In this issue:

- Program for the Annual Meeting of the NAPTS and the AAR Tillich Group
- Annual Banquet Information and Reservations
- The Paul Tillich Lectures at Harvard
- 2011 Papers and Unpublished Papers
- “Unity between the Ultimate and Concrete: The Success of Tillich’s Trinitarian Theology” by Matthew Aaron Tennant

Welcome to San Francisco, location of the annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society and the meeting of the American Academy of Religion Group, Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture. The schedule of meetings for both groups follows. You will also find information about the annual banquet of the North American Paul Tillich Society. On Friday evening, November 18, 2011, please plan to join the Society for the annual banquet. See all the information on the menu, the guest speaker, and reservations on page 3. The officers of the Society look forward to seeing and greeting many of you at both the academic sessions and the dinner. Once again, we are honored to have as our special guest, Dr. Mutie Tillich Farris of New York City.

Tillich and Culture
Friday - 9:00 am - 11:30 am
Room: HI- Mason

Mary Ann Stenger, University of Louisville
Tillich’s Theology of Culture in Relation to the American Religious-Secular Dialectic

Rose Caraway, University of Florida
A New Human Being: The Religious Dimensions of Secularism in Cuban and Soviet Moralties

Bert Daelemans, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven
The Breakthrough of the Spirit in Contemporary Church Architecture

Courage and Symbol in Tillich
Friday - 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm
Room: HI- Mason

North American Paul Tillich Society
HI – Hilton San Francisco Union Square
CC – Moscone Convention Center
Derek Nelson, Thiel College
Absolutely Relative: Teaching Dynamics of Faith, on Teaching Dynamics of Faith

Verna Marina Ehret, Mercyhurst College
Doubt, Courage, and the Transformation of Redemption within Globalization

Ryan O'Leary, University of Iowa
Gaia as Symbol

International and Interreligious Approaches of Tillich
Friday - 4:00 pm - 6:30 pm
Room: HI - Mason

Theo Junker, Université de Strasbourg
Paul Tillich’s Mature Politics: Unconfined Realism and Vigilant Hope. Examples from his Enduring Legacy of Political Affirmations and Refutations

Anne Marie Reijnen, Faculté Universitaire de Théologie Protestante de Bruxelles
Das Neue Denken in Franz Rosenzweig and Paul Tillich. The “Star of Redemption” as Jewish-Christian Theology of Correlation

Responding:
Lon Weaver, Glen Avon Presbyterian Church

Philosophical and Mystical Aspects of Tillich’s Thought
Saturday - 1:00 pm - 3:30 pm
Room: HI- Golden Gate 1

Rob James and Durwood Foster
Three Pigs, Red Riding Hood, and the Wolf: Solving the Riddle of Tillich’s Unsymbolic Statements about God

Jari Ristiniemi
Differential Thinking and the Possibility of the Faith-Knowledge: Tillich and Kierkegaard between Negative and Positive Philosophy

Stephen Butler Murray
The Beauty of a Union with God through Dangerous Obedience: A Christian Mysticism of Social Activism

AAR: TILLICH: ISSUES IN THEOLOGY, RELIGION, AND CULTURE GROUP

A19-120
Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group
Saturday - 9:00 am - 11:30 am
CC - 3018

Theme: Ultimate Concern after the Post-Secular Age
Sharon Peebles Burch, Interfaith Counseling Center, Presiding

This session brings together four papers that make constructive use of Paul Tillich’s notion of ultimate concern to engage with the opportunities and challenges of the religious and cultural situation after post-secularism. As the question of the relations between the religious and secular has become increasingly contested, the comfortable divide between the religious and the secular can no longer be sustained; neither, however, can the confident claims to “post-secularity.” The papers in this session all draw on Tillich’s reflections on ultimate concern as creative resources within this situation of religious-secular complexity.
John Robichaux, Harvard University
The Religiosity of the Secular and the Secularity of the Religious: Tillich, Murray, and Rawls

Daniel Miller, Mount Allison University
Ultimate Concern and Postmodern Theology: Two Competing Legacies

Adam Pryor, Graduate Theological Union
God as a Living: An Analysis of Paul Tillich’s Concept of the Divine Life in Light of Mark Taylor’s Infinitization of the Finites

Business Meeting:
Russell Re Manning, University of Cambridge

A19 - 325
Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group
Saturday - 4:00 pm - 6:30 pm
CC - 3020

Theme: Faith, Betrayal, and Disenchantment:
Paul Tillich in Dialogue with Contemporary Philosophy and Theology
Russell Re Manning, University of Cambridge, Presiding

This session unites four papers that bring Paul Tillich’s philosophical theology into critical dialogue with movements in contemporary philosophy and theology around the themes of faith, betrayal, and disenchantment.

Hollis Phelps, Mount Olive College
Evental Fidelity, Ultimate Concern, and the Subject: Reading Alain Badiou with Paul Tillich

Thomas A. James, Union Presbyterian Seminary
Can There be a Theology of Disenchantment: Unbinding the Nihil in Tillich

Blake Huggins, Boston University
Tillich and Ontotheology: On the Fidelity of Betrayal

Carl-Eric Gentes, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago

The Courage to Be(tray): An Emerging Conversation between Paul Tillich and Peter Rollins

A20 - 230
Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group
Sunday - 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
CC 3000

Theme: Tillich and Niebuhr: Conversations and Legacies
K. Healan Gaston, Harvard University, Presiding
Cosponsored by the Niebuhr Society

Panelists:
– Ronald Stone, University of Pittsburgh
– Andrew Finstuen, Boise State University

Responding:
– Jonathan Rothchild, Loyola Marymount Univ.
– Kevin Carnahan, Central Methodist University

The Annual NAPTS Banquet

The annual banquet of the North American Paul Tillich Society will be held this year at Le Central, a well-known French bistro, at 453 Bush Street (between Grant and Kearney Streets), San Francisco, California 94108. Telephone: 415.391.2233/ Website: www.lecentralbistro.com. There will be a choice of three appetizers, three entrees, and three desserts, all printed on a special menu for the occasion. You will have your choice:

First course: Butternut Squash Soup, Caesar’s Salad, Crab Cake
Entrée: Roast Chicken, Sea Bass, New York Steak
Dessert: Crème Brulee, Tiramisu, or Mixed Berries with Crème Anglaise.

The price of the banquet is 55 USD, a remarkable bargain given the cost of San Francisco restaurants and the range of choices available. Please join us!

For reservations: contact Frederick J. Parrella, Secretary Treasurer, NAPTS, at:
— Phone: 408.259.8225
— Text: 408.674.3108
— Email: fparrella@scu.edu
— Fax: 408.554.2387
— US Mail: Frederick J. Parrella
Religious Studies
Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, CA 95053

**Important note:** the price of $55 includes only the dinner. Wine and cocktails are separate, but the restaurant requires *one* bill. Drinks ordered at table *must* be paid to the secretary-treasurer in cash or check. Drinks ordered at the bar can be paid to the restaurant directly, but please inform management that you are part of our party. In this way, the Society can meet the minimum amount required and still offer an outstanding dinner at a reasonable price.

**Guest Speaker:** Dr. Owen Thomas.
The title of Owen’s address is: “Tillich’s Alternative Interpretation of Western Cultural History.” Owen C. Thomas is Professor of Theology emeritus of the Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass., and the author of nine books in theology and the philosophy of religion. A former physicist, he has been a visiting professor at the Gregorian University and the North American College in Rome, an adjunct professor at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and president of the American Theological Society. His email address is ot75@aol.com.

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**2011 Papers and Unpublished Papers From 2009-2010**

All papers presented at the meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society as well as the AAR Group, Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, Culture, will be published by the privately circulated Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society in the coming year. If you present a paper in San Francisco, please send your paper as a word attachment to fparrella@scu.edu as soon as you can.

Papers presented in previous years that have not been published may also be sent to the secretary treasurer of the North American Paul Tillich Society for publication in volume 38, 2012. Publication of a paper in the North American Paul Tillich Society does not prevent or conflict with publication elsewhere. Thank you.

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**UNITY BETWEEN THE ULTIMATE AND CONCRETE: THE SUCCESS OF TILLICH’S TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY**

Matthew Aaron Tennant

**Introduction**
language when describing something (the ultimate) that is beyond full human comprehension. Tillich writes, “What is existentially first may be systematically last and vice versa.” By this, he means that the “logical foundation in the structure of life” is given, but the appearance of Jesus as the Christ (or the existential foundation) is necessary for understanding the doctrine of the Trinity and the Trinity is necessary for understanding Jesus as the Christ. While this sounds like circular logic, Tillich uses it to illustrate the inner movement within the Trinity between the ultimate and the concrete. It also serves to justify the order of his Systematic Theology (revelation in Volume 1, divinity of Christ in Volume 2, and trinitarian dogma in Volume 3).

The Trinity has been approached in many different ways. Some people might explain it as three names, like Fiona Susan Smith, as analogous to Father Son Spirit. Others might think of the Trinity as different members of the same sports team—manager (Father), player (Son), and coach (Spirit). However, these two explanations veer into modalism and pluralism, respectively. Addressing the notion of three hypostases in one being almost requires a suspension of rational thought. Yet, Tillich offers contemporary readers of Christian theology a means by which they can approach the Trinity—he unites the ultimate and the concrete in divine inner movement. Tillich’s trinitarian theology is existential, and he avoids modalism and pluralism, while simultaneously avoiding making an assault on rational thought.

In his Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, Tillich writes, “The doctrine of the Trinity does not affirm the logical nonsense that three is one and one is three; it describes in dialectical terms the inner movement of the divine life as an eternal separation from itself and return to itself.” By following a process of logical arguments, Tillich suggests that God moves within God-self, yet remains separate from God-self and returns to God-self. This follows the Christian appropriation of Greek thought in the Cappadocian philosophers: three hypostases in one ousia. In other words, according to Tillich, the Trinity is not logical and mathematical nonsense; it is a way to better understand God. Thus, when seeking to explicate trinitarian theology, one can use the language of God’s divine movement without reverting to modalism, pluralism, tritheism, Arianism, and so on.

My argument will follow three steps: revelation, the divinity of Christ, and unifying the ultimate and existential reality. The conclusion will not pin Tillich’s trinitarian theology to something he does not explicitly say. Instead, my conclusion will follow his methodology and will draw from an example in Tillich’s applied theology, one of his sermons, in which he successfully applies trinitarian theology.

**Part 1—Revelation**

Tillich approaches the trinitarian question as a “problem of the unity between ultimacy and concreteness in the living God.” That is, he uses trinitarian theology to explain how humankind can understand both ultimacy and existential reality within God. Without the Trinity, he argues that Christianity would be similar to what he calls monarchical monotheism, in which lower divinities are sent in a quasi-trinitarian formula, such as a father-divinity or mother-divinity. The trinitarian formula is not dependent on the number three as much as it explains God’s participation in human activity, despite God’s ultimacy of power. Thus, in order to explore Tillich’s trinitarian theology or methodology, we must first look at his understanding of how humankind comes to know anything about the ultimate, i.e. revelation.

Revelation is how one gets to know the ultimate (or God); he covers this topic in Volume 1 of his Systematic, so beginning with how one gets to know the ultimate will be a fruitful step toward understanding the unity between the ultimate and the concrete. To seemingly state the obvious: without revelation, there would be no way to get to know the ultimate.

In approaching revelation, Tillich begins with truth. He describes truth as “the essence of things as well as the cognitive act in which their essence is grasped.” That is, revelation and truth are part of experienced reality, and through experiencing reality, humankind is aware of understanding revelation. Truth, or the “essence of things,” provides a means by which humankind can connect with revelation and the ultimate. Even though the reality we experience is an existential reality, Tillich moves, in this first step, closer to an understanding of the concrete (or existential reality) in relation to the ultimate (or God).

After truth, for Tillich, the ground or basis of revelation is “the ‘ground of being’ manifest in
existence.” He writes, “[This] can be expressed only in terms of finite actions originating in a highest being and transforming the course of finite events.” The construction of perceiving revelation is in that which humankind can experience. In other words, there is no metaphysical ground of revelation; it is ontological and existential, or humankind can only express or describe revelation in personal categories. Thus, the basis of revelation is the ground of being. About this term, he writes, “It indicates that the ground of revelation is neither a cause which keeps itself at a distance from the revelatory effect nor a substance which effuses itself into the effect, but rather the mystery which appears in revelation and which remains a mystery in its appearance.”

To reach revelation, Tillich introduces three terms in a sort of pneumatological parallel, although the phrase pneumatological parallel is my own, not Tillich’s. The three terms are: Abyss, Logos, and Spirit. Instead of being analogous labels for the Trinity, in which Abyss represents Father, Logos symbolizes Son, and Spirit is Spirit, each of his terms represents a movement of the ultimate, and they are part of the ground of revelation, not part of his discussion of the trinitarian dogma. His language maintains an appreciation for mystery and it is based on a view of God’s movement and dynamic unity. Therefore, revelation is not once and forever; it is ongoing.

This same Spirit or Abyss is present in the divine life and “creates the correlation of miracle and ecstasy in which revelation can be received.” He writes, “The doctrine of revelation is based on a Trinitarian interpretation of the divine life and its self-manifestation.” God is self-revelatory; humankind does not have a causal role in revelation other than participation.

**Part 2—The Divinity of Christ**

A second step toward Tillich’s trinitarian theology is his understanding of the divinity of Christ. After the Abyss, Logos, and Spirit and inner movement of the ultimate in revelation, he describes the divinity of Christ as a response to the manifestation of the ultimate. The ultimate experienced existential reality in the form of Jesus (by being Jesus) while remaining simultaneously part of the movement of the ultimate. Unlike modalism, Tillich’s trinitarian theology views the ultimate in terms of movement within the ultimate (or God-self). The divinity of Christ serves as a connection between humankind and the ultimate. In his Christology, humankind becomes aware of its existential predicament and questions whether or not this predicament can be overcome through a new state of reality, e.g., becoming a New Being through Christ. The need to become a New Being is “the consequence of the structure of estrangement.”

According to Tillich, the divinity of Christ became manifest in the way New Testament authors applied symbols to Jesus, although he rightly suggests that the early church interpreted Christological symbols using Greek philosophy. Tillich does not discard the use of Greek philosophy and he writes, “It is wrong to reject a priori the use of Greek concepts by the early church. There was no alternative.” In other words, these symbols are still useful and can be re-envisioned for contemporary readers.

Taking the mysterious and existential symbols described in Volume 1 of his Systematic Theology (Abyss, Logos, and Spirit), he writes in Volume 2, “The Incarnation of the Logos is not metamorphosis but his total manifestation in a personal life...is a dynamic process involving tensions, risks, dangers, and determination by freedom as well as by destiny.” There are various facets in the existential predicament; he alludes to these as “tensions, risks, and dangers.” His reference to “destiny” is a bit cryptic, but “determination by freedom” is likely a hint of the influence of the Russian philosopher Nicholai Berdyaev. In which case, destiny is determined by freedom, and Tillich’s understanding of the Incarnation is part of this mystery of the ultimate.

Tillich refers to Augustine’s distinction among the three personae (not persons), and he agrees with Augustine that the distinction lacks a distinction among the content. He also cites Luther’s discomfort with the word Trinity, but he concludes with Luther, “There is no better [word].” Tillich writes, “The Trinitarian dogma is a supporting part of the christological dogma.” His trinitarian theology rejects interpretations of Jesus that deprive him of the power to create the New Being.

**Part 3—Unifying God and Existential Reality**

Perhaps Volume 3 of his Systematic Theology would have been the best place to begin this paper. Tillich includes a section in Part IV specifically addressing the problem of the doctrine of the Tri-
ity. However, beginning in Volume 3 would have missed the foundational steps of revelation and the divinity of Christ, and it would have missed the importance of movement within the ultimate. Tillich’s trinitarian theology is dependent on each previous step (N.B., there are other steps that time does not allow me to include)

In Volume 3, Tillich begins his exploration of the Trinity by looking at the motives of trinitarian symbols. His study is deeply steeped in human estrangement from the ultimate and the process of overcoming this estrangement. He writes, “The substance of all trinitarian thought is given in revelatory experiences, and the form has the same rationality that all theology, as a work of the Logos, must have.” He relates trinitarian thought to revelation and as the rationality for all theology, but then, he clarifies: He sees his task in writing a systematic theology as creating a methodology; this methodology can be applied to trinitarian questions, but he does not see his task as writing a specific doctrine of the Trinity. For the specific doctrines, he acknowledges his indebtedness to previous thinkers, such as Luther and Augustine.

For Tillich, there is an evolution from the original intent of previous trinitarian dogmas to an impenetrable mystery to a riddle to a theological problem. In its original intent, trinitarian dogma expressed three different symbols of revealing the ultimate to humankind. As it developed and opened a divine abyss, the trinitarian dogma was placed on an altar; then, it was treated as a theological riddle. In some cases, it became the “glorification of an absurdity in numbers.” This trinitarian problem leads Tillich to ask, “Will it ever again be possible to say without theological embarrassment… ‘In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit’?”

To answer this question, Tillich is optimistic. He suggests that it is possible, but “it requires a radical revision of the trinitarian doctrine and a new understanding of the Divine Life and the Spiritual Presence.” Thus, we return to the idea of the movement of the ultimate, or God’s movement within God-self. In this way, the Trinity is relational and can be effectively divorced from numerical and symbolic language (e.g., Andrei Rublev’s painting “The Holy Trinity” or contemporary novels with anthropogenic depictions of the Trinity).

In Volume 1 of his Systematic Tillich writes, “The concreteness of man’s ultimate concern drives him toward polytheistic structures; the reaction of the absolute element against these drives him toward monotheistic structures; and the need for a balance between the concrete and the absolute drives him toward Trinitarian structures. However, there is another factor which determines the typological structures of the idea of God, namely, the difference between the holy and the secular.” Tillich’s relational trinitarian theology remains monotheistic while retaining the different hypostases of the ultimate.

Summarizing this trinitarian understanding or methodology, Tillich suggests that it is not closed. He writes, “[The Trinity] can be neither discarded nor accepted in its traditional form. It must be kept open in order to fulfill its original function—to express in embracing symbols the self-manifestation of the Divine Life to humankind.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, Tillich provides a voice, an analogy, for speaking about the ultimate in concrete terms. To illustrate this language and to answer the inevitable question yes, but what does it look like, we need not look any further than Tillich’s sermons. He provides a number of examples of applying this trinitarian methodology, some of which can be found in a 1956 collection of sermons, published as The New Being. I will draw from his sermon based on Jesus’ anguished cry on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:45-46, 50-54); it is called “Universal Salvation.”

He begins by describing the connection between the crucifixion and nature (earth trembling, curtain of the temple being torn, darkness, and so on). Placing this story somewhat in its liturgical context, he steers the question away from questioning whether there is a viable scientific explanation for the apparent supernatural events (earthquake, dust storm, etc.). Instead, he connects the ultimate and the concrete. He writes, “The event at Golgotha is one which concerns the universe, including all nature and all history.” In other words, “the sun veiled its face because of the depth of evil and shame which it saw under the cross.” His language is metaphorical and, by speaking as though the events are literal, he draws existential reality closer to the ultimate concern, without denigrating either. Regarding the darkness recounted by the author or reductor of the First
Gospel, Tillich cites St. Francis, and tells his listeners: the sun is our brother, not our god.\textsuperscript{27}

The ultimate is revealed in the concrete manifestations of the earth, in this case, darkness and a rumbling earth. At this point, the Trinity remains open. There are shades of the Abyss, Logos, and Spirit, but his conclusion to the sermon moves beyond mathematical nonsense and he suggests a universal unification between God and the world. He writes, “After this moment temples and churches can only mean places of concentration on the holy, which is the ground and the meaning of every place.”\textsuperscript{28} In his interpretation of the crucifixion, the place or every place is the concrete and it is united with the ultimate.


\textsuperscript{27} Cf. e.g. Paul Fiddes, \textit{Participating in God, a Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity} (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 11-12.

\textsuperscript{28} Paul Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Volume 1: Reason and Revelation, Being and God} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 56.

\textsuperscript{3} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 1}, 56.

\textsuperscript{4} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 1}, 228.

\textsuperscript{5} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 1}, 102.


\textsuperscript{7} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 1}, 156.

\textsuperscript{8} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 1}, 156.

\textsuperscript{9} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 1}, 156.

\textsuperscript{10} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 1}, 156.


\textsuperscript{13} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 2}, 139.

\textsuperscript{14} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 2}, 149.


\textsuperscript{16} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 2}, 144.

\textsuperscript{17} Being and Nonbeing (ST/1), the meaning of “God” (ST/1), Human estrangement (ST/2)


\textsuperscript{19} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 3}, 292.

\textsuperscript{20} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 3}, 292.

\textsuperscript{21} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 1}, 221.

\textsuperscript{22} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 3}, 294.


\textsuperscript{24} Tillich, \textit{The New Being}, 175-79.

\textsuperscript{25} Tillich, \textit{The New Being}, 176.

\textsuperscript{26} Tillich, \textit{The New Being}, 177.

\textsuperscript{27} Tillich, \textit{The New Being}, 177.

\textsuperscript{28} Tillich, \textit{The New Being}, 178.

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**Coming in the Winter Bulletin:**

—The Annual Banquet Address by Owen Thomas
—Papers from the Friday Meeting of the NAPTS
—News and Notes about the Society and its members

2 Cf. e.g. Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God, a Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 11-12.


7 Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1*, 156.

8 Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1*, 156.


17 Being and Nonbeing (ST/1), the meaning of “‘God’” (ST/1), Human estrangement (ST/2)


