



BULLETIN

The North American Paul Tillich Society

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If you have presented a paper at the 2015 meeting of the NAPTS or the AAR Tillich Group in Atlanta, Georgia, please send the paper to the editor for publication in the Bulletin. Since this is a privately circulated Bulletin, publication elsewhere is permissible.

**THE 2015 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
NORTH AMERICAN PAUL TILlich SOCIETY
AND THE ELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS**

The annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society was held in San Diego, California on Friday, November 22, and Saturday, November 23, 2014, in conjunction with the meeting of the American Academy of Religion. The AAR Group, "Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture" also met on Sunday and Monday, November 24 and 25. The meeting on Monday was a joint meeting with the AAR's Kierkegaard Society

The annual banquet of the Society was held on Friday night, November 22, 2014, at *Seasons 52* Restaurant, near the San Diego Convention Center. The guest speaker at the banquet was Peter Slater. His banquet address is published in this Bulletin.

New officers were elected to serve the Society for 2015:

President

Bryan Wagoner, Davis and Elkins College

President Elect

Adam Pryor, Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas

Vice President

Devan Stahl, School of Human Medicine, University of Michigan

Secretary-Treasurer

Frederick Parrella, Santa Clara University

Past President and Chair, Nominating Committee

Charles Fox, SUNY, Empire State College Emeritus

Three new members of the Board of Directors were also appointed for a three-year term, expiring in 2018:

Jawanza E. Clark, Manhattan College

Johanne Stebbe Teglbaerg Kristensen,
University of Copenhagen

Jari Ristiniemi, University of Gävle

The Officers and the Board of the Society extend their most sincere gratitude to Past President Duane Olson, McKendree University, Lebanon, Illinois, for his four years of service as an officer of the Society. The Society also wishes to thank those members who have served on the Board for a three-year term expiring in 2015:

Tom Bandy, www.ThrivingChurch.com

Adam Pryor, Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas

Devan Stahl, School of Human Medicine, Michigan State University

Congratulations to the new officers!

**NAPTS CALL FOR PAPERS
2016 MEETING
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

For the 2016 North American Paul Tillich Society meeting we seek papers or panel proposals related to any of the following topics.

A Tale of Two Pauls. Paul Ricoeur and Paul Tillich were both European transplants that taught at the University of Chicago, although at different times. We seek paper proposals bringing together the work of these two thinkers. Special consideration will be given to proposals that address any of the following questions. Is there evidence that Ricoeur was influenced by the work of Tillich, and if so where and how? How might we compare and contrast the influence of Mircea Eliade (a colleague of both at Chicago) in the work of Ricoeur and the late essays of Tillich? In light of their respective methods for crossing borders between theology and philosophy, what is the continued relevance of their approaches for contemporary work in philosophical theology and/or philosophy of religion? Proposals will be considered for a co-sponsored session with the Ricoeur Group of the AAR. **Please submit paper proposals for this session directly through the AAR PAPERS system (Due March 2nd).**

Tillich and Political Theology. The past two decades of Tillich scholarship have seen significant analysis of how Tillich's theology and philosophy of religion were crucial to forming his political activity and thought. This analysis spans a diverse series of issues and periods in his life, including his early socialist writings, differences in wartime and peacetime political reflection, and the relevance of his theology of culture to politics. We seek papers or panel proposals that describe the continuing relevance of Tillich's political theology today. This may take the form of either the direct application of Tillich's work to a contemporary problem or a constructive political theology rooted in Tillich's thought.

Interreligious Dialogue. In his final lecture before his death, “The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian,” Tillich famously elaborated on the importance of the ‘Religion of the Concrete Spirit.’ He is wrestling with a tension between pluralism and commitment that is undeniably self-critical. As issues of radicalization, religious intolerance, and the decrease in religious participation by Millennials in America have become familiar tropes in news media, Tillich’s later writings have only become increasingly relevant. We seek papers that explore how Tillich’s reflections on the tension between pluralism and commitment speak to current issues in interreligious dialogue and the emerging field of interfaith studies.

As always, Tillich-related papers or panels on other themes will be seriously considered, with specific themes for the meeting determined by the merit of proposals received. Proposals submitted to the AAR Tillich Group will also be considered with permission of the author.

Please send all paper and panel proposals (including a 150 word abstract) by April 1st to *both*:

Dr. Adam Pryor, Bethany College
email: pryoraw@bethanylb.edu

Dr. Bryan Wagoner, Davis and Elkins College
email: wagonerb@dewv.edu

**CALL FOR PAPERS
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION GROUP
“TILlich: ISSUES IN THEOLOGY,
RELIGION, AND CULTURE”
2016 MEETING
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

Statement of Purpose

The AAR Group fosters scholarship and scholarly exchanges that analyze, criticize, and interpret the thought or impact of Paul Tillich (1886–1965) and that use his thought—or use of revisions or reactions against his thought—to deal with contemporary issues in theology, religion, ethics, or the political, social, psychotherapeutic, scientific, or artistic spheres of human culture. We cooperate with the North American Paul Tillich Society (a Related Scholarly Organization of the AAR), which is linked with the German, French, and other Tillich societies. Papers at our sessions are

published in the Society’s quarterly Bulletin without prejudice to their also appearing elsewhere.

2016 Call for Papers Is Open!

The 2016 AAR Annual Meeting [Call for Papers](#) is open! Proposals are submitted through [PAPERS](#), the AAR’s Program Administration Proposal, Evaluation, Review, and Submission System. The deadline for submissions is **Tuesday, March 1, 2016, at 5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time**. For help using PAPERS, instructions are available [here](#).

Call for papers:

<https://papers.aarweb.org/content/welcome>

NEW PUBLICATIONS

- Chan, Keith Ka-fu. “Paul Tillich’s Understanding of Theology: A Pneumatological Christological Perspective,” *Sino-Christian Studies: An International Journal of Bible, Theology & Philosophy* 20 (2015): 33-86.

- Yunt, Jeremy D. *Love, Gravity, and God. Religion for Those Who Reason*. Introduction by Paul Lee. Santa Barbara, California: Barred Owl Books, 2015.

[From the book jacket]: Distilling down one of the most groundbreaking and important religious texts of the past century into accessible language, I’ll go inside the main ideas of the philosopher-theologian who revolutionized our understanding of religion, Dr. Paul Tillich. Applying the classical virtues of reason, tolerance, and courage, Tillich will show us an interpretation of religion—in particular, Christianity—without the supernatural and literalist distortions that make it so difficult for reasonable people to accept; he’ll penetrate the nature of reality and of our own self understanding through the lenses of psychology, philosophy, biblical scholarship, science, and Eastern wisdom; he’ll assess the profound effects of technology and industrialization on the human spirit and nature; and he’ll confront us with a vital fact that science and religion should never be in conflict. Through all of this, we’ll see why he was hailed during his lifetime as an “apostle to the intellectuals.”

- Stahl, Devan. “A Christian Ontology of Genetic Disease and Disorder,” *Journal of Disability and Religion*, 19, no. 2 (2015): 119-145.

This article will present an ontology of the human person that is predicated upon a Christian understanding of God the Creator. It argues that defining ontological

personhood in relation to God is essential for determining how Christians should understand personhood and human nature and their relation to genetic disease and disorder within human life. To show how a theological account of ontology can influence genetic debates, the article first explores why it is necessary to define personhood as an ontological reality granted by God in creation, as described by Paul Tillich. Next, the article discusses how we ought to understand human nature in relation to fallenness and sin. Finally, the article explores how our vision of resurrected bodies within the Kingdom of God can inform our treatment of those living with genetic diseases and disorders in our present communities. Within the classic Creation–Fall–Redemption narrative, the article focuses on the status of individuals whose bodies are often deemed subhuman by our contemporary definitions of personhood.

- Pattison, George. *Paul Tillich's Philosophical Theology: A Fifty Year Reappraisal*. New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Paul Tillich's Philosophical Theology takes up the challenge as to whether Tillich's thought remains relevant fifty years after his death. On the one hand, Tillich's systematic approach might mark him out as representing the kind of metaphysical thought critiqued by post-modernism, suggesting that he has relatively little to say to us today. However, drawing on his early research on Schelling, his religious socialism, his writings on art, and his preaching, as well as on his more systematic writings, the book argues that his thought is in many respects exemplary of open theological engagement with the contemporary intellectual situation.

For other information about two new books, please see:

[http://www.palgrave.com/page/Paul-Tillich-50th-Anniversary/?WT.mc_id=EMI_PALGRAVE_1512_SRL1875-Author-Newsletter-Dec%20\(1\)&WT.i_dcsvid=&spMailingID=50154886&spUserID=MTc0MzgXODY5MDE0S0&spJobID=820300119&spReportId=ODIwMzAwMTE5S0](http://www.palgrave.com/page/Paul-Tillich-50th-Anniversary/?WT.mc_id=EMI_PALGRAVE_1512_SRL1875-Author-Newsletter-Dec%20(1)&WT.i_dcsvid=&spMailingID=50154886&spUserID=MTc0MzgXODY5MDE0S0&spJobID=820300119&spReportId=ODIwMzAwMTE5S0)

This link was emailed to members of the Society on 3 December 2015.

- *Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought*, vol. 1, by Wilhelm and Marion Pauck. Re-issued in paperback with a new Preface by Marion Pauck. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2015.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Fred:

In his otherwise excellent panel presentation and follow-up discussion during one of our sessions in Atlanta this past November, John Thattamil spoke (1) of Tillich's putative "supersessionism," and (2) of the supposed fact—I think I heard this correctly—that in his last lecture, Tillich indicated that he was perhaps at last willing to give up that supersessionism.

From the floor, I took issue with John quite briefly with regard to the first point. I want very briefly to explain my objection on that first point. The second point demands a close reading of Tillich's last lecture, which I won't get into here. That reading partly or potentially depends upon how we settle the first point, anyway.

What I said from the floor was that Tillich is a supersessionist only in the odd sense that, for so long as a given group is engaged with and grasped by a given faith, that faith supersedes for them all other faiths, and is final for them. Thus any group's judgment—including the judgment of the huge group of the Christian church—that their revelation is FINAL, is an existential and not a theoretical-objectifying judgment. To agree with them is to step into the Christian theological circle.

Rob James, University of Richmond

LETTER FROM ETIENNE A. HIGUET OF THE BRAZILIAN PAUL TILlich SOCIETY

Dear Colleagues of the NAPTS,

I was tasked to gather articles for an issue on the actuality of the thought of Paul Tillich, for the scientific journal, *Estudos de Religião* (*Studies in Religion*), published by the Graduate Program in Religious Studies of the Methodist University of São Paulo, where I have spent most of my academic career. I enclose a copy of the call published in the magazine on the site: www.metodista.br/revistas/revistas-ims/index.php/ER, or www.metodista.br/estudosdereligiao. Articles should in principle be submitted on the same site until September 15, 2016. See also below standards of publication in English. Authors must register in the gateway before starting the submission process. As the proc-

ess is a little complicated, those who encounter difficulties in handling of the system—I think that this would be almost everyone—can send me their article directly to the address: ethiguet@uol.com.br. To get an idea of the texts that we receive, I would like those who have the firm intention of sending an article to let me know as soon as possible, with a provisional title and a brief summary. Articles that are the subject of an invitation—as is the case here—will not be subject to the “blind” evaluation by specialists.

—Professor Etienne A. Higuete, president of the Brazilian Paul Tillich Association.

Call for Papers to the Dossier of December 2016

The Actuality of Paul Tillich's Thinking

The German-American theologian Paul Tillich, who died fifty years ago, is considered by many as the greatest 20th-century Protestant theologian. He interacted with the greatest names of philosophy, theology, and the human sciences of his time. We can mention Ernst Troeltsch, Max Scheler, Martin Buber, Karl Jaspers, Karl Barth, Mircea Eliade, Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and even Albert Einstein. He influenced generations of theologians, among which we can mention David Tracy, Mark Taylor, and Mary Daly. To this day, Paul Tillich is adopted as an interlocutor for researchers from all over the world, even if it is to criticize him.

We are asking for articles that underscore the relevance of the thought of Paul Tillich and his contribution to contemporary debates in philosophy, theology, history of religions, and other disciplines. The texts can admire the main theological and philosophical themes such as philosophy of religion, the nature of theological method, epistemology, hermeneutics, ontology, ethics, ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue and religious analysis of culture, in the fields of politics, economy, science, gender, art, and literature, among others. The contributions can be dedicated exclusively to Tillich's thought or establish a dialogue between him and other relevant authors in different domains. Articles in French, English, German, Spanish, or Portuguese must be submitted by September 15, 2016.

The scientific journal, *Estudos de Religião* (*Studies*

in Religion), published by the Graduate Program in Religious Studies of the Methodist University of São Paulo, in print since 1985, is the oldest scientific journal in Brazil of its kind. Since 2009, it has also been published as an Open Access Journal (www.metodista.br/estudosdereligiao). It is classified by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), a governmental agency that regulates the quality of educational institutions, publications, and professors as A2 (in a scale with the maximum note A1). *Studies in Religion* is dedicated to the study of the phenomenon of religion. It gives special attention to the relations between religions and social sciences, psychology, theology, history, literature of the biblical world, and religious practices of diverse social strata. For its section called “dossier,” *Religious Studies* invites nationally and internationally recognized researchers to write articles on specific issue. In these special cases the articles submitted do not pass through peer evaluation.

Texts should be sent via the online system in the gateway of Metodista: <https://www.metodista.br/revistas-ims/index.php/ER>. To submit an article the author should register in the gateway.

Presentation of articles

The text should be between 15 and 20 pages (single spaced, Times New Roman, size 12, 2.5 cm margins), including bibliographical references. The articles submitted should be unpublished, and not, at the moment, being considered for publication by any other means, print or electronic. The cover page should contain the title of the article, the name of the author, and abstracts in Portuguese, English, and Spanish, which include the title. Abstracts should have a maximum of 120 words. A short curriculum vitae of the author should be included in a footnote after the first appearance of the author's name, which should be beneath the principle title.

The curriculum should present only the following information: highest academic degree, name of the institution which issued the diploma, e-mail, and in case of researchers who work in Brazil, indications of the so called *Curriculum Lattes*.

Citations

All citations should aid the reader to locate

the work that is mentioned, and appear in the Bibliography, at the end of the work.

References to the source should adhere to the following model: Author (Year), Author (Year, Page), (Author, Year) or (Author, Year, Page).

Examples:...the same as Weber (1991, p. 95); "... the challenge of secularity" (WEBER, 1991, p. 95).

Long citations (with more than three lines) should be transcribed in a block separated from the text, with a left space of 4 cm from the margin, justified, using the same font as the text, size 11, single spaced and *without quotation marks*.

Short citations (up to three lines) should be included in the text, with the same body, and with quotation marks. Examples:

If there is a citation of more than one title of the same author, a letter should be included after the date, such as in the following example: (WEBER, 1991b, p. 32).

Citation in languages different from the language in which the article is presented should be translated from the language in which the article is presented, and the original should be presented in a footnote. The citation should include the observation: Our translation.

Footnotes

Footnotes should be presented in size 10. Avoid the excessive use of footnotes in order to not distract the reader from the content of the principle text. Numbering in the body of the text (remissive) should appear **before** punctuation. Example: "A demonstration of basic behavioral processes in simplified conditions is the ability to see these processes functioning in complex cases, even though they cannot be rigorously treated. If the process were recognized, the complex case could be intelligently managed"¹.

Bibliographical references

Complete bibliographical references, when they appear, should be placed at the end of the text and follow the NBR 6023 of the ABNT, 2002. For authors who are not familiar with these norms, please follow the examples given below. **Only** works cited in the text should be included in the bibliography. Following are some examples:

Books:

Last name of the author, abbreviated first name. Title of the text: subtitle. Number of the edition, if it is not the first. Place of publication: Publisher,

date.

Collections:

Last name of the author, abbreviated first name. Title of the chapter. In: Last name of the organizer, abbreviated first name. Title of the collection. Number of the edition, if it is not the first. Place of publication: Publisher, date.

Journal articles:

Last name of the author, abbreviated first name. Title of the article. Title of the journal, volume, number of the edition, pages, date.

Internet references:

After the citation of the book or article, add: Available in: Access in: day(s), month abbreviated, and year.

**DID TILlich GIVE US A THEOLOGY OF THE
HISTORICAL JESUS WHEN HE MADE
"ESSENTIALIZATION" EXPLICIT IN
VOLUME THREE?**

ROBISON JAMES

[The following is the address presented at the Annual Banquet of the North American Paul Tillich Society at their Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, November 20, 2015.]

It is an open secret among those who are even modestly familiar with Tillichian theology that Tillich had a strongly negative view of what was usually meant by "a theology of the historical Jesus."

To be sure, he carefully demarked one meaning of the term, "the historical Jesus," according to which he believed the historical Jesus (whatever his name and address may actually have been) was central to Christian faith; and that a living Christian faith guarantees that *such a person existed*. Here is the way he put it:

Faith cannot even guarantee the name "Jesus" in respect to him who was the Christ. It must leave that to the incertitudes of our historical knowledge. But faith does guarantee *the factual transformation of reality in the personal life which the New Testament expresses in its picture of Jesus as the Christ* (ST 2:107, italics added).

As contrasted with this Tillichian perspective, the usual varieties of "historical Jesus theology" were marked by at least two fatal flaws, as Tillich viewed them. First, he discerned in such theologies a usually liberal and moralistic outlook centered upon the historical Jesus as a teacher. But that amounted to a "new

law,” Tillich observed, when what humankind needs is not a new teaching, but a new reality. We need the “factual transformation of reality” just referred to. Tillich calls it “New Being.”

And second, Tillich found the typical historical-Jesus theology to be engaging in sheer folly when it undertook to base the Christian faith upon the ever-shifting results of objectifying historical research into the individual who lies *behind* the New Testament’s picture of Jesus (Cf. ST 2:101-107).

Given this low estimation by Tillich generally of historical-Jesus theology, am I seeking to show in this paper that Tillich hoisted himself by his own petard? Precisely that was suspected by Charles Fox, one of Tillich’s Harvard students and fellows, when he learned what I planned to talk about. In fact, as Fox went on to say in an email (this was before he knew how I would argue my case): “I am confident that Tillich would be quite flustered over the thought that he had opened up such a theological option.”

I think Tillich did open up such an option, whether he intended to do so or not, and whether he would have wanted to make use of this option or not. But in so saying, my concern here is not to find fault with Tillich! Rather, what I think we see in this matter is an indication that his theological work is more *capacious* than he may have realized or even intended, so that others may make use of it in fresh ways.¹ (At the end of this paper, I suggest a reason why Tillich may have not chosen to use this option.)

An analogy may help here. I think we can consider the relevant part of Tillich’s views as something like a powerful new medical drug that is designed to treat a certain pathological condition. After the drug has been approved and successfully prescribed, physicians discover that it is effective also for treating certain other illnesses. At least at first, these other uses of the drug will be called “off label.” It is just such an “off-label” use of Tillich’s Christology that I am seeking to establish in this paper.

In 1957, Tillich published the second volume of his three-volume *Systematic Theology*. In this volume, he presented his doctrine of Christ. By rights, we could have expected that in this volume Tillich would present everything that is really decisive in his Christology. But if we attend carefully to the difference between what he *assumes* in volume two, and what he *presents* there, it seems clear that Tillich assumed—but did not present—something that is rather significant for his Christology.

In presenting his masterful doctrine of the New Testament’s “picture of Jesus as the Christ” in this

second volume, Tillich is almost certainly assuming his doctrine of “essentialization.” It is by this process—by the process of essentialization, as we shall see—that the transformative features of Jesus that grasp us in “the New Testament picture of Jesus as the Christ” are posited within that picture, and made effective there (ST 2:125-138).

But we are not told that in volume two. That cannot be because Tillich does not explicitly present his concept of essentialization for another seven years—not until volume three, which appeared in 1963.

All of which brings us to the question, What is essentialization? (ST III: 394-423). For help, I turn to Mark Antony, and to the speech at Caesar’s funeral that Shakespeare has given him. In this speech, Shakespeare’s own character Antony may well have had his tongue in his cheek, but if we simply take his words at face value, they give us a handy first approximation of essentialization—except that Antony is stating essentialization backwards.

Here is Mark Antony: “The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones.”

As against this, essentialization says that when we die, the good in our lives lives after us, and the evil is extinguished. The positive things about us are preserved in eternity, or in God’s life. What is essentialized includes our essential, created goodness, with all the talents and possibilities that have been packed into us by our heredity and our surroundings; and what is essentialized also includes our achievements, or the goodness that was newly actualized in us, by us, and through us, during the days of our lives.

But, as we are aware, having turned Mark Antony backwards, we also see that essentialization means that whatever has been negative and destructive in us is gradually purged away in eternity. Tillich calls this the Ultimate Judgment.

But it is crucial to note here that the “eternity” into which we are essentialized when we die is emphatically *not* detached from the ongoing course of human events that we exit when we die. Rather, the now-concentrated goodness of our lives becomes an ingredient in the wonderful goal of that very human history which living human beings are inhabiting as they strain toward and are drawn toward the Kingdom of God—even though history will never reach that Kingdom.

And here I come at last to the key point of my paper. If Tillich noticed this point, I do not find he said anything about it. Yet, I think it is huge.

My huge point is that one of the people on this planet who has been essentialized in the way I have

described is Jesus of Nazareth. One of the human beings who has contributed and continues to contribute to the forward-moving that is at work in history toward the Kingdom, is Jesus. Indeed, it is a colossal understatement to imply that Jesus “also contributes” to history’s inner urgency. As a matter of sheer demographics, if nothing else, his essentialized role exceeds perhaps a million fold the role of most everyone else.

Now it might be thought that Tillich has already made my huge point in volume two, where, for example, he examines the New Testament picture of Jesus as the Christ, and finds that the power of new being shines through that picture in the following threefold color.

[F]irst, and decisively, [the power of new being shines through] as the undisrupted unity of the center of [Jesus’] being with God; second, [it shines through] as the serenity and majesty of him who preserves this unity against all the attacks coming from estranged existence, and third [it shines through] as the self-surrendering love which represents and actualizes the divine love in taking the existential self-destruction upon himself (ST 2:138).

But, Tillich has not provided here, nor in the rest of his discussion in volume two, the point that I believe confronts us at last in volume three. Why do we not get this point already in volume two? The fact is that the passage we have just read concerning the threefold color of the New Testament picture, together with other related passages in the second volume, are all tightly focused on what Jesus as the Christ must be like in his essentialized state—if he is to be the bringer and the power of New Being. I accept all that, to be sure. It presents Jesus as Savior.

But, what these volume-two passages do not do is to confront us with those additional features of the essentialized Jesus in which his panoply of moral virtues shines through and inspires us and motivates us to be like Him, in appropriate respects, in the way we live.

A song from my boyhood says some of what I think could be said at this point. The song can perhaps be forgiven if it is a bit sentimental.

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,
All His wonderful passion and purity.
Oh, My Saviour divine, all my nature refine
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me
(A. Orsborn/T. Jones, altered).

The New Testament gives significant space to the ethical excellence of Jesus, who is clearly a historical individual just as we are. And this is to be expected if

the Jesus that Christians receive as the Christ is to be their Lord—as well as their Savior.

It is now perhaps evident, (1) that what I am advocating is indeed one kind of historical-Jesus theology, though I see no reason why this kind of historical-Jesus theology needs to make the mistakes that Tillich rightly points out in the Liberal theologies he so aptly criticized. And it is now perhaps also evident, (2) that it is Tillich’s essentialization idea that opens up this kind of historical-Jesus theology, and authenticates it theologically.

In any case, I hope these two things are evident. They are the principal things I set out to show in this paper.

But, a final point is needed. Why, if I am correct, does Tillich seem unwilling to make use of some of the possibilities that I believe his idea of essentialization opens up? Why must it be “off label”? I believe it is because he is reluctant or skittish about accepting, much less emphasizing, the fact that in most normative Christianity Jesus is not only Savior, not only the bringer of New Being, but he is also Lord.

I have not researched this matter beyond noticing what surely is one significant fact, namely, the fact that the term “Lord” does not appear in the indexes of any of the volumes of Tillich’s *Systematic Theology*.

Could it be that Tillich’s antipathy for heteronomy caused him to feel this way? If so, or whatever the reason, perhaps there is a phenomenon that could strengthen Tillichian theology. I refer to the idea of a “liberating authority,” an authority which demands that one be free and think for one’s self.

By contrast, with this we have in certain of Tillich’s autobiographical writings some moving accounts about how he had to struggle to liberate himself from his father’s authority. Perhaps his father helped to give all authority a bad name, and a bad “feel,” for Tillich (Cf. Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 36-45).

Though there is enormous authoritarianism in the Bible, I find better things strongly hinted at in the Gospel of John and in Paul. When these better things are put into play, the authority of Jesus as Lord might flourish in Tillichian theology, for it is a liberating authority, a Lordship that demands—on pain of disobedience—that humans be mature and become autonomous.

**THE DISAPPEARANCE OF GOD IN
PAUL TILlich'S *THE COURAGE TO BE***

TED FARRIS

[Editor's Note: The following article was submitted to the Bulletin by Ted Farris and is printed at his request.]

"The courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt."

The Courage to Be by Paul Tillich

Paul Tillich's best-selling book *The Courage to Be* is a work of self-affirmation and personal empowerment. The title itself quite clearly states its subject matter; the nature of individual courage. Yet, this carefully constructed book has a curiously ambiguous conclusion. The last sentence of *The Courage to Be* defines the courage to be as "rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt."² This ambiguous sentence that plays with a double meaning for God seems a strange conclusion to a powerful exposition on the courage of individual self-affirmation. The meaning of the concluding sentence of one of Tillich's important works is perhaps worth reconsidering on the 50th anniversary of his death.

To understand this sentence requires familiarity with several of Tillich's key ideas. The first is that Tillich rejected the idea that God is a being or an entity of any kind that is separate and apart from "being itself." There is no subject/object relationship between man and God because God is "being itself" or the "power of being."³ Tillich even states that, "God does not exist." He means in part that God does not exist as a being in the universe—because if God was a being in the universe he could not have created the universe. Although, for Tillich, God is not *a* being, he does not say that God is a non-being. Instead, he calls God the "ground of being" or the "power of being." We can think about the "ground of being" as the soil in which "being itself" exists. There is no question that being exists as life is an incontrovertible fact, and being can only be understood in terms of life, as it clearly does not refer to the inanimate. The ground of being is thus the source of life.

Tillich states that "the power of being" acts through the power of individual selves.⁴ The power of being is thus carried by each individual

self, which can be seen as the essence of being organized into a discrete and separate individual entity.⁵ The self is the only entity that can affirm itself. To affirm itself, the individual must have faith, vitality, and intentionality. Tillich defines faith as an expression of ultimate concern that is an intentional "act of the total personality."⁶ For Tillich, faith, which is very closely related to and encompasses self-confidence, has ecstatic elements and is not an entirely rational quality. Faith or self-confidence includes instead powerful emotional content and is by its nature a passionate, driving, and intentional force for action.

In the last sentence of Tillich's important work, God has disappeared because of the individual's doubt and all that is left behind is being itself, which can only mean the self. When God has disappeared, what appears is the self and its power of being. The individual self must be affirmed by acts of faith (self-confidence), intentionality, and vital action. This is Tillich's "courage to be as oneself." And faith thus becomes the courage of belief and confidence in oneself and is the ultimate form of self-affirmation. This self can only be Tillich's God beyond God who is being itself and the source of all the power that man can create as an individual. This is true because once God has dissolved in the anxiety of doubt there is nothing left but the pure being of the individual who is left with the possibilities of self-affirmation and self-confident action or despair.

When reliance on God disappears "in the anxiety of doubt," it is only then that the individual can take up the courage to be as himself and become fully responsible, vital, actualized, and active with intentionality, courage and self-confidence.

I believe that today this is the most relevant and meaningful interpretation of the concluding idea of Tillich's "courage to be." An individual does not need courage if there is a God who cares for and looks after the individual and determines the course of his life. The courage to survive and the self-confidence to do so is most needed where God is not present and the alternative is meaninglessness and despair. As a result, the acceptance of oneself in *The Courage to Be* exists and is affirmed even though there is no God to accept that affirmation or the individual's own self-acceptance. Each individual can only accept himself to be as he is and to accept that nothing exists beyond himself to accept him as an individual.⁷ There is

no God to accept your acceptance or anything concrete “other than yourself” to receive your faith. Faith is thus transmuted into self-confidence that is faith in being itself.⁸ The individual with the courage to be as himself is and remains being itself that is beyond the existence of God.

* * *

Tillich tried to correlate and unify philosophical, theological, scientific, and cultural approaches to religion. His work can thus be accepted by people of any religion or belief system whether pantheist, atheist, scientific, or Christian and that is why it remains so relevant today. Tillich calls God the “ground of being” which appears to be an attempt to unify pantheism (God is in everything), atheism (there is no God, there is simply being), and everything else in between.

For Tillich, God is not a being and has no tangible qualities or characteristics. God can only be referenced symbolically. Instead, God is called the ground of being. But in this case, God cannot be meaningfully discussed or described and becomes a concept that one cannot engage with. The ground of being and the power of being undeniably exist, but they exist anyway regardless of any conception of God. God thereby becomes superfluous and dissolves in the last sentence of *The Courage to Be* when self-actualization is achieved. If God is in everything, then God is also nothing. Everything is already there and present with or without God. Being itself receives no benefit from the addition to it of the concept of God. Stated another way, *being plus God equals being* and God does not add anything to the equation. So, instead of being concerned with the nature of God, in *The Courage to Be* Tillich studies the nature of being, which is all that exists anyway.

For Tillich, any talk of the nature of God or specific characteristics of God is new. The rituals of the Church are symbolic of the power of being. They do not relate to any particular being.

Viewing the nature of God as purely symbolic, of course, effectively makes God disappear

from the calculus. He no longer need exist and as Tillich says, “God does not exist.”⁹ God becomes at the end of a symbol of, and surrogate for, the self which is itself the power of being and “the God beyond God.”¹⁰

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¹ I argued part of the case that I argue in this paper, and argued some of it more fully, in Robison B. James, “Dealing with the Personal Encounter Deficit in Tillich, Especially vis-à-vis God,” *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society*, volume 33: 4 (Fall 2007), 6-20. See Part VI (2): “Jesus as the concretely virtuous Lord is missing from Tillich’s defense against the demonic, although in Tillich’s doctrine of essentialization this deficiency is implicitly resolved.”

² Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 190

³ “[Prayer] is speaking to somebody to whom you cannot speak because he is not ‘somebody’ [and yet]...is nearer to the I than the I is to itself.” *The Courage to Be*, 187

⁴ Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 118

⁵ “Power is the possibility a being has to actualize itself against...other beings.” *The Courage to Be*

⁶ Paul Tillich, *The Dynamics of Faith*, 5

⁷ Tillich calls this “the accepting of the acceptance without somebody or something that accepts.” *The Courage to Be*, 177

⁸ “The power of self-affirmation is the power of being which is effective in every act of courage. Faith is the experience of this power.” *The Courage to Be*

⁹ “[T]o argue that God exists is to deny him.” Also “[i]t is as atheistic to affirm the existence of God as it is to deny it. God is being itself, not a being.” Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, 205 and 237.

¹⁰ Tillich would be unlikely to have agreed with this statement, which is my own interpretation.

GOD AND BEING IN TILlich

A. DURWOOD FOSTER

[Durwood Foster submitted this article to the *Bulletin* from his home in Ashland, Oregon, September 2015.]

I.

Hardly any issue in Tillich remains as problematic as the relation of God and being. This relation was, of course, already one of the prime imponderables long prior to Tillich, at the core of Christian thinking as well as in the wider world of philosophy and religion. Having identified the issue as pivotal for his own path, Tillich continued to shift his approach

to it without ever explicating where he wound up. Nevertheless I believe we can make out main features of his concluding perspective, and they are significantly different from how he is widely understood. For, to a much greater extent than most seem aware, Tillich continued to think creatively and even change dramatically to the very end. Thence will continue to come incentive for further probing into our theme.

First, let me loudly acclaim Tillich's joining of God and ontology. This, and his salient espousal of the Christ norm and his irrepressible openness, are what make me wholeheartedly Tillichian, while also affirming debts to Thomas, Wesley, Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Rahner, and others. As a personal mentor at Union Theological Seminary, Tillich seemed smilingly to approve such inclusiveness if the ontological and christic bolts were in place. They remain so with me. My recent quarrels with Paulus's particular moves in ontology do not impugn—rather, they embody—commitment to the ontological task itself. In this present outing, if I lament anything at all, it is that Tillich in his ultra last summations, fails to bugle forward the comparative kind of ontological charge masterfully shown by him already in the 1962 Bampton Lectures. Still no other axially committed Christian systematician has dared, or been as qualified, to teach with an Eliad—or had the self-effacement to name a Jewish thinker, Martin Buber, as vocational ideal. Unbelievably active nearing eighty, Paulus dies right where the action goes on piling up.

II.

Arguably, Tillich's most obvious conceptual mistake ever was to construe, for several years from about 1946, "being-itself" as the *literal* meaning of God. In Volume II of *Systematic Theology* [1957. p. 9], he corrected himself clearly, now saying symbolization cannot be eliminated from positive expression of God. *But in part the correction was only implicit* since he did not therewith declare his own contrary statement in Volume One to be erroneous or change that statement in subsequent editions of the volume that was the flagship expression of his thought. ST II [p. 5] speaks of the changes it contains as "restatement and partial reformulation"—a distinct soft-pedaling, one can hardly not think, as to whether "being-itself" literally means God. To say in one place firmly that it does, then later pointedly that it does not, amounts to more than "partial reformulation."

Afterwards, Paulus did entirely desist, in anything written afresh, from reiterating the mistake, but without plainly noting he himself had made it and was con-

tinuing to issue it as ST I went on being translated and republished. In the feverish discussions of Tillich among UTS students, I do not recall this oddity ever being remarked. Even if Paulus might be wrong, it was repugnant to think he contradicted himself. For that matter, in the whole history of thought, how many reversals have there ever been by eminent masters on weighty points? Were *any* of those plainly self-acknowledged? If one deems the symbolism issue important, I find it hard to think of an about-face comparable to Tillich's. Yet his bland reassurance [op. cit.] that "the substance of [his] earlier thought had not changed," despite flagging of the change by such scholars as Gilkey and Clayton, seems to have been widely accepted.

Pertinent here is a telling comment by Renate Albrecht, who played so leading a role in editing Paulus's corpus. "Tillich wirklich [hatte] nur geringes Interesse an seinen frueheren Arbeiten. Vollstaendig von dem ergriffen, was er jeweils als Aufgabe vor sich sah oder bearbeitete, lag ihm die Erinnerung an aeltere Schriften und die Bezugnahme mit ihnen fern. "[Renate Albrecht & Werner Schuessler, *Schlüssel zum Werk von Paul Tillich*, GW XIV, 2. Ausgabe, De Gruyter, 1990, p. 13.] [Tillich really had only very little interest in his earlier works. Fully engrossed by whatever at a given time he was working on or saw ahead as a task, memory of and preoccupation with his older writings were remote to him.]"

The mistake was in any event a complex matter, since when he declared that "being-itself" was God's non-figurative meaning, it expressly signified for Paulus [ST I, 235-6 et al] the ground and power of being—whereas *that* seems seriously debatable as to what it ought to mean. Let us start with "being itself" without the hyphen. Ought not that to mean being as such or mere being, wherever found, analogously to "wealth itself," in such a statement as "Wealth itself does not guarantee happiness," or "beauty itself" in "Beauty itself cannot assure domestic harmony," etc.? Does the hyphen, which Tillich always added, create a new term with vastly different meaning? It does for Tillich; "*any* becomes *infinite* being" would be one way to render the mutation. But is his understanding of this phrase applicable to people other than he? Or must it always be directly adopted from him? Alas, there is no authoritative philosophy lexicon to settle such questions. In 1946, Heidegger was the dominant user in world philosophy of "Seinselfst," and many assumed Tillich was closely following his mid-twenties Marburg colleague. That can hardly be, unless Heidegger was badly confused about his own thought; he always

forcefully denied “Seinselbst” meant “God.” But the main reason we know Tillich was not substantively following Heidegger is that Tillich himself, without mentioning Heidegger, states his different actual grounds for espousing “being-itself” in the 1946 article, “Two Types of Philosophy of Religion.” To be sure, Tillich’s use (in contrast to usage) of the phrase was not unaffected by Heidegger, or Sartre, et al. Paulus’s mind was always an echo chamber of current culture. But nothing should be assumed as to agreement on the phrase’s meaning. That same Tillich-mind was uniquely individuated. I recall Paulus at Union saying—and saying only—how difficult he found Heidegger to comprehend. How this comports with the 1962 *Christian Century* listing of *Being and Time* as one of the books Tillich cited as most shaping his “vocational attitude” I cannot explain; I question its authenticity. Has any investigation of the two authors ever shown conceptual influence in the usage of “being-itself”? I think not. It seems Tillich, when he asseverated God literally meant “being-itself,” was using the phrase in a sense distinctly his own.

Tillich curiously seems unaware of this. In the crucial passages in ST I (pp. 235-9), he invokes “being-itself” as though within theology it were a standing vehicle of discourse to explain the Christian meaning of “God.” My recent article for the Bulletin stated why such a proposal is drastically problematic, viz. for the Christian tradition there are *two* species of being—(1) God’s own which is necessary and ipso facto uncreated, and (2) all other such being as God may and does will to create. With this envisagement the very idea of being-itself is in high tension since it assumes (does it not?) being’s unicity. Generated by such tension there was the sprawling debate about the *analogia entis* that still in the 1930s conspicuously pitted Karl Barth against Erich Przywara. Without invading the terrain of this debate in any detail, or afterward revisiting it, Tillich in ST I (p. 242) simply (and rather absurdly) asserts the *analogia entis* is “based on the fact that God must be understood as being-itself.”

Beyond issues of definition, how in any case would it help explanatorily to say anything itself is (whether literally *or* symbolically) its own ground of being? That is indeed the biblical and Christian (also Jewish and Muslim, Sikh and indeterminantly other) construal of God, but expressly of God only and not of the limitless instances of finite being God may and does otherwise bring forth. On the other hand, if we seek to name exhaustively the ground and power of everything, why must we not with Mahayana Buddhists include non-being and not-yet being along with

being in the naming of that utmost primordiality? Furthermore, if we are convinced—as many Christians and others are convinced—that God somehow vouchsafes to us a genuine finite freedom able to deviate from and respond to God, how can we ever conceive such finite freedom if being-itself is God? Such are the nettling dilemmas that implicitly oppose construing God as being-itself.

Glancing over theological history, perhaps Tillich’s most notable forerunner in blending God and being was 14th century Meister Eckhart—like Paulus both a popular preacher *and* scintillating philosophic abstractionist. Both these born mystics—overdue a close comparison—viscerally felt deity in their verdant German earth and all outsurging finitude, graced by “God beyond God’s” transcendental Yes over time’s sinful ruin. [Cf. Colledge and McGinn, eds., *Meister Eckhart*, Classics of Western Spirituality, New York: Paulist Press, 1961, pp. 35, passim.] A third Marburg colleague, the older Rudolf Otto, impacted Tillich with his classic thematization of God’s intrinsic holiness, religionsgeschichtlich amplified. There are resonances of Eckhart with Otto but also a chasm between being’s (=God’s) everywhere-ness in the former and the latter’s sense for the ecstatic *extraordinariness* of the holy. A contesting dance of these poles transpires in Tillich, with the Unvordenkliche of Schelling (to whom too Paulus was forever in debt) lending conceptual tone to Otto’s experiential *mysterium tremendum*. In any event, far and wide, Tillich was henceforth lambasted as well as lauded for coupling God firmly even if not literally with being-itself. Details of ensuing fray(s)—e.g. with Masao Abe or Robert Scharlemann—merit finer tracing than yet received or offered here, as this short notice must rivet on where Paulus in 1965 unpredictably winds up. Where was that? Briefly, having battled nobly for being-itself, but now mired in indecisive skirmishing, and aware through Eliade as never before of religious pluralism, in the end he *renounces* his embrace of it. His final stance, notably inspired by Martin Buber’s Judaism cum universality, reasserts allegiance to the historic Christ of (churchly though undogmatic) faith amid yes-and-no openness to and beyond *all* religions as embodying the whole sweep of the concretely human. Paulus declaims this stance—“freedom for” *and* “freedom from” his own foundation along with *explicit repudiation* of any “all-embracing abstraction,” by which he can only mean his hitherto stipulated “being-itself” or any variant thereof.

Various conversations alert me to a possible—and I fear far too frequent—misunderstanding of Tillich’s

enjoined twofold freedom “from” and “for” his own foundation. It can be heard as a synthesis *already* achieved, whereas in Paulus himself it ever remained a (sometimes ruthless) struggle of two divergent life commitments. Interpretation of our mentor stands or falls with adequately rendering the balance he struck between these commitments. It was very appreciable (cf. Gilkey) but far from total (cf. Clayton).

III.

Tillich’s resolve to finish the system paid off with ST III’s appearance in late summer 1963. The last segment labored upon was Part IV, and in that part, dealing with “Life and the Spirit,” “being-itself” is nowhere mentioned until the last page. But there (p. 294) and again toward the end of Part V (p. 399), which Tillich would have scanned as the volume went to press, the phrase is conspicuously reaffirmed. In the first instance, he cites the anti-sexist advantage of the understanding of God as being-itself, and in the second he points out how that understanding underscores the guarantee of eternal hope for all that is, since being is that. Thus, in any event, we can date the explicit abandonment of being-itself’s equivalence to God as occurring after the summer of 1963. On the other hand, it is unmistakable a shrinking back from such equivalence has occurred already in the Earl Lectures of February of 1963 when Paulus intones “the power and universality of the divine ... transcends everything we can say about the divine.” [*The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Christian Message*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1996, p. 60.]

We cannot do better here than vent further our mentor’s vehemence. “Let us avoid objectifying statements about the holy. Let us avoid giving it names, even the traditional ones of theology.” [N.B. Remember Paulus *had* been contending “being-itself” is the most imperative of these.] “When we do give it names...then let us always have a yes and a no in our statements. It is remarkable how the biblical language, especially the Old Testament, presents a very concrete God whom it seems everyone could make into an object alongside other objects. But try it. This God will evade you. You never can fix this God. Hence, the prohibition to name God, since a name is something you can grasp, something that tries to “define” or make finite. This is the greatness of the biblical language. It avoids objectifying. In all great religious experiences, the divine appears and disappears...For this we have the word “epiphany,” which means the appearing of an ungraspable divine power—being there

and not being there. This “yes *and* no” is the foundation of all speaking about the divine.” [Ibid.]

As much as we may not want to believe Tillich would have contradicted himself within one and the same span of consciousness, it seems unavoidable he did so during the fall and winter of 1962 and into 1963 when he was concurrently finalizing the text of ST III and preparing the Earl Lectures. This would throw light on the startling emphasis with which during that time he insists to secretary Grace Cali he is “schizophrenic.” [Cf. Cali, *Paul Tillich First-Hand. A Memoir of the Harvard Years*. Chicago: Exploration Press, 1996.] We know, of course, if a person technically *is* schizophrenic, he or she does not say so. To say so of oneself actually means one is locked inwardly in a seemingly unyielding dilemma. However that may have been, at the very end Paulus has worked through his irresolution on being-itself. His final position leaves no unclarity that the divine transcends all concepts.

How about the “Rejoinder” printed posthumously in the *Journal of Religion* of January, 1966, wherein Tillich, responding to Robert Scharlemann, unequivocally still defends his equation of God with being-itself? It is crucial to bear in mind *when* the Rejoinder was written, doubtless about a year before Paulus’s death. Clearly not among his last writings, it does show how very late was the change at issue, confirming use of “schizophrenic” in expressing his state of mind to Cali. Evidence thus mounts further that Paulus made his move to abandon being-itself during the last months of his life. Only at the very end, however, does he outright renounce the “all-encompassing abstraction” being-itself is.

There are two ultra late texts—his very last published or unpublished writings—in which Paulus emphatically confirms what was cited from the Earl Lectures. One is the encomium to Buber, following the latter’s death a few months before his own, and the other is the Chicago finale of October, 1965. In the first of these, Buber is unqualifiedly affirmed (at last!) in holding “God” to be radically untranslatable into *any* conceptual equivalent—something Tillich claims he at least sought in his sermons. In Chicago on October 11, he still cannot pronounce “being-itself” repudiatingly; this shows movingly, I would say, almost the nakedness of Paulus’s unique sensibility. But we get the point if there be Tillichian hope for us.

While it helps to be clear no all-embracing abstraction (such as “being-itself”) can register the plurality of religious ultimates, or the sheer unforesightability of the biblical God, one may regret Tillich in what proved his swan song does not explicitly summon fur-

ther ontological enterprise to where and why (a) all-embracing and (b) abstraction fail. He confesses dissatisfaction with his own position, as well as Teilhard's, but, palpably under sway of the just celebrated Buber, and running out of time, desists from enjoining a critical interaction of philosophic ultimates—something like an open-ended comparative ontology pursued through dialogic grappling of the great cultures and their religious cores. In think tanks wherever feasible, or leading toward them, minds like those of Sarvepali Radhakrishnan and Hisamatsu Shin-ichi and Martin Heidegger would mutually limit and also mutually impregnate—inducing sorely needed humility as

well as unforeseeable breakthroughs toward truly global thinking. Paulus earlier had in fact, in his immensely important Bampton Lectures of 1962, manifested such an onto-theological ecumenicity. [*Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963. The unappreciative dismissal of this work by the Paucks is something to be rectified!] Surely this too must count, along with freedom *from* and *for* his Christian base, as comprising our undying Tillichian heritage and challenge.

THE FUTURE OF THE PROTESTANT ERA

THOMAS G. BANDY

Paul Tillich published *The Protestant Era* with the assistance of James Luther Adams in the late 1940's. He did so believing that the traumatic events of the rise of National Socialism, war, and the subsequent transformation of civilization, for better or worse, demanded a new investigation and reframing of the significance—or lack of significance—of the Protestant movement.

In the same way, the historical events and seismic changes, for better or worse, in the first decades of the new millennium demand a similar investigation and reframing of the Protestant movement today. The sweeping questions raised are the same: “What is wrong with Christian civilization? Does Protestantism need a reformation?”

However, *The Protestant Era* is one of the most unusual books of the entire Tillich corpus, so unusual that Tillich was compelled to write an extensive introduction to explain it. The book was intended to be his introduction to an American audience. The goal was to attract attention to his thought by addressing a topic of more pragmatic interest, namely, the role of the Protestant church in daily living and world affairs at that time. His views would be surprising and perhaps baffling to the church at that time...just as they are often baffling but surprisingly relevant to the church today.

Tillich explained in his introduction that he included some of his earliest writing, translated from German, and new writing, written in an

American context), and he was surprised at...*how much of what I believed to be a recent achievement is already explicitly or at least implicitly contained [in earlier writings]*.¹ He viewed Protestantism *from the outside* in his early years, from the point of view of *passionately loved and studied philosophy*; and *from the inside* in his later years, from the point of view of *existential experience of [Protestantism's] meaning and power*.² He acknowledges that the selection of articles intentionally expresses his views “from the outside”—philosophy and the history of religion—and “from the inside”—military chaplaincy in World War 1, participation in the Evangelical or Protestant movement, and political activism. Each perspective influences the other. It is a *concerned detachment*.

The “detachment” that comes from living “on the boundary” goes beyond tradition and denomination to discern Protestantism *as a factor within the world-historical process*. The boundary-situation, however, is a matter of *concerned detachment* because the theological enterprise is driven by the religious demand to be *ultimately concerned*. Speaking personally, it is this empathy with life “on the boundary” that has shaped my participation in the AAR and NAPTS for 35 years ...and my work as an international consultant among Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Pentecostal churches and denominations for the past 22 years. And it has shaped both my academic and professional publications.

In order to share the practical significance of his work for the American Protestant church, Tillich needed to explain key concepts and methodologies that lay behind his practical insights. There are three reasons. First, Tillich gathers works from both his German and American periods that do not appear, at first glance, to have much to do

with one another. The German essays, primarily from 1922 and 1929, tend to be very abstract, exploring the relationship between history and religion *in principle*. The American essays tend to be remarkably pragmatic, exploring the relationship between history and religion *as lived*.

Thus, second, Tillich is aware that once again he is living *on the boundary*...fitting into the *religious situation* of America just as ambiguously as he did in Europe. He understands Protestantism as *a special historical embodiment of a universally significant principle*.³ *It is the ultimate criterion of all religious experience; it lies at their base, whether they are aware of it or not. The way in which this principle is realized and expressed and applied and connected with other sides of the divine-human relationship is different in different times and places, groups, and individuals.* The American context is different; the existential dilemmas the same.

Third, the universally significant *Protestant Principle* that seems so simple at first—i.e., the denial that any relativism can claim to be absolute, or, God alone is God and absolutely nothing can take God's place—is more complex in actual experience. Tillich said that *the Protestant principle is not the Protestant reality; and the question had to be asked as to how they are related to one another, how the life of the Protestant churches is possible under the criterion of the Protestant principle, and how a culture can be influenced and transformed by Protestantism*.⁴

His experience of the American religious situation only sharpened his suspicion that for the Protestant principle to survive, it might be necessary for the Protestant church to perish. He writes: *“Protestantism must enter the new era, whether this era will be described by later historians as a post-Protestant or as a Protestant era; for, not the Protestant era, but the Protestant principle is everlasting.”*⁵

Philosophical Roots

Tillich's assessment of the relevance and irrelevance of Protestantism is rooted in his understanding of the dynamics of fate, kairos, and community. *The Protestant Era*, begins with a chapter on “Religion and History” that includes two essays from his pre-war writings in Germany “Fate” and “Kairos.”

*“Fate is the transcendent necessity in which freedom is entangled.”*⁶ The radical limitation that ultimately negates human initiative might be understood solely as demonic (and here I like Miguel de Unamuno's phrase “the tragic sense of life”),

were it not itself linked to the eternal logos that pulsates through all our thinking, the secret presupposition of unconditional truth that lies behind any act of thought or cultural construct.⁷ In this sense, fate is the experience of the divine that imperfectly mediates meaning, but nevertheless provides a connection with God and a method to explore it. Providence is ultimately *meaning-fulfilling* and not *meaning-destroying*.

“Kairos in its unique sense is, for Christian faith, the appearing of Jesus as the Christ. *Kairos* in its general and special sense for the philosopher of history is every turning-point in history in which the eternal judges and transforms the temporal.”⁸ It is the catalyst, so to speak, that creates a *new theonomy on the soil of a secularized and autonomous culture*. Theonomy is not opposed to autonomy, Tillich says, but reveals all cultural forms not only in their relationships to each other (autonomy), but also in their relationship to the unconditional.⁹ Kairos, therefore, is what happens as the divine simultaneously employs and shatters all cultural forms. Meaning is conveyed imperfectly through limitation; but the instant the conditional claims to be absolute, it is broken again.¹⁰

The American church audience found, and still finds, such abstractions difficult, and struggles to see the significance of such reflections. Tillich (and James Luther Adams) included a third essay in this chapter, however, from 1948. This article compares non-historical and historical interpretations of history (the details of which I have no time to relate here),¹¹ but it ends with a poignant comment about the meaning of *ecclesia* that sets the stage for Tillich's next stage of reflection about the relevance and irrelevance of Protestantism.

Tillich understands the *ecclesia* or church as a matter of historical destiny, not choice. *History has a turning point or a centre in which the meaning of history appears, overcoming the self-destructive trend of the historical process in creating something new which cannot be frustrated by the circular motion in nature.*¹² The church is the bearer of historical consciousness in both its horizontal and vertical dimensions. In the horizontal dimension, the church is obligated to speak prophetically to the world. And in its vertical dimension, the church proclaims an ultimate hope, that regardless of inevitable human failure, and despite all appearances, the world is not doomed.

This point is extraordinarily significant for the future of the Protestant movement today. My

most recent work in North America has involved demographic and lifestyle segment research...and tracking demographic and psychographic trends among over 71 distinct lifestyle segments in the USA, Canada, and Australia. In the new age of digitalized information and location intelligence, when privacy has vanished and the most detailed behavioral patterns can be traced, sorted, and anticipated by marketers from every swipe of a credit card or visibility on the grid, it is possible to see deeper in the behaviors of publics to discern the existential anxieties that drive their quests for meaning, and their expectations and fears of religion.

One thing that stands out in my observations is that Tillich was right to suspect that the Protestant Church has become sidetracked. Despite the occasional prophetic word and ethical advocacy, Protestant churches today are mainly about preserving harmony at all costs, advocating acceptance without accountability, honoring membership privileges over seeker sensitivities, nuancing dogmas without focusing faith, shaping public policies without modeling leadership credibility, and communicating a veneer of love rather than declaring a reason to hope. More than anything else, this accounts for the dominant presence of aging boomers and their grandchildren in church, and the remarkable absence of Gen X, Y, and Z publics and their peer groups.

These latter publics are not looking for a message of love, but a message of hope, and a good reason not to despair over the future. Tillich's words in 1948 are even more poignant now: *The people of our day must be enabled to say "in spite of"; they must be taught to find for themselves the religious reservation which cannot be conquered by the tragedy of history. It is hard to find, but it must be found if cynicism and despair are not to prevail as they do now, driving the masses into the hands of agitators, driving the strong to the glorification of heroic self-destruction, and the weak to the loss of all meaning of life and to suicide.*¹³

If the Protestant movement is to become relevant again, it will need to return to its original mandate. *Religion must teach youth something they cannot bear anywhere else—to give themselves with an absolute seriousness and a complete devotion to an aim that in itself is fragmentary and ambiguous.* Tillich argues, and continues to argue, that *the ultimate word that religion must say to the people of our time is the word of hope.*

The Boundary Situation

Tillich viewed himself as living “on the boundary,” and believed that the first message of Protestantism must be to *insist upon the radical experience of the boundary-situation.*¹⁴ The modern human is an autonomous creature insecure in his or her autonomy. Not only are all reasoned certainties (worldviews, dogmas, and ideologies) surrounded by ambiguity, but human existence itself can never escape the threat of “not-being.”

For Tillich, the “boundary-situation” is more profound than intellectual scepticism or the fear of death. The interaction of fate, Kairos, and community reveals the deeper despair that is, in a sense, the inevitable obstacle to freedom. As humans exercise their autonomous will and rigorous rationality, they become more powerful, but lose meaning and purpose. And the more they surrender to limitations of dogma and ideology, and even word and sacrament, life gains meaning but loses the capacity for innovation. The real issue is not the fear of death, so much as the seeming inevitability of despair.

*The human “boundary-situation” is encountered when human possibility reaches its limit, when human existence is confronted by an ultimate threat.*¹⁵ Tillich is not just thinking abstractly here, but specifically about the interface between religion and culture. The “boundary-situation” means that humans, regardless of demographic status or lifestyle context, are caught up in existential anxieties that drive the quest for God. Some lifestyles are driven by emptiness and meaninglessness, and are threatened by chronic depression. Other lifestyles are driven by fate and death, and threatened by pervading paranoia. Still other lifestyles are driven by guilt and shame, and threatened by uncontrollable anger. And other lifestyles are driven by anxiety over displacement, and threatened by irreversible abandonment.

The “boundary-situation” cannot be overcome by information or ritual, but only by an act of courage. Each life threat is addressed by the courage to participate, separate, accept acceptance, and/or trust and be trusted. This in turn means that the essence of spiritual leadership is neither sermon nor sacrament, but the ability to model for any given lifestyle the courage needed to overcome anxiety, and the ability to point toward the New Being that provides the sole hope of humanity.

In Tillich's view, the American Protestant Church has followed secularity in the professionalization of clergy. Clergy leadership is about competency, clergy leadership development is about continuing education, and clergy leadership deployment is at the beck and call of local church insiders. If the first message of Protestantism is to insist on the radical experience of the boundary-situation, however, then spiritual leadership is really about courage, leadership development is about lifestyle credibility, and leadership deployment is guided by the anxieties and yearnings of the publics.

However, as Tillich points out, the temptation to use religion as a response to such insecurity is strong. The autonomous human today, insecure in his/her autonomy, is apt to surrender autonomy for the heteronomy of institutions, political movements, or ideological factions that offer security for unquestioned assent. Examples might include the vehemence and even violence of opposing views on any number of public policies dividing Protestant denominations today. The denial of ultimate insecurity is revealed in the "litmus paper" tests used by conservatives or liberals that demand absolute and uncritical assent, and the denial of ambiguity.

The second message of Protestantism must be to *pronounce the "Yes"* that is revealed in the courage to be, when God is revealed as hope that lies beyond security. If the Protestant Principle rejects any cultural form as absolute, then the Protestant Church should declare wholeness in the midst of *disintegration and the cleavage of soul and community; truth in the very absence of truth (even of religious truth); and meaning in a situation in which all the meaning of life has disappeared.*¹⁶

For Tillich, the pretense of security leads ultimately to the irrelevance of faith. The stubborn freedom that resists all efforts by ideological or institutional authorities to enslave...the power to say "yes" or "no" that cannot be taken away...is the essence of the Protestant Principle. The problem, for Tillich, is that he perceives the Protestant Church succumbing to, rather than resisting, the pretenses of security.

Tillich affirmed (and my own observations of twenty years with all forms of grassroots Protestantism confirm) that the very idea of "justification by faith" is so strange to both the general public and the average Protestant church-goer *that there is scarcely any way of making it intelligible to*

them.¹⁷ It must be separated from its doctrinal trappings in order to recover its spiritual substance. *The profoundest aspect of justification in our situation...is that we can discern God at the very moment when all known assertions about "God" have lost their power.*¹⁸

Ironically, the Protestant Church in the 21st century may become what the Catholic Church was to the 16th century, namely, a force for heteronomy that takes advantage of insecure autonomy. Instead of fearing culture and trying to control culture, Tillich argues that *Protestantism can be open for anything, religious and secular, past and future, individual and social.* Protestantism should carry on a conversation with culture as *it tries to understand its religious substance, its spiritual foundation, its "theonomous" nature.*¹⁹ If the Protestant Church fails to do so, then the church will become ever more irrelevant to a society that is becoming ever more spiritual, which (sad to say) seems to be the current trend.

Religion in Protest of Itself

The development of Tillich's philosophical system, and his understanding of the "boundary-situation," forces Tillich to explore a seeming paradox. The *form* of religion is judged by the *substance* of religion...and by "substance" Tillich does not mean theological or liturgical content, but rather the *import* or *significance* of religion that he understands as the New Being. In short, the Protestant Principle ultimately seems to negate the Protestant Church.

However, Tillich argues that *form* and *protest against form* are inextricably connected. The formative power of Protestantism depends on its *form-negating and form-creating power*²⁰ in the same sense that the God above gods simultaneous employs and shatters all cultural forms. Form is essential to communicate meaning, but all forms are judged inadequate when they try to become absolutes in themselves.

Tillich calls this form-negating and form-creating power the Gestalt of Grace...or its theonomous nature. The Gestalt of Grace, he says, is not like any other cultural form. It is a form that reveals the religious substance within and beyond every form. The ability to talk about grace is only possible in the presence of grace; the ability of culture to be hopeful *in spite of* the world situation is only possible in the presence of hopefulness. There are four principles of Protestant

form-creation. The first two are really about Protestant Church or institutional authenticity.²¹

(1) In every Protestant form the religious element must be related to, and questioned by, a secular element;

(2) In every Protestant form the eternal element must be expressed in relation to a “present situation”;

By “religious element,” Tillich is not just talking about dogma, liturgy, program, and so on; he is talking about religious *substance* (urgency and import, relevance and significance). Not only is the Protestant form in *confrontation* with culture in its horizontal nature; but it must in *conversation* with culture in its vertical nature.

(1) In every Protestant form the given reality of grace must be expressed with daring and risk;

(2) In every Protestant form the attitude of belief-ful realism must be expressed.

In speaking of the “Protestant form,” Tillich is deliberately deflecting attention from the church per se (as one Protestant form among many), to any cultural form that is shaped by the Protestant principle itself. Protestantism, in a sense, may not best be embodied by an ecclesiastical institution at all. It is embodied by any cultural form in which *reality is interpreted with respect to its ground and ultimate meaning*.²² It is revealed through courage rather than certainty. And it is tested through dialogue with culture itself.

The formative power of Protestantism is not strictly limited to the creation of a church. *Religious action—cultus—like religious knowledge, must create its forms out of the experiences of the daily life and the actual situation. The cultus is supposed to give an ultimate meaning to the daily life. It is not so important to produce new liturgies as it is to penetrate into the depths of what happens day by day, in labor and industry, in marriage and friendship, in social relations and recreation, in meditation and tranquillity, in the unconscious and the conscious life. To elevate all this into the light of the eternal is the great task of cultus, and not to reshape a tradition traditionally...Protestant formative power is at work wherever reality is transformed into an active expression of a Gestalt of grace.*²³

The wealth of demographic, psychographic, and lifestyle research available in the digital age can reinforce Tillich’s insight, and if he had had access to it in 1948 he would have found it intriguing. Behavior patterns are shaped around existential anxieties and spiritual yearnings; spiritual leaders are credible through their courage rather

than professionalism; hope is experienced in different ways for different publics, but always in immanent, incarnational ways that directly shape daily living.

In light of demographic and lifestyle research, I would describe the Gestalt of Grace in this way. Among 71 lifestyle segments currently identified today, there are seven boundary-situations; seven catalysts for hope; and seven incarnational experiences.²⁴

This is the Gestalt of grace Tillich seeks to describe. *Protestant formative power is needed in a secular world; and it is at work wherever the autonomous forms become bearers of ultimate meaning.*²⁵

The End of the Protestant Era?

In the last chapter, Tillich directly asks the question that he has been leading up to ... which is today an urgent, if hidden and unsettling question, of Protestant ministers and church members. Are we seeing the end of the Protestant Era? All signs suggest that Protestant churches are declining in numbers and influence, and that the institution itself is increasingly irrelevant. The biggest difference between our situation and Tillich’s is that the threat to the Protestant church is not secularity per se, but the surge in competing spiritualities that have emerged in the context of insecure autonomy.

Tillich worries that Protestantism may not survive the tension between *mass disintegration* and *mass collectivism* that is the legacy of capitalism. The former concerns the disappearance of multiple traditions, disempowerment of symbols, and loss of personal life, leading to a general sense of meaninglessness and emptiness;²⁶ *amorphous masses* with a *mass psychology* of universal, chronic depression. The latter concerns the disappearance of leadership, avoidance of risk, and decline of self-awareness, leading to a pervasive sense of fear and entrapment. Tillich’s illustrations of the rise of meaningless employment, increasing poverty, and dependence on economic markets identified in 1948 are all too relevant in 2015. Moreover, the sophistication of demographic research clearly describes the fragmentation of American society (from 40 to 71 lifestyle segments in just ten years) on the one hand; and the herd mentality of peer pressures that marketers and politicians manipulate to their advantage on the other hand. Tillich

says: *People long for a leader, for symbols, for ideas which would be beyond all criticism.*²⁷

Can the Protestant Church survive such a “perfect storm”? Tillich observes the exodus of people from the Protestant Church in search of authorities that can guarantee certainty and success; and also the huddling of a minority of church people claiming elite privileges, exclusive perspectives, and inward looking attitudes. Specifically regarding the survival of the Protestant Church, Tillich identifies three possibilities.²⁸

(1) Church leaders must put an end to denial and the pretense of institutional health. It must *reformulate its appeal* for a *disintegrating world* and focus on a message of hope rather than harmony.

(2) Protestant churches must cease their confrontation with culture for a conversation with culture, and deny the legitimacy of any *cleavage between a sacred and profane sphere*.

(3) Protestant people must *protest against every power which claims divine character for itself* . . . including the institution of the Protestant Church.

This last recommendation is the hardest of all. Who says a prophetic word against an institution that is built on the foundation of the Protestant Principle, but seems no longer capable of saying “No” to itself? Tillich asks: Where are the *real* Protestants?²⁹

In 1948, Tillich was still fairly optimistic that the first two possibilities were, indeed, *possible*. Today many church consultants and religious observers are more cynical. Denial still seems to characterize the attitude of many churches (and entire denominations), and ecclesiastical energy still seems to prioritize self-preservation over sacrificial service. Churches still seem content to rail ineffectively at either the liberal or conservative tendencies of society, without entering a serious and mutually critical conversation with the public.

However, it is the third possibility that causes Tillich the most concern. And today we may well see that concern justified. Aside from internal reform, there is a final alternative: the hope for the Protestant Church comes from the *outside*.

This third way requires that Protestantism appear as the prophetic spirit which lists where it will, without ecclesiastical conditions, organizations, and traditions . . . It will take the form of resistance against the distortion of humanity and divinity which is necessarily connected with the rise of the new systems of authority. He goes on to say that such an alternative would only be possible if there

was an agent beyond the church to do it. *Such a group could not be described adequately as a sect. It would approximate more closely an order or fellowship and would constitute an active group* with the following conditions of membership:

(1) Accountability to interpret human existence by the Protestant principle without the necessity of belonging to a Protestant (or any religious) organization;

(2) Accountability to use the Protestant principle to reintegrate society without the necessity of belonging to a special philosophical or political party;

(3) Accountability for innovative strategies based on the Protestant principle that includes self-criticism;

(4) Accountability for any strategy to be adaptable and relevant to the full economic, political, cultural, and religious diversity of the world.

In other words, the final alternative for the survival of the Protestant Era depends on the disappearance of the local congregation as the primary vehicle to enact the Protestant Principle; and the emergence of small, mobile, peer groups, or teams, as the primary vehicle of faith community. As a consultant who works intentionally, cross culturally, and across church traditions, this is exactly what seems to be emerging. This is more obvious in Australia, England, and increasingly visible on the east, west and gulf coasts of the US.

I describe these as “Pilgrim Bands,” because they tend to practice exceptionally high mutual accountability for spiritual practices and social service...a unique blend of contemplation and action. They tend to involve younger people with cross cultural connections with Asia, South America, Africa, and the Caribbean. They do tend to have short term impact (here today and gone tomorrow); interested in the transformation of communities and neighborhoods rather than the sustaining institutional personnel, program, and property. As Tillich said: “.. *Protestantism must enter the new era, whether this era will be described by later historians as a post-Protestant or as a Protestant era; for, not the Protestant era, but the Protestant principle is everlasting.*”³⁰

¹ *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957), p.vii.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

⁵ Ibid. p. xxv.

⁶ Ibid. p. 3.

⁷ Ibid. p. 14.

⁸ Ibid. p. 46-47.

⁹ Ibid. pp. 44 and 45.

¹⁰ See "The Conquest of the Concept of Religion in the Philosophy of Religion," in *What is Religion?* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969) p.144. Tillich argues that receiving knowledge is a mode of thinking which is "simultaneously employed and shattered" as Spirit demands fulfillment of meaning and yet transcends any concrete expression and ultimately negates it. James Luther Adams interprets a key concept of Tillich's "System of the Sciences" to be the dimension of depth that relates to culture as a "form-creating" and "form-bursting" power that pulsates through the whole of reality (*Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science & Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965, p. 131.

¹¹ The main characteristics of the non-historical type of interpreting history:

- Nature (or super nature) is the highest category of interpreting reality.
- Space is predominant against time; time is considered to be circular or repeating itself infinitely.
- The temporal world has a lesser reality and no ultimate value.
- The true being and the ultimate good are eternal, immovable, above becoming, genesis, and decay.
- Salvation is the salvation of individuals from time in history, not the salvation of the community through time in history.
- History is interpreted as a process of deterioration, waiting for the inescapable self-destruction of a world era.
- Religious correlate to the nonhistorical interpretation of history is either polytheism (the deification of special spaces) or pantheism (the deification of the transcendent "One", negating space as well as time).

The main characteristics of the historical type of interpreting history:

- History as an independent and, finally, the outstanding category of interpreting reality.
- Time is predominant against space. The movement of time is directed, has a definitive beginning and end, and is moving toward an ultimate fulfillment
- The temporal world is a battlefield between good and evil powers (expressed in mythological or rational terms). Ontologically, or as creation, world is good.
- The true being, or the ultimate good, is a dynamic process of self-realization within and above temporal existence.

• Salvation is the salvation of the community from evil powers *in* history *through* history. History is essentially "history of salvation".

• History has a turning point or a centre in which the meaning of history appears, overcoming the self-destructive trend of the historical process in creating something new which cannot be frustrated by the circular motion in nature.

• The religious correlate to the historical interpretation of history's exclusive monotheism: God is the Lord of time trolling the universal history of mankind, acting in history and through history.

¹² Ibid. p. 31

¹³ Ibid. p. 187.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 203.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 204.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 196.

¹⁸ Ibid. 203.

¹⁹ Ibid. 204-205.

²⁰ Ibid. 206.

²¹ Ibid. pp. 214-216.

²² Ibid. p. 218.

²³ Ibid. p. 219

²⁴ The chart **[See below]** is more fully developed in my books *Worship Ways* (Abingdon Press, 2014) and in *Lifestyle Expectations for Spiritual Leadership* (to be released in August 2016).

²⁵ Ibid. p. 221

²⁶ Ibid. p. 223

²⁷ Ibid. pp. 222-225.

²⁸ Ibid. pp. 228-230.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 231.

³⁰ Ibid. p. xxv.

Boundary Situations	Catalyst for Hope	Incarnational Experience	Resolving Existential Anxiety
Lost Looking for direction	Life Purpose and Destiny	Spiritual Guide	Emptiness
Lonely Looking for Rapport	Authentic and Truthful Relationships	Perfect Human	Meaninglessness
Trapped Looking for Deliverance	Liberation and Fresh Start	New Being	Fate
Dying Looking for Renewal	Confidence for Enduring Life	Promise Keeper	Death
Broken Looking for Healing	Wholeness and Serenity	Healer	Guilt
Abused Looking for Vindication	Advocacy and Justice	Vindicator	Shame
Discarded Looking for Compassion	Belonging and Comfort	Shepherd	Displacement

TILlich AND TRANSHUMANISM

DEVAN STAHL

Among those who call themselves “Christian transhumanists” Paul Tillich is one of the most, if not *the most*, quoted theologian.¹ And, not inconsequentially, some of the theologians who oppose transhumanism, particularly evangelicals, are quick to deride Tillich for his posthumous association with transhumanists. There are many obvious and not so obvious reasons why so-called Christian transhumanists find a kindred ally in Tillich.² In this presentation, I want to caution us against believing that Tillich himself would have upheld the moniker of “transhumanist.” I believe Tillich would have been deeply skeptical about

the ontology and the utopian telos of transhumanism, even though he might have found great promise in some transhumanist technologies. Transhumanism certainly has an ultimate concern, in fact, if religion is the personal and social quest for meaning, transhumanism likely fits the mold of a religion more than any other scientific movement, but transhumanism likely comes close to Tillich’s understanding of idolatry or taking a preliminary concern as ultimate.³

Christian Transhumanism

Now, first things first, what is Christian transhumanism you may ask? Let me begin with a couple of notes about transhumanism. In general,

transhumanists, "...envision the possibility of broadening human potential by overcoming aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering, and our confinement to planet Earth."⁴ These are, of course, not modest goals—transhumanists want to cure human mortality. There are at least three ways transhumanist believe they can achieve immortality: first, through the singularity, or by merging human consciousness with computers and dispensing with bodies altogether; second by genetic and biotechnology enhancements that will dramatically if not infinitely increase the average life span; and finally through bionic devices that could be replace failing body parts—making us all cyborgs. Although some of this may sound fantastical, the leading figures of this movement work at prestigious universities and well-funded companies that spend money and resources on these goals.⁵

On the surface, it is rather unclear how Christian theology would find any commonality with the transhumanist agenda. Most transhumanists identify as atheists. Moreover, they seem to advance two obviously heretical positions: the Manichean belief that the material body is an obstacle to full human flourishing, and the Pelagian belief that humans can perfect themselves.⁶ Moreover, one would think, that if Christians, particularly mainline liberal Protestants who tend to be most open to transhumanism, knew their own history, they would recognize that their embrace of the American Eugenics movement shared a similar motivation: using the best of contemporary science to help improve the human condition and usher in the Kingdom of God.⁷ The parallels are striking, but they are rarely explored.

There are, however, things that classic Christian theology and transhumanism do share and I think here is where we can begin to do some correlational work. Transhumansim is a relatively new movement but it shares in many of our long held cultural anxieties and ambitions and this is certainly why some Christians have found it appealing. The Christian Transhumanist Association describes its mission as "participating with God in the redemption, reconciliation, and renewal of the world."⁸ Christian transhumanists say they want to use technology to help "heal the sick, give sight to the blind, help the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, give voice to the mute and guide persons toward holistic betterment in community."⁹ Chris-

tian transhumanists recognize the human longing for something better than what our current life has to offer, they tap into the dissatisfaction nearly every person feels with their human limitations, and they recognize the tragedies inherent in life. There are perhaps vulnerabilities humans have that they would be better off without. Anyone who has ever suffered through an illness or seen a child die prematurely recognizes that eliminating certain effects of human vulnerability is not heretical but an authentic Christian longing for a better world. And, surely, technology can be and should be part of the betterment of society. Most Christians and transhumanists share the belief that evolution does not have our best interests in mind and that we should sometimes use technology to control evolution. Christian transhumanists do not believe they need to be on board with the whole transhumanist agenda; rather they believe that they can use their God-given creativity to help direct transhumanism toward a better and more ethical course: they want to eliminate disease and death because they are humanity's enemies and through Christ they believe we can overcome them.¹⁰ (Tillich did not believe death itself was our enemy, but we may be able to forgive Christian transhumanists this one sin). Perhaps Christians can help the transhumanist movement by figuring out how to use transhumanist technologies for Christ's redemptive purposes, rather than for self-gain.¹¹ Or, Christians can help transhumanists see the resonances between their project and the Christian gospel as Tillich did with other medico-scientific projects.

Tillich and Transhumansim

We should perhaps not be surprised whenever a movement that appreciates both religion and science should cite Tillich as one of its vanguards. As a liberal theologian, Tillich did not believe science and religion were in conflict.¹² In fact, Tillich believed that technology was a miracle of the modern age when it was used to relieve "unrelenting stress of bodily pain, from stifling oppression of the daily evils of the natural process, and from the defenselessness with which the earliest human beings were abandoned to nature."¹³ Moreover, Tillich believed that technology has transformed our world and that we must learn to incorporate it into the "ultimate meaning of life."¹⁴ He believed technology has the power to "de-demonize"

things that once provoked fear and oppression.¹⁵ Technology itself can be godlike, in that it can be creative and liberating. Our technical productions represent a new creation and a new form of being that we bring into the world.¹⁶ Tillich also believed technology's ability to create human community across space and time and provides modern people with eschatological hope.¹⁷ As someone who was not so sure about "life after death," Tillich may have appreciated the transhumanist ambition to bring futuristic hope to the here and now. And, although Tillich was wary of technologies like the hydrogen bombs that could destroy humankind, he also believed in general that "science should not be restricted, even if it becomes dangerous."¹⁸

The of Ambiguity of Technology

Of course, as a theologian of the boundaries, Tillich recognized that technology does not escape the ambiguity of life. Technology can liberate and "de-demonize," but it can also enslave and itself become demonic. Humans create in order to make their place in a strange world. We build to stave off the uncanniness of life, but our homes and cities retain their sense of the uncanny.¹⁹ How much more is this true when our project is our own body? To feel more at home in our bodies we invent technologies to spare us from the fragility and strangeness of life and in so doing we risk making our bodies into something foreign to us. It is unlikely we will ever feel at home in the mind of a computer or even a body that refuses to age. Our own best efforts to create bodies to fit our will and fulfill our desires may very well produce bodies that are strangers to us.

Moreover, the promise of technology, like the technologies of transhumanism, can create a utopian fantasy that lures us into believing our salvation is just around the corner.²⁰ Tillich did not believe that we found total fulfillment in this life; rather, we only get fragmentary moments. I do not believe Tillich would have seriously accepted that the posthuman—a person who never ages or dies—would be the final fulfillment of humankind. For every victory, we must be ready for a new demonic power to arise.²¹ Our essential nature leaves us free to contradict our own fulfillment.²² Transhumanist Julian Savulescu believes we could solve this problem through neurological

moral enhancements,²³ but my guess is Tillich would have his doubts.

Major Worries Concerning Transhumanism

I want to end briefly with some concerns I have as a Tillichian-bioethicist concerning transhumanism. First of all, it is really hard to get people to talk about death, especially their particular death. Only about 25% of patients have an advance directive and those that do have likely not discussed it with their family or their doctor.²⁴ Much of my job as a clinical ethicist is trying help families think through what their loved ones would have wanted at the end of life, and most simply have no idea. This often creates a great amount of stress and disharmony in families. I think we need a dose of Tillich's existentialism in our medical culture. We are not allowing the awareness of our future to evoke an ontological shock in us.²⁵ Tillich was concerned that the propensity to want a long life was "a sign that we are avoiding the inevitable."²⁶ Tillich warned against projects that look at only the horizontal dimensions of life while ignoring the vertical ones. We may be "running ahead indefinitely into an empty space."²⁷ In other words, we are so preoccupied with living forever, that we do not properly prepare for the end of our lives. And we are so dead-set on curing everyone that we insist on continuing medical treatments until our dying day. In order to maintain "hope" almost 50% of oncologists admit to communicating a terminal prognosis to patients only when patients specifically asked to be told their prognosis,²⁸ and 20-40% of oncologists give non-effective chemotherapy to patients who are at the end of their lives simply to give them hope they will not die.²⁹ This should concern us because cancer is now the leading cause of death in America. What is more, Christians are more likely than the general population to receive aggressive therapy at the end of life; they insist on it³⁰—they do not want to deny God the opportunity to miraculously cure them. I think we can all imagine how Tillich would have responded to this. Transhumanism, the desire for immortality through biotechnical means, is a product of a technological culture that has forgotten the lessons of the 20th century and reaches for progress at the expense of contemplating finitude.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, we are so consumed with staying young and able-bodied

that we think disability is worse than death. Even clinicians who work primarily with disabled patients consistently rate their quality of life as significantly lower than their own patients do.³¹ We just cannot believe living with a disability is not awful and so we invest billions in technologies to keep us looking and feeling young. Fetuses prenatally diagnosed with disabilities such as Down syndrome are still frequently aborted.³² It seems that a technological society that strives for human immortality and perfection cannot tolerate the imperfect. Tillich, on the other hand, thought perfection was ambiguous. Our desire for bodily, mental, or physical perfection fosters new Utopias that have as much potential to enslave as to liberate.³³ We must be careful in allowing the medical sciences to determine what is perfect or even good for the human being; science too stands under the ambiguity of life—it simply does not have all the answers.³⁴ To the transhumanist, disability can only be seen as tragic, because it already has an idea of the perfect dis-embodied or the technologically enhanced body. The transhumanist is unlikely to see the beauty or perfection that may come when a disabled child is accepted for who she is, befriended, and brought into the Eucharistic community.

Finally, I fear that transhumanism's unwavering belief that informed consent and autonomy are ethically sufficient to ensure that technologies will be *optional* choices, rather than government mandates, is naïve at best. We *love* autonomy in bioethics; in fact, it's certainly one of our idols. We sometimes forget that simply because people consent does not make their choices ethical. Most transhumanists are sure that we can avoid the problems of earlier eugenics movements, simply by assuring that the government stays out of the project—except of course in *funding* their technologies.³⁵ In the history of medical technologies, it is clear that technologies invented to be optional can easily become mandatory or at least socially obligatory. Try telling your obstetrician that you do not want a genetic screening for your fetus or your oncologist that chemo is not for you. Now tell your family and friends—someone will tell you that you are a bad parent or not fighting hard enough. And where did we get these ideas? Likely from the many arenas in our life that seek to manage our health. Transhumanists drastically underestimate the power of bio-politics to seep into our autonomous choices.

So, if he were alive, would Tillich call himself a transhumanist? I doubt it, but he may have found room for a correlational response to the deep questions transhumanism raises about finitude and embodiment. Transhumanism has an ultimate concern, along with an ontology and eschatology, but it does not perfectly align with Tillich's own. Much like the text of the Bible itself, it's not difficult to use Tillich's words as support for just about any moral project, but as a theologian of the boundaries Tillich was not a theologian to wholly identify himself with any secular group. I imagine him saying to Kurzweil and other prominent transhumanists, both “yes” and “no.”

¹ See for example, James McLean Ledford, “Prepare for HyperEvolution with Christian Transhumanism,” last modified December 9, 2005, <http://www.hyper-evolution.com/>; “Quotes”, *Christian Transhumanist Association* <http://www.christiantranshumanism.org/quotes>.

² Cris D. Putman, “The Doctrine of Man: A Critique of Christian Transhumanism” (presentation, International Society of Christian Apologetics 6th Annual Conference, April 28, 2011).

³ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 13.

⁴ Doug Baily et al., “Transhumanist Declaration,” *Humanity+*, 1998, last modified March 2009, <http://humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-declaration/>.

⁵ As a side note I want to mention that I recently stumbled upon a line of nutritional supplements endorsed by the futurist Ray Kurzweil, the guy behind the singularity. (<http://www.rayandterry.com/>) By taking all of Ray and Terry's longevity products you may live to see 2029, when Kurzweil computers will become conscious, or maybe even 2099 when he believes we will all be indistinguishable from computers and we will finally eliminate all war, hunger, poverty, death and disease. Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 280.

⁶ Brent Waters, *Whose Salvation, Which Eschatology?* in *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement*, ed. Ronald Core-Turner (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2011) 170-1.

⁷ Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸ "About," *Christian Transhumanist Association*, <http://www.christiantranshumanism.org/about>.

⁹ Christopher Benek, "Why Christians Should Embrace Transhumanism" *The Christian Post*. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/why-christians-should-embrace-transhumanism-139790/> accessed 12/1/15.

¹⁰ Benek, "Why Christians Should Embrace Transhumanism."

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957),

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