

TOWARDS PAUL TILlich'S THEOLOGY OF CULTURE: A PROBLEM OF DEMARCATION OF "SACRED" AND "SECULAR"*



Eduard SABLON LEIVA, B.A. in Philosophy (National Pedagogical Dragomanov University, Kiev), M.A. in Theology and Religious Studies (in process; Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven).

esablonleiva@gmail.com / © E. Sablon Leiva, 2017

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Abstract: This article focuses on the dichotomy found within categorical pairs such as religion and culture, church and society, and theology and philosophy – a problematical dichotomy in the horizon of Paul Tillich's theology of culture. In particular, Tillich's philosophical-theological approach to solving this problem is considered, namely, his theology of culture's hermeneutical-apologetical key: the "method of correlation." Tillich's intrinsic aims, along with certain ideas he borrowed from Western thinkers,

and how these inform his system, are the object of review and analysis throughout the article. The article indicates, finally, the system's main benefits and its contributions to interdisciplinary dialogue (between theology and the sciences, especially philosophy) and the dialogue between Church and Culture.

Keywords: theology; philosophy; religion; culture; church; society; theology of culture; method of correlation.

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Introduction

The debate over the problem of demarcation within the three categorical pairs, religion and culture, church and society, and theology and philosophy, has a reach history. Beginning with the earliest Church Fathers and theologians,¹ this issue has been intricately discussed, often leading to polarization between schools of Christian thought. Some subscribe to the starkest distinctions in each category – for instance, between theology and philosophy – while others contend for contact, interplay and essential intersection.

One of the most prominent thinkers to, not merely consider, but devote the greater part of his scholarly efforts to the “demarcation” debate was the German-American scholar Paul Tillich.² In his writings, Tillich focused particularly on the ethical, theological and ontological problems in church and society. He accorded the most generous treatment and development to the ideas of those writers, preceding him, who voiced support for compatibility and close interaction within these categorical pairs.

This article will examine the problem of the dichotomy between the “sacred” and the “secular,” as addressed in Tillich’s theology, on the basis of the key works of his American period,³ written after the Second World War.⁴ Among them, special attention will be paid to such works as *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (1951), *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (1963) и *Theology of Culture* (1959). These works acquaint us with Tillich’s more mature views, which he had by that time revised.

The three conceptual pairs to be addressed in this article derive from three chapter titles in Tillich’s autobiography *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch*, namely “Between Theology and Philosophy,” “Between Church and Society” and “Between Religion and Culture.” Our focus will be on the way these concepts interrelate in the later period of Tillich’s creativity.

¹ Suffice it to recall the famous words of Tertullian: “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and Church?” (Tertullian, “The Prescription against Heretics,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 3: Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, revised and chronologically arranged with brief prefaces and occasional notes by A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), VII.

² Tillich said the following about himself: “the problem of religion and culture has always been in the center of my interest” (Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), v.

³ This period begins after Tillich’s immigration to the USA in 1933.

⁴ In this article I will be citing the translation of the final version of *Kairos*, reworked by Tillich during his American period and published in English in 1948.

The religious and political preconditions for Paul Tillich's theology of culture

Paul Johannes Tillich (1886-1965) was one of the 20th century's most prominent and influential philosophers and theologians. He is justifiably called the "apostle to the intellectuals" and a "philosopher among theologians and a theologian among philosophers."⁵ The Lutheran tradition Tillich grew up in had a huge influence on his early views. He intentionally overcame the strong influence of his father, a Lutheran pastor, and further distanced himself from his childhood faith in the course of his studies.⁶ Tillich received a classical liberal theological and philosophical education at the universities of Berlin, Tübingen, Halle and Breslau. During his studies, Tillich became interested in Schelling, to whom he dedicated two of his works ("The construction of the history of religion in Schelling's positive philosophy" and "Mysticism and guilt-consciousness in Schelling's philosophical development"), for which he received his doctoral degrees in both philosophy and theology at the universities of Breslau and Halle. Also during university he became acquainted with the writings of Marx and Nietzsche, and with philosophical and socialist ideas that made a profound impact on him.

Tillich's theology, as we know it today, was formed under the influence of a number of factors. More precisely, it emerged from the wreckage of his "optimistic" theology, which "collapsed" against the background of religious and political crises. The crucial event to jolt Tillich into an essential re-evaluation of his theology was World War One.⁷ This catastrophe brought thorough disillusionment with traditional German theology, in Tillich's eyes shattering any possible optimism over human nature. In addition, according to Russell Re Manning – a modern philosopher of religion and former president of the North American Paul Tillich Society – the War revealed "the catastrophic error of late nineteenth-century theology: religion had become separated from culture..."⁸ Their former close correlation was replaced by theological positivism and scientific (historical) reductionism.⁹ In consequence, Tillich rejected outright many traditional theological views on God and the world. Tillich friends and authoritative biographers Wilhelm and Marion Pauck relate how Tillich went to war as a politically naive German patriot and returned a completely changed man. Over the wreckage of his traditional monarchism, Tillich raised his religious socialism.¹⁰ After

⁵ Wilhelm and Marion Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought, Vol. 1: Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 198. Cited by Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 114-15.

⁶ S. V. Lezov, "Теология культуры Пауля Тиллиха," в Избранное: *теология культуры* ["Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture," in *Selected: Theology of Culture*] (М.: Юрист, 1995), 461.

⁷ By that time, he already held a doctorate in theology (April, 1912), and had been ordained as a Lutheran minister (August, 1912).

⁸ Russell Re Manning, "Tillich's Theology of Art," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 155.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Pauck and Pauck, *Paul Tillich*, 40-41.

these events Tillich was no longer interested in theology in the classical sense; for him, only a “theology of culture” survived the catastrophe.¹¹

Among other things, the development of Tillich’s philosophical-theological approach was influenced by his implacable disagreement with the already existing approaches (in particular, the liberal and neo-orthodox ones) to the interaction between church and society. Though Tillich had once studied and been greatly influenced by classical liberal theology, he resolutely dissociated himself from it, becoming one of the most prominent representatives of neoliberal theology (not to be confused with postliberal theology).

Thus, the crisis in Western society and Protestant Christianity raised multiple problems that Tillich strove to find answers to. Furthermore, he was dissatisfied with his contemporaries’ answers to questions related to the interaction of cultures and religions, church and society, philosophy and theology. On the one hand, Tillich was extremely disappointed in liberal theology that had lost its popular currency and, in his eyes, was shorn of relevance after the War. On the other hand, he could not embrace Karl Barth’s dialectical theology, which radically divided theology and philosophy, religion and culture, church and society.

Theology of culture as a response to the problem of demarcation

Before examining how Tillich responds to the problem of demarcation,¹² it is necessary to define such concepts as “sacred” and “secular.” The concepts of “sacred” and “secular” or “holy” and “profane,” which Tillich considers in detail in his *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, imply an artificial separation of all things into what relates to the realm of religion and church (the “sacred”), and what does not (the “secular”), i.e. all secular, non-religion things (for instance, culture and philosophy). Tillich considered such division fundamentally wrong and unacceptable. There is an “essential unity,” for him, between these concepts.¹³ He argued that “everything secular can enter the realm of the holy and that the holy can be secularized.”¹⁴ In other words, for Tillich no such division or opposition between the “religious” and “secular” could legitimately be said to exist. He saw his creativity as an attempt to reconcile these spheres; more precisely, to eliminate the line of demarcation between them.

Tillich explicitly expressed his new type of theologizing for the first time in April 1919, in Berlin in his programmatic lecture entitled “Über die Idee einer Theologie der

¹¹ Russell Re Manning, “Introduction: The Real Tillich is the Radical Tillich,” in *Retrieving the Radical Tillich: His Legacy and Contemporary Importance*, ed. Russell Re Manning (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 3-4.

¹² The problem of demarcation is considered in this study in a narrowly specific sense. In spite of the fact that this problem has different meanings (mainly philosophical) in different contexts, in this article it is conceptualized and contemplated strictly with reference to Tillich’s theology.

¹³ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Three Volumes in One* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1:221. “Essentially the religious and the secular are not separated realms. Rather they are within each other” (Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 41).

¹⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:221.

Kulture" ("On the Idea of Theology of Culture"), delivered at the Kant Society (the Kant-Gesellschaft).

The conceptual fruit of Tillich's intellectual and creative efforts may be summarily expressed by the phrase: "theology of culture."¹⁵ This phrase represents a complex philosophical-theological system that embraces the whole spectrum of Tillich's intrinsically interconnected, ideas and concepts. Some of the elements comprising this system are: theology of culture proper; religious socialism; autonomy; heteronomy; theonomy; kairos; symbol; method of correlation; the courage to be; ultimate concern; and, God above the God of theism.¹⁶ Karl Barth – Tillich's main opponent – quite authentically formulated the essence and task of the system (although he did not agree with it) in his "swan song"¹⁷: "...to integrate theology with the rest of the sciences or with culture itself as represented by philosophy and, vice versa, to set culture, philosophy, and other sciences in an indissoluble correlation with theology, according to the scheme of question and answer..."¹⁸ As for Tillich himself, he spoke of his intentions as follows: "Most of my writings – including the two volumes of Systematic Theology – try to define the way in which Christianity is related to secular culture."¹⁹ This discourse can be traced through the two periods – i.e., German and American – of his work.

Paul Tillich's religious socialism, or a complete theonomy

One of Tillich's ideological reactions to the events of his time, especially to the First World War, and the demarcation of "sacred" from "secular," should be considered his concept of religious socialism, one of the goals of which was to overcome the gap between religion and *socium*.²⁰ After the War, Tillich became more interested

¹⁵ James D. Spiceland, "Tillich, Paul," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second Edition, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1200.

¹⁶ Due to space limitations, only some of them will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Concerning Tillich's conceptual and terminological apparatus, it should be noted that it was rather idiosyncratic; Tillich invested a whole gamut of terms with his connotations peculiarly his own. Tatyana P. Lifintseva, one of the (few) Russian Tillich scholars, and translators of his work into Russian, notes that in his theology Tillich used "the concepts of classical and post-classical European philosophy as well as traditional Christian terms, infusing them with a somewhat non-traditional symbolic sense..." (Tatyana P. Lifintseva, *Философия и теология Пауля Тиллиха* [*Paul Tillich's Philosophy and Theology*] (M.: Канон+, 2009), 222. Tatyana P. Lifintseva, "Пауль Тиллих: философия и теология," *Философский журнал* ["Paul Tillich: Philosophy and Theology," *Philosophical Journal*] 3 (2009): 47, accessed September 5, 2016, <http://www.intelros.ru/pdf/fg/03/04.pdf>). Russian scholar Sergey S. Pimenov comes to similar conclusions, noting that "Tillich's utilization of terms departs from the generally accepted. Moreover, rather often the same concept turns out to denote different things with Tillich, depending on the context" (Sergey S. Pimenov, *Доктор Пауль Тиллих: о традиции, новизне и богословском усилии* [*Doctor Paul Tillich: On Tradition, Novelty and Theological Effort*] (M.: Изд-во ПСТГУ, 2013), 152).

¹⁷ As Barth considered his *Introduction to evangelical theology*.

¹⁸ Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979), 110.

¹⁹ Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, v.

²⁰ Andrew O'Neill, *Tillich: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 18.

in politics. In 1919 he delivered a lecture at a meeting of the Independent Socialist Party, the text of which was later published under the title “Socialism as a Question of the Church.”²¹ In the same year he, together with like-minded people, founded a circle of religious socialists in Berlin, known as “the kairos circle” (“Kairos-Kreis”).²²

Given Tillich’s experience as a military chaplain, as well as his intellectual opposition to the Nazi regime in Germany, we can say that he was an active proponent of social transformation in society. He was convinced that the Church must always identify herself with human society as well as fulfill her prophetic appointment in it. The Church’s task is to proclaim the true hope to people, accompanying them in the quest for the “courage to be”. This requires that the Church actively participate in social life, especially in the midst of upheavals and crises, answering the profoundest existential questions in plain, understandable language.²³ In addition, Tillich believed that the Church must strive for justice and transformation among the people of whatever land she is found.²⁴ He could not subscribe to the a priori antirevolutionary stance of some churches (particularly the Lutheran). Despite the fact that he was not a radical revolutionary, he believed that, in some cases, revolution could usher in positive change. He was convinced that “[t]he chaos which follows any kind of revolution can be a creative chaos.”²⁵

Tillich dreamed of the emergence of a new socio-political order, a theonomy.²⁶ More precisely, he dreamed of the establishment of a new, or complete theonomy, as something radically different from historical precedents (for example, the Middle Age theonomy that had been destroyed by “all-powerful” heteronomy, i.e., the Inquisition).²⁷ By “theonomy” – a key concept of his religious socialism – Tillich meant “the state of culture under the impact of the Spiritual Presence,” while a “theonomous culture” for him was “Spirit-determined and Spirit-directed culture.”²⁸ In Tillich’s view, theonomous periods are those “in which rational autonomy is preserved in law and knowledge, in community and art. Where there is theonomy nothing which is considered true and just is sacrificed. Theonomous periods do not feel split,

²¹ Lezov, “Теология культуры Пауля Тиллиха” [“Paul Tillich’s Theology of Culture”], 464.

²² At the same time, it should be noted that Tillich and those like-minded decided not to join any socialist party. They felt their vocation to be a sort of prophetic voice in the religious tradition of the West. In actuality they did not believe that, from an alliance between Christians and socialists, or from Christian infiltration into socialist parties, any good could come (Pauck, *Paul Tillich*, 70-71).

²³ More precisely, Tillich considered the Church as a part of society. She is already present in it, even if She is not always aware of it. In other words, the Church is always present in society, even if She does not take an active part in public life.

²⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3:178-79.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:388.

²⁶ It is worth mentioning that Tillich revised his religious socialism over time. In his later work (the American period), it began to look more realistic and more mature, though remaining to some extent utopian. For more information on Tillich’s religious socialism see E. Heimann, “Tillich’s Doctrine of Religious Socialism,” in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, eds. C. W. Kegley and R. W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan Co., 1952), 312-25.

²⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:85.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3:249-50.

but whole and centered.”²⁹ The quest for theonomy can only ever be crowned with success via “final revelation and in unity with the church.”³⁰ Nevertheless, the Church must not be equated with God's kingdom; she is only the kingdom's symbol in history, referring to and serving the kingdom, and partaking of its reality.³¹ Tillich saw a complete theonomy as the era of God's reign.

It is within that theonomy, which should come with the onset of *kairos* (in Tillich's philosophy of history it is “the moment of the fullness of time,” or when “the eternal breaks into the temporal”³²), that he saw complete harmony between “secular” and “spiritual,” culture and religion. In other words, Tillich understood that his religious socialism, inseparable as it was from his eschatological aspirations for the fullness of God's Kingdom, could be realized only through the intervention of God the King in the course of human history.

It is obvious that Tillich's political theology and theology of culture are closely interrelated and intertwined. He never separated them strictly, because for him there was no clear demarcation line between “political” and “theological” dimensions.³³

The correlation between culture and religion, church and society, theology and philosophy

The above indicated conceptual pairs are interrelated and intertwined. In Tillich's understanding, between them there is no tension or conflict; they rather include each other, or are mutually present in each other. These are not three separate topics, to which Tillich devoted his three or more particular works, but rather they are three components of the same discourse that are discussed in many of his works, quite often simultaneously.

Tillich defined the relationship between religion and culture in the following way: “Religion as ultimate concern is the meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion expresses itself. In abbreviation: religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion.”³⁴ In short, religion is culture's substance, while culture is religion's form. In other words, if religion is *meaning* (or the religious symbols that man perceives), then culture is the ways of expressing that meaning, by means of culture's language: music, poetry, art, architecture, technology, etc. It thus becomes obvious that the “theology of culture” was not “religion” in of its narrow senses.³⁵

²⁹ Ibid, 1:148.

³⁰ Ibid, 1:150.

³¹ Ronald E. Modras, *Paul Tillich's Theology of the Church: A Catholic Appraisal* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1976), 93.

³² Paul Tillich, “Kairos,” in *Main Works*, eds. Carl Heinz Ratschow with the collaboration of John Clayton, Gert Hummel, Theodor Mahlmann, Michael Palmer, Robert P. Scharlemann, and Gunther Wenz, *Vol. 4: Writings in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. John Clayton (Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, Evangelisches Verlagswerk GmbH, 1987), 328, 337.

³³ Re Manning, “Introduction: The Real Tillich is the Radical Tillich,” 5.

³⁴ Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 42.

³⁵ Re Manning, “Introduction: The Real Tillich is the Radical Tillich,” 4.

In *Theology of Culture* Tillich argued for the inherent religious quality in culture's many facets and components.³⁶ He saw religious dimension in all creative acts, whether or not they were explicitly "religious."³⁷ Tillich argued that "The Church and culture are within, not alongside, each other. And the Kingdom of God includes both while transcending both."³⁸ Consequently, where theology of crisis assumed a dualism of religion and culture, theology of culture saw existential unity between them.

Tillich never separated the Church and society. According to his vision the as "the community of the New Being," is intrinsic to the very fabric of society and culture. She should not only not separate herself from the society surrounding her, but should influence and transform it from within, via the Christian proclamation. The Church's primary mission is to answer society's questions, which are inherent in the existence of each individual.

In his approach to the problem of interaction between church and culture Tillich tried, on the one hand, to convey the Christian message without distortion, but, on the other hand, to give it a modern form, taking into account the cultural characteristics and challenges of the 20th century. He believed that the Church must not lose contact with the outside world, but listen and respond to its profoundest existential questions. Moreover, his theology of culture was aimed at solving the problem of "a double ethics" – "one for believers (theological ethics) and another for secular society (philosophical ethics)."³⁹ Tillich's ethics are thoroughly intertwined with culture and its functions. He explained this inter-relationship as follows: "As culture gives content to morality, so morality gives seriousness to culture."⁴⁰ For him, ethics was not so much a "science of morality," as a "science of ethos" or of culture in its many functions.⁴¹

The concepts "philosophy" and "theology" are also among the key ones in Tillich's works. As a philosopher and theologian he came out against their opposition. He saw no contradiction between them; on the contrary, he insisted on the correlation between them. He formulated his response to the "either/or" approach to theology and philosophy in his "method of correlation."

Tillich's method of correlation

In view of the artificial differentiation between philosophy and theology, religion and culture, church and society, Tillich offered his own *correlative* method of

³⁶ Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, v.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, 51.

³⁹ William Schweiker, "Theology of Culture and its Future," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 139.

⁴⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3:160.

⁴¹ Mark L. Taylor, "Tillich's Ethics: Between Politics and Ontology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 191.

solving this problem, as described in his programmatic work *Systematic Theology*.⁴² His so-called “method of correlation” was proposed as an alternative to such, in his opinion, “inadequate methods,” as the supranaturalistic (most likely, by this Tillich meant fundamentalism and/or neoorthodoxy), naturalistic (liberal theology) and dualistic (natural theology).⁴³ This hermeneutical and apologetical “method of correlation” is both the key to Tillich's system of “theology of culture” and its key tool or device.

In fact, this *correlative* theology is not something completely new and unprecedented in the history of philosophical and theological thought.⁴⁴ More specifically, its echoes has already sounded before Tillich, even though it has not had (until Tillich) some clear system. Before Tillich systematized it, foreshadowings and embryonic glimmers of it were present in the work of others – among them Friedrich Schleiermacher and the “theology of mediation between religion and culture” he strove to develop.⁴⁵ Tillich himself recognized that his theology of culture was a continuation of what others, especially Schleiermacher and Richard Rothe, called “theological ethics.”⁴⁶ Moreover, Tillich's system, to some extent, can be considered a continuation of Ernst Troeltsch's historical reflections on “the embeddedness of Christianity in Western civilization.”⁴⁷

According to Tillich, method of correlation “explains the contents of the Christian faith through existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence.”⁴⁸ Symbolically, this means that “God answers man's questions, and under the impact of God's answers man asks them.”⁴⁹ This method aims at clarifying the content of the Christian faith in a contemporary way. The method is, first, a hermeneutical one, since it is a means of interpreting the religious symbols in modern society.⁵⁰ Secondly, it is an apologetic, or “responding” method, designed to furnish answers posed to humanity by being itself (*existentia*), and which are formulated with the help of philosophy. In practice, a theologian's duty is to be, at first, the “questioning” philosopher, and, then, the theologian-apologist who answers the crucial

⁴² Tillich's three-volume *Systematic Theology* is one of his key works, if not *the* key work; it triggered an upheaval in Protestant systematic theology by presenting the intellectual world with a wholly other, radical kind of *systematics*. His *all-encompassing* system allowed him to significantly expand the boundaries of traditional systematic theology (as it was understood *before* and *during* Tillich's time), by integrating elements of philosophy, art, science, politics et al. into it.

⁴³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:64-6.

⁴⁴ Tillich himself acknowledged that: “As method, it is as old as theology. We have therefore not invented a new method, but have rather tried to make explicit the implications of old ones, namely, that of apologetic theology” (ibid, 2:16).

⁴⁵ John P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1980), 48.

⁴⁶ Schweiker, “Theology of Culture and its Future,” 139.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:60.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 1:61.

⁵⁰ Richard Grigg, *Symbol and Empowerment: Paul Tillich's Post-Theistic System* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1985), 54.

questions about human existence, appealing to the symbols of divine revelation.⁵¹ In a broad sense, Tillich has put Schleiermacher and Barth into ontological sequence. If Schleiermacher attempted to combine theology with human experience, and Barth tried to reflect divine revelation as the archetype, then Tillich's position was that theology must do both.⁵²

According to Tillich, “[m]an cannot receive an answer to a question he has not asked.”⁵³ Apologetical or “answering” theology must always take into account the existential questions of culture that are embedded in it, in every person individually. In order for theology to be “answering,” it must first of all “listen” to the questions, anxieties and fears of human beings in their situation. Systematic theology cannot be universal for all times and nations; it must always be modern for each individual culture in its space-time context. Thus, systematic theology's answers should always correspond to the existential questions of an individual and situation, and never be given in isolation from them; otherwise, they are not the answers at all.⁵⁴

Thus, Tillich sought to make theology as relevant as possible by contextualizing it to address the existential challenges of modern culture. If modern philosophy, literature and art raise questions that concern people, theology gives answers that relate the Gospel to contemporary culture (*situation*).⁵⁵ In other words, theology must always be modern and relevant, answering the questions raised by a particular culture, or it risks being hopelessly out-of-date and useless to society. Moreover, it must not be formulated in “church-language,” but in the idiom of the culture and generation it addresses, focused as it engages with real-world needs and problems. As for Tillich himself, he tried to avoid using the traditional Christian language in his works, for which James Adams called him an apostle to the Gentiles.⁵⁶

The contribution of Paul Tillich's theology of culture to theology and the Church's mission

Both during Tillich's life and after his death, his fundamental theology of culture and its methodology – the method of correlation – have repeatedly been criticized by representatives of various schools of theology.⁵⁷ In particular, his definition of religion as “ultimate concern” and “the substance of culture” was criticized for its excessive abstractness, as well as for its lack of historical and social precision.⁵⁸ The critics

⁵¹ Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 120.

⁵² David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2003), 44.

⁵³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:13.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:63-4.

⁵⁵ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2007), 84.

⁵⁶ James L. Adams, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science, and Religion* (USA: Harper & Row, 1965), 279.

⁵⁷ Among his critics, it is worth mentioning such names as Karl Barth, George F. Thomas, Kenneth Hamilton, and John J. Davis.

⁵⁸ Schweiker, “Theology of Culture and its Future,” 141.

of Tillich's definition disagreed with it fundamentally because it made every person and every culture "religious."⁵⁹ The modern theologian John J. Davis, for example, despite finding the idea of method of correlation reasonable and even necessary, criticizes it for the fact that, as "Tillich developed it modern culture rather than the Christian tradition was really the controlling factor."⁶⁰ Tillich has been criticized equally by representatives of a more liberal sector, for example, ecological and liberation theologians. "If the former find theology of culture too anthropocentric, the latter consider it insufficiently oriented toward "praxis, race, gender and liberation."⁶¹

Despite the criticism that has constantly buffeted Tillich's system and method, on academic and theoretical levels, his method of correlation stands as a huge contribution both to interdisciplinary dialogue and to the dialogue between church and culture. The method's purpose and value lies in encouraging theologians to properly correlate questions with answers, and to respond to the vital questions of culture. His expectation is that they will speak to society in understandable language, in the pursuit of which they will turn for aid to the anthropological sciences, and before all else to philosophy.

As for Church influence on contemporary culture, Tillich believed that the Church should actively participate in cultural change, should be society's guardian, confronting demonic influence and distortions.⁶² This is impossible, however, without an awareness that the Church is a component of its sociocultural setting, not a closed religious society living entirely by its own rules in an alternate universe. He considered that "Christianity is not a set of doctrinal or ritual or moral laws, but is rather the good news of the conquest of the law by the appearance of a new healing reality."⁶³

Tillich considered himself and his work as an intermediary between theology and philosophy, religion and culture, church and society.⁶⁴ In general, we can say of Tillich's theology of culture that it was a kind of bridge designed to overcome the huge gap between the Church and secular society. To Tillich, the Church's mission on earth as "the community of the New Being" was to be the bearer of "the final revelation," as well as to make the divine answers accessible to every person wrestling with the profoundest existential questions, questions inherent to every human soul (the meaning of life, "the facing of nonbeing," and others). Among other things, as the contemporary philosopher of religion Jeffrey W. Robbins notes, Tillich's *radical* theology of culture still continues "to serve as a model for the non-sectarian

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ John J. Davis, "Tillich – Accurate Aims, Alien Assumptions," *Christianity Today* 20/23 (1976): 8. Cited by Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 121.

⁶¹ Schweiker, "Theology of Culture and its Future," 141.

⁶² Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 50-51.

⁶³ Ibid, 50.

⁶⁴ This follows from the very titles of the chapters of his *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch*.

academic study of religion and has developed into what is sometimes referred to by the oxymoron ‘secular theology’”⁶⁵

Conclusions

Paul Tillich’s legacy is a huge ideological treasury for the modern generation. Inasmuch as ethics and theology were, for him, essentially intertwined with culture, his moral theology could posit the Church’s moral duty only in the context of its culture. Thus, this German-American philosopher and theologian makes a huge contribution to the development of religious anthropology and ecclesiology.

Galvanized by the horrors of the First World War, Tillich set out to rethink the essence of the Christian message and the Church’s role in the modern world. He pointed first to the great gap in understanding and interaction between the Church and the world. Dissatisfied with all the theological formulations available to him, he posited his own *systematic* theology of culture, which was based on, and penetrated by, the correlation method. The essence of this method is the formulation of the Christian faith in generally understandable terms, responding to present-day sociocultural questions. Thus, his theology was aimed at bridging the gap between the Church and culture in order to bring genuine resolution to humanity’s most critical problems. Tillich saw the mission of the Church as being the representative of God’s kingdom on earth, the mediator of the “courage to be.” She should bear this meta-message to the world in human, not “sacred,” language, realizing that she is also intrinsically a member of, and productive of, the modern culture.

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⁶⁵ Jeffrey W. Robbins, “Changing Ontotheology: Paul Tillich, Catherine Malabou, and the Plastic God,” in *Retrieving the Radical Tillich: His Legacy and Contemporary Importance*, ed. Russell Re Manning (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 167.

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