TILLICH ON TILLICH

SENIOR HONORS THESIS
I.D. 499
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MUNCIE, INDIANA
MAY 27, 1970
I recommend this thesis for acceptance by the Honors Program of Ball State University for graduation with honors.

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May 25, 1970
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Acknowledgements

It would have been impossible for me to complete this paper without the assistance in respect to research techniques and matters of language that I received from Dr. Richard Wires. I am also indebted to Ball State University for the Undergraduate Research Grant that was awarded to me.
Introduction

American thought and culture have been much affected by the immigration of peoples from other countries. One of the greatest periods of immigration of intellectuals was during the time that Hitler was in political control of Germany. America gained scientists, philosophers, literary personages, and theologians who stimulated the mind of the American populace. One such individual who even in his purely theoretical manner has affected greatly the temper of popular and academic American religious thought is Paul Tillich.

The problem of this study is to ascertain Paul Tillich's understanding of his life, his thought and his effect. In great measure Tillich's words will be allowed to speak for themselves because one cannot totally understand an individual and his thought unless one understands that individual's "looking-glass self." There are definite limitations in this approach: since I must choose, order, and interpret Tillich's words, this method cannot yield an objective understanding of Tillich's assessment of himself. The study will be one interpreter's subjective understanding of Tillich's assessment of his life, his thought and his effect.
I would characterize Tillich as a nineteenth-century mind who was forced to face the brutal reality of a twentieth-century world. To understand the meaning of this statement it must be systematically analyzed. By "nineteenth-century mind" it is meant that attitude that is evident in Georg Hegel's attempt to synthesize the fields of human knowledge. The result of this type of synthesis is the obscuring of inconsistencies and contradictions. Two such contradictions appear in Tillich: the synthesis of mysticism and rationalism, and the synthesis of existentialism and essentialism. By "twentieth-century world" it is meant the awareness that man's life consists of contradictions, conflicts, and anxieties that cannot be dealt with in a purely intellectual manner. Therefore, I see Tillich as one whose desire is to wall himself up in an "ivory tower" and intellectually synthesize the aspects of human knowledge, but as one for whom his desire cannot be fulfilled because the realities of this century force one to participate in them. In other words, Tillich brings an intellectualizing nature to real problems of man and attempts constructively to give man answers. The content of this paper must determine if Tillich has been a success.

The question of the significance of this problem must now be faced. Why Tillich? What can he say to man that
is constructive? Why his understanding of himself? These questions can best be answered by consulting others' attitudes towards Tillich and what they see as his importance. The reader must realize that Tillich has even had great influence on popular theology and that average unacademic individuals have met in groups to attempt to broaden their understanding of the religious significance of life through study of some of Tillich's many works.¹ Reaction to Tillich's thought in academic circles has been both affirmative and negative. Jerald C. Brauer, Dean of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago saw Paul Tillich as the prophet to man in a secular age.

Paul Tillich was convinced that the secular cannot, by definition and in reality, live by itself. That is why he was a theologian, and that is why he believed and argued that religion would never pass away. He was fully secular in fighting against the domination of life by the historical manifestations of the Holy, but he was fully religious in proclaiming the divine depth of the secular in the face of the threatened emptiness... Tillich clearly saw the new challenge and called upon the Church to risk itself in the effort to be relevant to numerous people who though not in the churches belong to them essentially.²

¹The Concord Methodist Church in Dayton, Ohio, is an example of this type of study. This group was discussed in Robert E. Chiles, "A Glossary of Tillich Terms," Theology Today, XVII (April, 1960), 77-81.

Wilhelm Pauck, Distinguished Professor of Church History at
The Divinity School at Vanderbilt University, a close
friend of Tillich and a fellow German, saw Tillich as a
bridger of the chasms that separate men.

He [Paul Tillich] was always a mediator and
a bridge-builder, living and working in the
midst of men, at all times surrounded by a
cloud of witnesses with each of who he would,
sooner or later, be personally in touch.¹

Both of these men see Tillich as a man who is deeply
concerned with the problems of man and who offered a "religious"
answer to those problems. If these men are correct, a
religious answer is the only answer possible to the ultimate
problems with which man is faced.

In contrast with these affirmative reactions toward
Tillich, there are those who criticize Tillich from the
perspective of analytic philosophy. These individuals
would say that any discussion of Tillich would be unfruitful
because the very terms that Tillich uses are nonsensical.
J. Heywood Thomas criticizes Tillich for logical and
factual errors resulting from a lack of understanding of
the philosophic answers offered by the analytic philosophers.²


Professor E. Sprague says that the basic question that concerns Tillich, "What is being itself?" is "an interrogative illusion."  

It is evident from the very fact that I am continuing this study that I feel that Tillich does have something to offer. The analytic philosophers may be correct in saying that Tillich's terminology is unclear, but they are wrong in saying that it is meaningless. Tillich faces squarely those ultimate questions of existence that constantly trouble man's psyche attempting to answer them in order to set man free from them. It would be nice to agree with the analytic philosophers that those ultimate questions with which man grapples are meaningless, but this answer is merely ignoring the fact that the questions continually return to man and that possibly man is incapable of getting rid of them. Experience shows that man has anxiety about these questions. Is it not better to set man free from the questions, rather than to ignore that they exist and thereby to leave man in anxiety? Why Tillich? a simple answer for the modern secular man is that Tillich gives to him an answer that is not absurd, that is empirically reasonable, and that is valid in helping solve man's predicament.

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Tillich himself related what he thought the significance of his thought to be. I feel that this statement perhaps best answers the question: Why Tillich?

If one's whole life were dedicated to the fascination and the discipline of thought, one could easily forget the fact that reality opens itself up to us only by existential participation, by entering the situation about which one makes conceptual statements. The situation changes when life gives reality to what is for mere thought only possibility. Then the flavor of actual experience, a flavor which is lacking even in indisputable abstract statements, appears in one's thinking and writing. I hope that I have been involved in this process...

This statement perhaps even answers our last question: Why Tillich's view of himself? Men can speculate about another's thought, but they necessarily must remain outside of that thought looking in on it. The only way to get inside another's thought and ideas is to participate existentially in it and, since this is impossible, the nearest that we can come to this goal is to allow the person to speak for himself. One's thought is always formed out of an existential situation and the only person who can know how this situation has affected him is the person himself. Tillich will be allowed to speak for himself, for only in this way we can understand what he thinks to be important in his life's work, what formative

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influences gave birth to his thought and what he thinks is his effect today. By this method, a person's life and thought can more intimately and accurately be revealed than if one used a purely objective method, neglecting the personal aspects of any philosophy of life.

Before getting into the substance of this paper a few remarks of orientation into Tillich's thought are needed. This introductory orientation will be divided into four sections: (1) definitions of some Tillichian terms, (2) an introduction into his method, (3) an introduction into his philosophy of religion, and (4) an introduction into his system.

Tillich has always thought in terms of metaphysics; therefore, his terminology at times tends to be vague and words are used in unusual contexts. Several terms must be defined (these terms are spelled and defined as Tillich would have used them): (1) being, (2) Ground of being, (3) logos, (4) anxiety and (5) ultimate concern. Tillich's concern with the term "being" reveals him as an ontologist. Definitionally being is essentially a negative term. It has been defined as "...the power to resist non-being." 7 Perhaps, this phrase does not make this term more clear. Tillich uses the term as the gerund of the verb "to be" and as such it is an attribute that

must be said to be possessed by a noun. This noun must in fact be a thinking and reasoning creature because the term has meaning only in relationship to the ultimate question of existence: to be or not to be? Being, as such, is the potentiality possessed by each thinking and reasoning creature which is actualized only by that creature in relationship to the Ground of being (the Power of being). The Ground of being is commonly called God. It means that "...creative ground or formative unity..." of everything that is. That power that aids in actualizing being from its potential state and sustains it. The Ground of being is both the necessary and the sufficient cause for all that is. In relation to the Ground of being is the logos which is defined as the self-manifestation of God, the word of God. The specific revelation of the logos is in the person of Jesus as the Christ (the New Being). The term anxiety has meaning only in the particular existential situations in which man finds himself. Anxiety arises from that fact that man being finite is separated from the infinite Ground of being and man is aware that he is

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10Ibid., p. 107.

11Ibid., p. 6.
living in a state of "false being" lower than he could potentially be. In other words anxiety is the "threat of non-being."\textsuperscript{12}

Ultimate concern is then man's relation to the Ground of being. It is the fact that man is grasped by unconditional seriousness\textsuperscript{13} and realizes that this seriousness determines his being or non-being.\textsuperscript{14}

The definitions of these terms show Tillich's understanding of man's relationship to reality-itself. Man is a finite creature who has anxiety in his present existential situation. The answer for that anxiety is revealed to man through the continuing revelation of the logos. Man learns from the logos that there is a Ground of being which has the power to aid man in realizing his potential. Man is grasped by an ultimate concern and that concern is answered by reality-itself or being-itself. For if there is no answer for man's ultimate concern, and man's anxiety, man's life is ultimately meaningless.

This distinction between the question raised from existence (to be or not to be?) and the answer coming from the Ground of being itself leads to an understanding of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12}Chiles, "A Glossary of Tillich Terms," p. 78.
  \item \textsuperscript{13}Tillich, \textit{Ultimate Concern}, p. 7.
  \item \textsuperscript{14}Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology}, I, 14.
\end{itemize}
Tillich's method. There are two aspects to Tillich's method: (1) synthesis, and (2) method of correlation. Tillich attempts to synthesize all the aspects of man's knowledge of the "cultural sciences" into a unified theology of culture. The theology of culture is based upon the belief that behind any cultural movement is "spiritual material" that finds its true meaning (substance) in a theonomous relationship between God and man. The term "theonous" here means a society guided by the principle of ultimate concern. Theonomy is contrasted with autonomy, man's free expression which cuts himself off from the ground of his existence, and heteronomy, man's attempt to impose finite authority on his own freedom. Tillich's method then involves an attempt to synthesize the cultural sciences and evaluate them in relationship to their ultimate concern.

The method of correlation is a question and answer method that attempts to do justice to both man's existential situation and the religious aspects of his nature. This method relates philosophy to theology. Man in an existential


16Tillich, Ultimate Concern, p. 33.

situation by the means of philosophy asks questions arising out of his ultimate concern, but mere philosophy cannot give valid answers to these questions. The questions are answered through the theological message which is revealed through the **logos**. "It correlates questions and answers, situation and message, human existence and divine manifestation."\(^{18}\)

Tillich's method then attempts to evaluate the cultural concerns of mankind by the principle of ultimate concern and tries to answer the questions arising out of man's existential predicament by the means of the revealed message. This method emphasizes the importance of Tillich because he shows his concern for the questions which man faces and cannot answer alone, and attempts to set man free from those questions by means of the implications of message-answer.

Since Tillich is a philosopher as well as a theologian, he understands the necessity of having a philosophical base for religion because only by means of philosophy can man think clearly. As a philosopher of religion, Tillich is concerned with the meaning of religious terminology. These terms derive their meaning not from the implications of definitions given by finite men, but rather they derive their meaning from their relationship to unconditional meaning itself; therefore, terms

\(^{18}\)Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, 8.
have meaning if understood in their mythical relationship to particular reality which is in their mystical union with the unconditional.\textsuperscript{19} In other words the philosophical method that approaches religion must be "metalogical," that is adhering to the form (logic) but reaching beyond this to the creative manner in an attempt to receive an "...intuition of the dynamic in the structure of meaning-reality."\textsuperscript{20} As a philosopher Tillich is revealing himself as a metaphysician \textit{par excellence} by his constant insistence on grasping the ultimate essences of reality-itself. In this respect Tillich is not completely a philosopher, but rather a mystic who attempts to participate in the unity of all meaning in the unconditional. All that he will say about himself must be reviewed in light of this understanding. The goal of Tillich's life is to answer the questions of existence from knowledge obtained from the unconditional-itself. Here Tillich shows himself to be much like the philosophers of the nineteenth century hunting after Kant's \textit{Dinge-an-sich} (the essences of "things-in-themselves").

Tillich's understanding of the answers obtained from the Christian message, are set forth in his \textit{Systematic Theology}. Its purpose, he relates, was to answer the criticisms of

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., pp. 51-53.
Christianity from a scientific and a philosophical perspective. Hence Tillich's theology is apologetic theology. As a result of this purpose, Tillich defines systematic theology as an attempt "...to give us an interpretation of the Christian message which is relevant to the present situation." Science and philosophy are criticizing not the essence of religion, but an older interpretation of the Christian message no longer relevant.

The basis for any revitalization of the Christian message must begin as with the scientific disciplines in experience because experience is "the inexhaustible source out of which new truths can be taken continually." From experience the realization of man's present condition is ascertained. That condition is best explained by the terms "...disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness and despair..."

Man finds himself estranged from himself and from the Ground of his being, "...the essential unity of dynamics and form."

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21Tillich, The Future of Religions, p. 91.
22Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 53.
23Ibid., p. 45.
24Ibid., p. 49.
25Ibid., II, 65.
In this situation of estrangement man finds himself asking a question and he himself is the question. The question is:
Why is there something and not nothing? Why am I? Why this world?

The above is a description of the existential predicament in which man finds himself. Relevant to this situation is a reinterpreted Christian message, Tillich's system, which attempts to answer man's questions and to explain his existential situation. In contrast to man's existential situation, Tillich postulates man's essential situation (what man ought to be), and how man can move from what he is and "should not be" to what he is not and ought to be. The whole system is based, as is Christianity, on the person of Jesus as the Christ. Jesus by becoming the Christ revealed to man the New Being, the unity of man's essential and existential natures. Christ is the logos and as such His revelation is not only limited to His manifestation in Jesus. It is able to permeate through man's experience and reveal the ground from which it comes. Through revelation man learns that God has an

26Ibid., p. 13.

27No synopsis can do justice to Tillich's reinterpretation of the Christian message. If one is interested, he must consult the three volumes of Systematic Theology. Probably the best introduction to Tillich's system is Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue.

28Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 66.
inner telos (aim) for all that is,\textsuperscript{29} and that that aim will become manifest.

Jesus is existential man. As the Christ, he becomes the New Being both demonstrating man's false being and giving man an answer. Jesus as the Christ is the mediator uniting that which is estranged. "He represents God toward man and man toward God."\textsuperscript{30} In other words, he is the agent uniting man's existential nature (that outside of God) with his essential nature (that with God).

A man who is ultimately concerned finds a spiritual presence which stays with him aiding him to actualize himself. Man thus is transforming and creating his potentiality with the aid of a strength external to him.\textsuperscript{31} The hope with which man is left is an eschatological hope, that within all being there is an inner telos that is working toward a union of all being with essential being.

Three aspects of Tillich's thought about himself are most important. This paper will deal with each of these in a section: (1) Tillich on his life, (2) Tillich on his thought, and (3) Tillich on his effect. From these we will be able to see the picture

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., III, 298.

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., II, 196.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., III, 276.
of a man who spent his whole life attempting to answer man's ultimate questions. Some of the answers probably confound the question more than answering them but yet we see a man who lives existentially committed and searching for meaning. Maybe his life is an example of the best possible type of life.
Tillich on His Life

Ideas are never born in a vacuum. They are always the result of experiences that an individual has. Tillich emphasized this aspect of intellectual history more than any other. It was his belief that every philosophy was rooted in some existential situation. He held that his ideas always had "... their roots in actual situations and amidst practical needs ... every thought, even the most abstract, must have a basis in our real existence." Further explaining his intellectual development, Tillich characterizes it as on the boundary which, he feels, "... is the best place for acquiring knowledge." Explaining what he means by on the boundary, he states:

At almost every point, I have had to stand between alternative possibilities of existence, to be completely at home in neither and to take no definitive stand against either.

This study will attempt to remain true in its interpretation to Tillich's boundary understanding of himself.

The first part of Tillich's life can be placed historically if not strictly chronologically in the nineteenth century.


3Ibid.
It is this period that runs between the time of his birth in 1886 through his school years ending with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

Tillich was born on August 20, 1886, in the village of Starzeddel in the province of Brandenburg in Germany. He relates that there were three primary influences upon his early childhood: (1) an authoritarian home, (2) experience in nature, and (3) contacts with the working classes. Tillich was born into the home of a minister in the Prussian Territorial Church and brought up in the village of Schönfliess where his father was superintendent of the diocese. His father was typical of those members of the church holding a strong respect for authority. Tillich discovered that he was expected to yield to that authority and, as such, he experienced a "deep struggle" with his father. Later in his life, Tillich related that this authoritarianism was most difficult to overcome. As a personality, Tillich tended to be autonomous and inclined to freedom of expression, but his background held his autonomy.


5Ibid., p. 4.

6Tillich, On the Boundary, p. 15.

under heteronomous subjection. Karl Barth once accused Tillich of continually fighting the Grand Inquistor and Tillich admits that Barth is correct. Authoritarianism in any respect stifles man's potentials and keeps him from "actualizing" himself. Accepting his father's authoritarian control because he had no other choice, the young Tillich looked for other ways to express his desire for freedom.

Perhaps the place where Tillich felt the freest was in close contact with nature. Only by divorcing himself from the physical setting of his home and his village could he really feel free. Because his village was a walled medieval village, it only reinforced the authoritarian conditions that he found at home. The village "... gave the impression of a small, protected, and self-contained world." He could only transcend this self-contained world by communing with nature. Through these experiences with nature, Tillich discovered the creative basis for man's free expression. The sea became particularly important to him. It became a symbol which supplied him with "... the imaginative element necessary for the doctrines of the Absolute as both ground and abyss of dynamic truth, and of the substance of religion as the thrust of the eternal

8Ibid., p. 33.
A romantic nature was born in these early days which made him susceptible to Schelling's philosophy of nature and to an "aesthetic-meditative attitude."\(^{10}\)

Perhaps even this early, one can see the idea of theonomy emerging, especially if theonomy is seen as the divine mediation of authority and freedom.

As a young school boy, Tillich again was on the boundary. This time it was between social classes.\(^{12}\) He could not fully participate in his class, the bourgeoisie, and yet it was his duty to do so. He did participate with members of the proletariat although social folkways forbade this contact. The conflict of these two ideologies, the bourgeois and the proletariat, prepared his mind for the truths expressed in Karl Marx's prophetic interpretation of the social situation. Tillich was a member of the bourgeoisie and yet he was intellectually outside of it. He was conscious of social guilt and this guilt later emerged in his "... particular outline of religious socialism ..."\(^{13}\)

Many of Tillich's ideas and concerns were seeds in his mind being watered by his experiences but not yet blooming. His mystical nature and his philosophy of history could not

\(^{10}\) Tillich, *On the Boundary*, p. 18.

\(^{11}\) Tillich, *My Search for Absolutes*, p. 25.


\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 20.
have been possible without the environment of these early years. As he grew older the new environment of a humanistic Gymnasium and a university was to further aid in his development.

Tillich's school years still remained within the nineteenth century. He graduated from the Gymnasium in Berlin in 1904, was granted the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Breslau in 1911, and earned the degree Licentiat of Theology at Halle in 1912. A humanistic education and contact with great minds during the student years much affected Tillich's later thought.

A humanistic education placed Tillich on the boundary between the religious and humanistic traditions. Much conflict arose between these two. In contrast to America where the religious and scientific traditions are at odds, the religious and humanistic traditions are at odds in Europe. From early study and a love of the Greek language, Tillich was introduced to Greek philosophy. The pursuit to fulfill his love of philosophy became his prime concern. This love for philosophy reinforced his autonomous tendencies making him stand more at odds with authoritarianism. His interest in the humanistic tradition was not limited to philosophy. A contact with literature,
particularly the poetry of Rilke, reinforced his mystical-romantic nature.\textsuperscript{17} The humanistic education, particularly its mystical side gave Tillich "... the ability to combine categories, to perceive abstractions in concrete terms (... almost ... 'in color') and to experiment with a wide range of conceptual possibilities."\textsuperscript{18} One might think that this interest in the humanities, the way it reinforced his childhood experiences and the way it prepared him to engage in his true love, abstracting, would lead him into a career in the humanities. But this was not to be the case. The spiritual validity that Tillich had found in his father's religion would not allow him to escape from the religious tradition. Therefore, as is typical of him, Tillich became a synthesis of the humanistic and religious traditions as a theologian of culture. Tillich reveals the reason:

Nevertheless I was a theologian, because the existential question of our ultimate concern and the existential answer of the Christian message are and always have been predominant in my spiritual life.\textsuperscript{19}

Tillich ended the nineteenth century with an intellectual synthesis between philosophy and theology.

\textsuperscript{17}Tillich, \textit{On the Boundary}, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 25.
\textsuperscript{19}Tillich, \textit{My Search for Absolutes}, p. 36.
Several teachers and the thought of other individuals have had a profound influence on Tillich's thought. Five individuals were outstanding influences: Martin Kähler, Friedrich von Schelling, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche and Rudolf Otto. Martin Kähler of Halle was the first man to make Protestant theology real for Tillich. Kähler came out of the school of the theology of mediation and as such was the opponent of Albrecht Ritschl. Kähler's effect was twofold: (1) he applied the doctrine of justification to man's intellectual side and (2) he reinterpreted historical criticism of the Bible. The application of the doctrine of justification to man's intellectual acts, as well as to man's moral acts, meant that doubt as a part of the human situation did not need to be alleviated for man to be accepted by God. Even further it meant that doubt was a symptom of man's finitude and as such would always be with man. By Kähler's reinterpretation of historical criticism the Christ of faith became evidence for the Jesus of history and "... the certainty of the Christ of faith is independent of the historical results of the critical approach to the New Testament." Both the Christ of

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21 Ibid., p. 213.

22 Ibid., p. 215.
faith and the Jesus of history are one and give evidence for each other. As a result of Kähler's influence Tillich became the prophet to the doubters.

Tillich was introduced to Schelling by Fritz Medicus, a philosopher at Halle; Schelling interested Tillich so much that both of his dissertations were written about Schelling. Particularly Schelling's "positive philosophy" introduced Tillich to the basic foundations of existential philosophy and as such resulted in a break with the thought of Hegel. Schelling's "positive philosophy" was concerned with actual things and events in time and space. Although Schelling was concerned with actual experience, he realized that existence is only a negative which must be interpreted by a positive, "the essential structure of reality." From Schelling Tillich obtained his interest in men's existential predicament and his synthesis of existentialism with essentialism. Perhaps an example of this synthesis would explain Schelling's "negative side" and Tillich's ability to synthesize the two. Take the proposition: the man is running. The existential situation

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23 Tillich, On the Boundary, p. 47.
25 Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology, pp. 150-151.
portrays a man in the act of running. But this existential situation cannot be meaningful without an "essential structure of reality." In other words, the proposition is meaningful only if the term "man" is understood. Man here is an essence with which we must be familiar before we can understand the existential situation.

In the years of his academic training Tillich got a taste of Kierkegaard's "dialectical psychology," but because this idea did not fit the nineteenth-century world-view, it remained latent. Kierkegaard's thought helped prepare Tillich's mind for his acceptance of existentialism in the postwar years. The analysis of the human situation as one of anxiety and despair became particularly relevant.

Nietzsche's effect on Tillich was similar to that of Kierkegaard. "The ecstatic affirmation of existence" in Nietzsche became particularly relevant after the collapse of the self-contained world of the nineteenth century.


28Tillich, *Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology*, p. 166.
book came near to approximating Tillich's religious experience. Otto's "holy" became vital to Tillich.\(^\text{30}\) Otto discusses the appearance of the unconditional to man as the supremem existential situation for man even though this experience is the most mystifying experience for man.\(^\text{31}\) Tillich's understanding of God and his doctrine of God are dependent on Otto.

The nineteenth century as a period of Tillich's life gave him ideas and experiences whose consequences remained latent until they could be broadened and interpreted in relationship to the twentieth century. As the nineteenth-century world ended abruptly with the outbreak of World War I, Tillich found himself as an ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church.\(^\text{32}\) Tillich related the effect that the nineteenth century had on his life.

Belonging to the nineteenth century implies life in relatively peaceful circumstances and recalls the highest flourishing of bourgeois society in its productive grandeur. It also implies aesthetic ugliness and spiritual disintegration. It implies, on the one hand, revolutionary impulses directed against this self-complacent period, and on the other hand, a consciousness of the Christian humanist values which underlie even the antireligious forms of this society, and which made and make it possible to resist the inhuman systems of the

\(^{\text{30}}\text{Tillich, "Autobiographical Reflections," p. 6.}\)

\(^{\text{31}}\text{Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology, p. 166.}\)

\(^{\text{32}}\text{Tillich, "Autobiographical Reflections," p. 9.}\)
twentieth century. I am one of those in my generation who, in spite of the radicalism with which they have criticized the nineteenth century, often feel a longing for its stability, its liberalism, its unbroken cultural traditions. 33

The nineteenth century for Tillich was a growing and developing period that set the foundation for all that was to follow.

If the nineteenth century were the period that laid the foundation for Tillich's thought, the cultural disintegration which was caused by World War I and its aftermath brought latent ideas into fruition. In the early days of the war Tillich reacted like any other patriotic German and with enthusiasm volunteered for service as a war chaplain. But this initial enthusiasm was soon to wane as Tillich became aware that "... the war would last indefinitely and ruin all Europe." 34 A nineteenth-century complacent attitude was replaced by an awareness of the destructiveness apparent in man.

As the war ended, Tillich returned to a job in church administration, 35 but this was not the same Tillich. It was one who had aged and matured in the struggle for human existence. This new, more mature Tillich saw a great disparity between a bourgeois Christianity and its message, and the proletariat

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33 Ibid., p. 3.
34 Ibid., p. 12.
35 Tillich, On the Boundary, p. 32.
and their hope. With the destruction of Imperial Germany in 1918, Tillich became active in political affairs. The result of intellectuals like Tillich becoming involved in politics was the birth of the religious-socialist movement. The inception of this movement was in the realization that man was responsible for what he had done to others in World War I and for the gap between the bourgeois and the proletariat.  

Religious socialism was not a unified movement, for many factions divided it. One faction was organized to close "... the gap between the Church and the Social Democratic Party through change in church policy ..." This faction was not satisfactory to Tillich; therefore, he joined with others in the Social Democratic Party and founded the magazine Neue Blätter für den Sozialismus. This magazine was used to revitalize and remold the theoretical foundations of German socialism. This theoretical branch of the religious-socialist movement seemed to suit Tillich's interests.

37 Tillich, On the Boundary, p. 32.
38 Ibid., p. 33.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., p. 34.
until he was dismissed in 1933. Four experiences at these universities broadened Tillich's theological perspective: (1) introduction to psychoanalytic ideas while he was at Berlin, (2) initial contact with neo-orthodoxy at Marburg, (3) contact with Heidegger at Marburg and (4) his experience with the Nazi movement while at Frankfurt.49

The psychoanalytic ideas with which he became acquainted at Berlin, became material for "an Apologetic theology."50 At Marburg Tillich had contact with the radical effects of neo-orthodox theology. He discovered that the effects were heteronomous. Cultural problems, political ideas and theologians like Schleiermacher, Harnack, Troeltsch, and Otto were either rejected or banned from discussion.51 Neo-orthodox theology became for Tillich ". . . a new heteronomy, an anti-autonomous, and anti-humanistic attitude that . . . [is] . . . a denial of the Protestant principle."52 Also while as Marburg Tillich became acquainted with Heidegger and from this acquaintance he discovered " . . . a new understanding of the relationship between theology and philosophy."53 From

51Ibid.
52Tillich, On the Boundary, p. 41.
53Ibid., p. 56.
Heidegger Tillich discovered the relevance of the existential question which must relate to human freedom and human finitude.\textsuperscript{54} Tillich saw in philosophy the question theology must answer.

After being dismissed from the University at Frankfurt-am-Main, Tillich better understood the relationship between heteronomy and autonomy. As a result of his struggle with the Nazis, he learned that the question of heteronomy and autonomy had become "... the question of the final criterion of human existence."\textsuperscript{55} At the end of 1933 Tillich left Germany with his family to come to America and teach at Union Theological Seminary at Columbia University.\textsuperscript{56}

Tillich's American period was his most productive period. It was during this time that his ideas reached final culmination with the publication of his three-volume \textit{Systematic Theology}. An initial experience upon becoming part of the working community at Union Seminary was the realization that ideas, particularly religious ideas, must transcend nationality. This realization led him to understand that, instead of ideas being valuable to a community within a national setting, that which

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 57.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 43.
\textsuperscript{56} Tillich, "Autobiographical Reflections," pp. 14, 16.
movement spread into many countries.\textsuperscript{60} The basic ideals of religious socialism remained alive for the world even if they were dead for Germany.

The results of World War II affected a change in the religious-socialist movement. In contrast to the First World War, which was interpreted hopefully in the guise of a belief in the kairos, World War II ended with ". . . a general feeling that more darkness than light is lying ahead of us. An element of cynical realism is prevailing today, as an element of utopian hope was prevailing at that earlier time."\textsuperscript{61}

The postwar period became one of expansion and clarification. Religious socialism was limited by a doctrine of man that realized that the hoped-for theonomous relationship would not be possible in the foreseeable future.\textsuperscript{62} The theoretical concepts of the movement became practical concerns as Tillich chaired the Council for a Democratic Germany during the war, and continued being politically active after the war, working with the Graduate Faculty of Political Sciences at the New School for Social Research in New York, and as chairman of the Self-help for Emigrees from Central Europe.\textsuperscript{63}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Tillich,\ The\ Protestant\ Era} p. xv.
\bibitem{Ibid.\ p.\ xxv.}
\bibitem{Paul\ Tillich,\ "Beyond\ Religious\ Socialism,"\ Christian\ Century,\ LXVI (June\ 15,\ 1949),\ 733.}
\bibitem{Tillich,\ "Autobiographical\ Reflections,"\ p.\ 19.}
\end{thebibliography}
and in action, to be open toward the future. . ."68

Tillich's life ended as he was still in the midst of a search. He wanted to clarify by experiment what he thought was true. He did not want to believe something just for the sake of tenacity; for, he wanted to be right. American experimentalism might have affected this desire in Tillich, but it would be more correct to say that it reinforced it. The epithet that Tillich used for his life, on the boundary, evidences this experimental nature. He explains the result of this type of life.

The man who stands on many boundaries experiences the unrest, insecurity, and inner limitation of existence in many forms. He knows the impossibility of attaining serenity, security, and perfection . . . In its presence [the Eternal], even the very center of our being is only a boundary and our highest level of accomplishment is fragmentary.69


69Tillich, On the Boundary, pp. 97-98.
Tillich on His Thought

Paul Tillich's whole life was a search for answers to the ultimate questions of existence. He answered each existential question with his interpretation of the Christian message realizing that his interpretation was only tentative. Because of man's finitude, he cannot grasp totally the ultimate truth of existence, but he can re-express the revelation of that truth (the Christian message) in relevant language. Perhaps this quest is a futile quest and one that is never completely finished, but it is one that gives direction and purpose to one's existence in the here and now.

Tillich realized that his thought was the end product of his experiences and he wanted to make this personal thought relevant to others grappling with the same problems. The best place to begin this discussion of Tillich's understanding of his thought is with Tillich's understanding of the method that he used to relate his thought to others.

In the "Preface" to his Systematic Theology, Tillich states the purpose of his thought (his system).

My purpose, and I believe it a justified Purpose, has been to present the method and structure of a theological system written from an apologetic point of view and carried through in a continuous correlation with philosophy.¹

¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, xi.
Tillich is endeavoring to defend the Christian message and show why it is plausible and relevant in this age.

Tillich does not rest with just defending the Christian message. He wishes to show why the Christian message is the ultimate "existential truth" for an individual. He defines this existential truth as "...a truth which lives in the immediate self-expression of an experience."² This task he feels is the most difficult for a systematic theologian, for existentialism and systematizing seem to be contradictions. Can one exist inclusive of the other?

To write a system of existential truth, therefore, it is the most difficult task confronting a systematic theologian. But it is a task which must be tried again in every generation, in spite of the danger that either the existential element destroys systematic consistency or that the systematic element suffocates the existential life of the system.³

The goal of Tillich's thought is twofold: (1) to be apologetic and (2) to write the existential truth.

To reach this goal, he uses the method of correlation, which is an attempt to correlate philosophy and theology. He explains this method in the following way:

The method of correlation shows, at every point of Christian thought, the interdependence between the ultimate questions to which philosophy (as well as pre-philosophical thinking) is driven and the answers given in the Christian message. Philosophy

²Tillich, My Search for Absolutes, pp. 45-46.
³Ibid., p. 46.
cannot answer ultimate or existential questions qua philosophy . . . And, conversely, theology cannot answer those questions without accepting their presuppositions and implications . . . Philosophy and theology are not separated, and they are not identical but they are correlated, and their correlation is the methodological problem of a Protestant theology. 4

This method can be attacked from many perspectives. The conservative religionist would say that it does not do justice to the Christian message, and the philosopher would say that Tillich is bringing absolutes to answer questions and these absolute answers have not been proven valid. This last argument could be much strengthened if the philosopher realized what Tillich is doing here. Tillich will argue that his answers are only tentative; therefore, the philosopher's argument is invalid. But are his answers really tentative? They are tentative only so much as they are his interpretation of that Christian message in order to make it relevant. Tillich is assuming that there is an Unconditional Truth that has been revealed to man in order to answer the questions of his predicament. Where does this Truth come from? How is it verified?

Nevertheless, Tillich cannot be accused of attempting to hide this limitation under a guise of tentativeness; for, in the "Introduction" to his system, he explains the limitations within which a theologian must work. He calls

this area "The Theological Circle." The limitation of the theological circle is that the theologian must claim "... the universal validity of the Christian message... He [the theologian] enters the circle with a concrete commitment."\(^5\)

This limitation means that the theologian already has the answers that he claims will solve the existential questions. If this is so, which it seems to be, the philosopher's argument is valid. Although Tillich admits this limitation, he would emphasize that it does not discredit the theologian's task because the act of entering the theological circle is in itself the prime existential decision.

But even the man who has entered the theological circle consciously and openly faces another serious problem. Being inside the circle, he must have made an existential decision; he must be in the situation of faith... Every theologian is committed and alienated; he is always in faith and in doubt; he is inside and outside the theological circle... Therefore, one criterion alone can be applied: a person can be a theologian as long as he acknowledges the content of the theological circle as his ultimate concern.\(^6\)

Tillich seems to be saying that if one is to be a theologian he must make an existential decision to do so realizing that doubt will arise concerning the wisdom of that move. He is saying that one makes the Kierkegaardian "leap" and accepts the Christian message as true. The question about the verification

\(^5\)Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 10.

\(^6\)Ibid.
of this action still remains. Tillich would answer that the content of the Protestant principle determines this action. In other words, through the experience of the Protestant principle in one's life, one verifies one's decision. The Protestant principle here refers to the divine judgment which falls on every human attempt exposing its sham and incompleteness along with the divine acceptance of man in spite of his human frailties. The wisdom of one's choice is verified by faith where faith is defined as "... the state of mind in which we are grasped by the power of something unconditional which manifests itself to us as the ground and judge of our existence." The action of accepting the Christian message and working within its framework can only be verified if one is grasped by the unconditional. If one has not been so grasped, the wisdom of this action will still remain in question.

The analysis of the method leads one to realize the major question concerning the understanding of Tillich's thought: is he an existentialist or an essentialist? Because he makes an existential decision to enter his discipline, he seems to be an existentialist. However, on the other hand, because he brings answers from the unconditional to man's questions, he seems to be an essentialist. This question is

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7Tillich, The Protestant Era, p. 163.
answered by Tillich in the following way. He feels that he is neither an existentialist nor an essentialist, but both.

Often I have been asked if I am an existentialist theologian, and my answer is always short. I say, fifty-fifty. This means that for me essentialism and existentialism belong together. It is impossible to be a pure essentialist if one is personally in the human situation. . . On the other hand, a pure existentialism is impossible because to describe existence one must use language. Now language deals with universals. In using universals, language is by its very nature essentialist, and cannot escape it. Theology must see both sides, man's essential nature, wonderfully and symbolically expressed in the paradise story, and man's existential condition, under sin, guilt, and death.8

Is this response satisfactory? Can one be both an existentialist and an essentialist? To be an essentialist implies one believes that essence precedes existence, and an existentialist believes that existence precedes existence. How can one be both? Are these not contradictions? The rest of this section will attempt to answer these questions by explaining Tillich's understanding of existentialism, essentialism and how he has synthesized the two.

Tillich, in an article that he wrote in 1949, placed himself firmly on the side with those who believe that the existentialist evaluation of the human predicament is the most valid.

8Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology, p. 245.
In spite of the fact that existentialism has become fashionable and has been dangerously popularized, I have been confirmed in my conviction of its basic truth and its adequacy to our present condition. The basic truth of this philosophy, as I see it, is its perception of the "finite freedom" of man, and consequently of his situation as always perilous, ambiguous and tragic.  

Tillich sees existentialism as the valid analysis of the human condition and he defines existentialism as the act of looking "... at man in his predicament in time and space. ... [and seeing] ... the conflict between what exists in time and space and what is essentially given."  

Tillich traces the rise of existentialism as three steps: (1) as "an element," (2) as "a revolt," and (3) as "a style."  

What he means here is that existentialism first appeared as an element in someone's thought when they discussed the things of experience (the "that" and "this" of experience). From its appearance as an element, it became a revolt protesting the unnecessary division by the nineteenth-century philosophers of the subject of experience into objects to be essentially analyzed. Then from a philosophic protest, it became a style, the style of the twentieth century, which is concerned

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10 Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology, p. 244.
11 Ibid.
with man in the situation in which he finds himself.

An analysis of the philosophy of existentialism yields the relationship between existentialism and essentialism. The main thrust of existentialism is a criticism of the "... identification of Reality or Being with Reality-as-known."\(^{14}\) It is the existential contention that this world is a world of becoming that must be separated from the realm of being because existence is finite (within time) whereas essence is eternal.\(^{15}\) Man finds himself in this situation which is existential because man is finite and the major characteristic of his existential situation is estrangement because being finite he is separated from his essence.\(^{16}\)

This analysis shows the limitations of being only an existentialist; for, "... existentialism presupposes essentialism."\(^{17}\) Existentialism is only the question that arises out of man's analysis of his situation and this question must have an essentialist answer. That essentialist answer will be theistic or atheistic depending upon the background

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\(^{14}\) Tillich, "Existential Philosophy," p. 44.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 48.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 63.

of the person answering the question.\textsuperscript{18} Tillich states the limitation as follows:

Existentialism is not a philosophy which can stand on its own legs. Actually it has no legs. It is always based on a vision of the essential structure of reality. In this sense it is based on essentialism, and cannot live without it. If you say that man is evil, you must have a concept of man in his essential goodness, otherwise the word "evil" would not make any sense.\textsuperscript{19}

Therefore a relationship must exist between existentialism and essentialism. That relationship is one in which essentialism must be the foundation for existentialism because, for this world of becoming to be possible as a world, structures of being must exist that make it intelligible.\textsuperscript{20} These structures of being are the essences of essentialism.

But what is essentialism? Tillich defines it as a philosophy "... which develops the doctrine of man in terms of his essential nature within the whole of the universe."\textsuperscript{21} In other words, essentialism is concerned with essences which are the "whats" of experience or, in other words, that which makes experience unified, whole and intelligible.\textsuperscript{22} There are

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 747.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology, pp. 142-143.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Tillich, My Search for Absolutes, pp. 75-76.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology, pp. 243-244.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Tillich, "Existential Philosophy," p. 47.
\end{itemize}
three major essences or absolutes: (1) that which makes language possible, (2) that which makes understanding possible, and (3) that which makes truth possible.23

Tillich's attitude is that existentialism is valid as a perception of man's finite situation, but he also holds that essentialism is valid. Tillich sees himself as one who is searching for "... the essential structure of reality..."24 He cannot be properly called only an existentialist although he thinks that it is a correct analysis of our situation. On the other hand he cannot be properly called an essentialist because essentialism is not rooted in the situation in which we find ourselves.

To call such an interest "existentialist" is not wrong, but to do so is meaningful only if the nature of existentialism and its relation to essentialism is understood. I have never been an existentialist in the sense that Kierkegaard or Heidegger is an existentialist... In regard to every meaningful proposition, the existentialist lives from its opposite, the essentialist... For one cannot erect an edifice [theological system] with negativities; one cannot even describe the negative without presupposing the positive, namely, the essential structures of being. For this reason my present inquiries are predominantly essentialist, dealing with the dimensions and processes of life and spirit, without forgetting, however, the estranged, fragmentary and ambiguous character of these processes.25

23Tillich, My Search for Absolutes, p. 72.

24Tillich, Ultimate Concern, p. 56.

Tillich has synthesized existentialism with essentialism. The structure of this synthesis is interesting.

Foremost in the synthesis is the analysis of the nature of man. Tillich begins his analysis with man as we encounter him in the situation of life and by analyzing this man he finds that the nature of man is separated into "essential being" and "disrupted existence."26 Any analysis of man must recognize that man has two sides to his nature. There is the essential being which man could be and ought to be. The existence of the essential being is necessary because if it did not exist, the term "man" would be undefinable and meaningless. On the other hand, there is existential man who is finite and anxious. To be complete an analysis of man must include the synthesis of the essence and the existent.

Man's knowledge is also a synthesis between the relative (existent) and absolute (essence). Because as an existential being man is finite, his knowledge can be only relative, but if knowledge were only relative, there could be no continuity in thought.27 Therefore, knowledge is relative because of finitude, but this relative knowledge remains within the

26Paul Tillich, "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," The Theology of Paul Tillich, p. 342.

27Tillich, My Search for Absolutes, pp. 69-70.
absolute structures that give knowledge connectedness and allows relative knowledge to come to useful conclusions.\(^{28}\) A true analysis of knowledge must realize its limitations, its relativity, and must realize the absolute structure that makes knowledge possible.

The same is true of man's moral predicament. In the existential situation morals must be relative (situational), but this relativity to the situation is guided by the moral absolute, the moral imperative. The moral imperative, no person can be used as a means, is unconditionally true, but the contents of the moral imperative when applied to particular situations change.\(^{29}\) The moral imperative is absolute, but its application is relative.

These are but three examples showing the necessary interrelatedness of existentialism and essentialism. However, the interrelatedness will not continue indefinitely. The dichotomy between existence and essence is being overcome even now. The \textit{telos}, inner aim, of all existence is the union of that which was separated, the union of existence and essence which overcomes the tragedy and estrangement in man's existential situation.\(^{30}\) The inner aim of existence is to

\(^{28}\)Ibid., p. 80.

\(^{29}\)Ibid., pp. 93-94.

create the New Being in which each existent and essence are
united. The New Being is the experience "... in which
the self-estrangement of our existence is overcome, a reality
of reconciliation and reunion, of creativity, meaning, and
hope." An example of this New Being is Jesus who became the
Christ. However, the New Being is not limited to personal
reconciliation; rather it can also be social involving the
community. This social side of the New Being is best expressed
by Royce's idea of a "Beloved Community" in which the conflicts
of human existence are overcome by love. This ultimate
reconciliation means the dissolving of existential conflicts
by essential harmony.

Tillich saw himself as a bridge between essentialism
and existentialism. He believed that true being was expressed
by existentialism and that this world was purposefully being
led to an eventual totally essential state. However, while
man was still short of that goal any meaningful analysis must
delve into man's existential situation. Essentialism is the
answer to the question of making man's life meaningful. Tillich
saw his thought as a synthesis. Perhaps his thought could be
said to be on the boundary as his life was.

31 Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 49.
32 Tillich, "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," pp. 337-338.
Tillich on His Effect

The effect and contributions of many men are not observable during their lifetimes or even soon after their deaths. The effect of the thought of some of these men lies dormant for many years; for example, it took over fifty years for Kierkegaard's thought to become influential. Many musicians, authors, and poets have died in obscurity only to become well known when their works are resurrected many years later and are seen as culturally important.

Realizing the limitations of the methodological basis for this study, I must be concerned only with the years when Tillich was alive and capable of ascertaining his effect. However, first I must study Tillich's attitude toward the theological situation contemporary with him, and his place in it, because a person has an effect only in relationship to the cultural situation within which he lives and works.

Tillich characterizes the theological situation as one of diastasis. By diastasis he means the destruction of the nineteenth-century theological synthesis between Christianity and the nineteenth-century mind.\(^1\) That synthesis was called neo-Protestantism and it made Christianity a bourgeois religion

\(^{1}\)Tillich, "The Present Theological Situation in the Light of the Continental European Development," p. 303.
concerned with man's progress. It held that there was to be a "... continuous, divinely directed development to higher and higher forms of political, cultural and religious life." World War I and the subsequent destruction of nineteenth-century attitudes contributed to the break-up of the neo-Protestant synthesis. The neo-Protestant theology was replaced as the prominent theological point of view by the theology of crisis which is primarily concerned with the divine judgment that is placed upon finite human endeavors. The theology of crisis tries to analyze correctly the human situation, understand its failures, and offer the mediation of the infinite judge of all. However, the neo-Protestant theology remained alive in amended form as liberal theology.

Both of these types of Protestant theology were contemporary with Tillich. The most prominent type was the larger wing of the theology of crisis which is represented by Karl Barth and the neo-orthodox or dialectical theology. Of lesser prominence was the amended version of neo-Protestant theology which was called liberal or humanistic theology. Tillich's place in the theological situation is on the boundary between these two types, mediating between them and overcoming

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2 Ibid., p. 300.
4 Ibid.
5 Tillich, The Protestant Era, p. xxii.
both. Tillich places himself within the small school version of the theology of crisis which is based upon Bultmann's Biblical criticism and Heidegger's interpretation of existence. His theology relates to liberal theology because its approach to theology begins with an analysis of man in his situation. It relates to neo-orthodoxy in its acceptance of the diastasis, particularly that part of it which asserted that only God is the judge of man's actions and only He is the salvation for their consequences.

Tillich's mediating position uses the conclusions of existentialism and depth psychology to analyze a man's situation as one of estrangement (sin) and then attempts to answer the situation of estrangement with the kerygma (Christian message) which emphasizes the fulfillment of man in the New Being (a situation of healing).

Tillich sees that the role of the theologian in the contemporary world is to make the kerygma understandable. The

6 Ibid., p. xxiii.
8 Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology, p. 20.
9 Tillich, "Beyond the Usual Alternatives," p. 553.
10 Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology, p. 245.
theologian is one who having been grasped by the unconditional knows the kerygma to be valid. The most outstanding effect that Tillich sees of his thought is his ability to use new language and make the kerygma current.

By using the philosophical understanding exhibited in existential philosophy, Tillich is able to explain Christian doctrine to this age. The terms "sin" and "original sin" are offensive to modern man, but the words "estrangement" and "anxiety" are not. If Christianity uses these new words, man can understand what Christianity is saying and that it is meaningful to him.

Much of the language used by traditional Christianity has been over-used; hence, it has lost its message. A word is only a sign denoting some mental or physical reality. If this sign has been clouded by connotations, it no longer means what it originally was intended to mean. It must then be discarded, but the reality that it once designated cannot so easily be discarded. Consequently, new signs must be used to express these realities. Tillich states that his theological work was intended to have this effect.


13 Tillich, Ultimate Concern, p. 90.
My whole theological work has been directed to the interpretation of religious symbols in such a way that the secular man -- and we are all secular -- can understand and be moved by them. 14

Tillich sees his most important effect as the clarification of religious realities by the use of new denotative signs.

The other important effect that Tillich believes his thought has had is that he has been able to be the "apostle" to the secular man. As a result of the Second World War, Christianity no longer has its earlier heteronomous control over men's minds. A new generation of people born during the war are totally secular and live in a totally secular world. These people Tillich calls "the thinking and doubting people." 15 They have rejected the prewar type of Christianity that asserted that to be a Christian one needed to accept a worldview that was anti-scientific. 16 Tillich has been able to interpret the traditional symbols of Christianity in a non-literal way, asserting that they are mythical, which means for him based in truth but not literally true. 17 For, if the symbols of Christianity were literally true, and since they

14 Ibid., pp. 88-89.
15 Ibid., p. 190.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p. 193.
are grasped by man, they would have to be finite and God would be less than ultimate.18 It is idolatrous for one to assert that he has grasped the ultimate truth in literal symbols because he is really asserting that he is greater than God.19 Tillich thinks that his thought has led men to accept Christianity as "basic truth" although they have doubts about its literal truth, and, because of his reinterpretation of the doctrine of justification, they know that although their doubts have not been dispelled that they are still acceptable to God.

Tillich sees himself as a mediator who, by overcoming the conflict between the liberal and conservative schools of theology, expresses the mythological truth of the Christian message. He feels his thought has been instrumental in leading secular men back to Christianity because secular man understands the reinterpreted symbols and he is convinced that he can be both scientific and Christian. Life has meaning and this meaning is expressed in the kerygma; therefore, man sees meaning in his life only if the kerygma is accepted. This acceptance presupposes that the kerygma coincides with the truths in experience and is understandable.

18Tillich, "Where Do We Go from Here in Theology," p. 21.
19Tillich, Ultimate Concern, p. 194.
Conclusion

What is a man? He is a human being who interacts in a social environment. He is one who takes from the environment that which aids in making his life meaningful and, consequently, one who affects the environment. This general pattern fits any man, but it particularly fits the subject of this study, Paul Tillich. He was a man who was born into a social environment which is alien to the twentieth century. He used that which was valuable from the nineteenth century and placed it into the context of the twentieth century. From this action, he molded a tentative philosophy of life which was to be continuously recast in the light of emerging twentieth-century realities such as the rise of Nazism in Germany, contact with a new culture in America, and dialogue between the world religions. His thought was remolded until the day of his death. Even with its tentativeness, his thought effected changes in attitudes. Now that he is dead, his thought can no longer evolve, but it still affects other individuals. His thought is now part of their social environment and they will use it in the context of their experience to form a new, yet still tentative, synthesis.

This study has looked at three aspects of Tillich's understanding of himself. From the content of these aspects, it is possible to conclude that Tillich saw himself as one
who was capable of synthesizing the abstract with the concrete and of overcoming the divisions in modern thought. The main question which occurs when one looks at Tillich's assessment of himself is whether it is valid. This is a complex question. It implies that one can completely know Tillich's assessment of himself, the true assessment of Tillich, and how these compare. Complete knowledge about each of these implications is probably impossible, but some knowledge is possible. Realizing this limitation, I will attempt to answer the question.

Tillich believed that his thought was born out of the situations that he had had and as such his thought was personal. He emphasized that his life could be divided into three periods: (1) the period of the nineteenth century, (2) postwar Germany, and (3) the American years. Each of these periods added to his consciousness. During the nineteenth century he acquired the desire and the academic background for his chosen field, and he learned the meaning of the proletariat-bourgeoisie conflict and of the terms "autonomy," "heteronomy," and "theonomy." In postwar Germany he was able to put to practical use (the Religious-Socialist Movement) the ideas acquired in the nineteenth century. Also, as a result of Nazism, he learned the importance of freedom of expression. During the last years of his life, while he was
in America, he realized the importance of the tentativeness and practical application of ideas. America taught him that truth is found only through experiment.

The thought that was born out of his experiences can be called a mediation. He attempted to overcome the divisions in the modern mind by emphasizing the principle of synthesis. Philosophy and theology, existentialism and essentialism, religion and culture were mediated into a theology of culture which emphasized theonomy (the importance of divine approval of men's actions). He concludes that his thought has had two effects: (1) it helped modern man understand Christian truth, and (2) it allowed modern man to be Christian and remain secular.

A true assessment of Tillich must emphasize all of these aspects. It is a truism that one's thought results from "existential situations," but disagreement about which of these situations are most important can be expected. I feel that Tillich's father had a greater influence than Tillich realized. It is unusual that one who is trained and feels comfortable in the autonomous humanities would bind himself into "the theological circle." The only explanation for this action is that Tillich felt that religion was the only valid answer to the question of the meaning of his existence. Since the only known contact that Tillich
had with religion is through his father, his father's effect must have been outstanding. I also feel that "on the boundary" as an epithet was applied to Tillich's life from hindsight, and that in relating his experiences, he unconsciously molded them to fit this image. It is doubtful that one consciously wills that he live his life on the boundary. One might live his life this way, but is it a conscious decision? Does one not look for some stability? In Tillich the stability was the constant truth of the kerygma. I also doubt if Tillich's thought was a conscious synthesis. From hindsight it looks as though it were a synthesis, but if one uses the principle of synthesis consciously, he is playing with "intellectual suicide." What does one do when one must synthesize two positions (for example, assertions of philosophy and of theology) and one is true and the other is false? It is necessary in logic that the synthesis of these two be false, and what is the utility of this?

However, my major criticism of Tillich's assessment of himself is his analysis of his effect. He feels that he has translated Christian truths into understandable language, but are the following terms understandable: (1) telos, (2) kairos, (3) being, (4) New Being, and (5) Ground of all being? Are these terms not abstract and their meanings
unclear? Also, has Tillich really answered modern man's questions and are these answers valid? If Tillich is correct in assessing his effect, modern man can be Christian, scientific, philosophical, and theological. If Christian symbols are not literally true, how do we know that they are mythically true, and why can mythical secular symbols not be substituted for mythical Christian symbols? Tillich's prime concern was that he deliver an interpretation of the Christian message that is truly an answer to man's questions. However, is Tillich's assertion that man in a theonomous relationship with the Ground of being can be "actualized" into the state of the New Being any more of a concrete answer than God saves man by grace from the fiery pit of hell?

The basic problem with Tillich's theology is that he does not base it on a sound epistemology. Instead of limiting oneself to "the theological circle," one ought to have a sound conception of what it means to know, what is truth, and how one attains truth. If a theology is based on a sound epistemology, it will be understandable and useful.

Nevertheless, Tillich is important because he realized the constancy of the questions that trouble man and he attempted to give man an answer to those questions. If he
has failed in content, the spirit of his work must not fail. A constructive attempt must be made to answer these questions. Will they ever be totally answered? We do not know, but we do know that we must try. It is this spirit of the willingness to try, to experiment, that makes Tillich a teacher to modern man.
Bibliography

Primary Books


