order to respond to this trend in contemporary culture, it is perhaps time for dialectic rather than ideology to guide public discourse. Tillich's understanding of idolatrous religion is a useful framework for both identifying and responding to the challenges that face contemporary culture through various forms of rhetoric.

Tillich famously defines religion as ultimate concern. In the broadest application of that definition, anything can become an object of ultimate concern. However, Tillich places the limitation that ultimate concern in finite things or ideas becomes idolatrous. In this way, certain forms of cultural ideology can be expressions of religion that become both idolatrous and dangerous. To counter the position of the ideologue, the academic will be required to take a more active role in public discourse. The

question for the academic, then, is: How does one constructively engage such rigidity in order not to fall victim to that same rigidity oneself, and yet, in some sense, provide a voice of reason within the chaos of conflicting and often damaging ideological rhetoric? Rhetoric can bind people together in mutual support or tear them apart. It would seem, then, that the response to these idolatrous developments is to recognize the limitations of narratives and symbols that frame the rhetoric and begin a process of rejuvenation. While the process is still unfolding, the goal of healing a society broken by idolatrous cultural rhetoric must begin somewhere. In fact, this healing process is an ideal found embedded in the narratives of the United States. These narratives suggest the democratic principle of multiple voices coming together to represent the whole more completely than a single voice could do.

It is the purpose of this essay to highlight the idolatrous nature of certain components of American cultural rhetoric and propose a path to resist such idolatry. In particular, the essay will focus on expressions of this idolatrous cultural rhetoric in the public square where a single point of view is given ultimacy in the quasi-religion of nationalism. Such rhetoric is destructive. Awareness of the idolatrous nature of this cultural rhetoric can renew the desire to open rhetoric and narrative to better reflect the multiplicity of voices expressing ultimate concern. The path to constructive responses to idolatrous cultural rhetoric in the public square can be renewed. In order to achieve this goal, this essay draws on some concepts outside the regular domain of Tillychian studies while building upon a foundational framework laid by Tillich.

Through Tillich, one can identify the macro-structures of cultural rhetoric. Careful analysis of the micro-structures in the context of the macro-structures can reveal the path to identifying and challenging idolatrous cultural rhetoric.² In *The Courage to Be*, Tillich gives a careful analysis of anxiety. People tend to seek certainty.³ They want the security that comes from knowing the answers to the basic challenges of life. Anxiety arises out of the insecurity of realizing the limitations of their own knowing, or worse, the thought that they might be wrong.⁴ This desire for the security of truth builds macro-structures of thinking that exclude alternative perspectives and shut down discussion by trivializing the objections of others. When certain structures of thinking become absolutized in this way, they can become harmful. These macro-structures identified

by Tillich are built upon some important micro-structures of human understanding, which can be found in rhetorical analysis, conceptual integration theory, and a constructivist paradigm. Through these processes of rhetorical analysis, one can see the intellectual structures of the speaker and listener as they are, prior to any judgment about the quality of the claims being made. From there, it is possible to turn to the Constructivist Paradigm of International Relations in order to understand the network within which idolatrous cultural rhetoric happens, and project possibilities for transformation. The goal is to point toward ways to combat such idolatrous cultural rhetoric, which leads to the final portion of the essay in the application of trans-contextual narratives of the common good through Tillich's *Love, Power, and Justice*.

The Idolatry of Cultural Rhetoric

Theologians are academics particularly focused on questions of how one engages ultimate concern. In the process, theologians are often engaged in reflecting on traditional theological topics in order to call out destructive ideology in society. Cornell West most immediately comes to mind as an example of such a theological voice. Theologians as academics trained in dialectic and thoughtful argumentation have an obligation to address a fundamental question of cultural rhetoric: Is there a point where one can cry foul on a particularly destructive rhetoric, religious or otherwise, in the name of critical theological reflection? Addressing these questions might be uncomfortable for theologians who feel marginalized from public debate. However, Paul Tillich, through the combined understanding of idolatry and pluralism (or more accurately the engagement of world religions), can act as a model of how the theologian provides a standard of evaluation.⁵ That standard will lead to new possibilities in constructing cultural rhetoric that shapes individual and collective identity through narrative in what I have elsewhere described as the trans-contextual narrative, which provides both intellectual engagement and work toward the common good.⁶

In the analysis of cultural rhetoric, one can turn to Augustine and the foundational hermeneutic he proposed for understanding scripture in tradition. In one of his early writings, *Of True Religion*, he claims that what human beings really seek is truth. We seek an ordered life that is centered on what is certain, unquestioned, and true. It is not the quest for

certainty that Augustine challenges, but rather the assumption that it can be found in the temporal and material world. He warns us not to place religion in things, ideas, or even the angels. True religion is, for Augustine, the love of “the One God.” But, having already challenged the things of the world, the implication from Augustine is that to love God will require a willingness to read the details allegorically.⁷ There is anthropology at work here. Human beings seek certainty, but the certainty of God is certainty that is uncertain. It is love that is not knowledge the way one knows why the sky is blue. Our humanity is limited by our embodiment. The tendency to reduce ideas to absolute statements in the modern world becomes rigid ideology about the nature of the world that rejects the nuance of any given situation. As a result, cultural rhetoric in the hands of ideologues rejects a broad picture in order to promote a singular point of view. While the goal would appear to be truth, truth is lost in the attempt to impose ideology through rhetorical flourish.

The issue of truth provides us with an entry into Tillich’s theology. To engage seriously Tillich, one has had to address his detractors’ claim that his definition of religion is so broad that it encompasses everything and as a result says nothing. His definition of religion is difficult to accept for those who would put religion into the box of “belief in a certain set of principles or participation in a particular kind of institution.” But the power of his definition is that it recognizes human fallibility. It is all too easy to commit to something concrete and in the process cut off all avenues of growth as human beings. It is not that Tillich simply includes everything in religion and calls it a day. He provides a standard of evaluation of religion.⁸ If religion in itself is ultimate concern and, in his description, the greatest expression of that idea is found in the biblical command to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, and strength, then a standard has in fact been applied. Ultimate concern may mean that whatever forms the sacred center around which one’s life is built is an example of the religious. Not all religious expressions, however, are created equal. There is (in Tillich’s estimation) good religion and bad religion, or as he puts it, idolatrous religion. It is religion, but it is a failure to place one’s concern in what is truly ultimate, replacing ultimacy with the finitude of things, ideas, one’s own inclinations, and even the perceived values of the society or religious institution to which one belongs.

Idolatry for Tillich is to raise finite things to ultimacy, to take the bearers of revelation, which can be anything, and give them ultimate status.⁹ Idolatry is to hold up any particular thing as a bearer of absolute truth rather than a symbol that points toward a truth that in some way always eludes us. If it did not elude us, we would not need symbols in order to point toward it. Religious symbols act properly as religious symbols only if they negate themselves in order to point toward the ultimate reality in which they participate but cannot encapsulate.¹⁰ The discussion of religious symbols transfers well into the discussion of cultural rhetoric where the language of culture points toward cultural concerns and can even become symbols of ultimate concern, but concern in what is not truly ultimate.

Identifying the Micro-structures of Idolatrous Rhetorical Cultural

Idolatrous rhetorical culture can be found in what Tillich describes as the quasi-religion of nationalism. Current American rhetoric (and this is found elsewhere in the world as well) holds the nation to be the bearer of Truth and certain ideas to be the best expressions of such truth, while others are the most primal enemies of that truth. In order to illustrate my point, I will provide two basic examples of a kind of nationalism that shows the idolatry of cultural rhetoric in the United States today. The goal is first to understand the examples and then to evaluate them. The understanding will come from a tool that is not in itself given to evaluation. But put within the hermeneutical framework of Tillich’s discussion of idolatry and pluralism along with a discussion of the trans-contextual narrative of the common good that unfolds in *Love, Power, and Justice*, the evaluation of this rhetoric based on a more nuanced understanding of it is possible.

The first example comes from Rush Limbaugh. In February of 2012, a law student named Sandra Fluke was scheduled to speak to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee regarding the new health care legislation, particularly as it applied to contraception. She was not allowed to speak there. Limbaugh’s response to a speech made by Fluke elsewhere not long after she was denied was to say on his radio show,

What does it say about the college coed Susan Fluke [sic], who goes before a congressional committee and essentially says that she must be paid to have sex? What does that make her? It

makes her a slut, right? It makes her a prostitute.

She wants to be paid to have sex.¹¹

Later in February Limbaugh went further, in response to a huge backlash from Democrats and Progressives that what he said went well beyond the domain of civil discourse. He said,

So Miss Fluke, and the rest of you Feminazis, here's the deal. If we are going to pay for your contraceptives, and thus pay for you to have sex.

We want something for it. We want you to post the videos online so we can all watch.¹²

There is much happening in these two brief statements, which came as a part of much longer radio broadcasts. Limbaugh later indicates that he was illustrating "absurdity with absurdity" and that clearly he was joking when he said these things. But language, particularly in the hands of a national figure, has power, and he used the reactions to shape further the views of his listeners by his analysis of his own words. People lined up for and against his claims. But for the moment I will simply give the example and one other and then return to the analysis.

The second example is quite different. It comes from a group called the SIOA and an affiliate organization. SIOA stands for Stop the Islamization of America. A website called "Jihad Watch" affiliated with the group posted a picture in August 2012 of a sign they claim they had been allowed to place all over New York City above recycle bins on the streets. The sign reads "19,250 deadly Islamic attacks since 9/11/01. It is not Islamophobia, it's Islamorealism." The explanation under the picture is illuminating as it says,

I am very pleased to report that for once the freedom of speech and the truth have triumphed over political correctness and submission to the Islamic supremacist agenda. Our AFDI/SIOA Islamorealism ads are up in New York Metropolitan Transit Authority stations from White Plains to the Bronx. I'm particularly proud of this as "Islamorealism" is a word I coined.¹³

The comments under the explanation go on in a similar fashion. How are these types of claims to be understood? There seems to be a meta-narrative at work, an all-encompassing and exclusivist narrative that does not allow for divergent opinions,¹⁴ in both examples that the United States stands for something and women who use condoms and Muslims are a threat to that very thing. Moreover, anyone who would protect the rights of these groups is just as culpable for the destruction of truth.

To understand the move toward idolatrous cultural rhetoric, one must unpack the forms of thinking that go into the construction of such meta-narratives. It is through conceptual integration theory, conceptual rhetorical analysis, and the sociology of religion that one can begin to unpack this movement toward idolatry.

In his essay on conceptual-rhetorical analysis of metaphor, metonymy, and conceptual blending, Philip Eubanks makes the argument that the rhetoric one uses is a part of the very cognitive structure of a person. He writes,

I argue that rhetoric—the crafting of concrete expressions to accommodate or persuade likely audiences—is not something layered on top of more basic cognitive functions but is instead part and parcel of cognitive figuration. Indeed, I argue that the cognitive dimension of conceptual figures depends substantially on the figures' rhetoricity: the way figures respond in patterned ways to overarching discourse.¹⁵

What Eubanks claims throughout the article is that rhetoric is not something that happens to our cognition but rather is a part of the very structure of cognition. He is concerned with the reading of texts rather than images or spoken language, but as with other forms of hermeneutics, this method can be translated. What can be gleaned from Eubanks for the current examples is that the power of rhetoric to persuade is inseparable from the complex context of speaker and receiver. The metaphors employed in the rhetoric will indicate the target of the rhetoric, and the language chosen is designed to elicit very explicit emotional and intellectual responses from the target audience. Take Limbaugh, for example. By calling Fluke a slut, Limbaugh tells his listeners that support of the healthcare bill is the support of loose women whom the taxpayer will, in effect, pay to have sex. He simultaneously dismisses the voice of Fluke and support for a healthcare bill that may or may not help his listeners by tying her and it to prostitution. In the minds of his audience, who are predisposed to see him as a truth-teller and an authority, one who fights for them and the moral foundation of American society, what he is saying is clear and true and supports the cognitive rhetorical structures already in place. By associating Obamacare with prostitution, Limbaugh has given the people a choice: your values and the good of society, or sluts. In the process, Limbaugh becomes an ideologue, raising his own point of view to absolute status as truth and

providing his listeners with certainty regarding their choices.

Returning to Eubanks's analysis of rhetoric, then, he is particularly interested in the way the unpacking of metaphor can illuminate the myriad of ideas that lie behind a particular claim and give it power. But the analysis need not be limited to those. In the second example, there is a great deal unfolding in a few short words. Looking simply at the sign itself "It's not Islamophobia/ It's Islamorealism," a new language has been created. Here we find the application of a further tool of conceptual integration theory, the conceptual blend. Gullies Fauconnier, in "Compression and Emergent Structure," demonstrates how, "A central feature of integration networks is their ability to compress diffuse conceptual structure into intelligible and manipulable human-scale situations in a blended space."¹⁶ What does he mean by this? When we speak we draw on a long history of the way language has been used. There are certain ideas that on the surface mean something particular. So, for example, "to put something down" can mean to be holding it and then set it down. But the context of the phrase is going to affect the meaning. To put a baby down is to put the child in its crib and hope it falls asleep quickly. To put the dog down is to have the dog euthanized. The structure of our cognition has the power of rhetoric embedded within it. The phrases we use gain alternative meanings as they are used in a context that taps into the concepts already available to us.

But more than this, the blending of language into new forms can take grand ideas and bring them to "human scale" which essentially means to make it accessible in a more immediate way.¹⁷ Blending takes at least two basic concepts and puts them together in such a way as to compress the rhetoric into a single understanding while allowing new structures of meaning to arise. In the second example, Islamophobia and Islamorealism are big ideas. Put into the context of thousands of deaths, they are made accessible to the thinking of an ordinary person and at the same time new meanings can arise. Islamophobia, referring to the irrational fear of Muslims, is depicted as exactly the problem that is allowing so many people to die. It should be, the sign implies, replaced by Islamorealism. The phrase may not immediately be familiar, but its meaning is clear. Muslims kill people and anyone who is trying to defend Muslims by calling the fear of Muslims irrational is not facing reality and moreover is a part of the problem. As Fauconnier points out, "It is the

simplicity and accessibility of the blended space that give the power to the integration network: the logical, emotional, and social inferences within the blended space are inescapable; their validity is not in question."¹⁸ In the blending of these ideas, new forms of thinking are made available, but build from the foundation already present. The ideas are given greater power and lend a sense of truth and certainty to an idea, eschewing all other interpretations of Muslims.

This analysis of these two examples shows how the power of rhetoric speaks to people at a visceral level. There are deep micro-structures of rhetorical power embedded in the very cognition of people as they hear or read such things. One whose life experience has predisposed him or her to agreement has all of the details of that life experience to support the power of the rhetoric and elicit a basic agreement with the statements. But in order to be persuaded by the rhetoric, certain choices are made. The people who are claiming that the fear of Muslims or the association of women who use contraception with prostitutes is an absurd association are simply not heard. Given the rhetoric, one cannot take those voices seriously, regardless of the data they may have, and, at the same time, be persuaded by this rhetoric. It does not matter what the statistics are on condom use and by whom. It does not matter that there are men involved in those sexual encounters and that condoms can prevent disease. It does not matter that Muslims died in the World Trade Center attacks, serve in the U.S. military protecting Americans, or live ordinary lives with very similar moral codes to Jews and Christians. The person whose rhetorical milieu makes him or her the target audience of Rush Limbaugh and the SIOA simply rejects those arguments as so much sophistry and the desire of the "politically correct" to worry more about hurting people's feelings than saving lives. The rhetoric becomes a powerful tool to shape the quasi-religion of the country, providing a kind of certitude and absolutism that people crave, a comfort and belonging that is a part of their very understanding of the world. It is from these selective cognitive structures that the meta-narratives that give ultimate status to particular ideas within the state develop.

This cognitive work is supported by the sociology of religion. Drawing on Durkheim and Berger, Lester Kurtz provides three metaphors about religion that aid in the understanding of how religion is expressed in the world today.¹⁹ They provide a framework for the creation of and attachment to communi-

ties and thus the unfolding of idolatry. At the same time, the sociology of religion can indicate the ways in which diversity can be seen as an opportunity for religion. As a result, these ideas further help one understand the creation of idolatrous cultural rhetoric that both contributes to and is shaped by meta-narratives as well as point a way past them to trans-contextual narratives.

Kurtz employs three important metaphors: The first is *Sacred Canopy*, which he supplements with the term *world construction*.²⁰ For some, the sacred canopy can shield believers from the vicissitudes of life. Others see this sacred canopy as dynamic, adapting to the world to form a framework of understanding while not excluding new horizons. With *world construction*, Kurtz explains that religious symbols grow out of and turn back in on society, in the construction of a world in which a group lives in order to make sense of the universe. In this domain, there are three basic elements Kurtz identifies: *externalization*, *objectivization*, and *internalization*.²¹ In the discussion of Islamophobia, a particular canopy has been constructed as protection, externalized to encompass the rhetorical structures of like-minded people, turned into a movement to transform society by the application of Islamorealism, and then internalized as a part of the cognitive structures of one's understanding of the world.

The second major metaphor used by Kurtz is *religious market places*.²² The idea of religious market places is that there is competition between the various established religious communities for adherents. Again, Islamophobia bears with it a threat to clarity, simplicity, certainty, and even privilege when another religious perspective is protected alongside one's own. This can be a part of the micro-structures of the rise of idolatrous cultural rhetoric in relation to Islamorealism.

The third metaphor Kurtz provides for this study is that of *elective affinities*.²³ The claim is that social groups are drawn to certain ideas, styles, and definitions of the sacred that do not fit others, but are religious ideas that fit a particular person or group's social status and ideology. In the Limbaugh example, a choice has been given to the people, your moral fiber *or* Obamacare and sluts. Given the elective affinities, the rhetoric drives the listener to agree with Limbaugh's position.

It is these types of structures to which Tillich was speaking in his radio broadcasts to encourage Germans to fight the idolatry of the Nazi narrative.²⁴ Within Tillich's definition, these narratives are

idolatrous not only because they are excessively limited, absolutist, and claim a knowledge of truth they cannot have, but also because they have dismissed the voices of dissent before they have ever heard them. The rightness of their position only stands because it is unchallenged. The metaphors have been literalized. In the process, alternative voices are silenced as being unworthy to be heard. In the case of Limbaugh and Fluke, she is, after all, clearly one who cannot make good life choices in her promiscuity. The claim not only has power over the listener because this broader notion of sexual promiscuity links birth control to the activity of prostitution, but also says to the listener, "Agree with the slut or agree with traditional values." The slut will lose almost every time. A particular understanding of what gives meaning and value to life is raised to ultimacy and, at the same time, closes off all possibility for dialogue and understanding with the other.

Conclusion: Curbing Cultural Idolatry

The path to combating idolatrous cultural rhetoric can be found in dialectical engagement with difference. In Tillich, one sees this engagement through the unfolding conversation between religious traditions and the productive tensions of life. Such tensions provide a framework for discussion of various points of view and, at the same time, avoid idolatry by that engagement being respectful and open rather than exclusivist and absolutist. In *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, Tillich provides a series of lectures where he address the challenges faced by religion today through quasi-religions, and then turns to the great advantages of inter-religious dialogue. Tillich opens the mind to the possibility that the other can be transforming rather than destructive. This is the place of dialectic. In the dialectical process one is forced to think more carefully about the micro-structures of one's own thinking and in the process one's thinking can grow and be transformed. One's hermeneutical horizons can be broadened only by letting in the other.²⁵ It does not mean the fact that no evaluation is made. What it does mean is that the evaluation made is constantly put to the rigorous examination of the standard: that all language for the Holy (the God above God) is symbolic, and as symbolic is self-negating in order to both participate in and point toward that for which it is a symbol.²⁶

In other places, I have tried to present a foundation for such a transformation using the idea of the

“trans-contextual narrative.”²⁷ My claim is that our life in the world is narrative driven. We know ourselves through the language we use to describe ourselves, and these are not just words but claims within a vision of the whole. Idolatrous religion takes these narratives as singular, absolute, unchanging, and miraculously supporting the position of the person espousing this perspective. They are “meta-narratives.” The counter-point is the “contextual narrative,” which is the constant awareness that our narratives are not only always in flux, given our life experiences, but also that they are in fact limited to our contexts. They may overlap the narratives of others, but there is no single narrative that pulls all of life together in one neat package. The “trans-contextual narrative” is the attempt to bring these two perspectives together.

The trans-contextual narrative is better understood in the interplay between the concepts of idolatrous religion and pluralism through the hermeneutical tools of cognitive and rhetorical analysis. The actual work of stemming the tide of idolatrous cultural rhetoric must come in the application of this process in the public square. Theologians can be public without losing credibility as thinking people engaged with a larger world, our objectivity, as much as that is possible, remaining intact. But there are times when objectivity for objectivity’s sake can also become idolatrous, more important than the people to whom the theological questions and religious life are meant to speak. It is possible respectfully to challenge dangerous and idolatrous thinking (although admittedly calling it idolatrous is already a fairly substantial judgment).

In constructing a trans-contextual narrative that can promote productive dialogue, the International Relations (IR) paradigm of Constructivism can be useful. Constructivism does not only exist in IR, but in the IR paradigm it becomes possible to see the plurality of voices writ large and then bring them back to a discussion of idolatrous cultural rhetoric in the United States. Constructivism’s basic claim is the identity of the individual and the system in which one lives are mutually shaping. One makes one’s world and in making one’s world one makes oneself. In Ted Hopf’s short essay on constructivism he writes,

One aspect of constructivist power is the power to reproduce, discipline, and police. When such power is realized, change in world politics is very hard indeed. These intersubjective structures, however, although difficult to challenge,

are not impregnable. Alternative actors with alternative identities, practices, and sufficient material resources are theoretically capable of effecting change.²⁸

What Hopf is pointing out is that we create our own reality and we are created by it, which in some sense makes the structures of society rigid as we hold to certain ideas. But the realization of constructivism is precisely that we create our own reality and we are created by it, which means it is possible to think differently. This is important in International Relations when it comes to ever changing conditions, and is equally applicable within states where the conditions of the state are constantly changing and require a kind of fluidity to the thinking of the individuals in the society.

Constructivism allows one to see the micro-components of a trans-contextual narrative in terms of what such a narrative imagines to be possible. Constructivism, then, can lead back to Tillich who provides a model framework for the trans-contextual narrative within the constructivist paradigm. In the process, the return to Tillich will allow the public theologian to respond creatively and constructively to cultural idolatry through not only words but also actions in the engagement of love, power, and justice. The discussion of love, power, and justice in Tillich is the discussion of interpersonal relationships that transfer to societal and inter-societal relationships. It is a model of living in the tension of love—as that which binds us together—and power—as the expression of one’s own being against that of another—as competing forces and the positive productivity when love and power are balanced.²⁹ The job of a publicly engaged theologian, as shown by the model of Tillich himself, is to combat dangerous thinking that does genuine harm to the other simply for being other, for holding an alternative narrative. Here the discussion of the trans-contextual narrative can lead one to theological humanism and the integrity of life as the standard for evaluating the appropriate time for the theologian to draw her line in the sand against idolatrous religion.³⁰

The integrity of life is the standard of judgment by which the theologian can translate thought into action—in essence, the standard through which all theologians serve as explicitly *public* theologians. The use of Tillich’s typology of love, power, and justice makes it possible to explain how moral action unites self and other without dissolving either self or other. Difference of opinion, while illuminating certainty, does not destroy the individual. The quest for

certainty, as has been shown, leads to idolatry. The tension of uncertainty, however, reflects the productive exchange of difference. This process is exemplified in Tillich through love, power, and justice. Power asserts our being itself, love binds us in community with each other, and justice is the stance of evaluation, the background upon which love and power act.³¹

Justice is the *form* of being.³² Life in its integrity unites the dynamic with the formal, the particular with the universal. As the form of being, justice provides a standard for making judgments. However, this standard is applied within the finite fallibility of life. It is possible to be deceived about the application of justice. Love and power refer to the dynamic vitality of life. When the three are held together as a standard of evaluation, acts of justice become possible even within finitude. The balance of love, power, and justice bring together basic goods, social goods, and reflective goods for the promotion of the integrity of life.³³ Uncertainty rather than certainty shapes our engagement with the world. Certainty is a cognitive structure that is imposed upon the world, but it is rarely if ever found. Justice as a standard of that power and love in creative or reflective justice creates the conditions for love and power to work together and fight their distortions, but they are dynamic, constantly re-engaging each other.

Theology, in seeking understanding, organizes the *language* of religion into narratives that move us beyond ourselves, connecting us to that which transcends our limitation to that for which we have passion, and moving us to action through a sense of responsibility and obligation arising in the story. Religious narratives do not have to be exclusive in order to have the power to shape lives. In a trans-contextual form the narrative asserts the power of being of the self while engaging the difference of the other in a way that can both respect the other and promote the growth of each by building relationship. And in teaching, that process the public life of the theologian unfolds.

Works Cited

Augustine. (1953). *Of True Religion*. In E. J. H. S. Burleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings* (pp. 218-283). Philadelphia: Westminster Press.

Berger, P. (1967). *Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor Books.

Ehret, V. (2013). Uncanny courage and Theological Home. In e. Daniel Boscaljon, *Resisting the*

Place of Belonging: Uncanny Homecomings in Religion, Narrative and the Arts (pp. 73-86). Burlington: Ashgate.

- Eubanks, P. (2005). Globalization, "Corporate Rule," and Blended Worlds: A Conceptual-Rhetorical Analysis of Metaphor, Metonymy, and Conceptual Blending. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 173-197.
- Fauconnier, G. (2005). Compression and Emergent Structure. *Language and Linguistics*, 523-538.
- Hopf, T. (1998). The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory. *International Security*, 171-200.
- Klemm, David and Schweiker, William. (2008). *Religion and the Human Future: An Essay on Theological Humanism*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kurtz, L. (1995). *Gods in the Global Village: The World's Religions in Sociological Perspective*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Leopold, T. (2012, March 8). *Limbaugh revels in the crossfire after Fluke comments*. Retrieved March 19, 2013, from CNN U.S.: <http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/05/us/rush-limbaugh-controversy/index.html>
- Limbaugh: Sandra Fluke is "Having So Much Sex It's Amazing She Can Still Walk"*. (2012, March 1). Retrieved March 19, 2013, from MediaMatters For America: <http://mediamatters.org/video/2012/03/01/limbaugh-sandra-fluke-is-having-so-much-sex-its/155137>
- Limbaugh's Misogynistic Attack on Georgetown Law Student Continues with Increased Vitriol*. (2012, March 1). Retrieved March 19, 2013, from Mediamatters For America: <http://mediamatters.org/blog/2012/03/01/updated-limbaughs-misogynistic-attack-on-george/184248#march2>
- Lowder, J. B. (2012, March 2). *Has Rush Limbaugh Finally Gone Too Far in Slut-Shaming Sandra Fluke?* Retrieved March 19, 2013, from Slate: http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2012/03/02/has_rush_limbaugh_finally_gone_too_far_in_slut_shaming_sandra_fluke_.html
- Rush Limbaugh vs. Sandra Fluke: A Timeline*. (2012, March 9). Retrieved March 19, 2013, from theweek.com: <http://theweek.com/article/index/225214/rush-limbaugh-vs-sandra-fluke-a-timeline>
- Seitz-Wald, A. (2012, March 1). *Limbaugh Doubles Down on Sexist Attack Against Sandra Fluke*,

Demands She Post Sex Tapes Online. Retrieved March 19, 2013, from ThinkProgress: <http://thinkprogress.org/media/2012/03/01/435729/limbaugh-fluke-sex-tape/?mobile=nc>,
 Tillich, P. (1998). *Against the Third Reich: Paul Tillich's Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox.
 Tillich, P. (1994). *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
 Tillich, P. (1954). *Love, Power and Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 Tillich, P. (1973). *Systematic Theology Volume 1*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 Tillich, P. (1952). *The Courage to Be*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
 von Thaden Jr., R. H. (2012). *Sex, Christ, and Embodied Cognition*. Dorset: Deo Publishing.

¹ Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 4.

² Robert H. von Thaden Jr., *Sex, Christ, and Embodied Cognition: Paul's Wisdom for Corinth* (Dorset: Deo Publishing, 2012), 37-75.

³ Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 76.

⁴ Tillich, *Courage*, 77.

⁵ See Tillich. *Christianity and Tillich. Against the Third Reich: Paul Tillich's Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

⁶ Verna Ehret. "Uncanny Courage and Theological Home," in *Resisting the Place of Belonging: Uncanny Homecomings in Religion, Narrative and the Arts*, ed. Daniel Boscaljon (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 81-84.

⁷ Augustine, "Of True Religion," in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, ed. J.H.S. Burleigh (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 274-283.

⁸ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 12.

⁹ Tillich, *Systematic I*, 128.

¹⁰ Tillich, *Systematic I*, 133, 216.

¹¹ Todd Leopold, "Limbaugh revels in the crossfire after Fluke Comments" CNN.com. March 8, 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/05/us/rush-limbaugh-controversy/index.html>

"Limbaugh: Sandra Fluke is 'Having So Much Sex It's Amazing She Can Still Walk,'" Media Matters For America. March 1, 2012.

<http://mediamatters.org/video/2012/03/01/limbaugh-sandra-fluke-is-having-so-much-sex-its/155137>

¹² Alex Seitz-Wald, "Limbaugh Doubles Down on Sexist Attack Against Sandra Fluke, Demands She Post

Sex Tapes Online," Thinkprogress.org. March 1, 2013. <http://thinkprogress.org/media/2012/03/01/435729/limbaugh-fluke-sex-tape/?mobile=nc>,

"Rush Limbaugh vs. Sandra Fluke: A Timeline," The Week. March 9, 2012

<http://theweek.com/article/index/225214/rush-limbaugh-vs-sandra-fluke-a-timeline>,

"Limbaugh's Misogynistic Attack on Georgetown Law Student Continues with Increased Vitriol," Media Matters for America. March 1, 2012.

<http://mediamatters.org/blog/2012/03/01/updated-limbaughs-misogynistic-attack-on-george/184248#march2>,

J. Bryan Lowder, "Has Rush Limbaugh Finally Gone Too Far in Slut-Shaming Sandra Fluke?" Slate. March 2, 2013,

http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2012/03/02/has_rush_limbaugh_finally_gone_too_far_in_slut_shaming_sandra_fluke_.html

¹³ "AFDI/SIOA Islamorealism Ads Up in New York" Jihad Watch. August 10, 2012,

<http://www.jihadwatch.org/2012/08/afdisioa-islamorealism-ads-up-in-new-york.html>

¹⁴ Ehret, "Uncanny Courage," 76-78.

¹⁵ Philip Eubanks, "Globalization, 'Corporate Rule,' and Blended Worlds: A Conceptual-Rhetorical Analysis of Metaphor, Metonymy, and Conceptual Blending" *Metaphor and Symbol* 20(2005): 174.

¹⁶ Gilles Fauconnier, "Compression and Emergent Structure" *Language and Linguistics* 6(2005): 523.

¹⁷ Von Thaden Jr., *Sex, Christ, and Embodied Cognition*, 58.

¹⁸ Fauconnier, "Compression," 529.

¹⁹ Lester Kurtz, "Religious Life in the Global Village" in *Gods in the Global Village: The World's Religions in Sociological Perspective* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1995), 9-11.

²⁰ Terms such as "sacred canopy" and "world construction" originate with Peter Berger in his 1969, *The Sacred Canopy*.

²¹ Kurtz, "Religious Life," 10-11.

²² Kurtz, "Religious Life," 13.

²³ Kurtz, "Religious Life," 13.

²⁴ Tillich, *Against the Third Reich*, 23-28.

²⁵ Tillich, *Christianity*, 19, 60.

²⁶ Tillich, *Christianity*, 61.

²⁷ Ehret, "Uncanny Courage," 81-84.

²⁸ Ted Hopf. "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory" *International Security* 23(1998): 180.

²⁹ Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 91-106.

³⁰ See David Klemm and William Schweiker, *Religion and the Human Future: An Essay in Theological Humanism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

³¹ Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 72-90.

³² Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 54.

³³ Klemm and Schweiker, *Religion and the Human Future*, 61-71.

PAUL TILlich AND THE NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS: REMARKS ON TILlich'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONTEMPORARY DISCUSSION OF THE THEOLOGY OF RELIGION

CHRISTIAN DANZ

In a newsletter from December 1964, Tillich tells his friends about his activity at the University of Chicago:

And now the fall quarter in Chicago is coming to an end. The chief event was an evening seminar which I gave once a week, together with the very distinguished historian of religion, Professor Eliade (a Romanian emigrant, professor at the Sorbonne, now permanently in Chicago). He and his students were responsible for the history of religions material, and I for the interpretation of the material in light of Christian thinking. There is nothing better for overcoming every theological provincialism.¹

Tillich also refers to the significance of his seminar with the phenomenologist of religion Mircea Eliade at the University of Chicago in his last lecture, *The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian*, from October 1965. He writes,

I now want to return my thanks on this point to my friend professor Mircea Eliade for the two years of seminars and the cooperation we had in them. In these seminars I experienced that every individual doctrinal or ritual expression of Christianity receives a new intensity of meaning. And, in terms of a kind of apologia yet also as a self-accusation, I must say that my own *Systematic Theology* was written before these seminars and had another intention, namely, the apologetic discussion against and with the secular. ...But perhaps we need a longer, more intensive period of interpretation of systematic theological study and religious historical studies. Under such circumstances the structure of religious thought might develop in connection with an-

other or different fragmentary manifestation of theonomy or of the Religion of the Concrete Spirit. This is my hope for the future of theology.²

In the study of Tillich, such statements have led to the assessment that the late Tillich—under the influence of his trip to Japan in 1960 and his seminar with Eliade—arrived at a new perspective on his theology that moved beyond its former provincialism as he documents it in his systematic theology. This is above all evidenced by a new perspective on the non-Christian religions. In order to evaluate these claims, in what follows, I examine Tillich's late interpretation of the relationship of Christianity to the non-Christian religions. In the process, I refer primarily to his last lecture, *The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian*, as well as his three previous Bampton Lectures, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*.³ Tillich summarized his thoughts in the formula "theology of the history of religions"—a program taken up in Germany most notably by Ernst Benz and Wolfhart Pannenberg.⁴ Such a theology of the history of religions presupposes a concept of religion that allows for a correlation of the different religions. The religio-theoretical groundwork of this theology of the history of religions is delineated in the first section of this paper. Subsequently, Tillich's perspective on the relationship between Christianity and the non-Christian religions will be taken into account. Finally, I will briefly acknowledge Tillich's contribution to the contemporary debates about religious pluralism.

I. The Concept of Religion

In his last lecture, *The Significance of the History of Religions*, as well as in the Bampton Lectures of 1962, Tillich pointed out that the concept of religion forms the methodological basis for every determination of the relationship between Christianity and the non-Christian religions. Of course, he did not expressly submit the concept to a thorough examination. Rather, in both texts he draws on it as a presupposition. What, then, does Tillich understand

religion to mean, and what are the elements constitute his understanding of religion? Religion, according to Tillich in the Bampton Lectures, “is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of our life.”⁵ With this determination, Tillich takes up the notion of religion that he had been working out since the 1920s. Religion is that which is of ultimate concern for humans, whereby the religious dimension of absoluteness is mediated via a concrete content by which the ultimate concern becomes manifest.

In the interpretation of this concept of religion, there are two aspects to bear in mind. First, the basis of religion is human consciousness or the human spirit. For Tillich (speaking as it were with Johann Joachim Spalding), religion is a human affair. Thus, the distinction between the religious substance of consciousness and the prevailing religion is of decided importance for understanding Tillich’s formula is, namely, that religion is that which is of ultimate concern for humans. The determination, “religion as (the) substance of consciousness” focuses on the absolute as the basic function of consciousness.⁶ For Tillich, the absolute constitutes the general function of unity or synthesis that underlies all human consciousness. Tillich’s assertion of a universal religious basis—his thesis “that revelatory experiences are universally human”—builds on this presupposition.⁷ Related to this, of course, is the problem as to how precisely, assuming a basic function of the absolute, a distinction between religion and culture can still be made. Tillich attempts to solve this difficulty by means of a second determination of his concept religion, namely, his conception of revelation, and the corresponding religious experience. In his lecture, *The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian*, he claims that the “universal religious basis is the experience of the Holy within the finite” wherein “the Holy appears in a special way.”⁸ The prevailing religion, which originates first in religious experience (so might one summarize the above cited passages), consists in becoming aware of the universal basic function of the absolute, through the concrete contents of consciousness. Thus, in his later work, Tillich takes up his earlier description of religion, based on his theory of intentionality, as *Meinen* or direction (*auf das Unbedingte*), now described as “experience”—a concept that he had rejected as inadequate in the 1920s.⁹

Thus, religious consciousness is characterized by a tension between a universal moment, the absolute as the basic function of each consciousness, and a particular moment, the concrete forms of culture through which the absolute is grasped. The concrete moment functions as a medium for the rendering of the absolute. However, this is only possible inasmuch as the concrete is posited and negated simultaneously. Consequently, it is only as negation that the absolute can be presented to the concrete determinations of human consciousness.¹⁰ Tillich describes the intentional structure of religious consciousness via the interplay of three moments.

Like all religions, both grow out of a sacramental basis, out of the experience of the holy as present here and now, in this thing, this person, this event. But no higher religion remained on this sacramental basis; they transcend it, while still preserving it, for as long as there is religion, the sacramental basis cannot disappear. It can, however, be broken and transcended. This has happened in two directions, the mystical and the ethical, according to the two elements of the experience of the holy as what ought to be.¹¹

This distinction of the sacramental basis of religion, as well as the mystical and ethical poles in the inner structure of religious consciousness, constitutes the starting point of Tillich’s typology of the history of religions. (This will require further elaboration in what follows.) Tillich initially worked these things out in his lecture course about the philosophy of religion from the summer of 1920.¹²

With this concept of religion and its constituent elements, the methodical bases of Tillich’s theology of the history of religions are elucidated. Based on this presupposition, how does the relationship of Christianity to the non-Christian religions develop, and what is the function of the encounter with the world religions?

2. The Relationship of Christianity to non-Christian Religions

Tillich’s program of a theology of the history of religions intends to combine a positive assessment of religion with a critical evaluation of the history of religions. “Therefore, what we need...is a theology of the history of religions in which the positive valuation of the universal revelation balances the critical one. Both are necessary.”¹³ The positive evaluation of the history of religions serves in the formulation and application of the concept of religion. As a relig-

ion, Christianity is not distinct from the non-Christian religions. Every religion rests on revelation, and yet, every religion is also more than religion, namely a critique of religion—or, as Tillich puts it, “the fight of God within religion against religion.”¹⁴ This means that Christianity, in its encounters with the non-Christian religions, cannot flatly negate or reject them. Nevertheless, the stance of Christianity does not simply consist in a complete approval of non-Christian religions. Tillich combines a positive estimation of the non-Christian religions with a critical moment. “The third way of rejecting other religions is a dialectical union of acceptance and rejection, with all the tensions, uncertainties, and changes which such dialectics implies.”¹⁵

For Tillich, based on the methodological groundwork of his concept of religion, a dialectical evaluation of the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions emerges. Christianity encounters other religions with a posture neither of outright affirmation nor rejection, but rather, in “a dialectical union of rejection and acceptance in the relation of the two groups.”¹⁶ A criterion is provided for the critique of other religions. In what does the criterion for the critical moment in the relationship of Christianity to the non-Christian religions consist, and how does Tillich substantiate it? At this point, Tillich points to Christology. “The criterion for us as Christians is the event of the cross. That which has happened there in a symbolic way, which gives the criterion, also happens fragmentarily in other places, in other moments, has happened and will happen even though they are not historically or empirically connected with the cross.”¹⁷ Thus, it is a Christology, narrowed down to the cross, which functions as the criterion for the assessment of religions—Christian as well as non-Christian. Here is documentation of Tillich’s persuasion that a standard for the evaluation of the history of religion can only be obtained from one’s own religious tradition. The concept of religion is itself already the result of a certain religious culture and is not a neutral, general concept. Accordingly, for Tillich, Christology does not function as a component of the contents of the Christian religion, but rather as the description and presentation of the reflexivity of the religious act. The absolute can only come to be rendered in religious consciousness as the negation of the concrete moment. The theology of the cross represents this reflexivity of the religious act.

According to Tillich, the appropriate posture of Christianity toward the non-Christian religions con-

sists in a dialectical unity of rejection and acceptance. What follows then from this conception with reference to the encounter with the world religions? In what does the goal of the development of the history of religions consist? It becomes clear, from the considerations presented above, that the goal of historical religious development cannot consist in an absolute religion, nor in a conflation of religious traditions. “A mixture of religions destroys in each of them the concreteness which gives it its dynamic power. The victory of *one* religion would impose a particular religious answer on all particular answers.”¹⁸ Tillich assumes an irreducible plurality of religious traditions, wherein absoluteness cannot be predicated of one religion. For Tillich, historical religious development culminates neither in an absolute religion, nor—because of the constitutive concreteness of religion itself—in a religion of humanity. Rather, Tillich determines, as the goal of historical religious development, what he calls the *religion of the concrete spirit*, which consists in “the unity of these three elements [i.e., the sacramental, the mystical and the ethical element] in a religion” as “the inner aim of the history of religion.”¹⁹ The encounter of world religions is the way to this religion of concrete spirit. Through interreligious dialogue there should occur a deepening of the understanding of one’s own religion, within the horizon of the others. Thus, the encounter of religion and the dialogue with the non-Christian religions serves a perception of one’s own religion—in distinction to the others—which is sensitive to difference. The medium for this is provided by Tillich’s religio-historical typology, which is meant to make the comparison of different types of religion possible. For, according to his concept of religion, it is the same structure, with varying emphases, which underlies every historical religion. “If the Christian theologian discusses with the Buddhist priest the relation of the mystical and the ethical elements in both religions and, for instance, defends the priority of the ethical over the mystical, he discusses at the same time within himself the relationship of the two in Christianity. This produces (as I can witness) both seriousness and anxiety.”²⁰ In this way it becomes possible to discover “one’s own” in the other religion, and “the other” in one’s own religion.

3. Conclusion

Tillich’s program of a religio-historical theology should serve to better one’s understanding of one’s

own religion, within the horizon of the history of religions. "This theology of the history of religions can help systematic theologians to understand the present moment and the nature of our own historical place, both in the particular character of Christianity and in its universal claim."²¹ This perception (sensitive to difference) of the relationship between Christianity and the non-Christian religions provides a genuine alternative in current debates about a theology of religious pluralism. On the one hand, through his grounding of the encounter of the world religions in terms of the history of religions, Tillich is in a position to combine a positive assessment of non-Christian religions with a critical evaluation. On the other hand, the goal of interreligious dialogue consists in a deepening of the religious self-understanding of one's own religion. Through these two aspects, Tillich is successful in combining his own religious persuasion with a positive view of non-Christian religions.

In the letter to his German friends, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Tillich alludes to the importance of his seminar with the phenomenologist of Religion, Mircea Eliade, at the University of Chicago. The future of theology, according to Tillich in his last lecture, lies in a theology of the history of religions. With this program, he again takes up considerations that were already present in his lectures on the philosophy of religion in the 1920's.²²

¹ Paul Tillich's circular letter from December 1964, in: id., *Ein Lebensbild in Dokumenten. Briefe, Tagebuch-Auszüge, Berichte*, Stuttgart/Frankfurt a. M. 1980, p. 361.

² P. Tillich, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," in: id., *Ausgewählte Texte*, Berlin/New York 2008, pp. 455-470, here p. 463.

³ P. Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, in: id., *Ausgewählte Texte*, Berlin/New York 2008, pp. 419-453. Cf. P. Tillich, *The Encounter of Religions and Quasi-Religions*, Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter 1990. Cf. R.B. James, *Tillich and World Religions. Encountering other Faiths Today*, Macon 2003; J.J. Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine. God Creation, and the Human Predicament. An East-West Conversation*, Minneapolis 2006; C. Danz/W. Schüßler/E. Sturm (Ed.), *Religionstheologie und interreligiöser Dialog. International Yearbook for Tillich Research*, Vol. 5, Wien 2010

⁴ E. Benz, *Ideen zu einer Theologie der Religionsgeschichte*, Wiesbaden 1960; W. Pannenberg, *Erwägungen zu einer Theologie der Religionsgeschichte*, in: id.,

Grundfragen systematischer Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze, Göttingen 1967, p. 252-295. Cf. C. Danz, *Einführung in die Theologie der Religionen*, Wien 2005, pp. 141-153.

⁵ P. Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, p. 421. Cf. U. Barth, *Religion und Sinn*, in: C. Danz/W. Schüßler (Ed.), *Religion – Kultur – Gesellschaft. Der frühe Tillich im Spiegel neuer Texte (1919-1920)*, Wien 2008, pp. 197-213.

⁶ P. Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, p. 421. Cf. G. Neugebauer, *Die geistphilosophischen Grundlagen der Kulturtheologie Tillichs vor dem Hintergrund seiner Schelling- und Husserlrezeption*, in: C. Danz/W. Schüßler (Ed.), *Paul Tillichs Theologie der Kultur. Aspekte – Probleme – Perspektiven*, Berlin/New York 2011, pp. 38-63.

⁷ P. Tillich, *The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian*, p. 456.

⁸ P. Tillich, *The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian*, p. 460.

⁹ Cf. P. Tillich, *Über die Idee einer Theologie der Kultur*, in: id., *Ausgewählte Texte*, Berlin/New York 2008, p. 25-41, especially p. 30. 41. For the concept of experience cf. id., *The Problem of Theological Method*, in: id., *Ausgewählte Texte*, Berlin/New York 2008, p. 301-312, especially p. 302.

¹⁰ Cf. P. Tillich, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," p. 461: "The particular is denied for the Ultimate One. The concrete is devaluated."

¹¹ P. Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, p. 439. Cf. P. Tillich, *The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian*, p. 460f.

¹² Cf. C. Danz, 'Alle Linien gipfeln in der Religion des Paradox'. *Tillichs religionsgeschichtliche Konstruktion der Religionsphilosophie*, in: id./W. Schüßler (Ed.), *Religion – Kultur – Gesellschaft. Der frühe Tillich im Spiegel neuer Texte (1919-1920)*, Wien 2008, S. 215-231.

¹³ P. Tillich, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," p. 456.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 461.

¹⁵ P. Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, p. 430.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

¹⁷ P. Tillich, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," p. 462.

¹⁸ P. Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, p. 452f.

¹⁹ P. Tillich, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," p. 461.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 311.²¹ Ibid., p. 459.

**CHALLENGING THE GROUND OF MEDICINE:
LIBERAL PROTESTANTISM, METAPHYSICS,
AND A CRITIQUE OF MODERN BIOETHICS**

DEVAN STAHL

A funny thing happened on the road to bioethics. As thinkers began to ask how new forms of medicine challenged our age old conceptions of human nature, morality, and dignity, religious thinkers—those perhaps most prepared and most well-suited to answer such questions—were quickly pushed to the margins of the conversation. Those who tell the birth story of bioethics cannot help but mention the early input by theologians; however, within a generation, philosophers, sociologists, and lawyers began to question the suitability of theologians to speak to America’s progressively pluralistic society.¹ Such a reaction may appear odd considering theologians had been grappling with how to do theology in a secular world for at least two centuries prior to the formation of bioethics as a discipline. More recently, many have begun to see the deficiencies of relying upon a purely secular-based philosophy to bring content-full resolutions the continued disputes present in bioethics. Perhaps the time is once again ripe to call upon theologians whose rich traditions might add a thick moral vision to bioethics.

In response to the more recent calls for more theological reflection in bioethics, theologians have taken a few different tactics. Roman Catholics of course, have maintained medical institutions where their theology can be practiced. Others, particularly those from more conservative and neo-orthodox traditions have eschewed the secular bioethics all together in favor of talking exclusively to the faithful. The common caricature of liberal theologians, on the other hand, is that they are quick to abandon their religious language and tradition in favor of a rationalistic ethic that can serve as an apology for any and every medical technology created. While more conservative theologians have been deemed too “irrational” to make their viewpoints relevant in the public square, liberal theologians have made their particular views irrelevant by refusing to distinguish their rationality from that of secular philosophy.

²² I express my thanks to Jason Valdez (Vienna) for translating this paper.

The question then for liberal theologians has become: What can a theologian offer to bioethics that an ethically minded philosopher cannot? Perhaps, however, theology, and liberal theology in particular, should not be discounted too quickly. There are strands within Protestant liberalism that resist becoming proponents of unfettered scientific progress, and I believe that Paul Tillich stands in this tradition. I propose that the liberal theologian Paul Tillich presents an ideal method of engaging the medical sciences through his particular metaphysical ontology. Tillich’s metaphysical commitments allowed him to both affirm and critique aspects of his contemporary medical culture. In what follows, I will briefly describe how Tillich’s metaphysics formalizes into his “theology of culture,” which he uses to call to theologians find the Spirit moving in cultural practices. Next, I will explain how Tillich’s metaphysical claims inform his understanding of the relationship between God and the natural world. Finally, I will show how Tillich deployed his theology of culture to dialogue with the rising field of depth psychology. Ultimately, I hope to show how Tillich’s method of merging metaphysical claims with theology allows liberal theologians to make distinctive and definitive claims about how their tradition can transform the practice of medicine. To remain distinct in the field of bioethics, liberal theologians need to reconnect with the vision of the world that made them unique in the first place, and in so doing we will see the difference that liberal theologies can make to the field of bioethics.

The Need for Metaphysics and Tillich’s Theology of Culture

Unlike the early Protestant bioethicists like Joseph Fletcher, who sought to avoid metaphysics and reduce essence of being to a rationalistic ethic, Tillich grounded his dogmatic ethics in a metaphysical-ontology. Tillich understood his metaphysical task as studying and tracing the movements of the Unconditional within culture. The theologian as metaphysician is tasked with tracing our “meaning-giving orientation” through both the theoretical and practical spheres. For this reason, Tillich could not completely separate his metaphysics from his ethics. As

Tillich states, “Every proposition of a creative metaphysics is an expression of an ethos; every ethos expresses a metaphysics.”² Tillich’s metaphysics is thus defined from “both the ontological and the social-ethical side.”³ Ethics and metaphysics share, for Tillich, a concern with the Unconditional, or human being’s meaningful reach toward that which seems beyond all conditions.⁴ From the perspective of the primal connectedness of all human and non-human nature, Tillich offered a social-ethical critique of culture that exists within an understanding of the uniting ground of all being. In other words, to know how we ought to interact with the other, we must first know how everything is essentially connected. To distance himself from a classical metaphysics, which tended to refer to God as the totality of being, Tillich later referred to his metaphysical ethics as a “theology of culture.”⁵

Tillich’s social ethic demanded a realistic examination of the tensions present within culture. For the Christian message to become relevant once again to people’s lives, Tillich sought to translate the gospel message for modern culture. Tillich’s theological task can be seen in two interrelated moves: analyzing and bringing expression to the latent spiritual depth present in contemporary cultural formations and adapting the *a priori* Christian message to dilemmas facing society. For Tillich, these two moves are actually one because it is the one God who creates and redeems the world. By refusing to close any door to God’s spirit moving through the world, Tillich believed we might actually heighten our awareness of the radical dissimilarity between the Christian message and human situation.⁶

God, the Natural World and Science

It is from his metaphysical grounding—worked out in his theology of culture—that Tillich speaks to the natural sciences. Particularly pressing in Tillich’s time, as well as ours, was the need to understand the proper place of God in the natural world. If we are to understand the proper role of medicine in our lives, we must understand how God interacts with and graces the material world. If God created the world to be left to its own devices (as in deism), then scientific progress might direct the path toward salvation. If, on the other hand, God is completely indistinguishable from the finite world (as in pantheism), the ends of medicine and the ends of God cannot be found to contradict in any meaningful way. If, however, God both grounds the world and transcends the

world, then medicine becomes a potential mediated form of God’s grace. However, it can also be a destructive force of idolatry. As Tillich preached, “The greatest triumph of science was the power it gave to man to annihilate himself and his world.”⁷ Theology must give voice to both the constructive and destructive potentialities inherent in scientific progress, particularly in the power of medicine to annihilate humankind. To understand our proper orientation toward the medical sciences, we must first understand how God interacts with the world.

Tillich understood the historical conflicts between science and religion as evidence of ontological and epistemological confusion. Theology, according to Tillich, must equally reject naturalism and supernaturalism as both mistake God for a being amongst beings. Against naturalism, Tillich writes, “The main arguments against naturalism, in whatever form, is that it denies the infinite distance between the whole of finite things and their ground with the consequence that the term ‘God’ becomes interchangeable with the universe and is therefore semantically superfluous.”⁸ Anyone who believes that natural science can disprove the existence of God is speaking from a perspective of naturalistic faith that confuses nature with the ground of being. Nature, unlike the Christ, cannot conquer the threat of nonbeing. Moreover, naturalism does not allow sufficient room in its metaphysics for God’s (supra) personal reality.

Supernaturalism, on the other hand, “separates God as a being, the highest being, from all other beings, alongside and above which he has his existence.”⁹ In this scheme, God stands in a separate space above nature and acts as a cause alongside other causes. Such a God could only be an extension of the categories of finitude. Supernaturalism ends up naturalizing God. Tillich understood God as neither alongside things nor above them, “he is nearer to them than they are to themselves. He is their creative ground, here and now, always and everywhere.” Unlike a pantheistic God, however, Tillich’s God is self-transcendent, meaning God transcends “that of which he is the ground.” Here God has freedom *from*, and *for*, the other.

Tillich took our modern obsession with understanding how God acts in nature as endemic to our existential anxiety over our non-being: it reveals our quest for explanation about causation. As an existentialist thinker, Tillich believes that “To be finite is to be insecure.”¹⁰ Neither the god of naturalism nor supernaturalism, evolutionary materialism nor intelli-

gent design, the extinguishable cosmos nor the god of causation will be able to conquer nonbeing.

Tillich cautioned theologians against succumbing to this anxiety and allowing scientific discovery to confirm the truth of their faith. The truth of revelation cannot be confused for the truth of scientific discovery. Science understands reality in terms of objectifiable materiality. Revelation, as we have seen, rejects the idea of God as an object among others in the world. To know the world scientifically, we must objectify it; to know God, we must be grasped by something we cannot contain. Any attempt to know God through the modes of scientific understanding immediately becomes idolatrous.

Health and Disease

Although we should not confuse scientific progress with the activities of God, the healing role of medicine may still be understood as an element of God's grace. Health, in its deepest sense, is fundamental to our salvation. The human situation is such that disease is a constant threat. As Tillich said, "The gift of freedom implies the danger of servitude; and the abundance of life implies the danger of sickness."¹¹ Health, for Tillich, is the unity of the many divergent trends in our life. When Jesus commanded his disciples to heal, he did not distinguish between bodily, mental, or spiritual diseases. Our health requires that all dimensions of our life—physical, chemical, biological, psychological, mental, cultural, and historical dimensions—be in unity.

For all the reasons that a person can become diseased, Tillich advocated that a plethora of healers should collaborate together to reach the whole person. The physician, psychologist, priest, and social healer need to come together to drive away the demonic forces of illness. To heal the whole person, healers must work together. The question remains, however, if this vision of collaboration is truly being reached in the current bio-psychosocial practice of medicine or if our contemporary medical world is capable of facilitating true, equal cooperation amongst healers.

In response to the great need he saw to help heal the mental illnesses that plagued the midcentury American landscape, Tillich engaged psychology with an unmatched theological vigor. Through his engagement with psychology, we can see all the aspects of Tillich's theology described above come together in a positive project. Tillich shows why psychology cannot function without a metaphysical-

ontology that theologians are able to provide. In dialoguing with psychology, we can clearly see how Tillich employs his theology of culture to announce the necessary involvement of theology in the psychological pursuit. Tillich shows how psychological questions require and condition theological answers and even how psychology can prompt theologians to reevaluate their own latent ideologies. Ultimately, Tillich saw the psychologist as a natural partner of the priest, each functioning independently but with shared goals. Tillich certainly did not look to psychology to prove the claims of scripture; rather, he found within psychology an-often-unacknowledged-drive toward the spiritual dimension through ground of being. To conquer truly disease, all relevant faculties must be involved, including the theologian whose work addresses the question of being and points toward the ultimate source of healing.

Conclusion

The liberal theologian who becomes a mere apologist for medicine has failed to take seriously the correlative project Tillich presents. Undergirded by a robust metaphysics, the theologian cannot simply affirm Western medicine's quest for human normalcy, nor can she approach bioethics believing she will be *unable* to make a practical difference in public discourse. By holding on to its metaphysical categories, the liberal tradition may begin to function more like the Roman Catholic tradition, which has rarely been accused of attenuating its religious commitments for the sake of public discourse due to its unyielding metaphysical claims. With the exception of Roman Catholics, many theologians and bioethicists alike have been wary of deploying (or even constructing) particular metaphysical categories to combat medicine's own metaphysical assumptions. Though many are reticent to have "meta" conversations in a field that prides itself on its practicality—after all, bioethics, it is said, saved philosophical ethics by giving it contemporary relevance!¹²—I believe that much is lost for both the philosopher and theologian by overlooking the deeper, unacknowledged claims medicine makes upon the human body. I believe that Tillich would have a lot to say to contemporary medical practices, which tend to radically fragment and objectify the human person. Modern medicine can certainly extend human life, but it can never explain finitude and it certainly cannot conquer the threat of non-being.

¹ Albert R. Jonsen, *The Birth of Bioethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

² Paul Tillich, *The System of the Sciences According to Objects and Methods*, trans. Paul Wiebe (Lewisburg: Bucknell University, 1981), 201.

³ A. James Reimer, *Paul Tillich: Theologian of Nature, Culture and Politics* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2004), 186.

⁴ Mark Kline Taylor, "The Theological Development and Contribution of Paul Tillich" in *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries* ed. Mark Kline Taylor (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 195.

⁵ Tillich, *The System of the Sciences According to Objects and Methods*: 210.

⁶ Taylor, "The Theological Development and Contribution of Paul Tillich" 22.

⁷ Paul Tillich, "The Shaking of the Foundations," in *The Shaking of the Foundations*, ed. Paul Tillich (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955).

⁸ _____, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957), 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰ _____, *Systematic Theology* vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 195.

¹¹ _____, "Health the Sick; Cast out the Demons," in *The Eternal Now*, ed. Paul Tillich (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 24.

¹² Stephen Toulmin, "How Medicine Saved the Life of Ethics" *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 25, no. 4 (1982).

HOLDING THE BOUNDARY IN THE MIDST OF ABSOLUTISMS: THE MISSING CENTER IN THE CULTURE WARS OF THE U.S.A.

MARY ANN STENGER

The context for this paper is what I see as the "missing center" and polarization in American religious and cultural discussions, a situation created in part by fundamentalisms from both the left and right religious and political movements. The challenge is for those of us who belong to neither pole and who see ourselves more in the center, on the boundary. Tillich's depiction of living on the boundary and his theology of paradox offer theoretical grounding for how we can deal with polarization and fill in that "missing center."

I begin with some of Tillich's views and hopes for the religious and political context in the United States and then contrast that to the polarization many experience today. I then use theories of several analysts as well as ideas from Tillich to offer four major factors that contribute to present polarization. In the third part, I explore Tillich's views of living on the boundary and balancing polar opposites. In the final section, I assess several recent proposals for addressing religious and cultural polarization and then use ideas from Tillich and others to reflect on how we might respond to the current context of polarization and the missing center.

A. Tillich's Views on America in Contrast to the Current Context of Polar Absolutisms

1. Tillich's Views and Hopes for American Religion and Democracy

On the whole, Tillich found the religious and social pluralism within the U.S. as liberating and potentially opening new possibilities. In *On the Boundary*, he describes the American ideal of one humankind in the "image of one nation in whom representatives of all nations and races can live as citizens."¹ He clearly recognizes the stark contrast between the ideal and reality but still sees the image as a symbol that can point beyond itself to the Kingdom of God.² In his 1953 essay comparing his European heritage and his experiences in America, Tillich notes the "pragmatic-experiential" approach of American theology with its emphasis on social ethical problems and its effort to address concrete situations.³ He also points positively to the plurality of Protestant denominations and diverse world religions in the United States and describes their encounters as involving "discussion, competition, and teamwork."⁴ He calls for balancing the "American emphasis on new beginning with the European emphasis on tradition"⁵ and questions whether America can maintain its openness and overcome "spiritual provincialism" or whether it will develop its own American provincialism.⁶ (Of course, Tillich made his observations and comparisons long before the birth of the European Union or the increasing polarizations that have developed in the United States.)

In *Love, Power, and Justice*, Tillich notes a "half-conscious American imperialism" connected with its increasing "vocational consciousness" of spreading democracy in relation to the whole world.⁷ He even

suggests that it is possible that “one power structure” may rise to become a “universal power, with a minimum of suppression” and that “the law and the justice and the uniting love which are embodied in this power will become the universal power of mankind.”⁸ But even then, he recognizes that “[n]ew centuries of power, may appear, first underground, then openly, driving towards separation from or towards radical transformation of the whole” and that these centers of power “may develop a vocational consciousness of their own.”⁹

What I think Tillich did not anticipate is that the American unity of diverse groups would give way to a much greater awareness of diversity and an increasing sense of division and unresolvable conflict. I now turn to discussion of various analyses of that division, what I have termed the present context of polar absolutisms.

2. *The Present American Context of Polar Absolutisms*

Almost twenty years ago and well before 9-11, Samuel P. Huntington offered his theory that cultural and religious differences are more basic than political differences and will provide major sources of ongoing conflict among civilizations.¹⁰ While Huntington has rightly been criticized for talking about civilizations as more monolithic and independent than they in fact are, his insight into the importance of core cultural values in conflicts can be applied to contemporary religious-political conflicts in the United States.

Several recent surveys and essays support the picture of American religion as polarized today, especially when contrasted to the 1950s.¹¹ A report by the Pew Research Center, covering surveys through July, 2012, shows a decline in people’s connection to institutional religion even though 80% say that “religion is at least somewhat important in their lives.”¹² Luis Lugo, the author of this report, argues that the United States is not becoming more secular but rather more polarized, as the importance of religion within the United States remains high.¹³ This polarization occurs *within* religion, sometimes in the same denomination, as well as between religious and secular groups.

In their 2010 book, *American Grace; How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, Political Science professors Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell argue that both religious and secular Americans see the other as intolerant.¹⁴ Between religious and secular and among religious groups, Putnam and Campbell

find diverse views on sexual morality, gender roles in church and society, prayer in school, racial intermarriage, religious intermarriage, and acceptance of non-Christian religions.¹⁵ They argue that this increasing polarization stems from the “sexually libertine 1960s”; the freedoms celebrated then produced a strong conservative religious reaction, both evangelical and fundamentalist, and that has produced a reaction against that conservatism, with increasing numbers disavowing religion.¹⁶

Theologian Mark C. Taylor sounds a note of alarm about this polarization when he argues that “[t]he most pressing dangers we currently face result from the conflict of competing absolutisms that divide the world between oppositions that can never be mediated.”¹⁷ Like Putnam and Campbell, Taylor sees the roots of the present culture wars in the 1960s as a period when “sameness began to give way to difference—philosophically, socially, politically, economically, and technologically.”¹⁸ But sadly, difference resulted not only in a plurality of views but in a dualistic, polarizing split that seems to leave no middle ground.

What separates religious or political groups are the religious and cultural values each side privileges, but other factors have contributed to the *intensity* of the polarization, four of which I shall briefly discuss here.

B. Factors Contributing to Religious (and other) Polarization in the United States

Factor #1 - Authority and Issues of Interpretation

Who or what has authority can be the basis for opposing views, but even where people might share the same textual authority, such as the Bible or the U.S. Constitution, they differ on how to interpret what is said. Sometimes opponents even cite the same passages as support, but their worldviews and hermeneutical approaches lead to contrasting conclusions.

A second type of authority stems from populist tendencies in the development of American religion and culture. From its early history to new religious movements, we find numerous examples of groups encouraging preaching and granting authority to people called by God or empowered by the Spirit, irrespective of class and education and occasionally even irrespective of race and gender. Many new religious movements often begin with a non-elitist figure—not highly educated, usually not wealthy, generally not powerful, etc. The freedom of religion

in the United States encourages very broad bases of religious leadership¹⁹—something seen in the Great Awakenings of the past as well as in the present period of religious vitality, sometimes called the Fourth Great Awakening.²⁰ For example, for many conservative religious people, frequent quoting of scriptures as authority takes precedence over other widely accepted bases of authority, such as education, critical thinking, use of reason, and research (scientific, social-scientific, and humanistic).²¹ For them, education and research do not bring authority...*unless* they are used in conjunction with fairly literal support from scriptures. If biblical authority trumps all other authority and popularly accepted interpreters trump trained scholars, then, for them, the education we engage in at most universities and colleges has instrumental value but not necessarily truth.

Religious scholars Stephens and Giberson use historian Richard Hofstadter's idea of the American "*democratic impulse*" to help explain anti-elitist and anti-intellectualist attitudes of many American evangelicals, noting their willingness to accept leaders who rarely have academic credentials or use accepted secular standards of evidence.²² The democratic impulse treats all citizens as equals in the polling booth; so also do the opinion polls that cover every subject from political preferences to religious beliefs to moral views to self-descriptions of various behaviors.

Mark C. Taylor connects the populist direction of culture to changes that surfaced in the Protestant Reformation, namely increased individualization and privatization, decentralization of power, and deregulation. These movements intensify in the 1960s and after with the rapid expansion of technology—from TV to personal computers—that open up information to ordinary people and empower them in ways not possible before. He states: "If information is power, its free distribution is revolutionary."²³ These technologies empower individuals in ways that can isolate them in their private spaces even while interconnecting them to others globally.²⁴ Peoples and cultures seem to be on a level playing field *to the extent* that they have access to technology. But, Taylor also notes that global interconnection makes us more aware of differences among peoples and cultures, leading to conflicts and instability rather than peace and unity.²⁵

Whether conservative or liberal, today's "information age" contributes to a populist approach to knowledge and truth. From internet sites to book-

stores, to music downloads and films, one can easily find the "information" that fits with one's self-understanding, life-choices, commitments, and political, moral, and religious ideas. The "information" is out there for the taking, and what one takes often depends on what one is looking for rather than whether what one finds is true, according to accepted academic standards. This populist dimension of our lives challenges us in the academic community—both faculty and students. How do we, or even can we, make research, grounded in academically accepted standards of evidence, more available and acceptable more broadly?

Factor #2 - Fear

A second factor contributing to current polarization, emphasized by Law and Ethics professor and cultural theorist Martha Nussbaum, is fear that can lead to intolerance of others who are perceived as enemies, dangerous to oneself.²⁶ While Nussbaum's analysis tends to use fear as similar to anxiety, Tillich analyzes fear as rooted in deeper ontological anxieties of fate and death, guilt and condemnation, and doubt and meaninglessness, all of which are a normal part of life with which we must cope. Tillich argues that one way to cope with anxiety is to focus it on fear that, unlike more general anxiety, has a definite object that can be "faced, analyzed, attacked, endured."²⁷

Fear of the 'other' operates on both sides of the religious spectrum, contributing to polarization. More extremist speakers on both sides know how to build on that fear of the 'other,' often demonizing those with opposing values. People respond to powerful rhetoric and charisma, as long as what they read and hear fits with their ways of life and thinking, supporting their sense of truth and well-being even while turning them against the "others."

While the rhetoric of the 1960s and even some of the 1970s suggests openness to others and high value for acceptance of plurality (e.g., the Second Vatican Council, the fights against segregation and for integration, and the movements against racism and sexism and for equal opportunities for all), the rhetoric of the 1980s to the present shows a negative response to that plurality and inclusivism. Post-modern approaches, as well as particular historical events, undermined grand narratives and increased authority for the individual. But they also left many searching for some grounding and choosing whatever authority and movement made sense of their lives. Thus, inadvertently, those post-modern ap-

proaches reinforced American populist tendencies, allowing authority to people who did not bear traditional credentials. The rhetoric of polarization defines the other as “demonic,” reinforcing one’s own position as absolutely right and true.

Factor #3 - Cultural Identity

As Tillich analyzes culture, he argues that most people gain support for their lives through belonging to various groups rather than focusing on their own individual identity over against everyone else. But recent sociological studies suggest that such joining is less true of young people today, not only with respect to affiliation with religious institutions but also in other social and political areas.²⁸

But even if people do not affiliate with specific institutions, according to recent studies, they “more readily follow experts they know or perceive as being like them, even if their expertise is marginal or even suspect.”²⁹ Put differently, people respond to cultural cues about whom to believe, whom to trust, and whom to connect with in groups.³⁰ Shared cultural values and experiences become the basis not only of people’s affiliations but also of whom and what they accept as true and authoritative; thus, these cultural identities reinforce religious polarization.³¹

Factor #4 - The Religious Dimension of Ultimacy or Absoluteness

Many analysts of fundamentalisms and polarization miss the importance of the *religious* factor itself—not institutional religious dimensions but the characteristic of absoluteness or ultimacy that people experience in the truths they hold onto. One advantage of attending to this dimension of absoluteness is that it can apply equally to both poles of American religion, as well as to the avowedly non-religious.

Tillich’s definition of religion as the state of being ultimately concerned offers a broadly inclusive approach, a view too broad for many of his critics. But, interestingly, it fits with the populist tendencies in American religion and can take account of people experiencing ultimacy in quite diverse objects, persons, and groups.³² That human experience of ultimacy can have both creative, positive qualities and yet also destructive aspects, often at the same time—something Tillich knew all too well from his experience with the Nazis in Germany.³³ He therefore cautions people to recognize when ordinary, finite things, people, and movements take on that quality of ultimacy or absoluteness. Tillich’s critique of

idolatry distinguishes between religious and ultimate meaning coming *through* cultural expressions and *identifying* specific people or movements or objects as absolute in themselves. Applied to religious polarization, we see that both poles can reflect an absolutism, associating ultimacy with one’s particular cultural values and desiring to impose them on others as absolute, thereby preventing dialogue.

So how do we address religious and cultural polarization and the factors contributing to it? Are there ways to work with it or to soften it that can contribute positively to American religions and cultures? What is the role of the individual person of faith who does not belong to either extreme? It is here that I turn to Paul Tillich’s views of living on the boundary, of balancing polar opposites, and of living in the tension of polar views.

C. Tillich’s Views of Living on the Boundary; Balancing Polar Opposites as the Ongoing Dynamic of Life

The polarizations just analyzed include theoretical, social, and political divisions that on a deeper level reflect a distorted picture of the polar structure of reality and knowledge that Tillich lays out in his *Systematic Theology*.³⁴ We note that a key dimension of polarities is the interdependence of the two opposing sides. For Tillich, the basic polar structure of self and world grounds the subject-object structure of reason as well as the polar ontological elements of individualization and participation, dynamics and form, and freedom and destiny that he analyzes throughout the three volumes of his *Systematic Theology*.

So it is not surprising that Tillich implies that structure in the opening lines of *On the Boundary*: “At almost every point, I have had to stand between alternative possibilities of existence, to be completely at home in neither and to take no definitive stand against either.”³⁵ Throughout his analysis of the polarities, he calls for balance between the opposing sides. His self-description of living on the boundary portrays the challenges of working for balance, for maintaining the tension between opposites, and yet also the value of the boundary for being open to new possibilities. Tillich also notes the risks of living on the boundary because life continually requires “decisions and thus the exclusion of alternatives”³⁶ that can result in imbalance if the position one takes emphasizes one side of the polarity. For us as finite beings, a complete balance is not possible,

and “polarity becomes tension,” with each side pulling in opposite directions,”³⁷ producing anxiety, as Tillich analyzes more fully in *The Courage to Be*.

The polarity that Tillich focuses on in *The Courage to Be* is that of individualization and participation, as he analyzes the limits of both sides. If one applies that polarity to the current polarization in the U.S., one sees that movements on both sides emphasize an element of individuality even in the midst of participating in various groups. Conservative religious groups expect individual experiences of faith (such as being born again) and decisions of commitment as prerequisites to belonging to the community. Moreover, even as participation is encouraged, leaders depict the stance of the group as standing over against the larger secular, often immoral, community. Perhaps more strongly, the so-called liberal left stresses autonomy over against the heteronomy of conservative religious groups. But here also, a certain conformity is assumed that reinforces individual stances and continually calls for contributions of time, money, and political expression to counter conservative movements.

With respect to the anxieties, the conservative religious right places more emphasis on guilt and condemnation although far too often the condemnation is reserved for those outside the group rather than encouraging individual moral self-critique for those inside. Doubt is discouraged as that suggests weak faith for many conservative religious groups. The absolutist left groups focus more on doubt and meaninglessness, but with doubt directed toward the views of their opponents rather than involving self-critique for individuals within the group. Guilt plays almost no role as the groups encourage a wide acceptance of quite diverse personal mores and actions. Although less expressed in either group, I think insecurity about the future or the anxiety of fate and death underlies the approaches of both groups.

But moving beyond analysis of the polar sides and anxieties, my question is how to hold the boundary between both sides, how to create a center that accepts elements of truth from both sides while keeping a critical stance against the absolutist elements. One way might be to pull together the shared values of both sides -- a sort of hybrid from existing approaches. But, for the most part, that does little to weaken the polarizations as both sides reject any softening of their absolutist approaches. Historically, efforts to mediate between different religious groups by pulling ideas and practices from both usually re-

sult in new movements, with little change or effect on existing movements...except that both sides now have new groups to oppose.

Moreover, our current context involves not just one major polarization and one boundary but multiple ones that produce tension within our lives. Just as Tillich outlines a whole set of polarities within which he lived “on the boundary,” so we also live in the midst of sets of opposing ideas and forces, in part the result of democratic freedoms and opportunities within the U.S. Perhaps the question is: How can we move forward the positive elements Tillich experienced in the United States so many decades ago—the acceptance of plurality, emphasis on discussion and teamwork even with competition, openness to new possibilities, attention to working together to address social ethical problems? The challenge of keeping these ideals while facing the realities of polar tensions connects with Tillich’s own life challenges as well as with his early emphasis on belief-ful realism and his later theology of the Cross that also critiques idolatry and injustices. Living on the boundary, for him, involves all of these.

In “Realism and Faith,” Tillich posits belief-ful realism or what he also calls self-transcending realism as a “universal attitude toward reality” that holds together both a questioning, critical realism and the transcending power of faith.³⁸ “Faith transcends every conceivable reality; realism questions every transcending of the real, calling it utopian or romantic.”³⁹ To be grounded in the real means to be in the midst of the tensions of present history, where one will always experience “forces of disintegration and self-destruction.”⁴⁰ But the creative, hopeful forces can appear if one is grasped by faith, by the depth of ultimate power breaking through and into the concrete situation, judging us but also healing us.⁴¹ For Tillich, both faith and realism include a critical dimension against false absolutizing but in different directions; faith transcends the real while realism focuses on the here and now, paradoxically holding together the finite present and ultimate power.⁴² Tillich states that “[t]he criterion of all theology is its ability to preserve the absolute tension between the conditional and the unconditional.”⁴³

In both earlier and later writings, Tillich discusses how living in the midst of that tension reveals the depth of reason and of life that, for him, finally connects to the Cross and the Christ.⁴⁴ Holding reason and faith together or the static and dynamic elements of reason finally lead to final revelation manifest in Jesus as the Christ and in theonomous mani-

festations of the Spiritual Presence. The underlying unity of opposites in the depth of life connects one to the depth of divine life.

But theological “answers” to the conflicts of reason or of other aspects of life do not resolve the tensions of the polarities. Rather, the experiences of faith connected to Jesus as the Christ and to momentary, fragmentary in-breaking of Spiritual Presence enable one to live with the tensions, to experience a depth that enables endurance and creativity. The paradox present in all of those experiences maintains the balance point of polarities so that we are called to hold that boundary, living creatively and courageously with the tensions.

Of course, this paradox is also the guardian standpoint that Tillich reiterates throughout his work, affirming the Protestant Principle, critiquing idolatries and injustices wherever they are found—in knowledge, in politics, in ethics, in religions, etc. The critique assumes both the affirmation of ultimacy breaking through and the negation of the concrete form as absolute.

Our challenge, then, is to hold the boundary, to profess a critical stance even while affirming underlying depth that gives meaning and purpose. To live in the midst of the tension of polarities is only possible with a critical faith (a belief-ful realism), with courage and creative action rooted in faith. But as Tillich also argues, one has to live in the concrete historical moment and face the issues of one’s own time. In the next section, I assess some concrete proposals that try to address current polarization in the United States and close with theoretical reflections on holding the boundary in the midst of absolutisms and “filling in” the missing center.

D. Proposals for Addressing Religious and Cultural Polarization

1. Assessment of Recent Proposals

I begin with constructive suggestions made by some of the scholars discussed earlier, with focus on the factors contributing to polarization.

With respect to the issue of populist authority, Stephens and Giberson conclude that the most successful evangelical leaders are those who are able “to don the mantle of the academic while employing the communication strategies of the preacher.”⁴⁵ In other words, the mantle of authority comes from the ability to preach rather than lecture.⁴⁶ We can take this as a challenge to us as academics to find more ways to take our knowledge to a broader public out-

side the university and to address those searching for a middle ground, those rejecting the polar choices.

On the challenge of addressing the current climate of fear, Nussbaum offers basic principles to guide our thinking and actions. Specifically, she proposes: 1) focus on the good of others,⁴⁷ 2) attention to the vulnerability of people,⁴⁸ 3) openness to others, and 4) for impartiality. Nussbaum argues that such efforts require careful deliberation and, ala Kant, testing one’s ideas and actions according to whether the principles guiding them could be recommended for everyone.⁴⁹ She is not naive about how likely this is to happen, as she recognizes disagreement about basic values⁵⁰ and knows that personal bias often prevails. But her primary argument is for the examined life, with the hope that it will lead people to avoid bias wherever possible⁵¹ and to experience sympathy and compassion for others, through imagining others’ experiences and challenges.⁵² She believes that such examination will lead to a critique of hierarchy and a rejection of unjust treatment of minorities.⁵³

Mark C. Taylor proposes that we overcome the oppositional logic of our present times by asking people to recognize that we are co-evolving and co-dependent.⁵⁴ “Far from a simple biological force, life is a complex global network of natural, social, economic, political, and cultural relations.”⁵⁵ For Taylor, we are in a process of creation of new forms, structures, ideas, and meanings but also simultaneous destruction of other forms, structures, ideas, and meanings. His governing principles are that we should embrace complexity, foster creative differences, promote cooperation as much as competition, accept volatility, and cultivate uncertainty and questioning.⁵⁶ In contrast to the dualistic logic of absolutisms -- either this way or that way,⁵⁷ Taylor proposes relationalism⁵⁸ that allows for affirmation of multiplicities, including their interactions. While this is a helpful theoretical approach, what Taylor leaves out is the dimension of power. (Interestingly, for his self-description of being at university in the 1960s, he pays little to no attention to racism, patriarchy, homophobia, or classism.)

I conclude with some constructive reflections on polarization and the missing center that take account of the multiple approaches and identities in American culture.

2. Constructive Reflections on Polarization and a Missing Center

The polarization in American religion and politics discussed here centers on differing cultural values and reflects our tendency to think in terms of dualisms or binaries: us versus them, often defining ourselves over against others. To think about ourselves and our world with more complexity can threaten the security of one's self-identity and of one's group connections. Such polarization leaves the center missing and us more insecure.

One approach is to argue that polarizations are not dangerous but rather a reflection of the "democratic character" of American religion that supports personal choice in an open society.⁵⁹ In the 2005 Tanner Lectures on Human Values at Harvard University, James Q. Wilson affirms free markets, a decentralized government, and a localized media as both enabling religious organizations while also diffusing their impact on governmental policies.⁶⁰ He emphasizes the plurality among and within religious groups in the U.S. as showing the vitality of religion rooted in American religious freedom.⁶¹ Wilson concludes that while Americans can be passionately divided by religion, "[t]he great strength of this country is that we have learned to live together despite our deepest passions."⁶²

Similarly, Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell argue that, "religious tensions in the United States are muted,"⁶³ in spite of the divisive views they found on sexuality, ethnicity, gender, and income disparity. They note that polarized views seldom lead to open hostility or violence and take hope from the ongoing fluidity and peaceful pluralism of American religion, with individuals moving in and out of religious identities and frequently intermingling at work, in social settings, and even in intermarriages.⁶⁴

The United States is an experiment in holding together people of diverse religions, races, ethnicities, political ideologies, moral views, social classes, and educational backgrounds. Our motto is *E pluribus unum*, out of many, one. If we shift the focus to the many rather than the one, we might say *multa in uno*, many in one, reinforcing the populist, democratic thrust of religious groups in the U.S. I suggest that we should not think of one center but rather multiple centers across the religious and political spectrums. If we focus on multiplicities rather than dualisms, we can see the missing center as open to multiple possibilities, all of which contribute to our culture and our vision of the world. Such an approach also allows us to take account of our individual hybridity, the multiple identities that any one

person holds as well as to the changes in ourselves that happen in our encounters with others.

To address the issue of truth implied in such an approach, I find valuable the late theologian Langdon Gilkey's suggestion of *relative absoluteness*. He developed this term in his theological struggle to come to grips with the plurality of religions and yet his ongoing commitment to his own tradition.⁶⁵ With relative absoluteness, one maintains an openness to others, learns from others, and even incorporates insights, values, and practices of others as fitting with one's own life experiences and life goals. The absoluteness Gilkey describes allows for changing understandings of what is absolute, for ongoing critique of one's views—perhaps along the lines of Nussbaum's self-examination.

We do hold onto some values as absolute, such as the equal dignity of all humans, or for religious persons, the reality of God or ultimacy. But we also know that people's interpretations of those absolutes have changed over time. Think about all the dimensions of humanity we now connect to equal dignity that our forebears could not have imagined at the beginning of the United States. Equal dignity to all humans, irrespective of ownership of property, race, gender, class, sexual orientation, diverse physical abilities, and more. And religiously, theological debates about how to understand God or ultimacy, or within Christianity, Jesus, have gone on from the beginnings of the tradition. Multiplicities abound and usually enrich and deepen our cultural and religious understandings, actions, and interactions. But when the interpretations themselves become absolutized in ways that allow for no change, we must be critical.

In his later writings, Tillich anticipates religious and cultural multiplicity in his discussions of the New Being, Spiritual Presence in Spiritual Communities, and the plurality of world religions. In his discussion of Jesus as the Christ, the New Being, Tillich leaves open the question of other ways of divine self-manifestations before and after our present history⁶⁶ although he retains Christ as "the ultimate criterion of every healing and saving process."⁶⁷ With respect to the Spiritual Presence in Spiritual Communities, Tillich allows for latent manifestation of that presence in groups that "show the power of the New Being," even if they are not actual Christian churches.⁶⁸ In explicit reference to diverse world religions, Tillich argues that spiritual presence can be expressed outside Christianity. "In the depth of every living religion there is a point at which the

religion itself loses its importance, and that to which it points breaks through its particularity, elevating it to spiritual freedom and with it to a vision of the spiritual presence in other expressions of the ultimate meaning of man's existence."⁶⁹ Here, as in his affirmation of the "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" in his last lecture, Tillich affirms the spiritual depth underlying concrete religious communities.⁷⁰ This theonomous experience is always fragmentary and carries a critical, liberating element of "openness to spiritual freedom both from one's own foundation and for one's own foundation."⁷¹ Tillich's vision offers grounding in the depth of ultimacy, critique of absolutizing any one position, and relativizing of many religious options, but the grounding in ultimacy carries the paradox of affirmation and negation, the qualities of the New Being.

Tillich's theology adds another important dimension: the issue of power. To think in terms of multiplicities may seem to soften the power issues, but, as Paul Tillich argues, every encounter of one person with another involves a relationship of power.⁷² Personal interactions are ongoing negotiations of power, even within established power structures. Our challenge is to allow empowerment of many, without oppressing or negating others and to address injustices where we see them.

In a recent article in *The Journal of Religion*, Jason A. Springs, a professor at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at Notre Dame, uses Chantal Mouffe's proposal of "agonistic pluralism" as a way to rethink religious conflicts and religious intolerance. Mouffe's agonistic pluralism recognizes the multiplicity of views and sees conflict between and among views as normal. But she reconceptualizes conflict by encouraging people to respect one's opponents and to think of them as adversaries rather than enemies.⁷³ This may allow for some concessions even while maintaining key differences but also allows for ongoing conflicts as potentially productive.

We are left then with multiplicities with a shared center in our humanity, in our American freedoms, and religiously in the spiritual depth that unifies opposites. Polarization can only be softened by how we interact with each other. The challenges are real and ongoing, as the conflicts will not and should not end. The goal here is not to give up one's values or religious commitments but to open them up enough to hear what others might have to offer and to find ways to publicly encourage openness and engagement with others. Such encounters occur everywhere

—in intellectual discussions, but also when people work on shared projects that do not depend on religious or ideological differences. We have multiple opportunities to enact respect for each other and to gain greater appreciation for what others hold valuable—multiple centers interacting, or as Taylor would say, coevolving. Note how close this is to Tillich's description of religious encounters in the U.S. involving "discussion, competition, and teamwork."⁷⁴

¹ Tillich, *On the Boundary* (New York: Harper, 1967): 96.

² Ibid.

³ Paul Tillich, "The Conquest of Intellectual Provincialism: Europe and America," *Theology of Culture* (Oxford, New York, et al.: Oxford University Press, 1959), 168-169.

⁴ Ibid., 170.

⁵ Ibid., 176.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 104.

⁸ Ibid., 106.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* (Summer, 1993), 22, 25.

¹¹ For example, see Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace; How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York et al.: Simon & Shuster, 2010), 2-3.

¹² Luis Lugo, "The Decline of Institutional Religion," Pew Research Center, The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, www.pewforum.org. (presented at the Faith Angle Forum, South Beach, Florida, March 18, 2013)

¹³ Luis Lugo, "The Decline of Institutional Religion and Implications for American Civil Life," speech at the March 2013 Faith Angle Forum, South Beach Florida, March 18, 2013, available at www.eppc.org/publication/dr-luis-lugo-at-the-march-2013-faith-angle-forum/. Also see, Thomas G. Bandy, "Religion and Culture: What Do Seekers Seek?," *Bulletin* (The North American Paul Tillich Society), edited by Frederick J. Parrella, 39:1 (Winter, 2013), 8-16.

¹⁴ Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, 495-501.

¹⁵ Ibid., chapters 4, 8, & 9.

¹⁶ Putnam & Campbell, *American Grace*, 3.

¹⁷ Mark C. Taylor, *After God* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), xvii.

¹⁸ Ibid., 219.

¹⁹ Randall J. Stephens and Karl W. Giberson, *The Anointed: Evangelical truth in a Secular Age* (Cambridge,

MA & London, U.K.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 238-9.

²⁰ See Robert William Fogel, *The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2000). In *The Anointed*, Stephens and Giberson posit that in some conservative religious movements, this openness to authority in anyone, irrespective of traditional credentials, has combined with an acceptance of the prophetic tradition and that several high-profile leaders are seen by themselves and their followers as “anointed” by God, in the tradition of biblical prophets in the Hebrew Bible (16, 224).

²¹ As Stephens and Giberson put it, “A winsome preacher who can quote the Bible and tell heart-warming stories of God’s blessings may possess more authority on global warming for believers than an informed climatologist with 100 publications and a doctorate from Harvard.” op. cit., 7.

²² Ibid., 236.

²³ Taylor, *After God*, 229.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 231.

²⁶ Martha C. Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age* (Cambridge, MA & London, U.K.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 23, 25-27.

²⁷ Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, CT and London, U.K.: Yale University Press, 1952), 36.

²⁸ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

²⁹ Stephens and Giberson, *The Anointed*, 244.

³⁰ Ibid., 249.

³¹ One recent cognitive study of Pentecostal Christians, reported by Stephens and Giberson, argues that people’s critical faculties of the brain deactivate when they listen to people they trust; in contrast, the critical faculties activate when the people listened to are not like themselves (*The Anointed*, 267). If that should hold more widely than this study, then people’s cultural identities are a key factor in what they accept as true and authoritative.

³² In one case, Tillich’s definition of religion provided a legal basis for conscientious objection for a young man who did not have institutional religious connections (*United States v. Seeger*, 380, U.S. 163, 1965).

³³ Paul Tillich, “The Demonic,” *An Interpretation of History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936. 77-122. “Das Dämonische. Ein Beitrag zur Sinndeutung der Geschichte,” *Hauptwerke* 4:99-123. Also, see Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 102-106.

³⁴ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1-3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951, 1957, 1963).

³⁵ Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary; An Autobiographical Essay* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1966), p. 13.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:198.

³⁸ Paul Tillich, “Realism and Faith,” trans. James Luther Adams, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948/1957), p. 67.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁴¹ Ibid., 78, 81.

⁴² Ibid., 78.

⁴³ Ibid., 79.

⁴⁴ For examples from his early writings, see: Paul Tillich, “Fichtes Religionsphilosophie in ihrem Verhältnis zum Johannesevangelium,” (1906) in *Frühe Werke*, edited by Gert Hummel and Doris Lax (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), pp. 9, 17; Paul Tillich, “Systematische Theologie von 1913,” in *Frühe Werke*, 315, 317; Paul Tillich, “Dogmatik,” (1925) in *Frühe Werke*, 424. For examples from his later writings, see: Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), 85, *Systematic Theology* 1: 83-94, 105, 147 and 3:252-265, and *On the Boundary*, 42.

⁴⁵ Stephens and Giberson, *The Anointed*, 268.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance*, 59.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 67.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 100-101.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 136-137.

⁵¹ Ibid., 138.

⁵² Ibid., 144-145.

⁵³ Ibid., 186.

⁵⁴ Taylor, *After God*, 327.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 343.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 356-358.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 349.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 355, 358.

⁵⁹ James Q. Wilson, “II. Religion and Polarization,” *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, Harvard University, November 2-3, 2005, 71.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 72.

⁶¹ Ibid., 73, 78.

⁶² Ibid., 79, 80.

⁶³ Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, 495.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁵ Langdon Gilkey, "Plurality and Its Theological Implications," *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, edited by John Hick and Paul Knitter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 47.

⁶⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 2:101.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁶⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3:153.

⁶⁹ Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), 97.

⁷⁰ Paul Tillich, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," *The Future of*

Religion, edited by Jerald C. Brauer (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), 90.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁷² Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 87.

⁷³ Jason A. Springs, "On Giving Religious Intolerance Its Due: Prospects for Transforming Conflict in a Post-secular Society," *The Journal of Religion* 92:1 (January, 2012), 19.

⁷⁴ Tillich, "The Conquest of Intellectual Provincialism: Europe and America," 170.

**NEW BOUNDARIES: TILlich'S
RELEVANCE TO THE MILLENNIAL
GENERATION**

FREDERICK J. PARRELLA

Introduction

As we prepare to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Paul Tillich's death in two years, it seems to me that a reevaluation of Tillich's relevance and the viability of his message and method are in order. In addition to traditional scholarship in Tillich's thought since 1965, one of the hallmarks of recent scholarship has been the application of Tillich's ideas to questions and issues that he himself could never have imagined: post-modern thinking, liberation theology, the environmental crisis, the new world political order, the emergence of world terrorism, and the technological revolution, among others. So much has happened in the fifty years since the publication of the third volume of his *Systematic Theology*, his third volume of sermons, *The Eternal Now*, and his Bampton Lectures of 1961 on world religions. This paper asks whether this Tillich's thought is relevant and applicable for the new Millennial generation. Is his method of correlation still effective in forming the questions and giving answers to a new generation, a generation whose lives are defined by September 11, 2001, not the fall of Communism, the lunar landing, the assassinations of John Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Sputnik or the space race? Millennials' lives are ruled by smart phones and computers, people whose worldviews, style of life, ethical norms, and human expectations are radically different from ours—and from Tillich's

too. Will Tillich's answers still provide meaning, as they did for those who first read his articles and books both in Germany and America, despite the vast differences between the previous generations and this one? Will his metaphor of life on the boundary still move those twenty-somethings seeking to make their way in the world?

This paper itself is on the boundary—between the newest of generations, called the Millennial generation or Generation Y, and the answers that Tillich offers in accord with his method of correlation. We will proceed with the following sections: first, an analysis of the Millennial generation and its special characteristics; second, a brief recounting of Tillich's method of correlation; finally, an evaluation of Tillich's thought in light of the Millennial generation's religious sensibilities and existential questions. Put differently, how would Tillich frame the philosophical questions of the Millennial generation and what answers would he offer?

As a preliminary caveat, my concern is limited to the North American Generation Y, those young people immersed in and formed by American pop culture.¹ At the same time, a *Time* magazine cover story on the Millennials for 20 May 2013 said that while each country's Millennials are different, "because of globalization, social media, the exporting of Western culture, and the speed of change, Millennials worldwide are more similar to one another than to older generations within their nations."² What follows is not so much an exploration into Tillich, as it is, "Tillich applied," intellectually, pedagogically, and pastorally. Could Tillich, and can those who teach Tillich today, formulate the questions and present his theological answers to the Millennials with their global mind, dramatic imagination, and sense of entitlement?

I. The Millennial Generation or Generation Y

This designation Generation Y or Millennials generally refers to people who were born between 1978 and 1989, although the dates vary widely and the boundaries are quite fluid.³ Here, we use the term to refer to the millions of young people who grew up in the 1990s and early 2000s.⁴ In my 46 years of college and university teaching, I have taught the Baby Boomer Generation, the Gen X generation, and now the Millennials or Gen Y. Generations X and Y differ in many ways; GenXers were raised at a time when both parents had to enter the workforce leaving their offspring to fend for themselves. In contrast, the Millennials are considered the most parented generation in history, with mother and father described as “helicopter” parents, always hovering over the children from pre-school through the university. They are also the largest generation of youth in history, three times larger than GenXers and 80 million strong.⁵

The Millennials, according to the Pew Research Center Report, are “the least overtly religious American generation in modern times. One-in-four, far more than the share of older adults when they were ages 18 to 29, are unaffiliated with any religion. Yet not belonging does not necessarily mean not believing. Millennials [at least they report] pray about as often as their elders did in their own youth.”⁶ Likewise, when asked about ethical issues and religious commitment, young adults are just as convinced as older people that there are absolute standards of right and wrong that apply to everyone. Yet, they are far more open to change, as the Pew Research Report indicates: “Young people are more accepting of homosexuality and evolution than are older people. They are also more comfortable with having a bigger government, and they are less concerned about Hollywood threatening their values. But young adults are also slightly more supportive of government efforts to protect morality and of efforts by houses of worship to express their social and political views.”⁷ My colleagues and I have noted a sharp rise in those who identify as “none” when asked about their religious affiliation. Many claim that they are spiritual but not religious, a topic we will explore in the final section. They are supporters of the Green movement and environmental awareness but, as one commentator writes, they are more aware of the *why* than the *how*.⁸ One might suggest that it is one thing to have an opinion, but another to

get their hands dirty. Generation Y’s search for meaning makes support for volunteering among the benefits it values highly. More than half of workers in their 20s prefer employment at companies that provide volunteer opportunities, according to a recent Deloitte survey.⁹

In the workplace, Millennials are much more individualistic; they are less likely to seek permanent jobs than to gain work experience, and often stay at a position just long enough to move on or move up.¹⁰ Some employers see the Millennials as entitled, where they feel empowered to ask for the moon in working conditions. As they were, and still are after college, Millennials are overachievers and believe that they are special. Raising a family and financial success is much more important to them than to the GenXers before them; this, of course, may be a reaction to the families in which they themselves were raised as well as their liberated sexual attitudes.¹¹ Friendship is such a strong motivator for them that Millennials in the work place will choose a job just to be with their friends.¹² This may indicate less a devotion to friendship and more a need to have someone they know with them and around them to provide social support once available through wider community ties, including that provided by the religious symbols of church and Eucharist. Millennials are less likely to develop a meaningful philosophy of life yet more likely to oppose the legalization of marijuana.¹³ Millennials have grown up in a society where individual life has completely triumphed over any sense of community, except the communities that they themselves choose to join. This situation leaves many of them searching for meaning on their own and deep within themselves. If this is so, how could a former Marine Corp Commandant remark, “We’re seeing a huge cultural shift away from the word ‘I’ to the word ‘We’ in this new generation of young people coming in”¹⁴? This seems highly unlikely. Yet, any indication of a turn to community, I suspect, may be a reaction to the hyper-individualism of the Millennial culture. Whether Millennials are the full blossoming of Christopher Lasch’s “the culture of narcissism,” in a book written more than three decades ago, is a matter of debate.¹⁵

Millennials are the first generation to be constantly connected to one another through the web, social media, smart phones, emails, and, most popular of all, texting. Their private lives have become public lives, with even their parents finding out more than they might like to know.¹⁶ The Pew Research

Center Foundation reports: “Among survey respondents who report that they texted in the past 24 hours, the typical Millennial sent or received 20 texts in that period, compared with a dozen for a GenXer and five for a Baby Boomer. Unfortunately, Millennials are also much more likely than older people to text while driving.”¹⁷ My own students inform me that 80 texts a day might be a more accurate number than 20. (Before smart phones and tablets, when I gave a break in the long class, people would get up, stretch, and talk to one another. Now they remain seated in complete silence, taking out their cell phones and texting some invisible person someplace else. In a recent luncheon with Mutie Tillich Farris, she told me that she thought her father would be horrified by all these electronic gadgets and smart phones.) Does this greater contact lead to deeper intimacy? I suspect not, especially when one hears of a Millennial breaking off a long-term romance in a text message! Finally, Millennials are much less likely to see illegal or questionable activities on the Web, such as pirating files or hacking into files, as ethically wrong.¹⁸

When the question comes to sexual ethics, the millennial generation represents the first fruits of a liberated, and perhaps disastrous, sexual lifestyle. Lawrence Stone points out how romance has been obscured by sexuality: “the saturation of the whole culture—to every medium of communication—with sexuality as the predominant and overriding human drive... In no past society known to me has sex been given so prominent a role in the culture at large nor has sexual fulfillment been elevated to such preeminence in the list of human aspirations.”¹⁹ The majority of the Millennials are into hook-up sex, radically different from the “casual sex” of the Boomers and early GenXers. Hook up sex, in Tillich’s terminology, is *epithymia* gone wild, devoid of *eros*, *philia*, and most certainly, *agape*. It is marked by no relationship, no communication, and no emotional fulfillment, merely physical encounter, and virtually always under the influence of too much alcohol.²⁰ Alcohol, usually shots of hard liquor consumed at the “pre-party” where the sexes meet separately, serves as cause and catalyst of hooking up with someone later.²¹ With “dating among college students...all but dead,”²² girls have found that they have the choice of participating in random hookups or being in an ultra-serious relationship; there simply is no middle ground anymore. And it is girls, as they prefer to call themselves even though their mother’s generation insisted they be “women,” who are most

harmed by hookup sex or sexual activity that takes place too early. As Thomas Lickona writes, “Girls are more vulnerable than boys because girls are more likely to think of sex as a way to ‘show you care.’ They are more likely to see sex as a sign of commitment in a relationship.”²³ And, of course, they can get pregnant. Is all of this hookup sex, in Ernest Becker’s phrase, merely “another twisting and turning, of groping for the meaning of one’s life”?²⁴ Boston University religion professor Donna Freitas, in her new book, *The End of Sex*, suggests that the culture of casual hookups is leading to an unhappy, unfulfilled and confused generation. She cites overwhelming research showing predominantly negative experiences that result from hooking up because, for one thing, “it is purely physical and emotionally vacant.”²⁵ As one college Junior recently told me, “Although hookup sex has become the norm for most college students, an increasing number of students project ambiguous feelings toward the practice.”

The Millennials have more freedom than any generation that has preceded it. They are free to have sex whenever and wherever without fear of pregnancy—a gift of the pill invented in the Boomer generation. They are free to study what they want to study; free to travel when and where they wish to travel. They are free to smoke or snort whatever they can get their hands on. Most importantly, they are free to believe or not believe whatever they want; they are free to see God in a church, in a place radically different from a church, or to affirm there is no God at all. They tend to define the meaning of the sacred in their own way rather than encounter it moving toward them, grasping them, and transforming them. As one college freshman, who has attended Catholic schools all her life and identifies herself as a “social Catholic,” recently said in an essay: “Religion and God should be whatever is most meaningful to you; if that is the case, it is easiest to be fulfilled and get the most out of it.” I cannot help but wonder what Tillich would make of such a comment. He would certainly see, in his fundamental structure of self and world, that the world had been swallowed up by the self and now it was the self’s burden not only to be itself but also to create a world. And there are so many choices today, so many selves one can become, so many different worlds one can choose to enter. Yet, as Philip Rieff reminds us, “There is no feeling more desperate than that of feeling free to choose, and yet not without the specific compulsion of being chosen. After all, one

does not really choose; one is chosen. This is one way of stating the difference between gods and men. Gods choose; men are chosen. What men lose when they become as free as gods is precisely that sense of being chosen, which encourages them in their gratitude to take subsequent choices seriously. Put another way, this means: Freedom does not exist without responsibility."²⁶ Are the Millennials so consumed by their search for both self and world, so influenced by what Philip Rieff has called the "therapeutic culture," that they lose a sense of transcendence in a world of immanent achievement and the pace of life? Has a Millennial's sense of the Sacred been irretrievably lost so that ultimate concern about oneself may be, with or without malice, the new form of idolatry? Let us now turn to Tillich to explore the philosophical questions and theological answers he might have for the Millennial generation.²⁷

II. Tillich's Method of Correlation

Paul Tillich's image of his life and work on the boundary—between church and world, theology and philosophy, among others—also applies to his theological method of correlation.²⁸ Simply put, Tillich's method attempts to correlate the eternal Christian message with the existential questions of people in a concrete time and place; between the eternal truth of God and shifting human experience. Put differently, Tillich's method attempts to answer the perennial question in apologetic theology: "Can the Christian message be adapted to the modern mind without losing its essential and unique character?"²⁹ Tillich stands squarely on the boundary: between neo-orthodoxy, in which the truth of faith is deduced from God's revelation in Scripture and Church tradition on one side; and, on the other, those who begin with human experience and needs of modern consciousness and often *reduce* theology to politics, psychology, ethics, or aesthetics. The neo-orthodox or "deductionists" seek certainty and security, regardless of the lessons of modern experience; the "reductionists" inevitably surrender to modern and post modern sensibilities so that the Gospel message conforms to the desires and the needs of reigning cultural norms.³⁰

From his vantage point on the boundary, Tillich affirms that theology is by nature "answering" theology: "My work is for those who ask questions, and for them I am here," he said in an interview just before his death.³¹ The work of theology is mediation

"between the eternal criterion of truth as it is manifest in the picture of Jesus as the Christ, and the changing experience of individuals and groups, their varying questions and their categories of experiencing reality."³² In a reference to the neo-orthodoxy of Barth, Tillich affirms that the message cannot be hurled like stones at believers and non-believers alike.³³ Today, contemporary neo-conservatives and evangelicals still align themselves with this transcendent pole, where the answers are objectives and clear regardless of the questions. On the other hand, Tillich also sought to prevent the reduction of the message to the situation, making the Gospel convenient to the listener. Tillich was no facile "bargainer with modernity," in Peter Berger's phrase. As Gustave Weigel, one of Tillich's earliest Catholic commentators and critics shrewdly saw: "The method of correlation is not a plea for relativism, but rather an effort to overcome it."³⁴

Tillich's method of correlation "makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise, and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to these questions." The substance of these questions is the human person, an individual concerned about his or her being and meaning. This existential question is "the question he asks about himself before any other question has been formulated."³⁵ For Tillich, the person is "infinitely concerned about the infinity to which he belongs, from which he is separated, and for which he is longing."³⁶ Yet the question must remain: is the infinite still inescapably real and imaginable among Millennials?

Rather than isolating the subject of experience from its proper object, theology must address the depth of reality that is the ground of both subjectivity and objectivity. It speaks to that ultimately personal reality more intimate with a person than a person is with him/herself. One might add Martin Buber's insight about a God who appears not as self or other but One Who is addressed in the second person: "...all names of God remain hallowed—because they have been used not only to speak *of* God but also to speak *to* him."³⁷ Thus, theology cannot speak of God without also speaking about human persons in their existential condition and vice versa. As Tillich says, "...whenever an idea of God is enunciated, it is always in correlation with an interpretation of man, and vice versa..."³⁸

The method of correlation involves both substance and form: first, theology must answer the ex-

act human question; second, it must answer the question in the form in which the question is posed. The question cannot be derived from the answer nor the answer from the question; both question and answer determine each other and are interdependent. The formulation of the question is a philosophical task, that is, it lies outside the specific work of theology. The substance of the question comes from the theologian's experience of the finite world in philosophy, poetry, psychology, other social sciences, and similar disciplines of the human spirit. The theological answer, on the other hand, has two sources: its substance is derived from the revelatory experience in the Christian message; its form is derived from the form of the question in which the philosophical analysis is contained. Tillich's special genius, as Walter Leibrecht puts it, is "to bring to clear expression what others feel only dimly and to make awareness free through the power of right definition."³⁹

How would Tillich articulate the questions of the Millennial generation today? At first glance, it may seem that the questions the Millennials pose are similar to those of young people during Tillich's German career in the 1920s. The Millennials of today, however, are quite different: they are not war weary, they are very positive about themselves and their futures, and their ethical and moral issues are not raised in the shadow of a singular traditional moral code, but often in the context of little or no code at all. They are bullish on life, cherish their independence, and have a sense of entitlement. Ironically, they are more dependent on their parents than their predecessors and the age of adolescence rises every year. In the United States, with an all-volunteer army, they no longer have to worry about being drafted into military service so prevalent among young people during the misguided Vietnam War almost a half-century ago. They are the first completely technological generation—everything is done on computers, iPads, and iPhones or smart phones. They can retreat into a world of their own creation, free to watch this movie, text an old friend, post a photo on Facebook, and countless other freedoms. Sadly, they are also free to do harm with all of their technology. No generation before has had more options to choose from or more freedom of choice; the challenge is to use their freedom wisely and responsibly.

If the Millennials are bullish about themselves, then I am optimistic about Tillich's and his successors' ability to articulate their questions, both those

spoken and unspoken, and to provide answers to these questions. Can we teachers, far removed from Tillich but equally distant from the Millennials, also apply his method in our own work as teachers? It is no easy task for an individual who spanned the 19th and 20th centuries to communicate to those born in the final two decades of the 20th century. No one doubts that Tillich continues to speak to scholars, but can his theology still be an "answering theology" for the human condition? In the final section of this paper, we will present some possible examples of such answers to questions on these topics: God, sexual ethics, and the "not religious but spiritual issue."

III. Can the Millennials Hear Tillich's Message and Take It to Heart?

Since Tillich's method of correlation depends upon the balance between question-and-answer, it is important that the question be understood and articulated properly. We will attempt to pursue this method in the following three examples: first, their search for God, second, a viable sexual ethic, and, finally, insight into the generational slogan, "I'm not religious, I'm spiritual."

God

Millennials are not disposed to accept a God trapped in institutional religion, a God of other generations but one irrelevant to theirs. They are not anti-God; God is just not an issue for many of them. With the world filled with uncertainty and anxiety, with their compulsion to gratification, and the ambiguous nature of the ethical and moral norms to direct and guide their lives, they are searching for something, something that is normative. They are searching for a God who is lost in many senses. In the world where they take college courses online, they text and Skype one another without personal contact, they must be introduced to a God who confronts them personally, compensating, perhaps, for the lack of the personal dimension elsewhere in their lives. Their God must embrace both the religious and secular realms. If God is to make sense to the Millennials, God must clearly touch their personal spiritual space unfettered by intruding sanctuaries. Beyond their active, technological, and self-absorbed universes, many Millennials are searching for a deeper meaning not only to their own lives but also to the human community. In very different ways from the generations that Tillich addressed, Millen-

nials are still asking the same question of being and meaning.

Perhaps there was no better answer to this question than Tillich's in the last century. In his thought, the question is not of any special being, but rather of what it means to *be*. As Tillich says: "It is the simplest, most profound, and absolutely inexhaustible question—the question of what it means to say that something is. The word 'is' hides the riddle of all riddles, the mystery that there is anything at all."⁴⁰ The question of being is the question of "what is nearer to us than anything else." It is we ourselves asking, "what it means that we are," and each of us, in our own time and place and in our particular manner, asks the same question.⁴¹ God as Being-itself, God as Ultimate Concern, God as the Spiritual Presence, God as the inexhaustible depth of existence, God as the source of courage or self-affirmation,⁴² God as deeper than myself and deeper than the other—these Tillichian terms will resonate with many Millennials because the terms describe divinity in ways that are existentially relevant, gender neutral, and free from institutional and ecclesiastical association.

For most Millennials, God has been unfortunately trapped inside of the church and reduced to a literal ruler or judge, some objective supreme being that has little to do with their lives. Tillich was deeply concerned about the objectification of the divine as "a spatialized conception of another order of being," insisting that God is not an object or a "supreme being."⁴³ Likewise, Millennials view God as one who demands satisfaction for human sinfulness, exemplified in the crucifixion of his son. Tillich opposes this theological interpretation of God where Jesus must satisfy his father for the sins of the race.⁴⁴ As one Millennial said to me recently: "After looking at Christ on the cross, I thought to myself that if God did that to his son Jesus, what would he do to me?" This does not encourage a mature faith! In sharp contrast, Tillich emphasizes that the cross reveals the God who is not aloof but who participates fully in human suffering. In the famous sermon, he says: "It is the greatness and heart of the Christian message that God, as manifest in the Christ on the Cross, totally participates in the dying of a child, in the condemnation of a criminal, in the disintegration of a mind, in starvation and famine, even in the human rejection of Himself. There is no human condition into which the divine presence does not penetrate..."⁴⁵ For Millennials, God is liberated from the role of objective enforcer and punisher;

likewise, the incarnation signifies God's full participation in the human condition, which is another way of saying that God is love.⁴⁶

Sexual Ethics

Many in the Millennial generation are sexually active not because they are rejecting an objective sexual ethic, but because such an ethic, if it makes sense to them at all, is irrelevant. Does Tillich have anything to say to the "hookup" generation? Yes, and his answer would take into full account both the content and the form of their question. Unlike generations past, when questions of sexual rights and wrongs were always in the minds of the young, the Millennial generation takes sex for granted. For many, the question is not *whether* but *when!* Here, I think, Tillich would have to go much deeper into the Millennial mind and heart to fathom the question about their sexuality they have not yet fully brought to consciousness.

Tillich would undoubtedly begin by examining the meaning of *Epithymia* or libido, the sexual and procreative drive towards union with another. *Epithymia* is, however, more than a drive to the pleasure of sex; the desire for sexual climax with another is not sexual love at all but the release of physical tensions.⁴⁷ The direction of authentic *epithymia* is toward physical union with the other, not the pleasure that accompanies this union. As Tillich says, "[I]t is not the pleasure itself which is desired, but the union with that which fulfills the desire."⁴⁸ For the Millennials involved in the hookup culture, sex has become even more than just a drive for pleasure but a way of dealing with the anxiety of authentic love, or, in Rollo May's terms, the daimonic power of *eros*.⁴⁹ But Tillich also emphasizes, rejecting the Western moral tradition's dualism where the way of the spirit is better than that of the flesh, that *Epithymia* is good in itself and is genuine love as the physical drive to reunion; it becomes lust only when it is a drive for pleasure and not reunion. (This is a point that many others, including Rollo May, appear to miss.) Of course, *Epithymia* must be united with the two other qualities of love, *eros* and *philia*, and must come under the ultimate criterion of love, *agape*.⁵⁰ *Agape* always allows us to see the other in his/her center—it lets us see the other with part of God's perfect vision. "Agape sees him as God sees him."⁵¹

How will the millennial generation react to such a message? I have been teaching Tillich's book, *Love, Power and Justice*, and Rollo May's book,

Love and Will (which is, in many ways a psychological transcription of Tillich's ontology of love) for many years in a course called "Theology of Marriage." Even though they are ill versed in ontology today, I find my students enthusiastic about an ontological understanding of love, one that explores love beyond the sensational, the psychological, and the media hype. Hooking up appears to be their only alternative, but some, especially the women, are uneasy about it after a while. Since the neutrality and objectivity inevitably cannot be maintained, it almost always leads to one of the partners being hurt. Eros and philia flood in and put *epithymia* in its proper place. Tillich's positive emphasis on sexual desire, as good in itself, yet his call that sexual desire be linked with transpersonal *eros*, personal *philia*, and the pure love of *agape* is a message many are very eager to hear. At deeper levels, they know that sex for sex will ultimately fail them and so they are looking for alternatives in the meaning of what they do, an alternative that will challenge the unexplored depths with them.

Spiritual but Not Religious

Perhaps no cry or slogan has been heard more frequently, so much so that it has become a cliché in the language: "I'm spiritual but not religious." This proclamation of identity, found so commonly among the Millennials, has two sides: first, it is a rebellion against religion and all things "churchy"; second, it is a quest for something different, a search for something to fill the emptiness once filled by community. It represents both a precipitous decline of the world of the "religious" in favor of the world of the secular, and, at the same time, an implicit search for something to take its place. Tillich anticipated the situation because, like the artist who is predictive, he recognized the limitations and the corruption of organized religion long before people in organized religion did. In addressing the anxiety and meaninglessness of modern life on the one hand, and the shallowness of Christian symbols or lack of courage within the Christian churches to properly address the human situation on the other, Tillich anticipated the postmodern malaise and the Millennials' search for the sacred in cultural expressions dramatically different from their parents' and grandparents' generations. Many in the Millennial generation are not "religious," at least in their own minds, because their parents rejected religion and they were raised in the world where it ceased to be a compelling reality. No

wonder, then, that so many Millennials have no traditional or communal religious sensibility.

Tillich answers the Millennials' rejection of religion by both agreeing and disagreeing with them. He agrees with them by affirming that churches reflect fallen nature or estrangement. Churches both reveal and conceal their dynamic essence, the life of the New Being. In history, Catholicism has been reified, objectified, divinized, and thereby demonized; Protestantism has also lost its critical and prophetic power. Tillich naturally rejected the heteronomous authority of the Catholic Church, and I am sure, in light of the three restorationist popes since 1978, that he would be a prophetic voice today against Roman centralized authority, authentically Catholic but certainly not Roman Catholic.⁵² He would likewise be concerned about the steep decline in numbers among mainline Protestant churches⁵³ as well as their reduction to moral and social clubs.⁵⁴ Has his question about the end of the Protestant era been answered?⁵⁵

Tillich would certainly understand a Millennial's cry for spirituality and not religion, but, of course, he would reply and confound the Millennial by making no distinction between the two. In rejecting religion, Millennials reject its irrelevant, unreformed, and sometimes corrupt societal forms. But they certainly do not reject a search for meaning, something that ties the whole of their lives together so that they can make sense of them. In short, they do not reject a quest for an ultimate meaning, an ultimate concern; put differently, a spirituality. Tillich's three volumes of sermons reflected the spiritual struggle of people long before many of them became conscious of their precarious situation.⁵⁶ So too, with the Millennials: with the outside world demanding so much of their time and energy, they are remarkably unreflective, in Gerard Manley Hopkins, terms, about the "deep down things." Tillich not only anticipated their question about religion versus spirituality, his answer is surely one that they can accept and, more importantly, they need. Owen Thomas cogently expresses Tillich's thought when he writes:

...I believe that spirituality is something universally human, that all people are spiritual; that spirituality and religion are practically synonymous, that spirituality, therefore, is as much concerned with the outer life (of the body, community, institutions, liturgy, tradition, doctrine, ethics, and society) as with the inner life; finally, that spirituality is as much concerned with the

public life and work of citizenship as with private life.⁵⁷

As Tillich himself affirms, “Spiritual experience is a reality for everyone, as actual as the experience of being loved or breathing the air.”⁵⁸ As one grows in the experience of the Spirit, “like the breathing in of another air,” as he says, Tillich reminds us that “[P]articipation in communal devotion may decrease and the religious symbols connected with it may become less important, while the state of being ultimately concerned may become more manifest and devotion to the ground and aim of our beings more intensive.”⁵⁹

Regardless of their position on not being religious or actively attending church, the Millennial generation needs to know that Tillich, a man from a century ago, understands their questions and offers them viable answers. Tillich offers the Millennials a vision of religion as the dimension of “depth” in all areas of life rather than a special spiritual area.⁶⁰ In his famous turn of phrase, “religion is the substance of culture, and culture is the form of religion,” he forever unites religion and culture, the church and the market place.⁶¹ He offers Millennials a realistic God, not God as an object somewhere else, but a God that they can find in the depths of their own existence,⁶² a God who is not the conclusion to an argument but the silent presupposition of the meaning they long for and the being that defines them.⁶³

Conclusion

Teaching Millennials is a daunting task. We cannot presume that any of the questions we had formulated earlier about previous generations will work. While I am optimistic that Tillich will continue to offer viable and vital answers for this generation and generations to come, I am also convinced that if Tillich were in our classrooms today, divining the questions of the Millennial generation—those articulated and those unexpressed—would give him deep pause. Perhaps Martin Buber’s story to young Aubrey Hodes in 1953 is a precautionary note for all of us. A student came to Buber for advice and a short time later took his own life. Buber describes the scene for us: “He came to consult with me in the hour of his deepest need.... I talked to him openly. I was sympathetic. I tried to answer his questions. But I answered only the questions he had asked me. And so I failed to see through to the man behind the questions.”⁶⁴ Tillich’s method of correlation will continue to work only if theologians who

teach young Millennials try especially hard to articulate the questions this generation is asking us. If we fail to do so, Millennials will not, as earlier generations had done, rebel against our answers. They will simply not pay any attention to them at all.

¹ My own limited observation suggests that the European youth of 21 is approximately one to two years ahead of his or her American counterpart in the level of education and emotional maturity.

² Joel Stein, “The Me Me Me Generation,” *Time* 181, 19 (20 May 2013), 28.

³ See K. W. Smola, K. W. and C. D. Sutton, “Generational Differences: Revisiting Generational Work Values for the New Millennium,” *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 23 (2002): 363–382.

⁴ <http://people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/generation-gaps/millennial-generation.htm>

⁵ <http://www.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/generation-gaps/generation-y.htm>

⁶ Pew Research Center Report, “Millennials: Portrait of Generation Next.” www.pewresearch.org/millennials, 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, chapter 9, page 102.

⁸ Janis Gaudelli, “The Greenest Generation. The Truth Behind Millennials and the Green Movement,” published on April 29, 2009. <http://adage.com/article/goodworks/truth-millennials-green-movement/136331/>

⁹ Penelope Trunk, “What Gen Y Really Wants,” *Time Magazine*, 5 July 2007.

¹⁰ For more information, see Mingnon V. Monroe, “A Phenomenological Study of Generation Y at Work: Better Understanding Generation Y’s Lived Experience in the Workplace.” Masters thesis submitted to the The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management, Pepperdine University, 2010.

¹¹ Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Go to College. Strategies for a New Generation on Campus* (Great Falls, Virginia: LifeCourse Associates, 2007), 65.

¹² Penelope Trunk, “What Gen Y Really Wants,” *Time*, Thursday, July 05, 2007. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1640395,00.html?artId=1640395?contType=article?chn=bizTech>

¹³ Howe and Strauss, 65.

¹⁴ General James Jones, Commandant, United States Marine Corps, July 1999 to August 2003, quoted in *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁵ See Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism. American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978.

¹⁶ Pamela Paul, "Cyberparenting and the Risk of T.M.I." The New York Times, Sunday, 5 May 2013. <http://wap.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/fashion/cyber-parents-accessing-perhaps-tmi.html>

¹⁷ The Pew Research Center Report, p. 25.

¹⁸ O. Freestone and V.-W. Mitchell, "Generation Y Attitudes towards E-Ethics and Internet-Related Misbehaviors," *Journal of Business Ethics* 54, 2 (Oct., 2004), 121-128. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25123331>

¹⁹ Lawrence Stone, "Passionate Attachments in the West in Historical Perspective," in *Passionate Attachments: Thinking about Love*, William Gaylin and Ethel Person, eds. New York: The Free Press, 1988, reprinted in Kieran Scott and Michael Warren, eds. *Perspectives on Marriage: A Reader*, 3rd revised edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 177.

²⁰ Laura Sessions Stepp, *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose at Both* (New York: Penguin [Riverhead Books], 2007), 19. For Paul Tillich's four types of love, see his *Love, Power and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), 28-32.

²¹ See Lerome Rabow and Marilyn Duncan-Schill, "Drinking Among College Students," *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education* 40 (1995): 52-65.

²² Dana Mulhauser, "Dating Among College Students is All But Dead, Survey Finds," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 47 (2001): 51.

²³ Thomas Lickona, "The Neglected Heart: The Emotional Dangers of Premature Sexual Involvement," in Scott and Warren, eds., 198.

²⁴ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 162.

²⁵ Quoted by Bob Laird, "Uncoupling the Hookup Culture," *The Los Angeles Times*, Op Ed, 28 May 2013.

²⁶ Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic. Uses of Faith after Freud* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 93.

²⁷ This description was shared with 30 of my students 21 or 22 years old. They confirmed the accuracy of my words. In sociological terms, this is called "Members Validation." According to Robert Emerson: "...procedure seeks to verify fieldwork findings by taking them back to the members whose worlds they describe and analyze to see if members recognize and hence 'validate' such accounts." Robert M. Emerson, *Contemporary Field Research: A Collection of Readings* (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1983), 107.

²⁸ Perhaps the best analysis of the adequacy of Tillich's method of correlation as a principle of mediation is John P. Clayton's *The Concept of Correlation. Paul Til-*

lich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology, Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980.

²⁹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3. Vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951, 57, 63), II: 7. Henceforth, ST.

³⁰ "Deductionism," "reductionism," and "bargaining with modernity" are the terms of Peter Berger in his *The Heretical Imperative. Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1980), chapters 3 and 4.

³¹ Cited by Kenneth Bagnell, "Paul Tillich: An Interview," in *The United Church Observer*, 27 15 (November 1965), 24.

³² Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, translated with a concluding essay by James Luther Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948): ix.

³³ Paul Tillich, "Aspects of a religious Analysis of Culture," in *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 154. This article originally appeared in *World Christian Education*, Spring 1956.

³⁴ Gustave Weigel, "Recent Protestant Theology," *Theological Studies* 14 (1953): 578.

³⁵ ST I: 62

³⁶ ST I: 14.

³⁷ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 123.

³⁸ Paul Tillich, *The Rediscovery of the Prophetic Tradition of the Reformation* (Washington, D.C: Henderson Services, 1950): 11.

³⁹ Walter Leibrecht, "The Life and Mind of Paul Tillich," in *Religion and Culture. Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich*, edited by Walter Leibrecht (New York: Harper, 1959), 3.

⁴⁰ Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 11.

⁴¹ Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, 86.

⁴² See Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948); *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952),

⁴³ See James Luther Adams, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science and Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 45, 270.

⁴⁴ Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 165-167.

⁴⁵ Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1963), 46.

⁴⁶ Two Catholic theologians have been influenced by Tillich here. See Dermot Lane, *Christ at the Centre* (New

York: Paulist Press, 1991): chapter three, "The Cross as the Revelation of God." See also John Dwyer, John Dwyer, *Son of Man, Son of God: A New Language for Faith* (New York: Paulist, 1983), pp. 82ff.

⁴⁷ See Rollo May, *Love and Will* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), 105-06.

⁴⁸ Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 29.

⁴⁹ May, 122-131 and 105.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice*, 117.

⁵² See Tillich's well-known comment on becoming Catholic in *On the Boundary. An Autobiographical Sketch* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 39.

⁵³ Mainline Protestant identification numbers dove from 24% to 6% and their worship attendance slid from more than 4% to less than 2%. At the same time, Millennials are small in number but their enthusiasm is up. See <http://www.edstetzer.com/2012/12/from-usa-today-millennials-at.html>.

⁵⁴ Paul Tillich, "The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism," *Protestant Digest* (New York) 3, 10 (1941): 25.

⁵⁵ See Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, abridged ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 222-233.

⁵⁶ Tillich, *The Eternal Now*, 51. This sermon was presented in Clarke Chapel at Lycoming College on October 29, 1961.

⁵⁷ Owen C. Thomas, "A Tillichian Critique of Contemporary Spirituality," in Frederick J. Parrella and Raymond F. Bulman, eds. *Religion for the New Millennium: Theology in the Spirit of Paul Tillich* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2001): 221-234.

⁵⁸ Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 84.

⁵⁹ ST III: 236.

⁶⁰ Paul Tillich, "Religion as a Dimension in Man's Spiritual Life," in *Theology of Culture*, 4-5.

⁶¹ Paul Tillich, "Aspects of a Religious Analysis of Culture," *Theology of Culture*, 42. See Mary Ann Stenger's excellent article, "Tillich's Theology of Culture in Relation to the American Religious-Secular Dialectic," *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society* 38, 2 (Spring 2012): 4-12.

⁶² See Tillich's famous sermon, "The Depth of Existence," in *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948): 52-63.

⁶³ See "Two Types of a Philosophy of Religion," in *Theology of Culture*, 10-29.

⁶⁴ Aubrey Hodes, *Martin Buber: An Intimate Portrait* (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), 10.

Coming in the Fall Issue:

- The Annual Program for the 2013 Meeting in Baltimore
- Papers from the 2012 Meeting in Chicago

*Please remember to send your dues
to the Secretary Treasurer at
your earliest convenience.
Thank you.*

PAUL TILlich AMONG THE JEWS

MARION PAUCK

My great teacher and friend, Paul Johannes Oscar Tillich, known to the public as Paul Tillich, was called “Paulus” by his family, friends, and students. His distinctive way of communicating the Christian message, whether in secular or religious circles, earned him the name of the first Christian evangelist, St. Paul, or “Paulus.” Tillich was born in a village called Starzeddel in eastern Prussia where his father was a minister of the Lutheran church and became the Superintendent of Lutheran churches in the Berlin circle in 1901. Paul Tillich earned a doctorate in theology at the University of Halle, having studied in Berlin and Breslau where he earned a doctorate in philosophy in 1910. He was ordained in the Evangelical Church of the Prussian Union in Berlin in 1912. After serving as an assistant preacher in the Moabit (the workers’ section of Berlin), he was called to army service in the First World War in 1914. For four years, he served as chaplain on the front in France and during that time rescued the wounded and dying in the front lines escaping physical injury himself. During this time, he realized that he was experiencing the end of his world, the end of an era. In his letters to friends at home he described his intense inner struggle this way: he could no longer imagine a girl’s pretty dress or white flowers or anything that did not smell of death. Indeed, the experience of war transformed his theology.

After the war, Tillich returned to Berlin. He became a Privatdozent or Assistant Professor at the University of Berlin and joined a group of Jewish intellectuals eager to find a new way of government that was neither fascist nor communist.

All the members of the group, which Tillich named “Kairos Kreis” or “Kairos Circle,” were Jewish except for him and two others, namely Gunther Dehn and Karl Mennicke who fled to Holland during the Nazi era. Among the Jewish members were: Adolf Löwe, Eduard Heimann, Alexander Rustow, and Arnold Wolfers; most of them came to America and remained in close touch with one another there. Indeed, they continued their philosophical and political conversations there in a free and open atmosphere. In Germany, Tillich’s friendships with Jewish philosophers, economists, art historians, and psychiatrists multiplied as he moved from Berlin to Marburg, to Dresden, and finally to the University of

Frankfurt. In Frankfurt, he was the only Christian in the Department of Sociology. Although he was in fact the successor to Hans Cornelius, he claimed to be Max Scheler’s successor.

Tillich’s identification with left wing groups inspired him to write a book titled *The Socialist Decision*, which became the immediate cause of his dismissal by the National Socialist Party leaders in 1933 after Adolf Hitler’s succession as Chancellor of Germany. During the summer of 1933, Tillich bade farewell to friends all over Germany. Reinhold Niebuhr, the great American theologian at Union Theological Seminary in New York, and the genial Herbert Schneider, who taught philosophy and history of religions at Columbia University, invited Tillich to teach at both institutions for a semester, thus enabling him to leave Germany before his inevitable arrest. During the summer he told many of his friends that in a recurring dream he saw sheep graze in the bombed out streets of Berlin. His certainty that another world war would break out haunted him.

In the autumn of 1933, he arrived in New York where countless Jewish refugees ultimately joined him. Once he was established as a permanent member of the Union Theological Faculty, he found himself in a position to help seemingly countless numbers of Jewish intellectuals, lawyers, historians, philosophers, and even one ballet dancer to find jobs as one after another came to these shores. He had indeed become “Paulus among the Jews.”

Tillich was not alone in helping Jewish refugee professors and a handful of Christian refugee professors to find positions in America. Niebuhr and Schneider among others continued to help refugee professors. At the University of Chicago, Wilhelm Pauck, the historical theologian who had become a close friend of Tillich’s and had been dubbed “Tillich’s guide to America” by Reinhold Niebuhr, urged Robert Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago, to make room on the faculty for refugees. Indeed, the largest number of Jewish refugee professors on any American university faculty was at the University of Chicago. Just as Tillich’s Jewish friends and colleagues gathered around him in New York, so did Jewish groups gather around Wilhelm Pauck in Chicago.

Allow me to tell you a little bit about my own background. I am a native of New York City and the only offspring of German-born parents. My father owned a French restaurant, and my mother owned a cosmetic business, both in Manhattan. They had

come to New York as early as 1922, not because they were Jewish—in fact they were Lutheran—but because of the devastating economic circumstances in which Germany found itself. My father was a well-educated man who had also served at the front during the First World War. He emerged from the war on the conservative side of the political spectrum. I do not mean to imply that he was a Nazi, but he was definitely not a Socialist. His father had been a builder in Nuremberg and had had several disappointing experiences with Jewish businessmen. These experiences were part of the baggage my father brought with him to America where ironically he cultivated a large circle of Jewish friends from Austria, Hungary, and Germany. He had helped many of them find jobs and even gave them financial aid. They were a part of the social circle of which my parents were members.

My father decided to take my education in hand and sent me to a progressive grammar school and a Quaker high school known as Friends Seminary in New York. Inevitably, I made Jewish friends who were wonderfully kind and generous to me and openly affectionate. My parents were very strict and rarely praised me to my face, although I knew from others that they were very proud of me. I delighted in the open affection shown by my Jewish friends and their families. They were, moreover, endlessly interesting conversationalists, always on the cutting edge of every subject, whether music, painting, literature, or theatre. My father seemed content until I started to date a Jewish boy. From then on, he revealed his deep prejudice against the Jews. And from that time on, he and I were on a war footing concerning the Jews that sadly lasted until his death.

After graduating from Barnard College in 1949, my closest friend and I, both Philosophy majors, had already been introduced to the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich; we decided to try for a theological degree at Union Theological Seminary just across the street. There were six young women in a class of 300 men. Today's ratio is starkly but not entirely reversed. I took a Master's degree, wrote a dissertation on Martin Luther, and then signed up for a Th.D. At the time, I also worked for Reinhold Niebuhr as managing editor of the little political journal he had launched during the Second World War, namely, *Christianity and Crisis*.

As an undergraduate, I had translated German letters and short manuscripts into English for German-born faculty members. Among these were Richard Kroner and Paul Tillich whose courses I

now attended. One morning when I had an appointment with Tillich, I felt and looked downcast. I told Tillich, who noticed others' moods quickly, that my father and I had had a terrible row about the Holocaust. Tillich listened quietly and then said, "I have just the thing for you. I have delivered lectures on the Jewish Question in Berlin recently and a Jewish magazine in this country wishes to publish the lectures. If you would translate them into English it would help me and also help you." And so, I translated the lectures and indeed they did help me understand both my father and the problem of anti-Semitism more deeply.

I hope you will forgive me for taking such a circuitous route to arrive at my subject, namely four lectures titled "The Jewish Question: A German and A Christian Problem," delivered by Tillich in Berlin, Germany, in 1950. His audience consisted of former colleagues, students, friends, and family members. He always had an eye for large, enthusiastic audiences and relished applause. On this occasion, he met with disappointment. Two of his former students had unaccountably become members of the Nazi party. With few exceptions, moreover, those who had worked against Hitler were nevertheless made uneasy, even a bit resentful, by what they heard.

He began by asking and answering questions about each concept in his first lecture. What does the word "Jewish" mean? Is it a sociological term referring to a minority group? Is it a religious reality? Does the word refer to a race? Or does the word refer to a race different from other races? Or, when we say "Jewish," do we refer to the forerunners of Christianity? Second, when we say "Christian," what do we mean? Do we refer to the Christian principle? Do we mean the Roman Catholic or Protestant churches? Do we refer to Christian church history? Or do we refer to a so-called Christian culture? When we use the word "German," what do we mean? Is there something in the German character that makes Judaism positively or negatively a German problem? Or is it completely different? Was the Holocaust a unique event, a single catastrophe in German history?

Tillich felt that all three concepts are true. The Jewish question, the German, and the Christian character—none of these possible definitions can be excluded. What Tillich regards as decisive follows: the human and personal deficiencies to which he points as he deals with the subject are genuine. He writes, "The distance between me and my subject

are as small as possible.” Tillich points out that as a Christian theologian he dealt with the subject of Jewish/Christian relations for decades. For, he talked about the questions that concern man ultimately. (Here I would like to point out that Tillich’s definition of faith is “ultimate concern,” and he refers to God as the “object of our ultimate concern.”)

These are some questions with which he struggled in his debates with his Jewish friends and colleagues. Even though, Tillich continues, his relationship with these friends and colleagues was intimate, any fruitful discussion and debate about matters of faith were most difficult. Tillich points to something he considers most important, namely, that he himself suffered the same fate as his Jewish friends and colleagues had, not because he was Jewish but because he was a Socialist and openly protested against what the Nazi regime was doing to European Jews. As I have indicated, Tillich was surprised that his audience remained unusually quiet and applauded lightly. With some exceptions, even this group of liberal people could not bear the weight of their guilt.

Tillich himself maintained that we can only accuse specific groups and specific individuals—not an entire nation—of acting in an evil manner. But one cannot refer to the guilt of a nation as a whole. Tillich’s second concept of guilt follows logically, namely, the failure of individual persons to live up to their responsibility. In this context, Tillich maintains, every German is guilty. Even those who emigrated are guilty. “Even I,” Tillich writes, “am guilty.” He continues saying that those including himself who predicted the horrors that would occur in Germany, and they predicted the worst, were truthful. Yet, they failed to prevent those horrors. They were not strong enough or sufficiently self-sacrificing. In the 1920s for example—and I mentioned this earlier—Tillich dreamt that he saw the city of Berlin in ruins. “We knew,” he writes, “that we were facing irresistible evil. But we were not strong enough to resist what was to come although we knew what would come. We were therefore guilty already before 1933.” (I wonder, as I write these words, how much a small group of professors or business people or judges or physicians might have been able to do with an already mighty military establishment that supported Hitler.)

Tillich points out that guilt can be a suppression of knowledge—“we knew but we did not want to know. There were those who wanted to know but were unable to accept the guilt of reality as they saw

it.” Instead, they said, “I wash my hands of it.” This, in Tillich’s view, is an example of simple guilt.

There is, Tillich continues, a fourth kind of guilt. This is guilt known as forgetting. Guilt in the sense of forgetting means one does not want to remember, one wants to forget. In a reference to Max Scheler’s splendid essay on “Contrition”, Tillich points out that contrition is arrived at by expelling something false from one’s inner life. Especially those elements which have induced the anti-Semitic madness must be driven from the soul in order that they not be forgotten but rather be acknowledged and banished under the pain of repentance.

Another interesting reaction on the part of Tillich’s audience at these lectures is revealed in this confession. The audience confesses to him and to themselves: “The Jews have suffered, and we have suffered and so we are even.” This point of view is unacceptable, said Tillich, for it contradicts the basic law of life as expressed in the biblical idea of justice. There were indeed a handful of listeners who agreed with Tillich on this point but they were as rare as a blooming rose bush in winter.

Tillich continues his lecture by pointing to the difference between anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. The origins of anti-Semitism lie in theories of race that in fact arose in England and France and ironically not in Germany. The word for “race” in German is “Rasse.” The word “rassig,” an adjective, on the other hand can also mean “noble” or “blue blooded.” Proponents of naturalistic race theories of the 19th century seem to have led to the anti-Semitic horrors of the 20th century. But of course Tillich knew well that the immediate reason why the Nazis attacked the Jews was that they needed to blame some group for the economic crises of inflation and depression after the First World War.

Jesus remained a Jew, Tillich continues, although he considered himself the Son of God ushering in the faith of the New Testament. St. Paul was also not anti-Jewish or against Judaism; yet, he was a Jew who became a Christian. Tillich asks us to look at the 9th and 11th chapters of “Romans” as an example. “So long as there are Jews, there will be Christians.” Tillich concludes that Anti-Judaism was born at the moment when Christianity entered the pagan world and had to interpret itself to paganism. When we read the Gospel of John, Tillich continues, we see that St. John blames the Jews and not the Romans (Pontius Pilate) for Christ’s crucifixion. Pilate is later described as a convert and in Egyptian lore, Pilate is referred to as a saint. Tillich refers to

Pope Innocent III, the most powerful Pope in Christian history, who called the 4th Lateran Council at the high point of the Middle Ages. Although this Pope put laws in place to protect the Jews, the authority of the church ultimately felt threatened and thus became more rigid in its point of view.

Tillich, like his fellow theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and other contemporary Christian leaders, was against any attempt to convert the Jews to Christianity. In this context, Tillich reports to his German audience that Protestant churches in the United States have erased all references that point to the involvement of Jews in Christ's death. Pontius Pilate, after all, was Roman and his decision to crucify Christ was a political one. Moreover, Tillich points out that in the United States, Christian churches have also in some cases erased hymns using war-like symbolism, e.g., "Like A Mighty Army Moves the Church of God." I do not know whether this has also been done in Germany by now.

Tillich points out at the end of the first lecture that Christians must remember the fact that their roots are in the Old Testament. Judaism, as we have already pointed out, precedes Christianity and the New Testament is dependent upon the Old Testament. To deny this is to deny Christianity.

Tillich's second lecture analyzes the Jewish question as a German problem. He recalls a lecture he delivered at the University of Frankfurt on Founders' Day in 1933 shortly before Hitler came to power. In that lecture, he traced the developments of German intellectual history from the time of Spinoza, a Jew, through classical poetry and philosophy, to Marx, also a Jew. He demonstrated in his lecture how the rational Jewish mystic Spinoza influenced the greatest period of German poetry and philosophy and how at the end of this period the rational Jewish ethicist, Karl Marx, functioned as the critic of these movements. In 1933, Germans did not hear these facts gladly. As Tillich left the assembly hall, he heard some colleagues say to one another, "Now they even want to make us into Jews."

Tillich points out that such a remark, foolish and careless though it is, has serious implications. The question is, "Are there structural analogies between the Jewish and the German character?" Tillich was convinced that such analogies exist and states that his suspicions were confirmed by his experiences as an émigré. The fact is that most of the Jewish émigrés were more homesick for Germany than some gentile émigrés. Why? Because, says Tillich, from the time of the emancipation of the Jews onward, a

close connection between German culture and Judaism was created. Mendelssohn was the philosopher of the Enlightenment, Spinoza was the saint of Romanticism, the woman, Rahel Varnhagen, was the source of its inspiration, and German youth found its poetic voice in Heinrich Heine. The social revolution became articulate in Marx. It is amazing to note how quickly the Jews supplied creative forces to German culture after their emancipation and, because of a deep affinity, a fruitful interpenetration took place.

Moreover, according to Tillich, both groups experienced a prophetic period of reform: the Jews in Prophecy, the Germans in the Reformation. They experienced the relativities and ambiguities of the national process of self-realization: the unconditional represented both judgment and demand. In both cases, national self-realization was never again achieved, and the break never healed. The Jews ceased to be a nation of space after the break; they became a people of time. The Reformation brought about in Germany produced a territorial insecurity and a belated self-realization of the German nation. We find in both peoples a surprisingly unique emphasis on space as a metaphysical problem. (Although I have not yet referred to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict in this discussion, this analysis is entirely relevant.)

Tillich points out similarities between Germans and Jews which may surprise you and with which you may disagree. He states that both the Germans and the Jews experience an inner strife which reveals itself in a mixture of self-hatred and self-overestimation. It is a strange and contradictory mixture. In both cases, it represents destiny as well as character. The great Germans criticize the German people and this criticism is somewhat different from natural self-criticism. Heraclitus says, "A man's character is his fate." It is interesting to point out here that the great Germans who make this criticism do not do so in the hope that they can change the German character or destiny; rather their criticism is an act of despair. In contemporary Judaism, a certain anti-Semitism, which is expressed by the most intelligent and critical Jews, exists. This is particularly sharply expressed in Marx's writings about the Jews.

Tillich speaks of the national destiny and self-understanding of the Greeks, and also of the Romans, the British, and the Americans. But when it comes to Germany Tillich states that its self-understanding disappeared after the time of the medieval German emperors. In modern times, Tillich maintains that Germany has not found a genuine sense of

calling. I do not know whether he would say this today. Tillich points out that he does not mean that other people are better than the Germans but he is concerned with German historical destiny. Tillich died before the reunification of Germany, which has developed far more peacefully and constructively than many predicted, especially now that Germany is the strongest economic power in Western Europe. Tillich's main point here, however, is that the Germans who yearn for Italy, Russia, or the United States tend to identify themselves so completely with their adopted countries that they virtually disappear.

On the other hand, a striking difference is seen in the Jews who are able to adjust to any given situation. The Jewish émigré does not disappear. He remains visible. Tillich points out that the great leaders of Germany have always been separate and apart, whereas the great leaders in Great Britain or America have been identified by and with the masses. Tillich's comparisons may no longer ring a bell so far as we are concerned but his point is well taken: the similarities and differences between the two peoples played a role in the Holocaust.

Here is an interesting paradox: for a very long time, the lower east side of New York was the place in Manhattan where the majority of Jews lived before they moved up the economic and social scale. It was as though they were isolating themselves. There were always intellectual Jews who congregated on the upper west side of Manhattan as well as Jews involved in the world of music and the theatre. There was also a smallish group of Jews who climbed the social ladder through banking and the theatre, or by becoming Unitarians, who lived on the Upper East Side in the so-called Silk Stocking district. Here, wealthy Protestants were in the majority. Today Jews are scattered more evenly throughout the city. The success of Jews in this country continues to demonstrate their ability to flourish in a free society. I recall Elie Abel's conviction that "Jews in this country are safe and sound and very successful." And yet, some Jewish citizens in America do not always feel secure. A close German Jewish college classmate of mine, a refugee who left Germany in 1939, becomes nervous when right wing groups like the Tea Party make threatening sounds not only to Jews but also to us all, threatening our freedoms. It has become harder for me to comfort her in recent years although our 2012 election ameliorated our anxiety. This dear friend is an example of someone permanently scarred by events in her pre-teen youth.

Unlike her older sister and the émigrés whom Tillich knew, for example, she has never been able to return to Germany.

Tillich made one point in this lecture with which one of my closest Jewish high school classmates, the late Adam Pinsker, a brilliant impresario of ballet and orchestra, a Quaker by choice, and a multi-linguist, did not agree. He felt there was a touch of anti-Semitism in Tillich's analysis. I quote the passage below.

The anti-Semite is frightened by the mirror that the Jew holds up to him. There are moments in which we dislike, even detest ourselves, when we see ourselves in a mirror. The mirror tells us what we are for others who look at us. In many utterances of cultured Jews, there is something that the Germans regard as a mirror. The German knows that the mirror tells the truth, but he cannot bear the reflection, and therefore he reacts against the person who holds it up to him. This does not mean that the person who creates the mirror does not need a mirror himself and would probably react to one in a similar way. I speak neither philo-Semitically nor anti-Semitically but analytically.

This is indeed a paradoxical statement. This quote leads us to the third lecture in which Tillich considers the Jewish question as a religious problem.

In the last resort, the Jewish problem can only be understood as a religious problem. It is not sufficient to consider the problem as we have just done. The reason why the history of the Jewish people is marked by something unique and particular can only be understood in the light of religious analysis. The sociological question leads directly to the religious question. A group like the Jews has after all existed for 3000 (or 5000?) years and has become the object of diversionary tactics. The decisive question is: how is it that such a group exists?

Christianity was not alone in opposing Judaism and the Jews. Christianity also opposed other minorities, but no case even vaguely resembles Christian anti-Judaism. And here we stumble upon the basic problem of these lectures, namely the theological problem. Whenever we encounter the Holy we experience that which concerns us unconditionally, that which we cannot push aside. It comes upon us as absolute demand. It is also two-sided. On the one hand, the holy grasps us and we cannot push it aside. The holy includes goodness and truth but it is not created by them; it is the holy's ultimate root.

The other side of the holy, according to Tillich, is this: it is never completely finished. It is always challenging, demanding perfection and promising fulfillment. Tillich continues, "The holy contains the tension between that which is and that which ought to be." As he says:

Being and what ought to be struggle with one another. The holy, insofar as it is a demand, has prophetic character and this demand is the norm of the holy. Everywhere there is a more priestly-sacramental or a more social-prophetic type. If there is only the priestly pole, the sacrament turns into magic. If there is only prophecy, gospel turns into law. The holy is real only when both poles are effective.

The prophetic type is the Father type, and it serves as a contrast to the sacramental Mother type. In the Prophet, the tradition turns against itself and breaks into its own immediacy and certainty. The individual is directly confronted by God and God's unconditional demand. The taboo that protected the church and her representatives from criticism disappears. The prophet criticizes everyone who tries to hide behind the sacramental taboo. And yet, here the power of the Holy is not undone. The Prophet makes his demand not on the basis of an abstract moral law but rather on the basis of the covenant through which God has pledged himself to his people.

There is no story as characteristic of this situation as the story of Abraham's call. Here everything that Tillich has said about the conflict between space and time is expressed in classical symbols. Abraham is called out of the space to which he is bound. He is called away from the social, cultural, and religious ties that give him his being. He is called out of space into time. The sacred and/or consecrated space that he shared with everyone is broken through. He is to go into a country that God will show him. The event symbolized in Abraham's call has always repeated itself in Jewish history. The event through which Israel was created as an historical reality is traditionally called Exodus, the going out from a space, namely out of Egypt, where Israel lived even if not independently. Israel's later history is the history of perpetual exile, which means banishment from the space where one belongs. Israel's history becomes a history of the Diaspora, namely the dispersion into other nations, followed by new exiles, or banishment from these nations. The Jewish people also have a space. Without one, of course, they could not be. But it is not their own space, but a guest space and therefore not secure since it can be, and has been, taken

from them at any time. This means the transition of the Jewish people from confinement to space to connection in time. This has a threefold consequence: the line of time is the line of history; it is the line of monotheism, and also the line of justice.

History, according to Tillich, and I have been paraphrasing him, is always a history of the struggle of a people with the demands of the gods of space. Hence, the nation that represents time against space is necessarily the enemy of all space limited nationalisms and imperialisms. There existed, for example, a Roman anti-Judaism before a Christian one existed. The Romans felt that the Jews, through the God of time whom they served, attacked the space of the Empire. The feeling of the Romans was justified. Judaism represents an attack on the pantheon of the gods because it is essentially monotheism bound. Polytheism is essentially bound to the gods of space and monotheism therefore means being bound to the God of time.

The God of time is universal and so is the God of justice. God is not bound to Israel if Israel breaks the covenant based on justice. The history of Judaism is a constant conflict between the power of space, to which everything that exists is subjected, and the demands of time torn out of the securities of space. There is always a remnant that is obedient to the gods of time that are torn out of the securities of space. There is always a remnant that remains obedient to the God of time and carries on Judaism's function to be the people of time. Judaism, therefore, remains for all time a thorn in the flesh of all idols of space, all nationalisms and imperialisms. Christianity, too, is part of this history. In the proclamation of John the Baptist, one finds a radical attack on the particular nationalistic tendency in Jewish history. Jesus continues this proclamation. This is why the first Christians thought of themselves as fulfillers of the prophetic tradition of Judaism. Christianity broke through the space limitations of Judaism and gathered the elect from all people. One could dwell on the tensions between Jews and Christians concerning the meaning of "the Christ" but that would lead us too far afield today.

Instead, we come face to face with Zionism. The state of Israel was founded in 1948 immediately after the United Nations approved its establishment. Tillich regards Judaism and the Jews as a nation even before it took hold of its land. It is a nation, he says, in a unique sense. It is a people and not a people in the same sense in which it is a church and not a church. The situation of Judaism, of being people

and not a people, is expressed by the fact that the Jew is once again driven out of his own space.

Tillich, recognizing that Jewish assimilation had suffered shipwreck in Europe, has succeeded amazingly well in America. There are still Jewish circles today that attempt this solution. In general, however, Judaism has taken another road and has followed it with amazing energy. It is the attempt of Judaism to create a space for itself that is its own space. This happened in the Zionist movement. The success of Zionism, the creation of a Jewish state, amid the settlement of Palestine, means the end of the Diaspora for a considerable number of Jews. Sharp conflicts can arise from this reality in the new nation. One is critical of the establishment of a Jewish state, an event that goes beyond what earlier Zionists wanted. Or one tries to organize it theocratically, namely, to subject the entire national life to a religious ideal. It is, however, naturally questionable whether it is possible to construct a modern national state on a theocratic basis. The development of Israel to date speaks against this. Although Tillich wrote these words in 1953, he might still agree with them today.

Tillich's question applies to some extent to the contemporary situation. Is it possible that the space that Israel has found as its own space may lead to a new embodiment of the prophetic spirit? It is possible since this space is completely filled sociologically and psychologically by the Jewish spirit. The danger, however, to Israel is that as a nation she will lose the element of the religious spirit and become a secular nation. (As things have developed in the last sixty years, it seems to many onlookers that Israel's space has almost become one framed on all sides by enemies and that therefore the people of time have become by necessity a people of space. I do not want to open a discussion about the Jewish/Palestine conflict which has gone far beyond Tillich's analysis.)

So far as the nature of German guilt is concerned, Tillich had also recommended national psychiatry as a necessity but also an impossibility. The

number of Jews in Germany today is very small. Every year a certain portion of German income is taxed and sent to Israel as a "Wiedergutmachung" or "recompense" for the Holocaust. Germans, in their seventies today, were children during the Second World War and they do not feel responsible for what happened then. And the younger generation sometimes grumbles about being taxed for heinous deeds for which they are not directly responsible. Yet I am also aware of certain student groups in Berlin who obsess about the Holocaust.

The incredibly destructive and inhumane wave of hostility that swept Europe before the middle of the last century has dissipated. Both Jews and Christians have a common enemy now in the radical Muslim movement. The extraordinary genius of Jews of every century, whether in Biblical times or in our time, continues almost out of proportion to their numbers. What will happen to Israel, the nation, remains a mystery, which must be solved by compassion and the willingness to compromise on both sides.

Tillich ends his lectures with a paragraph that is almost a prayer and I would like to conclude this paper by quoting him directly:

How can we overcome the conflicts of human existence? The Christian answer is not an argumentative answer. It is an answer of being. Perhaps it is not unjustified to hope that there will emerge from Christian Being that power that will destroy the demonism of anti-Semitism and create a new community between Christianity and Judaism not only in the German nation but in all nations.

[Quotations and paraphrases are all from Paul Tillich: "The Jewish Question: A German and a Christian Problem."]

The Officers of the North American Paul Tillich Society

President

Echol Nix, Furman University

President Elect

Duane Olson, McKendree University

Vice President

Charles Fox

Secretary Treasurer

Frederick J. Parrella, Santa Clara University

Past President

Courtney Wilder, Midland University

Board of Directors

Term Expiring 2013

Nathaniel Holmes, Florida Memorial University

Bryan Wagoner, Harvard University Wesley Wildman, Boston University

Term Expiring 2014

Marc Dumas, Université de Sherbrooke

Janet Giddings, Santa Clara University and San Jose State University

Marcia MacLennan, Kansas Wesleyan University

Term Expiring 2015

Tom Bandy, www.ThrivingChurch.com

Adam Pryor, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley

Devan Stahl, Saint Louis University

