

“BAPTIZED MYSTICISM”:  
AN EXPLORATION OF PAUL TILLICH’S THEOLOGY OF MYSTICISM  
AND ITS SPIRITUAL THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Knox College  
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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores Paul Tillich’s theology of mysticism and its spiritual theological implications. It argues that Tillich’s concept of “baptized mysticism” weaves together his thoughts on mysticism and expresses a dialectical unity of Tillich’s two essential elements of religion, the mystical and the prophetic. The thesis begins in Chapter 1 with an overview of Tillich’s own experiences of the mystical and his definitive expressions of mysticism, then investigates his major writings in drawing out essential features of baptized mysticism in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, various appraisals of Tillich’s theory of mysticism from different vantage points and denominational backgrounds are presented to sharpen and enhance the understanding of his thoughts on mysticism and their spiritual theological implications. Finally, in conversation with some contemporary theorists of Christian spirituality, the thesis provides a modest proposal for Tillichian spirituality and prayer in Chapter 4. Paralleling aspects of the thought of Philip Sheldrake, Tillichian spirituality concerns the life oriented towards a sense of the “eternal now” and promotes not so much an ideal of a perfected state of being, but the “belief-ful” and courageous encounter of ontological threats and radical doubt in a condition of ever-increasing awareness, freedom, relatedness, and transcendence. A Tillichian saint is the

mystic “wanderer” living on the boundary of the human limit and possibilities, in the unending desire of the “God above God.” Tillich’s baptized mysticism also proposes a life of contemplative prayer that has close affinities with Thomas Keating’s Centering Prayer. This thesis shows that Tillich’s theology of mysticism is cogent and coherent. It offers rich resources for understanding Christian mysticism and in grounding a Protestant theology of spirituality, one which provides effective guidelines for the spiritual life of Christians.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	v
INTRODUCTION .....	1
A. Background and Context .....	1
B. Thesis Statement .....	3
C. Introductory Remarks .....	6
D. Method and Procedure .....	9
CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF PAUL TILLICH’S EXPERIENCES AND THOUGHTS ON THE MYSTICAL .....	13
A. Tillich’s Life Experiences of the Mystical .....	13
1. Tillich’s Mysticism of Nature .....	14
2. Tillich’s Mysticism of Beauty .....	24
3. Tillich’s Mysticism of Being .....	30
B. Tillich’s Various Definitions of Mysticism .....	33
1. Mysticism as a Relation with Being .....	34
2. Mysticism as a Drive .....	42
3. Mysticism as an Action of Faith .....	46
C. Threefold Theoretical Focus in Tillich’s Thoughts on Mysticism .....	48
1. Mysticism as Category and as Type of Religion .....	48
2. “Baptized Mysticism” as the Unity of the Mystical and the Prophetic .....	63
3. Mysticism as Fragmentation and Anticipation .....	74
CHAPTER TWO: ANALYSIS OF PAUL TILLICH’S ACCOUNTS OF MYSTICISM .....	83
A. Tillich’s Thoughts on Mysticism in the German Period .....	86
1. <i>Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling’s Philosophical Development</i> (1912) .....	86
2. <i>Systematische Theologie</i> (1913) .....	101
3. “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture” (1919) .....	104
4. “Basic Principles of Religious Socialism” (1923) .....	108
5. “Justification and Doubt” (1924) .....	113
6. “Realism and Faith” (1929) .....	120

B. Tillich's Thoughts on Mysticism in the American Period .....	124
1. "Totalitarian State and the Claims of Church" (1934) .....	124
2. "The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism" (1941) .....	129
3. "The Word of Religion" (1942); "Vertical and Horizontal Thinking" (1945)...	132
4. <i>Systematic Theology I</i> (1951) .....	136
5. <i>The Courage To Be</i> (1952) .....	141
6. <i>Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions</i> (1963) .....	147
7. <i>Systematic Theology III</i> (1963) .....	154
C. Conclusion .....	164
CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF THE APPRAISALS OF TILlich'S THEORY OF MYSTICISM .....	170
A. Philosophical Perspective .....	170
B. Psychological Perspective .....	184
C. Theological Perspective .....	203
D. Spiritual Theological Perspective .....	221
E. Inter-Religious Perspective .....	234
CHAPTER FOUR: SPIRITUAL THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TILlich'S THEOLOGY OF MYSTICISM .....	247
A. Tillichian Model of Holiness .....	250
1. Defining Holiness .....	250
2. Philip Sheldrake's Proposal for Holiness .....	254
3. Tillichian model of Holiness .....	266
B. Tillich's Conception of Prayer and Contemplation .....	288
1. Construction of Tillichian Prayer and Contemplation .....	289
2. Centering Prayer as a Tillichian Way of Prayer .....	311
CONCLUSION .....	322
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	335

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background and Context

A distinguished scholar of Christian spirituality and mysticism, Bernard McGinn indicates in his paradigmatic survey of the literature on Christian mysticism<sup>1</sup> that the German Protestant tradition has been on the whole more negative than positive in its evaluation of the place of mysticism in Christianity and evaluates Paul Tillich's understanding of mysticism as a "complex" case. In McGinn's view, which seems to be largely dependent on James Horne, whose view of Tillich's thoughts on mysticism will be evaluated in Chapter Three of this current thesis, Tillich's scattered remarks on mysticism play no fundamental role in twentieth-century theories of mysticism due to his somewhat "reserved" attitude toward it. Interestingly enough, this assessment of Tillich's view of mysticism and his contribution thereof is contrasted by the views of Carl Braaten and Frederick Parrella, who point out that Tillich grounded his theology on mystical ontology.<sup>2</sup> This latter viewpoint goes well with Tillich's own persistent critique of the tendency in the mainline Protestant theologies to ignore or devalue the positive functions of mysticism as "mystic phobia."<sup>3</sup> Although he neither developed a systematic theory of

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 269. McGinn's survey consists of the three approaches, theological, philosophical, and psychological, and includes many significant works on mysticism up to date.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, ed., Carl E. Braaten (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Frederick Parrella, "Tillich and Contemporary Spirituality," ed., Raymond F. Bulmann & Frederick J. Parrella, *Paul Tillich: A New Catholic Assessment* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994); "An Emerging Spirituality," *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society*, vol. 28, no. 1 (Winter, 2002). This publication is abbreviated hereafter *BNAPTS*.

mysticism nor took an entirely positive stance toward mysticism, mysticism occupied a central place in his life and works and one can find in his philosophical theology a sophisticated, distinctive understanding of mysticism. Even his “reserved” attitude toward mysticism, then, perhaps, is a characteristic sign of his theology of mysticism.

Some of the early interpreters of Tillich have noticed the mystical character of his theology<sup>4</sup> and there have appeared several significant studies of Tillich and mysticism.<sup>5</sup> The themes of mysticism and spirituality have been given much more attention within Tillich studies since 2000, when the International Paul Tillich Symposium was held in Berlin. 32 essays from this symposium were published (17 German and 15 English).<sup>6</sup> A few articles appeared in the New Harmony Conference held in 2001 to highlight successfully the relevance of Tillich’s theology to the contemporary spiritual situation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Tillich, *Meaning of Health*, ed., Perry LeFevre (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1984), 216.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Leibrecht describes Tillich as a “mystical Christian theologian in the classical sense of the phrase” and his theology as a “theology of the spirit.” He holds, “it is mystical experience which underlies all his theology.” Walter Leibrecht, “The Life and Mind of Paul Tillich,” in *Religion and Culture: Essays in honor of Paul Tillich*, ed., Walter Leibrecht (New York: Harper, 1959), 19-20. Carl Braaten holds that “Of all the labels that has been applied to Tillich’s theology, none of them come close to fitting unless they bring out the mystical ontology which undergirds his whole way of thinking.” Carl E. Braaten, “Paul Tillich and the Classical Christian Tradition,” in *A History of Christian Thought*, xxv.

<sup>5</sup> Robert E. Gianini, “Paul Tillich’s Understanding of Mysticism,” *Cistercian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1975), 139-172; Robert E. Gianini, *Mysticism and Social Ethics: Thomas Merton Seen in the Light of Paul Tillich’s Theology*, Ph.D. Dissertation (The University of St. Andrews, 1976); Roy D. Morrison II, “Paul Tillich’s Appropriation of Jacob Boehme,” in ed. John J. Carey, *Tillich Studies: 1975* (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1975), 14-25; Frederick J. Parrella, “Tillich and Contemporary Spirituality,” in *Paul Tillich: A New Catholic Assessment*, eds. Raymond F. Bulman, Frederick J. Parrella (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), 241-267.

<sup>6</sup> Gert Hummel & Doris Lax, eds., *Mystical Heritage in Tillich’s Philosophical Theology* (Münster: LIT, 2002). This publication is abbreviated hereafter as *Mystical Heritage*.

<sup>7</sup> The articles include: Owen C. Thomas, “A Tillichian Critique of Contemporary Spirituality”; Marcia MacLennan, “Paul Tillich’s Three Gifts to Us for Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century”; Frederick J. Parrella, in ed. Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parrella, *Religion in the New Millennium: Theology in the Spirit of Paul Tillich* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2001).

Since then, a considerable number of works have been published on the topic.<sup>8</sup> Tillich's use of the term, "baptized mysticism," has been noted by several researchers<sup>9</sup> and its key features, e.g., the dialectic of the mystical and the ethical, have been paid due attention by some scholars.<sup>10</sup> And yet, there seems to have been no significant attempt to date to perceive the term as the concept which weaves together all the threads of his thoughts on mysticism and thus serves as the theological basis of Christian spirituality and prayer. The present research hopes to fill this lacuna.

## B. Thesis Statement

This study aims to explore Paul Tillich's theology of mysticism and its spiritual theological implications. The considerations that I have in mind in the exposition to follow are: Does Tillich's theology provide sufficient resources for understanding

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, A. James Reimer, "Prayer as *Unio Mystica*: Tillich's Concept of Prayer in Contrast to Barth's Christological Realism and Hirsch's Pietistic Personalism," ed., Werner Schüßler & A. J. Reimer, *Das Gebet als Grundakt des Glaubens* (Münster: LIT, 2004); David Nikkel, "The Varieties of Mystical Experience: Paul Tillich and William James," *BNAPTS*, vol. 30, no. 2 (Spring, 2004); Martin Gallagher, "Paul Tillich, the Mystical Overcoming of Theism, and the Space of the Secular," *BNAPTS* 31, no. 2 (Spring, 2005); John Dourley, "Tillich's Appropriation of Meister Eckhart: An Appreciative Critique," *BNAPTS* 31, no. 1 (Winter, 2005); Daniel J. Peterson, "Jacob Boehme and Paul Tillich: A Reassessment of the Mystical Philosopher and Systematic Theologian," *BNAPTS* 31, no. 1 (Winter, 2005); John J. Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine, God, Creation, and the Human Predicament: An East-West Conversation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006); Lois Malcolm, "Mystical and Prophetic: The Theology of Paul Tillich Reconsidered," *BNAPTS* 32, no. 4 (Fall, 2006); David Nikkel, "Negotiating the Nature of Mystical Experience, Guided by James and Tillich," *BNAPTS* 33, no. 3 (Summer, 2007); Sigridur Gudmarsdottir, "The Apophatic 'God above God': Tillich and the Poststructuralist Critique of Negative Theology," *BNAPTS* 34, no. 4 (Fall, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> James Horne, "Mystical characteristics of Tillich's absolute faith," ed. John J. Carey, *Theonomy and Autonomy: Studies in Paul Tillich's Engagement with Modern Culture* (Macon: Mercer, 1984), 158; Wessel Stoker, "The Mystical in Religious Experience: Tillich's Transcendental Theology of Experience," in *Mystical Heritage*, 97.

<sup>10</sup> Donald F. Dreisbach, "Tillich's Ambiguous Attitude Toward Mysticism," in *Mystical Heritage*; Jean Richard, "The Ontological Concept of the Mystical in Paul Tillich," in *Mystical Heritage*; Erdmann Sturm, "Mystik und Ethik bei Paul Tillich," in *Mystical Heritage*; YoungHo Chun, "Mystical Impulse and Protestant Principle," in *Mystical Heritage*; Duane Olson, "Hick and Tillich: Pluralism and Inclusivism, Critique and Construction," *BNAPTS*, vol. 34, no. 4 (Autumn, 2008).

Christian mysticism? Can Tillich's theology of mysticism serve as the systematic guidelines for the spiritual life of Christians in their desire to encounter the divine within the context of the ordinary life? Can it effectively promote a sound theology of prayer, which incorporates the basic tenets of the so-called "contemplative" traditions of Christianity, and thus meet the contemporary need for a theologically grounded principle of contemplative prayer?

My thesis is that Paul Tillich's theology of mysticism, culminating in his distinctive concept of "baptized mysticism," is coherent and cogent enough to provide a Protestant theology of spirituality and prayer. In particular, I wish to show that Tillich's baptized mysticism underlies "Tillichian spirituality," which is characterized in a fourfold way as: a "spirituality of fragmentation and anticipation;" a "spirituality of the mystico-prophetic dialectic;" a "spirituality of desire and eros;" and "living on the boundary as mystic wanderer." This modest proposal for Tillichian spirituality, which will be built upon a creative conversation with the view of holiness suggested by Philip Sheldrake, concerns the life oriented to a sense of the "eternal now," as Tillich describes this.<sup>11</sup> It promotes not so much the ideal of a perfected state of being, as the "belief-ful,"<sup>12</sup> courageous encounter of ontological threats and radical doubt in a condition of ever-increasing awareness, freedom, relatedness, and transcendence. A Tillichian saint is the

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<sup>11</sup> The title of the collection of the sermons that Tillich delivered during the years of 1955-63, this term signifies the presence of the eternal in the midst of the temporal. In the moment of the presence of the eternal, the "now" is affirmed in spite of all of its negativities. Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963).

<sup>12</sup> This term connotes in Tillich's theology the experience of faith. It is often combined with the term, "realism," altogether meaning contemplating the real in such a way that its divine ground becomes transparent in and through it.

“wanderer”<sup>13</sup> living on the boundary of the human limit and possibilities in the unending desire of the “God above God,”<sup>14</sup> who appears paradoxically in its absence.

I also wish to show that Tillich’s baptized mysticism proposes a life of Christian prayer that has close affinity with the contemplative traditions of Christianity, highlighting correspondences with Thomas Keating’s “centering prayer.” In the life of a baptized mystic, prayer involves the quality of contemplation, where the mystic participates in Christ as Spirit, i.e., the “Spirit-created ecstasy,”<sup>15</sup> wherein he/she becomes keenly aware of his/her own existential situation and the surrounding reality in light of the divine direction of life’s processes. In both Tillich’s conception of prayer as the “spiritual longing of a finite being to return to its origin”<sup>16</sup> and Keating’s centering prayer, the cultivation of the “contemplative attitude” is prioritized over the enjoyment of certain states of perfection, and this cultivation involves the whole personality symbolized by the heart. For both, prayer is the locus where God’s initiating act of accepting the person who is unacceptable is responded with the human’s acceptance of God’s accepting. In prayer, “divine therapy”<sup>17</sup> or “ecstatic healing”<sup>18</sup> occurs and one is enabled to reassert and reconcile with unarticulated, traumatizing emotional experiences, which have been accumulated in the unconscious since the early childhood. And, both acknowledge the

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<sup>13</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 299.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 182; Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology II* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 12.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology III* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 118.

<sup>16</sup> Tillich, *The Eternal Now*, 86.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 44.

<sup>18</sup> In utilizing the medical model of illness-healing for comparing Sankara and Tillich, John Thatamanil characterizes Tillich’s model as “ecstatic healing.” John J. Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament*, 149-167.

limits of human finitude and advocate the need for a continuous journey of seeking, in which a “deeper humility”<sup>19</sup> is graciously given.

### C. Introductory Remarks

My exploration of Tillich’s theology of mysticism revolves around his distinctive term, “baptized mysticism.” Despite the fact that the term was coined during Tillich’s later career and only used a few times, it is able to serve as a concept that threads through and penetrates his entire theology of mysticism. It appears in his lecture series given in the 1950s and posthumously published as *A History of Christian Thought*, as well as in his second volume of *Systematic Theology*, published in 1958. It is used in the first place to illustrate the transformative process by which Neo-Platonic or “abstract mysticism”<sup>20</sup> became Christianized by way of the Origen-Bernardian interpretation of the *Song of Songs*, in light of mystical love. In mystical love, the individual participates in the being of Christ and yet does not lose his or her subjectivity. In genuine Christian mysticism, Tillich claims, the individual identity and rational structure of the person is not dissolved into the abyss of the divine. A baptized mystic thus fulfills his or her centered self rather than demanding its sacrifice. Tillich’s use of the term in *Systematic Theology* illustrates the element of grace in mysticism. He criticizes futile attempts to reach the Ultimate Reality, which he calls “self-salvation” through bodily and mental exercises, observed in certain forms of Eastern and Western mysticism. He states that mystical experience

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<sup>19</sup> Keating, *Intimacy with God*, 63

<sup>20</sup> In Tillich’s mind, there are two types of mysticism, abstract mysticism and baptized mysticism. He accuses abstract mysticism of annihilating the experiencing, centered subject and considering existential, historical realities without sufficient seriousness.

depends entirely on the event of the Christ as the “New Being.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, for him, mysticism is a mode of participation in the form of grace, not the possession of it, and thus always “anticipation.”

A close reading of the biographical and autobiographical works of Tillich reveals that he had various experiences of the mystical. He had many memorable instances of “mystical participation in nature,”<sup>22</sup> e.g., the experience of being fascinated by the numinous character of the Gothic architectures or of being grasped by an exuberant vision of the sea, which contributed to the development of some of his major theological concepts, including “the boundary,” “breakthrough,” and God as “the ground and the abyss.” Most importantly, while contemplating Sandro Botticelli’s painting, *Madonna and Child with Singing Angels*, at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin in 1918, he was exposed to a “divine revelation,”<sup>23</sup> which, I argue, amounts to what Evelyn Underhill understands as “ecstasy,” and this became the fundamental occasion in developing his concept of the mystical as a revelatory ecstasy. A similar kind of the revelatory experience took place while he, as a military chaplain, was reading Nietzsche on the battlefield in the First World War. On a later occasion, he himself labeled this experience an “encounter with the power of being itself.”<sup>24</sup>

It is in Friedrich Schelling’s philosophy that Tillich found a conceptual tool with which to express his mystical sensibility that germinated and developed through his early

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<sup>21</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 83-84.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Tillich, “Autobiographical Reflections,” in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, eds. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 4-5.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Tillich, “One Moment of Beauty,” in *On Art and Architecture*, ed. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 234.

<sup>24</sup> Tillich, “Art and Society,” in *On Art and Architecture*, 12.

ecstatic encounter with nature and being.<sup>25</sup> He began his academic career by studying Schelling and wrote a theological dissertation dealing with the latter's synthesis of mysticism and ethics.<sup>26</sup> His mystical penchant enabled him to understand Ernst Troeltsch's typology of the church type, the sect type, and the mystical type, Rudolf Otto's ideas of the numinous and the holy, and Martin Heidegger's existential ontology. During his academic career Tillich thus continued to write on mysticism, though more occasionally than systematically, and give lectures periodically. In the years of 1924-25, when he was called to replace Rudolf Otto at the University of Marburg, he lectured on Protestant mystics;<sup>27</sup> in the years between 1951 and 1957 at Union Theological Seminary and Harvard University, he offered courses on mysticism entitled, "Christian Mystics through Church History," "The Theology of Christian Mystics," and "Seminar in Christian Mystics"<sup>28</sup>; in 1957 he made two presentations on mysticism, "Christian Thought and Eastern Mysticism" and "The Mystical as a Lasting Category of Religion."<sup>29</sup> This brief account of his life experiences of the mystical and of his uninterrupted works on mysticism illustrate that Tillich stood in the ontological, mystical

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 17; 75.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development* (Lewisberg: Bucknell University Press, 1974). The title is hereafter abbreviated *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*.

<sup>27</sup> Wilhelm Pauck and Marion Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 95.

<sup>28</sup> The unpublished syllabi, which contain the list of the themes and mystics, are extant at the Paul Tillich Archive at Harvard. The mystical thinkers whom Tillich taught include Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Bernard of Clairvaux, Meister Eckhart and Protestant mystics such as Sebastian Frank, Jacob Boehme, George Fox, and Jonathan Edwards.

<sup>29</sup> The lecture notes of the former are already published: Terry Thomas, *Paul Tillich and World Religions* (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1999); the latter is only extant in handwritten format at the Paul Tillich Archive at Harvard.

strand of Christian spirituality, as he himself described in his 1946 essay, “The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion,” and also that he appreciated Catholicism in his continuous, rigorous attempt to unite “Protestant Principle” and “Catholic Substance.”<sup>30</sup>

#### **D. Methodology and Procedure**

In addressing the issues of this thesis, a general picture of Tillich’s life and thoughts on mysticism need to be drawn in the first place. Thus, I will explore Tillich’s account of his ecstatic experiences and their relationship to his thoughts on mysticism by referring to his autobiographical essays<sup>31</sup> and several biographical works.<sup>32</sup> Given that he made no systematic presentation of mysticism, I will then explore his various writings to gather his references to mysticism and identify the major theoretical foci (Chapter 1). I will follow with an exposition and analysis of Tillich’s thoughts on mysticism that are scattered in his writings. This will be done according to the conventional division of his life and work, dividing between the German period (1886-1933) and American period (1933-1965) (Chapter 2). A critical evaluation of a variety of selected appraisals of his theories of mysticism will then be employed to highlight the key features of Tillich’s baptized mysticism and their connecting points to spiritual theological implications

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion,” in *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 10-29; “Cultural Comparisons,” in *Theology of Culture*, 169.

<sup>31</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch*; “Autobiographical Reflections”; “What Am I?” in *My Search for Absolutes* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967); “Philosophical Background of My Theology,” ed., Gunther Wenz, *Philosophical Writings: Main Works, Vol. 1* (Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 1989).

<sup>32</sup> Rollo May, *Paulus: Reminiscences of a Friendship* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Wilhelm Pauck and Marion Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); David Nikkel, “The Mystical Foundation of Paul Tillich.” *BNAPTS*, vol. 32, no 3 (Spring, 2006).

(Chapter 3). Finally, a constructive reflection will be undertaken to explore spiritual theological implications of Tillich's theology of mysticism. The methods of comparison and juxtaposition are also used since the constructive reflection is done in consideration of the relevant theories of the contemporary scholars (Chapter 4).

More specifically, Chapter One explores Tillich's life experiences of the mystical, which are categorized as: the "mysticism of nature," the "mysticism of beauty," and the "mysticism of being." I will then examine his various expressions and concepts of mysticism, which include "identity," "union," "participation," "intuition," "presence," "directedness," and "inwardness." Finally, I will employ three theoretical foci in examining Tillich's thoughts on mysticism in a thorough and systematic manner: 1) his distinction between the mystical as category and as a type of religion; 2) his distinction between "abstract mysticism" and "baptized mysticism"; and, 3) his understanding of mysticism as "fragmentary" and "anticipatory."

Chapter Two will explore Tillich's various writings to illustrate the scope and context of his theology of mysticism and the essential features of baptized mysticism and Tillichian spirituality. The first section will engage the writings he wrote when he was in Germany (1886-1933), including *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophy*, *Systematische Theologie*, and his essays on the philosophy of religion, theology of culture, religious socialism, and Protestantism. The second section will explore his writings during the following years in America, which include the essays written in 1930-40s on politics, Catholicism, and the social situation and his magnum opus *Systematic Theology, The Courage To Be, Love, Power, and Justice* and *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*.

Chapter Three will review the various appraisals of Tillich's theories of mysticism from different vantage points. James Horne opens up a discussion of Tillich's attitude toward mysticism and suggests five reasons for Tillich's reservation about mysticism.<sup>33</sup> John Dourley engages in a project of reading Tillich's theology from the perspective of Jungian psychology in proposing that Tillich and Jung can converge on the question of humanity's inescapable rootedness in the divine.<sup>34</sup> Particularly interesting is Dourley's comparison of Tillich's and Jung's appreciation of the thoughts of the two mystical theologians, Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme. A. J. Reimer brings Tillich's view of prayer into critical light in arguing that Tillich mediates the Spiritualist and the Pietistic traditions on the one hand and the views of Emmanuel Hirsch and Karl Barth on the other, and that in this mediation his theology of prayer falls short of ethical ramifications.<sup>35</sup> Frederick J. Parrella explores Tillich's theology in light of spirituality and holds that Tillichian spirituality can say much about the contemporary spiritual situation.<sup>36</sup> Mary Ann Stenger approaches Tillich's concept of the mystical *a priori* to compare it with the Buddhist *sunyata*.<sup>37</sup> This review of the various commentators helps to

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<sup>33</sup> James R. Horne, "Tillich's Rejection of Absolute Mysticism," *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 58, no. 2 (April, 1978), 130-139; "Mystical characteristics of Tillich's absolute faith," 157-170.

<sup>34</sup> John P. Dourley, *The Psyche as Sacrament: A Comparative Study of C.G. Jung and Paul Tillich* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1981); *Paul Tillich, Carl Jung and the Recovery of Religion* (London & New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> A. J. Reimer, "Mysticism or spirituality? The Concept of Prayer in Tillich's Theology," in *Paul Tillich: Theologian of Nature, Culture, and Politics* (Münster: LIT, 2004); "Prayer as Unio Mystica: Tillich's Concept of Prayer in contrast to Barth's Christological Realism and Hirsch's Pietistic Personalism," in eds., Werner Schüßler & A. J. Reimer, *Das Gebet als Grundakt des Glaubens* (Münster: LIT, 2004), 109-135.

<sup>36</sup> Frederick J. Parrella, "Tillich and Contemporary Spirituality," 241-267; "Paul Tillich and the Roman Catholic Mystical Tradition," in *Mystical Heritage*, 253-277.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Ann Stenger, "A Comparison of Spiritual Presence with Buddhist *Sunyata*," in *Mystical Heritage*, 463-478.

sharpen and enhance our understanding of Tillich's thoughts on mysticism and prepares us for a better theoretical framework for suggesting spiritual theological implications of his theory of mysticism in the following chapter.

In the final chapter, the analysis will shift to explore spiritual theological implications of Tillich's theology of mysticism. A modest proposal of Tillichian holiness will be made in a creative conversation with the view of holiness suggested by Philip Sheldrake. Tillich's conception of prayer will also be constructively presented to show that it has a close affinity with the contemplative traditions of Christianity, exemplarily with Thomas Keating's centering prayer.

In Conclusion, I will provide a brief summary of the preceding chapters and attempt to consider the value and meaning of Tillich's theory of baptized mysticism within the context of Korean Protestantism.

## CHAPTER ONE

### OVERVIEW OF PAUL TILlich'S EXPERIENCES AND THOUGHTS ON THE MYSTICAL

This chapter is an overview of Paul Tillich's experiences and thoughts on mysticism. First, Tillich's life experiences of the mystical will be examined to provide an experiential basis for his theory; then I will provide an exploration of his many definitions of mysticism, which are scattered throughout his various writings. I will proceed, then, to present a threefold theoretical focus that penetrates his thoughts regarding mysticism. Throughout my research I use the two terms "mysticism" and "the mystical" interchangeably and yet there are subtle differences depending on the context. What I mean by mysticism, in general, is the academic discipline or religious system where the mystical is dealt with as the subject matter. In contrast, the mystical designates a certain quality or element of reality and being that can be commonly called mystical. This differentiation is largely congruent with Tillich's use of the terms.

#### A. Tillich's Life Experiences of the Mystical

Despite the burgeoning interest in recent years within the scholarship in Tillich's theory of mysticism, not enough attention has been paid to his life experiences of the mystical. David Nikkel's 2006 essay stands out as one of the rare works written in English, which focuses exclusively on the issue.<sup>1</sup> Nikkel identifies three main categories to present Tillich's mystical events and experiences: nature, World War I, and art. A

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<sup>1</sup> David H. Nikkel, "Mystical Formation of Tillich," *BNAPTS*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Spring, 2006), 15-21.

close engagement with Tillich's autobiographical essays, I argue partly relying on Nikkel's observation, may well lead us to discern three moments in his life for the mystical, which we shall call the "mysticism of nature," the "mysticism of beauty," and the "mysticism of being." The "mysticism of nature" points primarily to a specific set of sensibilities, dispositions, capacities, and patterns of behavior for the mystical as it was germinated in his childhood and developed later on—although it presumably includes as well certain occasions that brought him into exalted or mystical consciousness. By contrast, both "mysticism of beauty" and "mysticism of being" point to specific revelatory events or occasions that made a tremendous impact on the evolution of Tillich's personality and thought. These three moments of Tillich's mystical life are all intertwined and influenced his mature theology and thus provide a foundation for interpreting the relationship between his life experiences and theology of mysticism.

### **1. Tillich's Mysticism of Nature**

Tillich states in his 1952 autobiographical essay that many memorable instances of mystical participation in nature occurred both in his childhood and in his adult life. In an extensive dialogue with the Zen master Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, which took place in the fall of 1957, Tillich describes himself as a "nature mystic," to whom "a yellow flower speaks with a magnificent eloquence."<sup>2</sup> In what follows I will survey three aspects of Tillich's mysticism of nature.

First, Tillich had a strong predilection for and participatory relation to nature and this made a notable contribution to developing his mystical sensibility. In a reminiscence of his childhood, he emphasizes a stronger tie to the country than to the city. He asserts

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Encounter of Religions and Quasi-Religions*, ed. Terence Thomas (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 162.

that many of his fond memories and longings are interwoven with landscapes, soil, weather, fields of grain, the smell of the potato plant, the shapes of clouds, wind, flowers, and woods.<sup>3</sup> Later, during adolescence, his predilection for nature was nourished by sailing, wandering through the countryside in Brandenburg, where he lived between the ages of four and fourteen, and playing in the garden behind his home where there were a grapevine, many trees and flowers such as lilies and violets.<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that Tillich uses for this aspect of his relation to nature the word “mystical participation,” which is one of his central expressions for the religious and his theological anthropology: “I find the actual communication with nature, daily in my early years, in my later years for several months of every year. Many memorable instances of “mystical participation” in nature recur in similar situations.”<sup>5</sup> It is also noteworthy that he defines his attitude toward nature as “aesthetic-meditative,” as in the following description of his mystical sensibility:

These early impressions may partly account for what has been challenged as the romantic trend in my feeling and thinking. One side of this so-called romanticism is my relationship to nature. It is expressed in a predominantly aesthetic-meditative attitude toward nature as distinguished from a scientific-analytical or technical-controlling relation.<sup>6</sup>

In this autobiographical account, Tillich holds that his aesthetic-meditative attitude toward nature made possible the tremendous emotional impact of Friedrich Schelling’s philosophy of nature on him and the formulation of his own Lutheran theory of the

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<sup>3</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Pauck and Marion Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 11.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Tillich, “Autobiographical Reflections,” 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

mystical participation in nature in contrast to the so-called “*Extra Calvinisticum*,” i.e., the doctrine that the finite is not capable of the infinite.

An example of the participatory, aesthetic-meditative attitude toward nature is illustrated by Wilhelm and Marion Pauck in their biographical portrait of Tillich. According to them, in 1910 in Lichtenrade while writing his theological dissertation titled *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling’s Philosophical Development* he was “intoxicated” by the sight of green fields and trees and flowers. This experience of participation in nature continued for Tillich later in America. In his East Hampton home on Long Island, in which he finally settled after his 1933 emigration from Germany, he cultivated trees, regularly dined outdoors, and worked for hours in his garden and walked by the sea.<sup>7</sup>

A sermon on Acts 17:28 that Tillich delivered in 1911 or 1912, when he was serving as assistant pastor in Nauen, attests to his mystical sensibility regarding participation in nature. In that sermon, which Erdmann Sturm, the compiler of Tillich’s early sermons in his German period, appraises as representing “the mysticism of nature, mystical monism,” Tillich praises the sacredness of nature in the spirit of Jacob Böhme:

Out of his own being God has brought forth creation; His body is the whole world... The cosmos with its millions of suns, revolving around each other according to eternal laws, is His body. The light in which we see, the air we breathe, the sounds that move our hearts, the words that connect spirit to spirit, the earth that carries and nourishes us, the fire that warms and serves us, the water that refreshes us – all these are His moving and becoming.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Pauck and Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought*, 31.

<sup>8</sup> Erdmann Sturm, “Between Apologetics and Pastoral Care: Paul Tillich’s Early Sermons (1908-1918),” *North American Paul Tillich Society Newsletter* 26, no. 1 (Winter, 2000), 11. This journal is abbreviated hereafter *NAPTSN*.

Second, Tillich recalls in his autobiographical essays the impact of Gothic architecture in the province of Brandenburg, which propelled him toward a certain mystical penchant. His hometown, Schönliss, small in size and medieval in character, radiated for him a sheltered, protective, and self-contained quality. This same quality was shared by the old, beautiful Gothic church standing in the center of the town and the Gothic environment in Königsberg, where he stayed from his twelfth to fourteenth year for his humanistic Gymnasium training. He was fascinated—even absorbed—by the numinous characteristic of those Gothic architectures, and later called it the “experience of the holy,” which became the backbone of his philosophy of religion:

It is the experience of the “holy” which was given to me at that time as an indestructible good and as the foundation of all my religious and theological work. When I first read Rudolf Otto’s *Idea of the Holy*, I understood it immediately in the light of these early experiences, and took it into my thinking as a constitutive element... This made Schleiermacher congenial to me, as he was to Otto, and induced both Otto and myself to participate in movements for liturgical renewal and a revaluation of Christian and non-Christian mysticism.<sup>9</sup>

In *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolf Otto offers a noble category of the interpretation of religious experience, “the numinous,” to articulate the “non-rational” element of religion, whose value the mainline Christianity failed to recognize. The numinous points to a moment of what he calls the “creature-feeling” as the “feeling of personal nothingness

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<sup>9</sup> Tillich, “Autobiographical Reflections,” 6. Tillich wrote two brief essays on Otto in 1923 and in 1925, which are translated, respectively, as “The Category of the ‘Holy’ in Rudolf Otto” and “Thinkers of Today: Rudolf Otto-Philosopher of Religion.” Chris L. Firestone and Nathan Jacobs, *Kant and Theology at the Boundaries of Reason* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009). Jean Richard traces in Tillich’s ontological concept of the mystical the legacies of Ernst Troeltsch and Rudolf Otto. Jean Richard, “The Ontological Concept of the Mystical in Paul Tillich,” in *Mystical Heritage*. Chris Firestone, co-translator of Tillich’s essays on Otto, proposes that Otto’s philosophy of religion can be understood as a direct extension of Kant’s thought and, given the impact of Otto’s philosophy of religion on Tillich, Tillich’s systematic theology is as much grounded on Kant’s philosophy as it is on Schelling’s. Chris L. Firestone, “Tillich’s Indebtedness to Kant: Two Recently Translated Review Essays on Rudolf Otto’s *Idea of the Holy*,” *BNAPTS* 35, no. 2 (Spring, 2009), 3-9.

and submergence before the awe-inspiring object directly experienced”<sup>10</sup> It is the “wholly other, that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar, which therefore falls quite outside the limits of the ‘canny,’ and is contrasted with it, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment.”<sup>11</sup> The numinous has two qualities: the daunting awefulness and majesty and the attractive, fascinating charm (*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*). The numinous object produces in the experiencing subject horror, dread, and overpowering majesty on the one hand and wonderfulness, bliss, and the Dionysiac transport and rapture on the other. Tillich in his later doctrine of God appropriates Otto’s theory of the two qualities of the numinous as expressing the double sense of “the ultimate,” that is, that which is the abyss and that which is the ground of being.<sup>12</sup>

Recalling the impact that this early environment had upon some lasting elements of his theological thought, Tillich, in his 1965 lecture on religious art and architecture, associated such an experience of the holy with a “feeling of inner fulfillment.”<sup>13</sup> One may wonder here what he precisely means by the “feeling of inner fulfillment.” Seen in light of the two principles that Tillich introduces in the lecture with respect to the genuine expression of religious art and architecture, that is, “honesty” and “consecration,” I would argue it is a “felt sense” that one acquires in his or her encounter with an object of art or architectural structure, which resonates with the autonomous innovativeness of the artist combined with his or her historical destiny and capacity for the contemplation of the holy.

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<sup>10</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 2d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology I* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 215.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Tillich, *On Art and Architecture*, 221-222.

More precisely, the feeling of inner fulfillment is the ecstatic feeling of the encounter with the numinous in the sense of *mysterium fascinosum*:

The reason for these two effects of the holy is obvious if we see the relation of the experience of the holy to the experience of ultimate concern. The human heart seeks the infinite because that is where the finite wants to rest. In the infinite it sees its own *fulfillment*. This is the reason for the ecstatic attraction and fascination of everything in which ultimacy is manifest.<sup>14</sup> (emphasis added)

Third, the sea or the ocean constituted for Tillich an especially powerful source for developing mystical sensibility. We are told that he was often grasped by the power of the infinite in his yearly excursions to the Baltic Sea that he made from the time when he was eight. In a seminar at the University of California in 1963, two years before his death, he stated that the idea of what he called “ultimate concern” for authentic religiosity was conceived and confirmed time and again in his encounters with the ocean.<sup>15</sup> An example can be found in the biography authored by Paucks. During the time of writing his first successful book, *The Religious Situation*, originally published in 1932, Tillich stayed in Kampen on the island of Sylt, where he, looking at the sea, had certain “visions of jewels and flowers.”<sup>16</sup> Although specific details of the visions remain unknown, this experience certainly enriched his concept of ultimate concern.

A more general account of the role of the ocean in Tillich’s life and theology comes from his own narrative:

The experience of the infinite bordering on the finite suited my inclination toward the boundary situation and supplied my imagination with a symbol that gave substance to my emotions and creativity to my thought. Without this experience it

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 15.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue*, ed. D. Mackenzie Brown (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 28.

<sup>16</sup> Pauck and Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought*, 66.

is likely that my theory of the human boundary situation... might not have developed as it did... There is another element to be found in the contemplation of the sea: its dynamic assault on the serene firmness of the land and the ecstasy of its gales and waves. My theory of the “dynamic mass” in the essay “Masse und Geist” was conceived under the immediate influence of the turbulent sea. The sea also supplied 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 into finitude.<sup>17</sup>

This rather abstract account of Tillich’s own experiences of the ocean seems to be further illuminated by later recollections. We will divide his account into three sections in order to consider the implications of each of three outstanding themes revisited by Tillich. The three themes concerned are “boundary situation,” “immanent mysticism,” and the “absolute as both ground and abyss” or “religion as the thrust of the eternal into finitude.”

First, Tillich characterizes his experience of the ocean as infinite and an illumination of the “boundary situation,” one of his fundamental concepts for human existence. The concept “boundary” expresses two aspects of human existence: the limit of human existence always being confronted by ultimate threats, e.g., guilt and meaninglessness, and the possibility of creating a “third area” where human freedom and existence find support as well as threat. In the acceptance speech of the Peace Prize of the Marketing Association of the German Book Trade in Frankfurt in 1962, Tillich illustrates the two aspects in the following way:

Existence on the frontier, in the boundary situation, is full of tension and movement. It is in truth no standing still, but rather a crossing and return, a repetition of return and crossing, a back-and-forth-the aim of which is to create a third area beyond the bounded territories, an area where one can stand for a time without being enclosed in something tightly bounded.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Tillich, “Boundaries,” *Theology of Peace: Paul Tillich*, ed. Ronald H. Stone (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press: 1990), 163.

It is not human being but the Eternal that “can, from its side, cross over the border.”<sup>19</sup> Grasped by the gracious power of the Eternal, humans can live on the boundary without willing to eliminate ultimate threats and find security in the heteronomous authority, ideology or institution. We can surmise, thus, that in the contemplation of the ocean Tillich intuited the limitation of the finite self, and at the same time a transcending power of the infinite. In other words, he may have been radically exposed to the “limit set on everything finite by that which transcends all human possibilities, the Eternal,”<sup>20</sup> in keeping with existentialist emphasis on the horizon of death in authentic awareness, as he confesses in his 1936 autobiography.

Second, the contemplation of the ocean provides Tillich with an experiential impetus for his later conceptualizations of the mystical as “breakthrough” and of “immanent mysticism.” In his 1922 essay “Mass and Personality,” which Tillich mentions in the above account, he discusses three groups of mass: the “mystical mass,” the “technical mass,” and the “dynamic mass” or the “mass of immanent mysticism.” In the mystical mass that the early Gothic painting represents, “everything individual is erased: one facial expression, one way of holding the head, one line of body and clothing, one intensity of light makes them all alike.”<sup>21</sup> The mass is dominated by the overarching idea, e.g., the idea of discipleship or astonished adoration. In the technical mass as

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>20</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 98.

<sup>21</sup> Tillich, *On Art and Architecture*, 59.

illustrated in the impressionistic art, mystical principle is missing and instead external powers like natural instincts or technique create the character of the masses.

By contrast, the dynamic mass, neither completely dominated by the overarching idea, nor portrayed as a surface or an object of formal technique, possesses its own metaphysical significance to the extent that it is elevated beyond humanity to ecstatically visionary heights. In the expressionistic art, the redeemer cannot come from above and instead must be born *in the depth of the longing of the mass*. The dynamic mass is the mass of “immanent mysticism,” Tillich says, in the sense that it is “not guided supranaturally, from above, but remains immanent in the reality of this world, breaking from the depths of the soul.”<sup>22</sup> Noteworthy is that the word “immanent” is also found in his 1921 essay “Religious Style and Religious Material in the Fine Arts.” It is used as against the word “transcendent” and for the word “this-worldly”: “expressionistic mysticism is not transcendent and does not rest in God as does medieval mysticism; rather, it is immanent, ecstatic over life in the Nietzschean sense. Nietzsche murdered only the one, the other-worldly, side of God but, in return, all the more squeezed the highest dynamics of life into the other, the this-worldly side.”<sup>23</sup> To conclude, in the contemplation of the turbulent sea Tillich presumably took in its dynamic movements as well as its breaking power, which are produced not by an external cause but by its inner dynamics.

Third, the ocean serves as Tillich’s fundamental symbol for the doctrines both of God as the ground and the abyss, and of religion as the thrust of the eternal into finitude.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>23</sup> 46.

This symbolic aspect for the ocean registers a Böhme-Schellingian influence in the formation of his theology. According to Tillich, the “ground” symbolizes the “mystery which appears in revelation and which remains mystery in its appearance,” whereas the “abyss” points to the inexhaustible and ineffable character of the divine life.<sup>24</sup> The ground is the revealed mystery, though its mystical character is never abolished, whereas the abyss is prior to the ground, spelled “*Ungrund*” or “*Abgrund*” in German. And the experience of the ultimate as the ground and the abyss, in Tillich’s view, can also characterize religion: religion is the intrusion of the eternal into time. Therefore, we can postulate that in his occasional excursions into the sea Tillich was ecstatically grasped by the mysterious and abysmal power of the ocean, i.e., the all-embracing and yet indefinable eternal dimension of the ocean, and that he later associated this experience of the ocean with his concept of God as the ground and the abyss and of religion as the thrust of the eternal into finitude.

In this sense, David Nikkel’s suggestion for calling Tillich’s experience of the ocean an “oceanic experience” seems justifiable, insofar as the expression designates the feeling of the eternal.<sup>25</sup> The idea of the oceanic feeling is originally from Romain Rolland and later picked up by Sigmund Freud, who considers the feeling as regressive and infantile. Rolland in his 1927 correspondence to Freud mentions the “feeling of the eternal” as a religious feeling, which differentiates itself from the religion as an

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<sup>24</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 156.

<sup>25</sup> Nikkel, “Mystical Formation of Tillich,” 15.

institution, i.e., in the sense of the collections of dogmas, credos, organizations, sacred books, etc. Rolland likens such religious feeling to the feeling of the “oceanic.”<sup>26</sup>

## 2. Tillich’s Mysticism of Beauty

In 1914, at the age of 28, in a spirit of patriotism Tillich volunteered for the German army as a military chaplain and served for five years until the end of the First World War in 1918. During his chaplaincy, he radically experienced the “dirt, the horrors, and the ugliness of human existence”<sup>27</sup> or what he called an “abyss in human existence”<sup>28</sup> to the point that he fell in a faint three times and had to be hospitalized once.<sup>29</sup> During the war, he began to study the history of art by candle or lantern light and collect cheap reproductions available to him in the battlefields, which helped him to counteract the destructive, horrible effects of the war. Toward the end of war, on his last furlough in 1918, he took a leave to visit the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin. There he stood before Sandro Botticelli’s *Madonna and Child with Singing Angels*. In fact, he had been comforted by a copy of this painting amidst the thunder of the canons on the front.

Fig. 1. Sandro Botticelli, *Madonna and Child with Singing Angels*<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> William B. Parsons, *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling: Revisioning the Psychoanalytic Theory of Mysticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 173.

<sup>27</sup> Tillich, *On Art and Architecture*, 12.

<sup>28</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 52.

<sup>29</sup> Tillich’s suffering in the war time was physical as well as psychological. Pauck and Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought*, 51, 54. René Tillich, Tillich’s son and a practicing psychotherapist, diagnoses his father as having anxiety disorder and depression and post traumatic stress syndromes from the war. René Tillich, “My Father, Paul Tillich,” *Spurensuche : Lebens- und Denkwege Paul Tillichs*, eds. Ilona Nord & Yorick Spiegel, (Münster: LIT, 2001), 19.

<sup>30</sup> Sandro Botticelli, *Madonna and Child with Singing Angels*; available from <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/sandro-botticelli/madonna-with-child-and-singing-angels-1477-1> (assessed on April, 11, 2014).



In this picture, the half-naked baby Jesus is being held by his mother, whose seemingly melancholic or indifferent appearance is contrasted with his audacious attempt to hold onto her bosom and his direct gaze at the observer, or the external world. While contemplating this painting, Tillich was taken into “revelatory ecstasy.” This revelatory experience exerted on him an impact that was “shaking, transforming, demanding, [and] significant in an ultimate way.”<sup>31</sup> It was in no way the communication of an objective piece of information; rather, it was a comprehension of the Unconditional, as we read in

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<sup>31</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 110.

his lecture delivered in 1952 at the Minneapolis Institute for Arts: “I... had an experience for which I do not know a better name than revelatory ecstasy. A level of reality was opened to me, which had been covered up to this moment, although I had some intimations of its existence.”<sup>32</sup>

A more detailed description of this experience can be found in Tillich’s 1955 essay titled “One Moment of Beauty,” originally published in the magazine *Parade* for a series called “I’ll Never Forget.” This time he described it as the experience of “Beauty itself”:

DIVINE REVELATION comes to few men, [sic] but understanding of it came to me one moment 36 years ago... Gazing up at [the painting], I felt a state approaching ecstasy. In the beauty of the painting there was Beauty itself. It shone through the colors of the paint as the light of day shines through the stained-glass windows of a medieval church. As I stood there, bathed in the beauty its painter had envisioned so long ago, something of the divine source of all things came through to me. I turned away shaken. That moment has affected my whole life, given me the keys for the interpretation of human existence, [and] brought vital joy and spiritual truth. I compare it with what is usually called revelation in the language of religion.... The experience goes beyond the way we encounter reality in our daily lives. It opens up depths experienced in no other way.<sup>33</sup>

This description by Tillich of the experience of “Beauty itself” seems to satisfy necessary conditions of what Evelyn Underhill understands as “ecstasy.” Underhill understands ecstasy as a special kind of contemplation, whose distinctiveness lies in entrancement, the state of being ravished out of fleshly feeling. Ecstasy involves physiological, psychological, and mystical aspects.<sup>34</sup> In ecstasy, the body of the subject is more or less cold and rigid, remaining in the exact position that it occupied at the oncoming of the

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<sup>32</sup> Tillich, “Art and Society,” in *On Art and Architecture*, 12.

<sup>33</sup> Tillich, “One Moment of Beauty,” in *On Art and Architecture*, 234-235.

<sup>34</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1955), 358-375.

ecstasy, and breath and circulation are depressed. Psychologically speaking, the subject perfectly withdraws his or her consciousness from the external world and attains a “temporary unification of consciousness.” On its mystical side, ecstasy represents the greatest possible extension of spiritual consciousness in the direction of “Pure Being.” The person in an ecstatic state attains a supreme knowledge of or participation in Divine Reality. Put differently, the ecstatic consciousness transcends the ordinary ways we process knowledge and throws us into the Heart of Reality. Thus, ecstasy carries the positive aspects of exaltation and life-enhancement.

Indeed, Tillich’s account of his revelatory experience shows many traits of what Underhill sees as “ecstasy,” the term which Tillich also uses in his theology frequently: while standing before the painting, he was “bathed” in its radiating beauty and turned away “shaken,” and savored “vital joy”; his consciousness reached the state of pure concentration so that he could perceive “Beauty itself” filtered through the colors of the painting; “something of the divine source of all things,” which he also phrased as “depth” of reality (in his 1952 account), came through to him and a level of reality opened itself to him. His expression “something of the divine source of all things” does not point to a specific field of knowledge but a contemplative state of being grasped by Divine Reality. The radical sense of the real pervaded his soul, so to speak, and it thus provided, as he narrates, the keys for his interpretation of human existence.

One of the most fascinating dimensions of this revelatory ecstasy seems to me to have to do with the death of Tillich’s mother, which took place when he was seventeen. The turbulence caused by the loss of his mother was such that his sense of identity was

completely shaken, exposing him to the reality of absolute nothingness. That is well preserved in a poem that he wrote right after the event:

Am I then I? Who tells me that I am!  
 Who tells me what I am, what I shall become?  
 ...  
 O abyss without ground [*O Abgrund ohne Grund*], dark depth of madness!  
 Would that I had never gazed upon you and were sleeping like a child!<sup>35</sup>

The absence of the mother is illustrated in the poem as a shattering of his identity, which leads to an encounter with the abyss [*Abgrund*], the “dark depth of madness.”

Pauck and Pauck remind us that Tillich virtually “repressed” the fact of her death and did not speak of her to anyone. We may thus say in psychoanalytic terms that the reality of the loss of the mother was repressed and, as a result, she was idealized. These authors speculate in their biography that Tillich continued to adore and seek out his lost mother in every woman with whom he was involved. And, the sea and the sun, according to the authors, were the transferred objects of his obsessive love of his mother.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the abysmal dimension of human existence, which was revealed to him on the occasion of losing his mother and recapitulated in his war-time experiences (which will be discussed in the next section), spurred his continuous pursuit of mystical union with a love object such as women, oceans, nature, play or imaginative works.

Seen in this light, Tillich’s revelatory encounter with Botticelli’s painting of the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus amounts to his own encounter with his lost mother. Tillich narrates that, upon gazing at the painting, he was ecstatically drawn into “Beauty itself.” What characterizes the experience in his account is the access to pure Beauty,

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<sup>35</sup> Rollo May, *Paulus: Reminiscences of a Friendship* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 41.

<sup>36</sup> Pauck and Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought*, 14.

which, I think, corresponds to what he later terms as “dreaming innocence” in his doctrine of the state of essential being, that is, the state before the Fall.<sup>37</sup> The Beauty or dreaming innocence revealed itself to him through the image of the baby being held by his mother. Given that the mother is for Tillich a lost and idealized mother, it would not be farfetched to imagine that, exposed to ideal Beauty, he experienced a loving union with his idealized mother, which brought about vital joy and spiritual illumination. In the reunion with the lost and idealized mother, he comprehended the “divine source of all things,” which symbolizes a certain level of the resolution of the conflicts that he struggled with by then.

It is noteworthy and understandable, then, that Tillich imagines God as being feminine. Tillich asserts in *Systematic Theology III* that the female element in the symbolic expression of ultimate concern was eliminated in Protestantism due to its removal of the image of the Holy Virgin and this led many Protestant humanists to be attracted toward Oriental mysticism. In the concept of God as “ground of being,” he finds a possibility of retrieving the feminine side of the divinity and religious experience:

I want to point to the following possibilities. The first is related to the concept “ground of being” which is-as previously discussed-partly conceptual, partly symbolical. In so far as it is symbolical, it points to the mother-quality of giving birth, carrying, and embracing, and, at the same time, of calling back, resisting independence of the created, and swallowing it. The uneasy feeling of many Protestants about the first (not the last!) statement about God, that he is being-itself or the ground of being, is partly rooted in the fact that their religious consciousness and, even more, their moral conscience are shaped by the demanding father-image of the God who is conceived as a person among others.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 294.

Tillich's God as the "ground of being," which reminds us of his expression the "divine source of all things" in his 1955 autobiographical account already quoted above, is like mother who is life-giving and reuniting. In other words, God as the ground of being symbolizes the feminine horizon of religious experience in which God's life-giving and reuniting power is effectively manifest.

### 3. Tillich's Mysticism of Being

In a *Time* interview in 1959, Tillich mentioned an event that "absolutely transformed" him:

But the real transformation happened at the Battle of Champagne in 1915. A night attack came, and all night long I moved among the wounded and dying as they were brought in—many of them my close friends. All that horrible, long night I walked along the rows of dying men, and much of my German classical philosophy broke down that night—the belief that man could master cognitively the essence of being, the belief in the identity of essence and existence....<sup>39</sup>

It was that moment of radical awareness in which his belief in Western civilization and the identity of essence and existence collapsed.<sup>40</sup> Richard Hughes suggests that the awareness grew all the more acute as Tillich participated in the battle of Verdun in the following year.<sup>41</sup> What we call Tillich's "mysticism of being" is the experience that is

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<sup>39</sup> "Religion: To Be or Not To Be," *Time* (March 16, 1959).

<sup>40</sup> The identity of essence and existence is the fundamental claim of German idealism, as Tillich understands, that the "system of categories portrays reality as a whole, rather than being the expression of a definite and existentially limited encounter with reality." Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 83. Thus, the criticism of idealism leads to a new definition of truth that truth is bound to the situation of the knower. According to the biographical account of Rollo May, Tillich used to say that since the transforming night in 1915, he became an existentialist. This implies, May explains, that while Tillich had begun his philosophical career as a German idealist, from that night on he "could no longer separate truth from the human being who acts on it; right and wrong were no longer decided purely at ethereal heights of thought; the living, pulsing, committing, suffering and loving human being must always be taken into account." Rollo May, *Paulus: Reminiscences of a Friendship* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

<sup>41</sup> Richard A. Hughes, "Tillich's Metaphor of the 'Eternal Memory,'" *Encounter* 63, no. 3 (Summer, 2002), 316-317.

accompanied by this radical awareness. He gives an account of the same kind of event in his 1952 lecture, “Art and Society”:

Exactly in the way in which the picture of Botticelli produced an ecstatic feeling of revelatory character, a *special encounter with the seemingly abstract concept of being* created a similar experience. It was, as I would call it today, an encounter with the power of being itself. It was the astonishing awareness that something is and not nothing, and that I participate in its power to be. That made this moment unforgettable.<sup>42</sup> (emphasis added)

Given that Tillich here compares the experience of being to that of beauty in terms of the character and intensity of the experience, it can be said that the former is as revelatory and ecstatic as the latter. His selection of the word “astonishing” speaks, as it were, for the revelatory character of the experience. It is a mystical encounter with “Being itself,” which is what he later describes as the only non-symbolic concept of God. It is, at the same time, an encounter with his own being that participates in the power of “Being itself.” Tillich discovered in the encounter God as the power of being— the concept of which goes beyond the traditional, theistic concept of God as personal, effectively enlarging its own semantic field to include the meaning of the ecstatic affirmation of existence. This mysticism of being finds an eloquent theoretical expression in Tillich’s idea of the “courage to be,” which he defines as the “self-affirmation of being in spite of the fact of nonbeing.”<sup>43</sup>

When did Tillich actually experience this “being?” Although neither Tillich nor his biographers provide a direct answer to this question, we might rightly conjecture from their accounts that it occurred at least once while he was reading Nietzsche in a French

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<sup>42</sup> Tillich, *On Art and Architecture*, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 155.

forest in 1917. Tillich mentions in his 1936 autobiographical essay that his reading of Nietzsche at the age of thirty made a tremendous impression on him. Indeed, Nietzschean vitalism, i.e., the ecstatic affirmation of existence amidst demonic threats, spoke with enormous clarity to Tillich of his own experience of the abyss during the war.<sup>44</sup> Tillich recalls the impression of Nietzsche's writing later in the aforementioned interview with *Time*. In the interview, he talked about his resonance with Nietzsche's disillusion with heteronomy and the traditional concept of God:

I well remember sitting in the woods in France reading Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, as many other German soldiers did, in a continuous state of exaltation. This was the final liberation from heteronomy. European nihilism carried Nietzsche's prophetic word that 'God is dead.' Well, the traditional concept of God was dead.<sup>45</sup>

What is noteworthy in Tillich's reminiscence is his expression that reading Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* transported him into a "continuous state of exaltation." The combination of "continuous" and "exaltation" here allows us to imagine that the continuous experience of exaltation which took place in the reading of Nietzsche was of the same kind as the experience on which Tillich already elaborated in his 1952 lecture on art and architecture, and for which he used the phrases such as "the encounter with the power of being itself" and "an ecstatic feeling of revelatory character." Hughes suggests that the crucial part of the book that moved Tillich to the ecstatic exaltation was that of Zarathustra's "Midnight Song," given that Tillich cited the concluding line of this song in his sermon on the first Advent Sunday of 1917. The poem goes as follows: "joys want all eternity, want deep, profound eternity... I hope in you, then, I love you, O

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<sup>44</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 53-54.

<sup>45</sup> Tillich, "Religion: To Be or Not To Be."

eternity.”<sup>46</sup> While Hughes’ suggestion may need more evidence to be justified, what is clear is the fact that Tillich’s mysticism of being was experienced during his reading of Nietzsche, and thus the Nietzschean vitalism played a significant role in the formation of Tillich’s mature mystical sensibility as reflected in the mystical tone of his theology.

We have thus far explored Tillich’s life experiences of the mystical, which comprised the three moments of what we called the “mysticism of nature,” the “mysticism of beauty,” and the “mysticism of being.” In doing so, we noted that those experiences exerted significant influence on the formulation of his theological concepts, e.g., “mystical participation,” the “experience of the holy,” the “experience of the infinite,” an “encounter with the power of being-itself,” and “revelatory ecstasy.” Those concepts and expressions are closely related to Tillich’s various definitions of mysticism, which will be presented below.

## **B. Tillich’s Various Definitions of Mysticism**

This section offers a survey of Tillich’s definitions of mysticism. Tillich never ventured a systematic presentation of definitions of mysticism nor explored issues surrounding the definition. In his writings, however, we encounter various definitive expressions of mysticism and the usages of the term “the mystical,” which he employs in accordance with the context at hand. For our purpose, we will organize and present Tillich’s definitions and usages according to the following categories: a relation with being, human drive, and action of faith.

### **1. Mysticism as a Relation with Being**

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<sup>46</sup> Hughes, “Tillich’s Metaphor of the “Eternal Memory,”” 317.

Tillich views mysticism as a relation with being and employs for the quality such terms as “identity,” “union,” “participation,” and “presence.” In the first place, mysticism is the quality of identity between Divine and human for Tillich. This is succinctly put in his 1912 dissertation on Friedrich Schelling: “Mysticism is the religious expression for the immediate identity of God and man.”<sup>47</sup> In the introduction of the dissertation, where he traces a brief history of the principle of identity, Tillich postulates that the two forms of identity– the identity of the universal and the particular and the identity of subject and object, whose origins are Socratic and Augustinian respectively– were effectively synthesized in the Middle Ages by means of the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum* proposed by Nicolas Cusanus and Giordano Bruno. In the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum*, the Neo-Platonic concept of One is conceived as the infinite in the sense of the inner experience of the will, and so infinity does not stand in exclusive antithesis to the finite: “Everything finite, by virtue of its inwardness, participates in the infinite, and the infinite is involved in everything finite. Everything is a reflection of the universe, a microcosm; man, most completely.”<sup>48</sup> God as the infinite and man as the finite are thus viewed to be interpenetrating to each other. Tillich continues to say with Schelling, however, that this type of identity does not refer to sameness by any means; rather it presupposes polarity.<sup>49</sup>

In his seminal 1946 essay titled “The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion,” in which the immediate character of the Augustinian tradition is contrasted with Thomistic

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<sup>47</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 30.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>49</sup> 70.

mediation and inference, Tillich defines mysticism as the “experience of the identity of subject and object in relation to Being-itself.”<sup>50</sup> Being precedes the division of the psyche into various functions as well as the subject-object relation. And, mysticism is the experience wherein the division is blurred and Being-itself is manifest. In the Augustinian ontological type of religion this mystical character is affirmed: humans are immediately aware of something unconditional, that is, God as being-itself (*Deus est esse*), which is the prius of the separation of and interaction of subject and object. On the other hand, the Thomistic cosmological type can be a meaningful approach to religion only if it is based on the ontological type: i.e., if seen in light of the ontological awareness of the Unconditioned, its analysis of the finitude of the finite serves to recognize the unconditional element in human existence and thus introduce the meaning of religion.

Second, the languages of “union” and “unity” are used in Tillich to define mysticism. In “On the Conquest of the Concept of Religion,” one of the earliest essays presented by Tillich at a meeting of the Kant-Gesellschaft in 1922, he ventured to define mysticism as the “unity with that which is absolutely objective, with the abyss, with the transcendent, with pure ‘nothingness.’”<sup>51</sup> All of the words he uses here for the object of the unity can be integrally put as the “Unconditional,” which serves as a major concept for God, especially in Tillich’s early thoughts. The Unconditional is neither an existential entity nor a personal being that exists in the order of time and space. Rather it is the “meaning reality” that is ultimate, deepest, all-shattering and ever-newly creating.<sup>52</sup> A

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<sup>50</sup> Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 14.

<sup>51</sup> Paul Tillich, *What Is Religion?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 146.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

caution should be noted with respect to Tillich's conception of the Unconditional or the Unconditioned. It is unconditioned not in the sense that it is unrelated to human existence, reality or the conditioned order; rather it signifies the point where subject and object meet and where meaning is paradoxically fulfilled and at the same time confronts higher demand.<sup>53</sup> As ultimate meaning reality it gives a being or a thing its "spiritual substantiality."<sup>54</sup> In other words, the Unconditional is the power and meaning of being. Mysticism is, then, the unity of the human subject with the ultimate meaning reality, which defies substantiation and objectification.

A similar definition of mysticism is found in his 1925 essay, "The Philosophy of Religion": "Mysticism means union with the unconditioned import of meaning as the ground and abyss of everything conditioned."<sup>55</sup> Here, a brief examination of the semantics of the terms "import" and "meaning" is in order. In Tillich's conception, "meaning" is not merely axiological but rather teleological: meaning is the *telos* of being, i.e., the fulfillment of existence in the creativity of the spirit.<sup>56</sup> Meaning can be understood in three ways: it can be an awareness of the universal interconnectedness of meaning, an awareness of the ultimate meaningfulness of the interconnection of meaning, or an awareness of a demand to fulfill the ultimate, unconditional meaning reality. The second and third elements are called in Tillich the "import" of meaning, which gives a meaning ultimacy or unconditionality and thus is characteristic of religion. Mysticism as

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<sup>53</sup> James Luther Adams, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science, and Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 197-198.

<sup>54</sup> Tillich, *What Is Religion?*, 165.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>56</sup> Adams, *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science, and Religion*, 183.

union with the unconditioned import of meaning, then, points to the mystical quality: where one is graciously grasped by the unconditioned reality that gives the ultimate meaning to his or her being.

In the latter two definitions of mysticism, that is, the “unity with that which is absolutely objective, with the abyss, with the transcendent, with pure nothingness” and the “union with the unconditioned import of meaning as the ground and abyss of everything conditioned,” Tillich shows a keen awareness of the double character of mysticism: its criticism of the objectification of religion and its reclamation of the unconditionality of God. It is understandable, then, that in the aforementioned 1922 essay, he considers mysticism as the protest of living, authentic religion against its objectification: “The typical protest of living religion against its objectification has taken three forms: mysticism, predestination, and grace. Mysticism penetrates to the paradoxical meaning of every statement about the Unconditional.”<sup>57</sup> Mysticism radically opposes the objectification of religion and thus tries to reestablish the sovereignty of God. This awareness of Tillich is acutely shown again in a short definition of mysticism as the “ecstatic union of man and God,” which appears in Tillich’s *Systematic Theology* to highlight mysticism as transcending objectifying scheme by which we structure our thoughts:

Mysticism tries to overcome the objectifying scheme by an ecstatic union of man and God, analogous to the erotic relation in which there is a drive toward a moment in which the difference between lover and beloved is extinguished. Theology always must remember that in speaking of God it makes an object of that which precedes the subject-object structure and that, therefore, it must include in its speaking of God the acknowledgement that it cannot make God an object.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Tillich, *What Is Religion?*, 59.

The language of union can also be found in a lecture on scholasticism and mysticism in the Middle Ages, which Tillich delivered at Union Theological Seminary in New York. In his emphasis on the inseparable relation of both trends, Tillich regards mysticism as the highest form of relationship to God and defines it as the “immediate union with God in his presence.” He also points out that this definition of mysticism is an equivalent expression of what the Orthodox Protestant theologians call *unio mystica*.<sup>59</sup>

Third, the quality of participation with being is included in Tillich’s definitive expression of mysticism. This quality is given emphasis especially in his later writings. Following his lecture-based trip to Japan that took over three weeks in 1960, he gave the four Bampton Lectures at Columbia University in the Fall of 1961, the last of which was given to provide the criterion in judging the validity of Christianity in the context of its encounter with quasi-religions and world religions. In this last lecture, Tillich proposes:

There is only one point from which the criteria can be derived and only one way to approach this point. The point is the event on which Christianity is based, and the way is the *participation in the continuing spiritual power of this event*, which is the appearance and reception of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, a symbol which stands for the decisive self-manifestation in human history of the source and aim of all being.<sup>60</sup> (emphasis added)

For Tillich, the criterion of judging religions, including Christianity, is the event of Jesus’ self-sacrifice, i.e., the event of crucifying the particular in Jesus for the sake of the universal; the unambiguous manifestation of God-manhood is possible only in the self-

<sup>58</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 172-173.

<sup>59</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 136.

<sup>60</sup> Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 79.

sacrificial act of denying the elevation of the particularity of a being or a thing into the status of universality or absoluteness. Thus, the way of Christianity is that of the participation in the spiritual power of this self-sacrificial event.

It is in this context that Tillich introduces the definition of mysticism as a quality of participation in being:

The main concept of mysticism is immediacy: immediate participation in the divine Ground by elevation into unity with it, transcending all finite realities and all finite symbols of the divine, leaving the sacramental activities far below and sinking cult and myth into the experienced abyss of the Ultimate. Like the prophetic and the theological critique, this is an attack against religion for the sake of religion.<sup>61</sup>

Mysticism means the quality of immediate participation in the ground and abyss of the Ultimate, which manifests itself completely in the event of Jesus' self-sacrifice and self-transcendence. In short, mysticism is the immediate participation in the self-sacrificial and self-transcendent event. Noteworthy is that the event of Jesus the Christ in his sacrifice and transcendence is understood here not as a mediating one but as the perfect manifestation of immediate participation in the divine. The event of Jesus' crucifixion viewed from the angle of mysticism is the emergence of the "New Being," which arises from the ground and abyss of the divine. The New Being goes beyond all finite, existing realities and thus creates a new reality, which eludes literal linguistic expression.

Now, what does Tillich actually mean by the term "participation"? Tillich provides a semantic explanation of the term in his lecture on Bernard of Clairvaux, which we will explore in detail later as we investigate Tillich's concept of "baptized mysticism." In this lecture he states that mysticism as participation, as advocated by

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 91-92.

Bernard, is still mysticism because participation involves a “partial” sense of identification; participation involves a partial identity and a partial nonidentity.<sup>62</sup>

Participation for Tillich means “becoming a part of.” He views mysticism as the immediate participation in the ultimate ground (or reality); the individual thus becomes a part of the divine without losing his or her identity.

Lastly, the “presence” of the divine also characterizes mysticism in Tillich’s theology. Tillich, in a 1948 essay, discusses Martin Buber’s significance for Protestantism: he appreciates Buber’s rediscovery of mysticism as an element of the “prophetic religion” and defines mysticism as the “immediate presence of the divine and the way of union with it.”<sup>63</sup> Showing that both in prophetic literature and in orthodox Jewish teaching, mysticism is abundant in the form of ecstatic and visionary experiences, Tillich claims that mysticism cannot be criticized as “un-Protestant.” Orthodox Protestantism, according to him, was not ignorant of the doctrine of *unio mystica* and developed from the very beginning pietistic movements that have a mystical bearing. Indeed, he refers to pietism as a historical bearer of the principle of mysticism within Protestantism, though remaining alert to its potential danger of personalism, that is, the danger of anthropomorphizing God or treating God as if He/She is like a created personal being, however immense, majestic and exalted.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 88.

<sup>63</sup> Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 192.

<sup>64</sup> Tillich’s stance toward the personalism of pietism is well shown in his critique of Emmanuel Hirsch. In Tillich’s view, the personalism of pietism tends not to do justice to the unconditionality of the Unconditioned, which stands beyond the opposition of subject and object. A. James Reimer, “Prayer as *Unio Mystica*: Tillich’s Concept of Prayer in Contrast to Barth’s Christological Realism and Hirsch’s Pietistic Personalism,” 126. Tillich, however, does not simply degrade the idea of the personal God or God as personal, since that results in the abolition of the existential character of the divine–human relation: “The

Tillich continues to use the language of presence in his later years. In his 1961 Bampton Lectures, mysticism is referred to as an “experience of the immediate presence of the divine.”<sup>65</sup> Also, in his lecture on Pietism, he uses the language of presence. According to his creative analysis, pietistic mysticism does not oppose the rationalism of the Enlightenment: “modern rational autonomy is a child of the mystical autonomy of the doctrine of the inner light.”<sup>66</sup> For Tillich, mysticism is the “presence of the Spirit in the depths of the human soul.”<sup>67</sup> In his system, the “depths” symbolizes the innermost recesses of reality, i.e., the infinite and inexhaustible ground and abyss of being. Thus, mysticism defined as the presence of the Spirit in the depths of the human soul includes the absence, corresponding to the divine *Ungrund*, as well as the presence of the divine.<sup>68</sup> And, the presence of the divine Spirit in the human spirit creates what Tillich calls the “unambiguous life” in the three realms of life, i.e., morality, culture, and religion. We can

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symbol ‘personal God’ is absolutely fundamental because an existential relation is a person-to-person relation. Man cannot be ultimately concerned about anything that is less than personal.... ‘Personal God’ does not mean that God is a person. It means that God is the ground of everything personal and that he carries within himself the ontological power of personality.” Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 244-245. Concerning Tillich’s view of God as trans-personal and personal, see Guy B. Hammond, “Tillich on the Personal God,” *The Journal of Religion*, 44 no. 4 (October, 1964), 295; Durwood Foster, “Tillich and the Personal God,” *BNAPTS* 33, no. 2 (Spring, 2007), 21-25; Jean Richard, “God Is Not a Person, God Is Personal,” *BNAPTS* 33, no. 2 (Spring, 2007), 25-28. Robison James, while acknowledging the presence of the idea of the personal God in Tillich’s theology, complains that Tillich “just doesn’t have the conceptual resources to handle theistic symbolism satisfactorily,” failing to incorporate the efficacy of the Buberian I-Thou relation fully into his ontology. Robison B. James, “Revising Tillich’s Model of Reality to Let God Be Personal,” *NAPTSN* 25, no. 2 (Spring, 1999), 5-13, 14-15.

<sup>65</sup> Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, 88-89.

<sup>66</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 286.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>68</sup> Steven G. Ogden, *The Presence of God in the World: A Contribution to Postmodern Christology Based on the Theologies of Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 86-91.

see here that Tillich's mysticism as presence has the character of active creation and transformation within the realm of the phenomenal world.

## 2. Mysticism as a Drive

In various places, Tillich uses the word "mysticism" to designate the innate tendency or drive that urges a person toward the ultimate or God. "Directedness" and "inwardness" are two representative expressions Tillich employs for the character of the drive in mysticism. We will explore the implications of mysticism evoked by each expression in Tillich's works.

In the aforementioned 1925 essay, "The Philosophy of Religion," Tillich argues that the "directedness" toward the ultimate is what mysticism symbolizes: "[mysticism] is the most powerful symbol for directedness toward the holy import, and as such it is also the permanent background of the religion of paradox."<sup>69</sup> Influenced by Rudolf Otto, the word "holy" is used in Tillich's philosophy of religion as a symbol for the "unconditioned" as the object of religious experience. What he means by the "religion of paradox" is that the Holy cannot be deliberately brought about but is always experienced as a post-factum finding that emerges upon an unexpected "breakthrough." Thus, it is also called the "religion of grace." Incarnation understood in Tillich's Christology as the emergence of the New Being bringing new reality is the event of grace, and any attempts at self-salvation, e.g., legalistic, ascetic, and mystical ways of self-salvation, necessarily fail.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Tillich, *What Is Religion?*, 93-94.

<sup>70</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 78-86.

What about the word “directedness,” which pervades his early philosophical essays on religion? This word is found especially in his attempt to define religion. In the English version of his 1925 essay we encounter the English word “orientation,” whose German counterpart is the same as that of directedness.<sup>71</sup> Tillich writes:

In this sense mysticism is essential to all religion. For *orientation* to the unconditioned ground of meaning is an essential element of religion. Mysticism as a special religious phenomenon emerges when the desire to become one with the unconditional import of meaning detaches itself from the other element of religion, the affirmation of form.<sup>72</sup> (emphasis added)

In my view, it is significant that James Luther Adams adopts “directedness” or “orientation” as the translation for Tillich’s original German word, *die Richtung*, which is usually translated as “direction,” “trend,” “line,” “course,” “route,” “path,” etc.<sup>73</sup> Adams, throughout his translation of Tillich’s three essays on the philosophy of religion, uses “directedness” instead of “direction” for *die Richtung*. According to the Oxford English dictionary, “direction” as a simple noun signifies an action, function, or capacity of directing whereas “directedness,” as the noun form of the past participle of the verb “direct,” indicates the quality of movement. Thus, we can read in the translator’s choices of the word “directedness” and “orientation” an intention to emphasize the quality of movement that is implied in Tillich’s use of *die Richtung*. This is an example of the

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<sup>71</sup> Tillich, *What Is Religion?*, 44, 66, 90.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>73</sup> James Luther Adams was the figure that played a significant role as an English translator of Tillich’s German writings. His capacity for apprehending what Tillich meant by certain words in a given context is deemed extraordinary. Tillich himself once said that Adams understood his thought more thoroughly than he himself did. Paul Tillich, “The Unity of *Eros* and *Agape*”: in *Appreciation of James Luther Adams*, ed. D.B. Robertson (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), 5-6; see also *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought*, 220 ff. The German word “*die Richtung*” under discussion is found, for example, in Paul Tillich, *Frühe Hauptwerke* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1959), 344.

priority of dynamics over form in Tillich's theology of religion, where the Spirit as principle of life is essentially dynamic. Peter Slater in his essay on Tillich's ideas of religion, culture, and history succinctly puts this dynamic character of Tillich's theology of religion:

What matters, almost literally, is the direction or orientation of the actualizing moves in each instance, not the essential natures of beings considered in abstraction from the concrete tensions of historic reality. Dynamics as such for Tillich connoted the vital principle, and only the divine Spirit gives life, whereas form can be considered abstractly and intellectualistically.... Here we are reminded that, however much Tillich stressed the Neoplatonic and mystical roots of his ontology, he belonged on this side of the Hegelian divide when it comes to locating the "concrete" in history.<sup>74</sup>

This analysis of Tillich's original usage and Adams' translation of the German words help us to conclude that the mysticism Tillich attempts to define in this essay refers to an inclination or drive toward the holy, the meaning reality, which can only be given in grace and detected dynamically in culture and history.

We now turn to Tillich's definition of mysticism as "inwardness," which is used with slight difference depending on the context. First, Tillich uses the term "inwardness" in his 1912 dissertation on Friedrich Schelling. He interprets the infinite in the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum* as a qualitative concept of internalizing and also in the sense of inner experience: "It [the infinite] no longer stands in exclusive antithesis to the finite. Everything finite, by virtue of its inwardness [*Innerlichkeit*], participates in the infinite, and the infinite is involved in everything finite."<sup>75</sup> Here, the word "inwardness" designates the will toward the infinite. In his later lectures on Voluntarism and

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<sup>74</sup> Peter Slater, "Dynamic Religion, Formative Culture, and the Demonic in History," *The Harvard Theological Review*, 92 vol. 1 (1999), 104.

<sup>75</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 29.

Augustine's idea of man he translates the will as the "unconscious drive." He holds that for Augustine the will is the decisive function of man, which carries the character of *eros*, that is, "longing" or "striving" from below to above.<sup>76</sup>

Second, Tillich uses the term "inwardness" again in his 1944 essay on Existentialist Philosophy. He asserts that Existentialist philosophers turned toward Reality, as men and women experience it immediately in their actual living, to *Innerlichkeit* or inward experience, represented by Jacob Böhme's voluntaristic way of thinking. Tillich understands this shift to inwardness in line with people's desperate struggle to find a meaning of life in a cultural situation where both the Christian and the humanistic lost their convincing power. Here inwardness indicates immediate experience of the Reality that occurs in the inner and personal center of human beings.<sup>77</sup>

Third, the term "inwardness" is found in a lecture Tillich delivered at the University of Chicago during the spring quarter of the 1962-63 academic year: "Mysticism means inwardness, participation in the Ultimate Reality through inner experience... This mystical element is the inward participation in and experience of the presence of the divine."<sup>78</sup> In this lecture, mysticism as inwardness is contrasted with the theology of the Word of God as Tillich finds its example in Karl Barth; the former emphasizes existential experience that occurs inside whereas the latter appeals to the authority intervening from the outside, to which one subjects oneself through either accepting doctrines or fulfilling moral commands. In Tillich's view, the two aspirations,

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<sup>76</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 488; 115-119.

<sup>77</sup> Tillich, "Existential Philosophy: Its Historical meaning," *Theology of Culture*, 76-111.

<sup>78</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 318.

i.e., mysticism as inwardness and the theology of the Word, are reconciled in the experience of the Spirit. Thus, in light of the semantics of the word “inwardness” in Tillich’s writings, it is plausible to state that mysticism as inwardness signifies a human drive or longing for the Ultimate Reality that can be found in a human’s inner dimension.

### **3. Mysticism as an Action of Faith**

In Tillich’s view, mysticism and faith are not antithetical: faith includes in it an element of the mystical, while mysticism is a form of faith. In his essay titled “Existential Philosophy: Its Historical Meaning,” which first appeared in *Journal of the History of Ideas* in 1944, and then in *Theology of Culture*, a collection of his essays written in the 1940-50s, he elaborates on the significance of Existentialist philosophy in its turn to *Innerlichkeit* and subsequent discovery of the creative realm of being that is prior to and beyond a distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. In his analysis, Existentialist philosophy is an attempt to “re-conquer” the meaning of life in mystical terms. Tillich explains what he understands as the mysticism of Existentialism:

In this context the term [mysticism] does not indicate a mystical union with the transcendent Absolute; it signifies rather a venture of faith toward union with the depths of life, whether made by an individual or a group. There is more of the Protestant than the Catholic heritage in this kind of “mysticism”; but it is mysticism in trying to transcend the estranged “objectivity” as well as the empty “subjectivity” of the present epoch.<sup>79</sup>

Mysticism is defined here as a “venture of faith” made by an individual or a group toward union with the depths of life, which precedes both estranged objectivity and empty subjectivity. This mysticism, thus defined, attempts to return to a pre-Cartesian attitude in

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<sup>79</sup> Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 107.

which the essence of objectivity could be found in the depth of subjectivity. It affirms that God could be best approached through the soul.

The word “faith” does not appear again in the essay and so we should look up different sources to better understand what Tillich has in mind when he uses the word in defining mysticism. In his later works, Tillich defines faith as the “state of being ultimately concerned”<sup>80</sup> or the “state of being grasped by an ultimate concern.”<sup>81</sup> By this definition he wants to emphasize that faith is not a particular act of cognitive affirmation performed within the subject-object structure of reality but, rather, the “most centered act of the total personality.” In faith, one is driven toward ecstasy, i.e., toward a state in which one has radically grown indifferent to every various finite concern to reach the ultimate— the ultimate being something that can neither be identified with an object of reality nor be expressed in rational language. And yet, faith as the centered act of the total personality transcends the drive of the apparently non-rational unconscious as well as the language of the rational consciousness, since it does involve all three given functions of the human person—cognition, emotion and will.<sup>82</sup> He calls this subtle dimension of faith the “ontological type of faith” or “mystical faith,” which occurs only in the depths of the human soul.<sup>83</sup>

We have thus far investigated Tillich’s various definitive expressions of mysticism, which fall within the three categories: 1) a relation with being, for which Tillich employs such languages as identity, union, participation, and presence, 2) human

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<sup>80</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 1.

<sup>81</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 132.

<sup>82</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 4-9.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-70.

drive, and 3) action of faith. By this investigation we are enabled to begin to measure the basic strands of his understanding of mysticism. Now, what is in order is to identify theoretical foci in Tillich's thoughts on mysticism that can function as guiding principles in understanding the distinctiveness of his theory of mysticism centering on the concept "baptized mysticism."

### **C. Threefold Theoretical Focus in Tillich's Thoughts on Mysticism**

In this section, we will attempt to locate the theoretical focus of Tillich's thoughts on mysticism, which are scattered throughout his corpus. This constructive work will help to amalgamate his thoughts on mysticism into an organic whole. Furthermore, this theoretical construction will provide a fundamental framework for assessing his various writings on mysticism. The theoretical focus that can help us to appreciate the architectonic complexity of Tillich's mystical thoughts is threefold: 1) the distinction between mysticism as a category and mysticism as a type of religion; 2) "baptized mysticism" as the dialectical unity of the two essential elements of religion—the mystical and the prophetic—which represents the genuine Christian mysticism; and 3) mysticism as "fragmentary" and "anticipatory".

#### **1. Mysticism as Category and as Type of Religion**

We can find in Tillich, especially in his later life, an attempt to distinguish between what he terms "mysticism as a category" and "mysticism as a type of religion." Admittedly, the distinction is not always explicit or evident and, on some occasions, even blurred. However, a close reading of his writings on mysticism attests to the intentionality with which Tillich made this distinction; both his dialectical attitude toward

mysticism, i.e., a Yes and No to mysticism, and his proposal for Christian mysticism, are better understood against the backdrop of the distinction. In other words, we are likely subject to serious confusions or misunderstandings, as Wessel Stoker rightly observes, if we do not recognize this aspect of Tillich's theory of mysticism.<sup>84</sup>

"Mysticism as a category" designates primarily an "element" or "quality" of religion whereas "mysticism as a type of religion" characterizes the type of religion where the mystical element predominates over the prophetic element. In *Systematic Theology*, Tillich contrasts the two in a somewhat formalistic fashion:

However, there is no reason to exclude the mystical experience from the Protestant interpretation of sanctification. Mysticism as a quality of every religious experience is universally valid. Mysticism as a type of religion stands under the same qualifications and ambiguities as the opposite type, which is often called—wrongly—the type of faith. The fact that Protestantism did not understand its relation to mysticism has produced tendencies which reject Christianity altogether for Eastern mysticism, for example, of the Zen Buddhist type.<sup>85</sup>

In the quoted passage, Tillich claims that Protestantism also possesses mysticism in its lived experience and theology of sanctification and the failure to see this often-unacknowledged fact has produced a tendency among some critics to reject Christianity as a whole and embrace Eastern mystical traditions. He goes on to say that: "the alliance of psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism in some members of the upper classes of Western society is a symptom of dissatisfaction with a Protestantism in which the mystical element is lost."<sup>86</sup> We can notice here that Tillich considers mysticism as an indispensable

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<sup>84</sup> Stoker, "The Mystical in Religious Experience: Tillich's Transcendental Theology of Experience," in *Mystical Heritage*, 93ff.

<sup>85</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 242-243.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 243.

category of religion and religious experience; thus, mysticism can in no way be denied or neglected. The eradication of mysticism will only result in the following: a reduction of religion into an intellectualized faith and a moralized love;<sup>87</sup> a biased emphasis on Jesus' teachings, excluding the possibility of mystical union with his being;<sup>88</sup> a replacement of love toward God by obedience to God;<sup>89</sup> and "mysticophobia," in the sense of an elimination of the element of erotic participation in God, fellow humans, and nature, as shown in all Kant-Ritschlian schools of theology.<sup>90</sup> On the contrary, mysticism as a type of religion is subject to certain criticisms, because it tends to exclude its polar element, the element of the prophetic, which is in Tillich's view also essential in religious experience.

What does Tillich precisely mean by the expression "mysticism as a category?" In answering this question, we first have to explore the term "category" as used in his theological system. In *Systematic Theology*, category refers to the form in and through which the mind grasps and shapes reality. In other words, reality can be experienced only through categories such as time, space, cause, substance, and so on. Category is thus ontological and transcendental.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, when Tillich uses the term "category" in relation to mysticism or the mystical, it should indicate the ontological form in and through which the human as a finite being perceives divine reality. As Tillich says:

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<sup>87</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 136.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>89</sup> Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 31.

<sup>90</sup> Tillich, 214-216.

<sup>91</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 192.

“Mystical” is, first of all, a category which characterizes the divine as being present in experience. In this sense, the mystical is the heart of every religion as religion. A religion which cannot say “God himself is present” becomes a system of moral or doctrinal rules which are not religious, even if they are derived from originally revelatory sources. Mysticism, or the “felt sense of God,” is a category essential to the nature of religion and has nothing to do with self-salvation.<sup>92</sup>

Tillich’s expression “the divine being present in experience” requires examination: it does not indicate a spatial presence of the divine as the object in the human as the subject. Rather, it addresses a quality of the “felt sense of God,” as he calls above, and a resistance against both spatialization of the divine and the predication of it based on the dichotomy of subject and object. Put in a different way, divine presence includes, ironically enough, absence as well as presence; divine presence is experienced both in ontological shock and in blissful fulfillment. Precisely due to this resistance against being conceived in the conventional spatial, objective, image of presence, Tillich’s concept of divine presence is mystical, i.e., immediate. Thus, on a different occasion, he states that “[e]very experience of the divine is mystical because it transcends the cleavage between subject and object, and whenever this happens, the mystical as category is given.”<sup>93</sup> Thus, we can conclude that Tillich’s mysticism as a category points to the quality of the experience of the divine, the central element of which is transcendence of the structure of subject and object. This quality is expressed in the words he uses such as “identity,” “union,” “participation,” and “presence,” on which we have elaborated in the foregoing section of his definitions of mysticism.

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<sup>92</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 83.

<sup>93</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 242.

A further illumination of mysticism as a category is possible when we turn our attention to Tillich's peculiar phrase, "the ontological awareness of the Unconditional," as used in his characterization of the Augustinian-Franciscan principle of identity. The concept of the ontological awareness of the Unconditional points to the transcendental quality of the *Deus est esse*: "Man is immediately aware of something unconditional which is the prius of the separation and interaction of subject and object, theoretically as well as practically."<sup>94</sup> It is the quality given transcendently to humans to perceive the Unconditional, in which one's whole being, not a particular psychological or cognitive function, operates. It is due to this quality of the ontological awareness of the Unconditional that human beings can pose existential questions, e.g., guilt, doubt, and meaninglessness, which are ultimately directed to God. Indeed, God conceived as the Unconditional underlies the human quest for God; prayer is possible, as Tillich says in a sermon, since "something in us, which is not we ourselves, intercedes before God for us."<sup>95</sup> This keen awareness of the dialectic between God and human being leads Tillich to part company with Karl Barth:

He [Barth] is correct in his resistance to all mysticism, which would permit union with God in the depths of man's own human nature. Apart from the Augustinian *transcende te ipsum* there is no access to God. But this precept does contain within itself the demand to proceed *through* self *beyond* self. Therefore, the other statement, *in interiori anima habitat veritas*, is more basal in the dialectic of Augustine. We can find God *in* us only when we rise *above* ourselves.... The point is that we are in quest of it [the transcendental]. But on the other hand this quest is possible only because the transcendental has already dragged us to the quest out beyond ourselves as we have received answers which drive us to the quest.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Paul Tillich, "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," *Theology of Culture*, 22.

<sup>95</sup> Paul Tillich, "The Paradox of Prayer," *The New Being* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 137.

In short, Tillich's mysticism as a category expresses this very quality of the ontological awareness of God as "Being-itself," which grounds our beings and anticipates our quest for God through and beyond ourselves.

A key characteristic of Tillich's mysticism as a category stands out in his presentation of two aspects of religious experience during his famous Terry Lectures, "The Courage To Be," delivered at Yale University in 1952. With the basic premise that religion can be defined as the state of being grasped by the power of "Being-itself,"<sup>97</sup> which is the source of the "courage to be," he asserts that polarity of participation and individualization determines the special character of the relation to Being-itself and that mysticism underlies both aspects.

If participation is dominant, the relation to being-itself has a mystical character, if individualization prevails the relation to being-itself has a personal character, if both poles are accepted and transcended the relation to being-itself has the character of faith.... But mysticism is more than a special form of the relation to the ground of being. It is an element of every form of this relation. Since everything that participates in the power of being, the element of identity on which mysticism is based cannot be absent in any religious experience.<sup>98</sup>

A brief summary of Tillich's ontology is necessary here. In the basic framework of the basic polarity of self-world, Tillich's ontology proposes three polarities that constitute the structure of being: individualization and participation, dynamics and form, and freedom and destiny. Only an explanation of the first pair is necessary for our

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<sup>96</sup> Paul Tillich, "What Is Wrong with the "Dialectic" Theology?," *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries*, ed. Mark Kline Taylor (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 112.

<sup>97</sup> In *Systematic Theology I*, Tillich considers "Being-itself" as the only possible concept for God: "The statement that God is being-itself is a nonsymbolic statement....nothing else can be said about God as God which is not symbolic." Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 238-239.

<sup>98</sup> Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 156-160.

research. Individualization indicates the quality of being in which a self-centered being cannot be divided or destroyed and differentiates itself from the other, whereas participation points to the quality in which the individual self participates in his or her world through the rational structure of mind and reality. In Tillich's view, the two qualities are interconnected: "when individualization reaches the perfect form which we call a "person," participation reaches the perfect form which we call "communion".... No individual exists without participation, and no personal being exists without communal being."<sup>99</sup>

Given that Protestant tradition in general places more emphasis on the personal character of the relation to being-itself and thus tends not to include in its theological scheme mysticism and its implications, the above passage is significant; for Tillich, as long as the personal communion is a form of the relation to being-itself, the mystical element is inherent. In other words, mysticism as a category is the quality underlying the pietistic, personal experience of divine presence. He, thus, goes on to say that "the experience of the presence of this power is the mystical element in the person-to-person encounter with God."<sup>100</sup>

Then, in what ways can mysticism as a category be distinguished from mysticism as a type of religion? Is there any material difference between the two and if so, what would be the implications of the distinction? To answer these questions, we concern ourselves with the aforementioned work of Wessel Stoker, as it appears to take into

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<sup>99</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 176.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

serious account the issue of Tillich's distinction between the two.<sup>101</sup> Stoker holds that mysticism as a category and mysticism as a type of religion are in analogical relation, and any difference is only formal. In Stoker's view, the latter characterizes a certain phase of "union without distinction," in which the mystic feels at one with God and the subject-object structure seems to have been transcended, whereas the former concerns only a formal *a priori* element in the divine-human encounter. In other words, mysticism as a religious type is the full development of mysticism as a category. Stoker contrasts the former with Tillich's theology of the Spirit, which is the unity of the mystical and the prophetic. Stoker's view seems to be justifiable in that it comprehends both mysticism as a category and mysticism as a type of religion in a continuum and rightly contrasts the latter with the theology of the Spirit. And yet, it falls short of bringing us to the heart of Tillich's intention in distinguishing between his two usages of the term "mysticism."

As we have outlined before, what Tillich terms mysticism as a type of religion indicates the religious type in which the mystical predominates over the prophetic. In order to fully understand this term, we need to consider, first, the context in which he understands mysticism in his philosophy of religion.<sup>102</sup> Tillich's presentation of the basic types of religion seems to be inconsistent. In his early philosophy of religion, the sacramental and the theocratic are two basic religious attitudes. In this scheme, the mystical, though carrying different qualities from the sacramental, still belongs to the

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<sup>101</sup> Stoker, "The Mystical in Religious Experience: Tillich's Transcendental Theology of Experience," 87-110.

<sup>102</sup> In clarifying his theory on the basic types of religion, this research relies on (unless otherwise indicated) the following lectures Tillich delivered: "The Philosophy of Religion" (1925), "The Protestant Principle and the Encounter of World Religions" (1958), "Christian and Non-Christian Revelation" (1961), "Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions" (1961), and "The Significance of the History of Religions" (1965).

latter and is not considered as a separate type of religion. In his later writings, however, the sacramental is the basic religious type, from which two movements or tendencies derive: the mystical and the prophetic or the ethical. This apparent inconsistency is taken in the current research as more of a refinement of his theory over the course of time than the proposal of a different perspective.

A careful exposition of Tillich's writings establishes that mysticism as a type of religion is to be understood against the backdrop of both transcending the sacramental and seeking after the inner telos of religion toward the unity of the mystical and the prophetic. A basic premise he maintains from his early philosophy of religion to his last lecture in 1965 is that mysticism, or the mystical, is born out of what he identifies as the basic religious tendency, i.e., "the sacramental." In the sacramental type of religion a special object, being, group, institution, nation, or authority is understood as the holy and thus the holy is present now and here and also graspable. It is here that the possibility of demonization arises. Let us examine Tillich's concept of the demonic briefly. In his philosophy of religion, the holy is the undifferentiated unity of the divine and the demonic:

In the sphere of the Holy itself there arises the polarity of the divine and the demonic. The demonic is the Holy (or the sacred) with a minus sign before it, the sacred antidivine. The possibility of the demonic resides in the peculiar relation of form and import: the inexhaustibility of the import of meaning signifies on the one hand the meaningfulness of every form of meaning, and on the other it presupposes the endless resistance of matter to form.<sup>103</sup>

The unity of form of being and inexhaustibility of being in the depth of essential nature is the divine, and their separation in existence, i.e., the relatively independent

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<sup>103</sup> Tillich, "The Philosophy of Religion," *What Is Religion?*, 85

eruption of the abyss in things, is the demonic. The demonic stands for the isolation and formless eruption of the abyss, which can appear in every thing or being since “there dwells in everything... the will to realize itself as an individual the active infinity of being, the impulse toward breaking through its own, limited form, the longing to realize the abyss itself.”<sup>104</sup> And yet, the demonic is an existing reality, unlike the Satanic, which is the purely negative, destructive principle inimical to meaning and thus cannot be carried into reality; the demonic still has a form in it, i.e., the principle of creation. Thus, it can appear in the sphere of the holy as being counter-positive to the divine. In short, demonization or demonry is the process of “form-destroying eruption of the creative basis of things,”<sup>105</sup> which appears in the sphere of the holy as a threatening force against the unity of the divine.

Tillich believes the sacramental religion considers particular realities and forms as bearers of the holy and even identify them with the holy. Because of this identification of a concrete, finite object with the holy itself and elevation of the object into the ultimate state, the sacramental religion often falls prey to demonization; the claim of the holy object to ultimacy necessarily produces a conflict with and destruction of other finite realities that claim to have the same ultimacy. This is manifest, for example, in polytheism and in nationalism: in polytheism a certain demon or deity claims for ultimacy and this brings about conflict and finally destruction of itself as well as other

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<sup>104</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Demonic,” *Interpretation of History* (New York: Scribner, 1936), 84-85. James Adams holds that Tillich’s conceptualization of the demonic is an adaption of the thoughts of Boehme and Schelling, given that in his 1926 essay, “The Concept of the Demonic and Its Significance for Systematic Theology,” which followed the essay, “The Demonic,” Tillich uses Boehme’s terms “ground and abyss” and Schelling’s “potency.” James L. Adams, *Paul Tillich’s Philosophy of Culture, Science, and Religion*, 229-230.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

demons or deities; in nationalism a nation or state, in its claim to be the ultimate bearer of the holy will, tries to subject other nations or states under its force and authority, and this brings conflict and destruction. Tillich's wartime broadcast into occupied Europe in the years of 1942 through 1944, which was one of his major political acts while living in America, is full of this criticism against demonization in the context of National Socialism and Fascism. For example, on September 20, 1943, he calls attention to demonic consequences, e.g., dehumanization, caused by the "puppeteers," whose underlying forces have to be unmasked and driven out completely:

Behind them [the puppeteers of National Socialism] stand not human beings but rather dark, sub- and superhuman forces by which they are driven. These forces are everything that is dark, distorted, and desperate in the German soul and that has embodied itself within them. . . . And then see how strong they are as impersonal, dark powers driven by a demonic will destroying whatever steps into their path, and in the end, destroying themselves. They are masks behind which the powers of destruction hide, puppets on which the darkest substrata of life draw and which must, for that reason, turn all others into puppets. Pull off the mask!<sup>106</sup>

It is in the context of the danger of demonization in the sacramental religion that Tillich brings mysticism into discussion.

Mysticism as a special religious phenomenon emerges when the desire to become one with the unconditioned import of meaning detaches itself from the other element of religion, the affirmation of form. This happens when, on the soil of the basic sacramental attitude, the inner-religious dialectic has led to a destruction of particular sacramental forms and the theocratic will is lacking to actualize the unconditioned form. Mysticism is the radical ecstasy that seeks to grasp the import itself beyond all forms.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Paul Tillich, *Against the Third Reich: Paul Tillich's Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany*, ed. Ronald H. Stone & Matthew Lon Weaver (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 196-197.

<sup>107</sup> Tillich, "Philosophy of Religion," 90.

In mysticism the presence of the holy can be experienced, and yet this experience is such that it goes beyond all forms—whereas, in the sacramental type, the holy is claimed to be present in given, concrete forms. In other words, mysticism as a special religious phenomenon tries to abolish all finite forms, e.g., holy objects, and, by doing so, transcend or overcome the possibility of demonization inherent in the sacramental. In his last public lecture entitled “The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian,” which took place in 1965 at the University of Chicago, Tillich views the mystical as a “critical” movement against the sacramental demonization.<sup>108</sup>

Tillich argues, however, that the mystical can be demonized as well. Given that the mystical religion negates the concrete object or being in its experience of the holy to penetrate into the holy itself in the abysmal dimension, it often causes the destruction of personality, which is a symptom in the demonic. In his view, the demonic comes to fulfillment in personality, because personality is the bearer of form in its totality and unconditioned character. In the demonic, a personality is attacked and divided and its unity and freedom are broken. Hence, while the divine ecstasy brings about an elevation of being, of the creative and formative power, in which grace is effective, the demonic ecstasy produces disintegration and decay of being and also the total meaninglessness of being. The demonic ecstasy is the possessed state.<sup>109</sup>

According to Tillich, the mystical type of religion is only one of the types of criticism directed against the sacramental; in Tillich’s writings, the other type of criticism is called “the prophetic” or “the ethical.” The prophetic also goes beyond the sacramental

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<sup>108</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian,” *The Future of Religions*, ed. Jerald C. Brauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 87.

<sup>109</sup> Tillich, “The Demonic,” 85-93.

realm but in quite a different way than the mystical does; the sacramental is criticized because of its denial of justice in the name of holiness. In the prophetic type of religion, an anti-demonic struggle is thus taken up, and the demand is raised for a just social order, an ethical form of personality, and a true knowledge of God: the holy is experienced as “what ought to be.” The prophetic does not go beyond all the media to the ultimate thereby losing concreteness, as in the mystical, and instead tries to emphasize one concrete reality, which is just and judges all. Judaism is the basic example of this type of religion.<sup>110</sup> The prophetic type, however, also has its own limitations. Due to its emphasis on the infinite demand and law as the manifestation of the holy, it can be reduced to theocratic legalism, both autonomous and heteronomous, and moralistic intellectualism based on the command-obedience relationship between God and human.<sup>111</sup> Put differently, in the prophetic religion, holiness easily becomes righteousness:

However, it must be said with regard to each of these cases that to the degree to which the antidemonic struggle was successful historically, the meaning of holiness was transformed. The holy became the righteous, the morally good, usually with ascetic connotations. The divine command to be holy as God is holy was interpreted as a requirement of moral perfection. And since moral perfection is an ideal and not a reality, the notion of actual holiness disappeared, both inside and outside the religious sphere. The fact that there are no “saints” in the classical sense on Protestant soil supported this development in the modern world.<sup>112</sup>

The change of the meaning of holiness into righteousness and moral perfection in the prophetic type of religion is discernible, Tillich argues, for example, in Calvinism’s “fear of the demonic.” He goes on to say that

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<sup>110</sup> Paul Tillich, “Christian and Non-Christian Revelation,” *The Encounter of Religions and Quasi-Religions*, 69.

<sup>111</sup> Tillich, “The Philosophy of Religion,” 92-97.

<sup>112</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 216-217.

Fear of the demonic permeates Calvin's doctrine of the divine holiness. An almost neurotic anxiety about the unclean develops in later Calvinism. The word "Puritan" is most indicative of this trend. The holy is the clean; cleanliness becomes holiness. This means the end of the numinous character of the holy. The *tremendum* becomes fear of the law and of judgment; the *fascinosum* becomes pride of self-control and repression. Many theological problems and many psychotherapeutic phenomena are rooted in the ambiguity of the contrast between the holy and the unclean.<sup>113</sup>

For Tillich, the limitations of the prophetic type have great deal to do with the repression of the demonic. Thus, he does not use the term "demonization" in considering the danger of the prophetic type of religion.

Now, we will identify, briefly and summarily, the key elements of both mystical religion and prophetic religion, and this will help us to proceed into our forthcoming discussion of the dialectical relationship between the two types. In Tillich's view, the holy is experienced in two ways; in other words, human beings always encounter the representations of their ultimate concern in two ways,<sup>114</sup> which are originally undifferentiated in the fundamental religious tendency, that is, the sacramental. The mystical religion strives to encounter the holy as "what is," while the prophetic religion the holy as "what ought to be." The former, though still belonging to the sacramental, moves away from the sacramental symbolism as a whole to penetrate into the ultimate thereby transcending personality, morality, and history. To simplify, in the mystical religion, all concreteness disappears in the abyss of pure divinity; the depth of the human

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>114</sup> A notable way that Tillich appropriates Rudolf Otto's theory of the holy is that Tillich relates the experience of the holy to the experience of the ultimate, or what he calls "ultimate concern." That is, Otto's phenomenological description of the holy as *tremendum* and *fascinosum* is interpreted in Tillich as the twofold experience of the ultimate concern as the "abyss" and the "ground." This is Tillich's own observation. Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 216; Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 14-15.

soul is the point of contact between the finite and the infinite.<sup>115</sup> In it, one is fascinated, grasped by the presence of the holy, which “breaks into ordinary reality, shakes it and drives it beyond itself in an ecstatic way.”<sup>116</sup> On the contrary, the prophetic religion subjects sacramental, finite objects under the divine law, whose main function is to judge them and reclaim the sovereignty of the ultimate, e.g. God in Judeo-Christian tradition. In it the holy is experienced as demanding personal and social holiness in the sense of justice and love. Ethical, historical consciousness is thus, highly valued.

Since both types of religion, mystical and prophetic, possess deficiencies and limitations in their respective ways, each type as such is incomplete and thus needs to be supplemented by the other. Indeed, both are dialectical. It is at this point that a brief analysis of Tillich’s conceptualization of “type” is necessary:

Types are logical ideals for the sake of a discerning understanding; they do not exist in time and space, and in reality we find only a mixture of types in every particular example.... The kind of dialectics which, I believe, is most adequate to typological inquiries is the description of contrasting poles within one structure. A polar relation is a relation of interdependent elements, each of which is necessary for the other one and for the whole.... The tension drives both to conflicts and beyond the conflicts to possible unions of the polar elements.<sup>117</sup>

Seen in this light of “dynamic typology,” the prophetic element exists even in the mystical type of religion as the driving force toward the ultimate inner aim of religion and religious life, i.e., the unity of both elements. We can see here that mysticism as a *type* of religion is a term Tillich devises to acknowledge the dialectical movement of a given religion toward the unity of the mystical and the prophetic. Since there is neither a

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<sup>115</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 70

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>117</sup> Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter with World Religions*, 54-55.

purely mystical type of religion nor a purely prophetic type of religion, that is to say, both elements are always mixed in a living religion, an authentic religion and religious life is generated in the creative tension between the two. In Christianity, for example, the prophetic, i.e., the experience of the holy as what ought to be, predominates the mystical, i.e., the experience of the holy as what is, but the latter is never inexistent. Under the predominance of the prophetic and yet the dialectical unity with the mystical, Christianity moves toward its ultimate aim, the unity of both, whose best expression can be found, according to Tillich, in the Pauline doctrine of the Spirit.

## 2. “Baptized Mysticism” as the Unity of the Mystical and the Prophetic

“Baptized mysticism” is Tillich’s peculiar term for mysticism wherein the mystical and the prophetic form dialectical unity. Given that Tillich construes the dialectical unity of the two as the inner telos of religion and religious life, I argue that this characterizes the core of “Tillichian spirituality.” The term baptized mysticism as such appears only twice in his entire writings, but the question that he asks with seriousness “Can mysticism really be baptized or Christianized?” seems to have been one of his lifelong concerns. This question governed the seminar he led at Union Theological Seminary in New York, most probably in 1951.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> My estimation of the year is based on the report of Peter John, who circulated in private his recording and transcription of Tillich’s lectures in the Spring semester of 1953. In a lecture on Abelard and Bernard, Tillich said: “Here I come to a problem which is important and has been dealt with directly in this room *two years ago when we had a seminar on Christian mysticism*, and put it under the question, “Can mysticism be baptized? i.e., can it be Christian? Is that possible?... Now in this seminar we came to the final answer that it can be baptized if it is made a concrete Christ-mysticism—in a very similar way as it is in Paul—a participation in Christ as Spirit (emphasis added).” *A History of Christian Thought*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Peter H. John (1956). In 1967, Carl Braaten published the same lectures in the same title, but with thorough revisions of the text, he said, for matters of style and content. Braaten’s edition, however, made it impossible to estimate the year that Tillich’s seminar on mysticism took place by omitting John’s description above “in this room two years ago.” *A History of Christian Thought*, ed. Carl Braaten, 173.

The term baptized mysticism first appears in Part III of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, i.e., in his Christology. The basic premise underlying his Christology is that salvation cannot be brought about by human efforts or discursiveness and wholly depends upon the power of the New Being, which is manifest in Jesus the Christ. He observes that in the history of religions various attempts at self-salvation have been made, one of which can be found in mysticism, as Tillich understands it. Self-salvation is evident in the mystical type of religion when one tries to reach the state of being united with the divine through bodily and mental exercises. The mystical way of self-salvation, he argues, is a failure because the ecstatic reunion, if it is to be authentic, cannot be forced. It is here that Tillich draws on the concept of baptized mysticism:

One would then understand that there is something one could call "baptized mysticism," in which the mystical experience depends on the appearance of the new reality and does not attempt to produce it. The form of this mysticism is concrete, in contrast to the abstract mysticism of the classical mystical systems. It follows Paul's experience of being "in Christ," namely, in the spiritual power which is Christ. In principle, such mysticism is beyond the attitude of self-salvation.<sup>119</sup>

It is obvious from this passage that Tillich coins the term baptized mysticism to designate the concrete character of the mysticism he advocates and that his coinage of the term attests to his full inheritance of the Lutheran, Pauline doctrine of justification through faith by grace. Baptized mysticism is contrasted to the "absolute mysticism," in which the attempts to transcend all realms of finite being to be united with the infinite prevail and yet are doomed to fail in the end. According to Tillich's Christology, the new reality is the new mode of being in which the power of Jesus the Christ as the "New Being" is manifest. The New Being is a concrete, historical embodiment of the "essential

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<sup>119</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 84.

God-manhood,” i.e., the essential being under the conditions of existence, which has conquered the gap between the essence and existence. The dual character of the New Being—its power of overcoming the estranged realities and still being under the conditions of existence—does not allow baptized mysticism to seek out the complete freedom or ascendance from the concrete realities or the structure of being. Baptized mysticism addresses, in Tillich’s view, the humble statement of the mystics in which the “dark night of the soul” follows moments of ecstasy and the structure of human predicament is only provisionally transcended within the limits of finitude.

As shown in the above passage where Tillich relates baptized mysticism to the Pauline doctrine of “being in Christ,” baptized mysticism is the mysticism of the participation in the Christ as the Spirit. In Jesus Christ the divine Spirit is present without distortion; simply speaking, the Christ is the Spirit. This doctrine of “Spirit Christology” that Tillich espouses provides a fundamental rationale for baptized mysticism and implies the following three points in relation to his theory of baptized mysticism. First, the Spirit, in its presence in the human spirit, does not destroy or disrupt the structure of the centered self;<sup>120</sup> so, baptized mysticism preserves the individual identity of the centered personality in mystical experience, and also the difference between God and the mystic. Second, the Spiritual Presence, due to its striving to manifest in all functions of the human spirit—moral self-integration, cultural self-creation, and religious self-transcendence—is not an isolated event but the event occurring in a social context;<sup>121</sup> so, baptized mysticism also occurs in all dimensions of life: morality, culture, and religion.

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<sup>120</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 111-120.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

In baptized mysticism, morality and historicity are taken seriously, so to speak. Third, although the impact of the Spiritual Presence is unambiguous in the sense that it overcomes the ambiguity of the three dimensions of life—morality, culture, and religion—human participation in the impact of the Spiritual Presence is “fragmentary” in time and space.<sup>122</sup> Accordingly, baptized mysticism is radically aware of the fragmentary character of the experience of the Spirit. One can see here Tillich’s fear of triumphalism and utopianism.

The interrelation of pneumatology and Christology in Tillich’s proposal of baptized mysticism also appears in another place where baptized mysticism stands out as a profound, practical implication of the so-called *filioque* debate. He postulates:

But stripped of its scholastic form, the discussion has a profound meaning. The Eastern church, when it asserted that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, left open the possibility of a direct theocentric mysticism (of course, a “baptized mysticism”). The Western church, in contrast, insisted upon applying the Christocentric criterion to all Christian piety.<sup>123</sup>

Tillich claims that in the Christian East mystical experiences of Spirit are legitimate (and theocentric) quite apart from a connection with the Christ, while all mysticism in the West is Christocentric. Eastern mysticism of the Spirit is still a baptized mysticism, however, even though it can be separated from the Christ in thought.

In the thoughts of Origen of Alexandria and Bernard of Clairvaux Tillich traces a formative process of Christianized mysticism. In a series of lectures he delivered at Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1953, published as *A History of Christian Thought*, he suggests that the typical Jewish interpretation of the Song of the Songs was

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<sup>122</sup> 140.

<sup>123</sup> 149.

mainly focused on the relation between God and the nation and that it was Origen who for the first time interpreted the Song of Songs in terms of the mystical love of the individual soul with Christ. Origen introduced the Neo-Platonic idea of mystical marriage between the divine and the human soul to create a Christianized version of Neo-Platonic mysticism. Tillich comments on this Christianized mysticism:

The soul, being grasped by the Spirit of God, does not go beyond itself into the abyss of the divine, but the Logos, the concreteness of the divine, comes into the soul. This is the first step in what I call the “baptizing” of mysticism. Mysticism could be introduced into the church by becoming concrete. If Origen, and later on Bernard of Clairvaux, speaks of the mystical marriage between the Logos and the soul, the centered personality is not destroyed. It is preserved, as in a marriage there is a complete union in which the persons are not destroyed.<sup>124</sup>

In Tillich’s view, Origen’s Logos is not an abstract principle but the embodied reality of the divine manifestation, since the Logos unites itself completely with the humanity of Jesus. The Logos became flesh in Christian mysticism. In the mystical union of the individual soul with Jesus the Christ as the embodied or concretized Logos, the concrete character of the centered personality still remains. Because of the concreteness, both partners in the mystical marriage become not so much identical as united, and the rational structure of the human person is still preserved; the subjectivity of the mystic is not lost but retained. A baptized mystic fulfills his or her self rather than being demanded its sacrifice, so to speak.

As in Origen’s mysticism, Tillich finds a perfect example of baptized mysticism in the mystical theology of Bernard of Clairvaux, since the mysticism of Bernard as Tillich understands is a “concrete Christ-mysticism”:

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<sup>124</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 63.

The importance of Bernard is that he is the “baptizing father” in the development of Christian mysticism. Whenever it is said, as some Barthians do, that Christianity and mysticism are two different things, that either one is a Christian or a mystic, that the attempt of almost two thousand years to baptize mysticism is wrong, then one must point to Bernard in whom a mysticism of love is expressed. Only if you have a mysticism of love can you have a Christian mysticism.<sup>125</sup>

Here we read that Tillich takes up the mysticism of Bernard to stand against the Barthian position that holds onto the impossibility of a Christian mysticism. Tillich postulates that, by the idea of mystical participation in the Christ, Bernard, along with the mystics of the Middle Ages, overcame a legal interpretation of obedience to the Christ and showed a perfect form of Christian mysticism; thus, Christianity and mysticism can be compatible.

In assessing Bernard’s mysticism in his 1953 lecture at Union Theological Seminary, Tillich suggests that mysticism has two types of content in Bernard: “concrete mysticism” and “abstract mysticism.” The abstract mysticism, also called “transcending mysticism” or “mysticism of the abyss of the divine,” stands for the type of mystical experience that goes beyond everything finite to the ultimate ground of everything that is. It is called “abstract” because it abstracts from the concrete; it is “transcending,” because it transcends any finite objects. On the contrary, the concrete mysticism is Tillich’s designation for the dimension of Bernadian mysticism as mystical participation in the being of Jesus: the believer participates in the mystery of Jesus the Christ, which is concrete and historical. In the mystical participation, one is enabled to enjoy the communion with Jesus; one goes into a love relationship, wherein both parties are interdependent and yet a differentiation between them is still to be found. This type of mysticism does not abstract from, but retains, the concrete in its realization.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 173.

Noteworthy is Tillich's remark that in the mysticism of Bernard, the concrete mysticism of love is the "presupposition" of the abstract mysticism: "This concrete, active mysticism of love to Christ is the presupposition of the second type of content in Bernard's mysticism."<sup>126</sup> What does Tillich precisely refer to by the word "presupposition?" We note that the above passage is followed by his assertion that the abstract mysticism is "that which Christian mysticism has in common with all other forms of mysticism." Then, he identifies in Bernard's mysticism a threefold movement, "consideration," "contemplation," and "*Excessus*," and gives a short comment on the third stage.

(1) Consideration (you look at things from outside; they remain objects for your subjectivity. (2) Contemplation (participating in the "temple," going into the holiness of the holy. (3) *Excessus* (going outside oneself, an attitude which exceeds the normal existence, one in which man is driven beyond himself without losing himself, it is also described as *raptus*, being grasped). In the third stage man goes over into the divinity, like a drop of wine which falls into a glass of wine. The substance remains, but the form of the individual drop is dissolved into the all-embracing divine form. One does not lose one's identity, but it becomes a part of the divine reality.<sup>127</sup>

Tillich does not provide any more details about Bernard's theory of "consideration" but we know from sources that it points to the quality and attitude of the mind that is less direct and intuitive than "contemplation" and involves active searching with the mind, which allows one to examine one's actions and thoughts. Bernard's short treatise, *On Consideration*, is addressed to Eugenius III, who was a monk of Clairvaux and now Pope, to suggest that Eugenius as Pope maintain a right balance between his duties to others

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<sup>126</sup> 174.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

and his spiritual life through “consideration.” In the treatise, Bernard talks about three species of consideration: practical, scientific, and speculative.

Consideration is practical when it makes use of the senses and the things the senses perceive in an orderly and coordinated way, so as to please God. It is scientific when it wisely and carefully searches into and weighs the signs of God’s work in the world. It is speculative when it retires into itself and, as far as God helps it, frees itself from human affairs for the contemplation of God.<sup>128</sup>

Tillich’s use of the metaphor and corresponding comments in illustrating *excessus* is probably derived from St. Bernard’s treatise, *On Loving God*, where Bernard delineates the fourth, highest degree of love, since we read in Bernard’s text:

To love in this way is to become like God. As a drop of water seems to disappear completely in a quantity of wine, taking the wine’s flavor and color...so, in those who are holy, it is necessary for human affection to dissolve in some ineffable way, and be poured into the will of God. How will God be all in all (I Cor 15:26) if anything of man remains in man? The substance remains, but in another form, with another glory, another power.<sup>129</sup>

We can see here Tillich’s partly misquote of Bernard: in the original text, it is not a drop of “wine” but a drop of “water” that dissolves into the wine. In *excessus*, the human soul, which is symbolized by water, dissolves into the divine reality: it loses its form and becomes a part of the divine reality. Its substance remains, however; the human soul and God are united, not in their substance or nature, but in their will or spirit. Water and wine are, even in the mystical union, two different entities, so to speak. Here, it is important to notice the differentiation of form and substance being made here: in Bernard and Tillich’s analogy, water and wine, respectively standing for human and divine, are mixed in a way

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<sup>128</sup> *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, trans. G. R. Evans (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 150. Gillian Evans, translator of the above volume, says that in certain instances the two terms “consideration” and “contemplation” seem to be used interchangeably. *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>129</sup> 196.

that makes them united only formally, not substantially. The human participates in the divine reality and this participation involves “partial identification.”<sup>130</sup> What makes possible a non-substantial union between human and divine is the element of love, since love, as Tillich formulates, “presupposes a differentiation between the subject and object of love. Even in imagining eternal life or eternal fulfillment, this differentiation remains.”<sup>131</sup>

What Tillich ultimately intends to say, then, is that Christian mysticism acknowledges the dimension of the absolute mysticism, i.e., that mysticism goes beyond everything finite to the ultimate ground and the individual human soul dissolves into the divine reality, and yet that it does not rest in the latter. In Christian mysticism, or in the Bernadian *excessus*, one is driven beyond oneself to grasp the ultimate reality and yet does not lose one’s identity; one’s dissolution into the divine whole is only formal, not substantial. One’s personality, thus, cannot be destroyed in an authentic ecstasy and rather is creatively transformed. The element of love, which is based on the dialectic of separation and reunion, makes one closer and closer toward the likeness of God in one’s spiritual journey but does not enable one to claim perfect union with God, so to speak.

In commenting on Bernard’s mysticism, Bernard McGinn asserts that St. Bernard’s doctrine of union “does not surpass perfect loving union of wills and never involves any form of union of identity or indistinction with God.”<sup>132</sup> In the mysticism of Bernard, the human soul “adheres to” the Christ and in doing so becomes one “spirit”

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<sup>130</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 175.

<sup>131</sup> Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, 140.

<sup>132</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism: Gregory the Great through the 12<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 213.

with the Christ. Thus in St. Bernard's own words we read: "The human person and God, because they are not of the same substance or nature, cannot be said to be one thing (*unum*); but by sure and absolute power they are said to be one spirit if they inhere in each other by the glue of love. This union is made not by the coherence of essences, but by the agreement of wills."<sup>133</sup> In short, Bernardian Christian mysticism, i.e., baptized mysticism, finds itself on the concrete mysticism on the one hand and appropriates the absolute mysticism on the other, to create its distinctive form, i.e., the mysticism of love.

In this vein, Tillich says in his 1963 seminar with graduate students and faculties at the University of California: "But I know from two seminars which I led for a whole year on Christian mysticism<sup>134</sup> that one can definitely say that Christian mysticism is always a mysticism of love."<sup>135</sup> This remark of Tillich is the part of his response to the request of a participant in the seminar regarding the difference between the Christian concept of communion and the idea of union found in oriental religions.

We can find a series of the characteristics of baptized mysticism in Tillich's lecture notes entitled "Christian Thought and Eastern Mysticism." In this lecture, Tillich delineates what he thinks Christian mysticism should be, while using the dialectic of exclusion and inclusion:

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>134</sup> The two seminars on Christian mysticism that Tillich mentions above are, I suspect, the ones entitled "Christian Mystics through Church History" and "The Theology of Christian Mystics." The syllabuses, which contain the lists of the themes and mystics and the schedule of students' presentation, are extant at the Paul Tillich Archive at Harvard, being unpublished. The former seminar took place in the academic year of 1956-1957 at Harvard University. During the course Tillich invited several renowned scholars such as Georges Florovsky, Gershom Scholem, and Abraham J. Heschel to discuss on Orthodox Church, Jewish mysticism, and "About our reasons for Believing the Realness of God," respectively. We know from the sources that Tillich lectured on Bernard of Clairvaux in both seminars.

<sup>135</sup> Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, 215.

a) It excludes the abstract as such and wherever it appears but it includes the concrete; b) It excludes the negation of the finite. But it includes the transparency of the finite; c) It excludes the loss of personality but it includes ecstatic possibilities (love and union); d) It excludes the identification of finitude and sin but it includes the universal tragedy of finitude; e) It excludes the replacement of the word by silence but it includes the way from prayer to contemplation; f) It excludes the meaninglessness of time and history. But it includes the eternal now; g) It excludes the pantheistic depersonalization of God. But it includes a god who is the ground of being; h) It excludes a devaluation of social transformation but it gives no ultimate fulfillment to any social state; i) It excludes any reduction of moral seriousness but it knows the dependence of the ethical on grace and participation; j) It excludes any non-Christological universalism but it includes the cosmic vision of the Christ as representing everything finite.<sup>136</sup>

In Tillich's baptized mysticism finite realities do not disappear but, rather, are shown most clearly; time and history are considered meaningful more than ever so that the baptized mystic is driven into the life of "eternal now," that is, "the presence of the Eternal in the midst of the temporal,"<sup>137</sup> which breaks into the mystic's life graciously and providentially. The baptized mystic is enabled to possess a radical, contemplative awareness of socio-political dimension of the world in which he or she dwells and also engage in the promotion of social transformation in a way that, nevertheless, gives no ultimacy or finality to any social state. Since the individual personality is not lost in the baptized mysticism, the baptized mystic does not claim to be having achieved a state of "perfection" at any stage of his or her life. Rather, he or she confesses to be living in finitude: ontological threats of non-being are still lingering and his or her "creatureliness"<sup>138</sup> continues to remain. And, the God of the baptized mystic is neither

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<sup>136</sup> Terence Thomas, *Paul Tillich and World Religions*, 177.

<sup>137</sup> Tillich, *The Eternal Now*, 9.

<sup>138</sup> Finitude and creatureliness are used interchangeably in Tillich's thoughts. See *Systematic Theology III*, 189.

endlessly extended in space as in pantheism nor spaceless as in deism; the personal center of the divine life cannot be sacrificed. The baptized mystic's God is the God who, as the ground of being, creatively participates in the spatial existence of His creatures.<sup>139</sup>

### 3. Mysticism as Fragmentation and Anticipation

The last layer of the theoretical focus that we locate in understanding Tillich's theology of mysticism derives from the question he poses with seriousness in Part IV of his *Systematic Theology* in the context of the "image of perfection": is the transcending of the split of subject and object—that is, mysticism as a category in Tillich's idiom—a real possibility? This question appears to be simple and blunt, and yet it addresses a salient point underlying the core of Tillichian spirituality. To this self-posed question, Tillich gives a succinct reply:

The answer is that it is a real possibility in every encounter with the divine ground of being, *but within the limits of human finitude and estrangement—fragmentary, anticipatory and threatened by the ambiguities of religion.* However, this is no reason to exclude the mystical experience from the Protestant interpretation of sanctification.<sup>140</sup> (emphasis mine)

What Tillich does here is give a limit or qualification to mysticism; mysticism is a real possibility and yet must always be qualified by the existential character of human finitude in the estranged world. To decipher more clearly what he means in the above passage a brief exposition of his concepts—"ambiguity," "fragment," and "anticipation"—is in order.

In Tillich's system, life is an actualization of potential being and runs on the principles of self-identity and self-alteration. The potential being becomes actualized through the interaction of both principles in the three functions of the life process, i.e.,

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<sup>139</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 277.

<sup>140</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 242.

self-integration, self-creation, and self-transcendence, which are manifest in the dimensions of morality, culture, and religion, respectively. The three functions of the life process depend on the basic polarities of being: self-integration depends on the polarity of individualization and participation; self-creation on the polarity of dynamics and form; and self-transcendence on the polarity of freedom and destiny. If the unity of self-identity and self-alteration is threatened and disrupted by existential estrangement, the ambiguity of life occurs. Tillich states, “Life is neither essential nor existential but ambiguous.”<sup>141</sup> On the other hand, the ambiguities of life in the three dimensions of morality, culture, and religion are overcome in the manifestation of the Spirit, a classical term of which is “ecstasy,” that is, the state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence, in which essential and existential elements of being are united. This transcendental union, i.e., mystical experience, appears in the dimension of religion as two ecstatic movements: faith and love. Although it is unambiguous in itself, it is in its manifestation in the real world conditioned by time and space fragmentary and anticipatory.

The word “fragmentary” is used by Tillich to avoid an idealistic connotation of the transcendental union: the union caused by the Spiritual Presence exists only as a fragment; and thus the idea of unending perfect union is for him an illusion. The word “anticipatory” emphasizes the eschatological character of the union: the union cannot yet be perfectly possessed or appropriated and is a figurative laying hold of the unconditional meaning. It is in this vein that Tillich exclaims in a 1928 essay “all mysticism is anticipation, provided of course that it is not a technique of anticipation.”<sup>142</sup> The

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 32.

transcending quality of life, in his view, operates always within the limit or impossibility of reaching the Unconditional permanently in time. He asserts: “Under all dimensions, life moves beyond itself in the vertical direction. But under no dimension does it reach that toward which it moves, the Unconditional. It does not reach it, but the quest remains.”<sup>143</sup>

Tillich’s characterization of mysticism as fragmentation and anticipation is found as early as in 1912, that is, in his theological dissertation on Friedrich Schelling. In the dissertation Tillich tried to show how Schelling synthesized mysticism and guilt-consciousness; through his “positive philosophy” Schelling did “break through the confines of statically conceived systems of identity and set forth a new, dynamic ontology in which freedom, irrationality, and guilt are given their due.”<sup>144</sup> Even the highest stage of mysticism that Schelling envisions, i.e., the mysticism of intellectual intuition, Tillich observes, cannot reach God himself:

But it is not possible to remain in a state of intellectual intuition. There must be action. The estranged world demands actuality and therefore duality arises again.... Art, philosophy, and contemplation are ideal states, and must remain such in the fallen world. They are valid in the ideal world. Whereas the ideal and the real are eternally united in God, the temporal world is founded upon their separation. Mysticism cannot reach God himself; this is the principle of its critique. But it can intuit the eternal truths of the divine nature: this is its justification.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Paul Tillich, “Protestantism as a Critical and Creative Principle,” *Political Expectation*, ed. James Luther Adams (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 26.

<sup>143</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 109.

<sup>144</sup> David Hopper, *Tillich: A Theological Portrait* (Philadelphia: J.B.Lippincott Company, 1968), 125.

<sup>145</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 122.

The inevitability of conscious acts and the human will in the estranged world does not allow mysticism to claim its perfect realization in a mystic, who is still part of the estranged world. It is worth noting that Tillich attributes this impossibility of mystical realization to human existence as such: due to very human existence, mysticism is only realized in fragment and anticipation.

In light of what has been discussed, we can postulate that Tillich's idea of mysticism as fragmentation and anticipation is primarily based on his ontology, and is inherently related to his theory of God and eschatology. For Tillich, a created being is finite, and finitude is recognized in the threats of nonbeing as anxiety. It should be pointed out that in his systematics nonbeing is a dialectical concept having relation to being, which is rendered as *me on* in Greek in contrast to the non-dialectical *ouk on*. Meontic nonbeing is the relative nonbeing, which resists and yet has the possibility of being: "An actual thing stands out of mere potentiality; but it also remains in it... It never fully exhausts its potentialities."<sup>146</sup> The threats of nonbeing are expressed in suffering, disease, loss of relations to nature and other human beings, loneliness, insecurity, weakness, and doubt. They are illustrated in certain mystics as the "night of the soul,"<sup>147</sup> wherein the anxiety of meaninglessness is acutely experienced.

Since the threats of nonbeing are ontological, they cannot be eradicated even in mystical experience and can only be acknowledged and accepted by what Tillich calls the "courage to be." The mystic, participating in the power of being-itself, does not ignore, bypass, or escape but rather, with courage, acknowledges and confronts the threats of

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<sup>146</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 21.

<sup>147</sup> Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 39.

nonbeing and, in doing so, affirms his or her own being in spite of the acute presence of such threats. Put differently, accepting the threats of nonbeing into the self, i.e., acknowledging and confronting them with courage, is the way in which the mystic conquers various forms of anxiety. This acceptance is enabled when he or she is grasped by the power of being-itself.<sup>148</sup> In Tillich's analysis, due attention to the tensions of ontological elements arising from the human finitude has been paid in modern history mainly by the philosophy of life and some Protestant mystics.<sup>149</sup>

The following, somewhat apparently paradoxical, statement by Tillich can be understood in this light:

The God above God [of theism] is the object of all mystical longing, but mysticism also must be transcended in order to reach him. Mysticism does not take seriously the concrete and the doubt concerning the concrete. It plunges directly into the ground of being and meaning, and leaves the concrete, the world of finite values and meanings, behind. Therefore it does not solve the problem of meaninglessness.... Nevertheless absolute faith agrees with the faith implied in mysticism in that both transcend the theistic objectivation of a God who is a being.<sup>150</sup>

The first sentence of the above passage epitomizes, in a way, the whole argument of Tillich's mysticism as fragment and anticipation; the God with whom the mystic longs to unite cannot be reached. For the "God above God" can by no means be objectified and appropriated at all; it is mystery that cannot lose its mysteriousness even when it is revealed.<sup>151</sup> Mysticism, as it were, affirms itself only by negating itself. In criticizing the "mystical ways of self-salvation," Tillich makes a conclusive remark: "a real union of the

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 156-160.

<sup>149</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 200.

<sup>150</sup> Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 186.

<sup>151</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 109.

mystic with God is never reached.”<sup>152</sup> The God above God transcends the subject-object discourse, but a historical person cannot ultimately transcend it in that even in the mystical state the person as the experiencing subject still holds his or her awareness of the state. What the mystic claims as the union with God is always an approximation. The complete disappearance of the subject-object structure is possible only in “eternal fulfillment,” not in historical existence, as Tillich asserts: “Only in eternal fulfillment does the subject (and consequently the object) disappear completely. Historical man can only anticipate in a fragmentary way the ultimate fulfillment in which subject ceases to be subject and object ceases to be object.”<sup>153</sup>

A serious consideration of Tillich’s idea of mysticism as fragmentation and anticipation moves one forward into his idea of living on the “boundary.” Tillich repudiates all attempts to flee from the ultimate threat in human existence and offer spiritual security, which leads invariably to surrendering to “heteronomy:” “The Protestant element in Protestantism is the radical proclamation of the human border-situation and the protest against all attempts, through religious expedients, to evade it, even though this evasion be accomplished with the aid of all the riches and depth and breadth of mystical and sacramental piety.”<sup>154</sup> Of course, Tillich does not repudiate sacramentalism and mysticism as such; instead what he tackles here is such practices that do not take seriously the “human border-situation” as “the sacrament that works

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<sup>152</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 83.

<sup>153</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 253.

<sup>154</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Protestant Message,” in *The Protestant Era*, ed. James Luther Adams (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 196.

magically and thus circumvents the ultimate threat; the mysticism that is supposed to effect immediate unity with the unconditional and thus escape the ultimate threat.”<sup>155</sup>

The border-situation or the boundary-situation is possible, for Tillich, because of human freedom, which is an essential part of the human person and from which he or she cannot escape. Human freedom makes two things possible: living always under the threats of nonbeing and transcending his or her vital existence. Being on the boundary points to living with possibilities as well as limits as we read in Tillich’s autobiographical essay:

But whether or not it [Tillich’s desire to articulate his thoughts] is to be fulfilled, there remains a boundary for human activity which is no longer a boundary between two possibilities but rather a limit set on everything finite by that which transcends all human possibilities, the Eternal. In its presence, even the very center of our being is only a boundary and our highest level of accomplishment is fragmentary.<sup>156</sup>

If we keep in mind Tillich’s idea of mysticism as fragmentation and anticipation as associated with his idea of living on the boundary, and also recall his basic ideas on baptized mysticism, it would be legitimate to state that the life of the baptized mystic is precisely what Tillich articulates in his idea of living on the boundary. The baptized mystic, being grasped by the power of the New Being, by the Spiritual Presence, overcomes the estranged realities and yet, since he or she is aware of the inescapability from the conditions of existence, does not seek out complete freedom or ascendance from the concrete realities or the structure of being.

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>156</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 98.

The life of the baptized mystic is a life in the Spirit of Christ, which moves toward fulfilling and actualizing the potential self, and yet so, in a limited way, due to the ever-present reality of the threats of nonbeing. Baptized mysticism is the mystical life that accepts the threats of nonbeing into itself, that is, the life of the courage to be; it tastes the presence of the Eternal and yet accepts that it cannot remain there permanently. Spiritual security and complete freedom from ambiguities of human life are not the goal. For the baptized mystic, the measure of spiritual maturity is not a sense of the perfect union with the divine, but a radical awareness of the ambiguity of life, as Tillich humbly remarks in his 1963 address at the fortieth anniversary of *Time*:

It is my conviction that the character of the human condition, like the character of all life, is “ambiguity”: the inseparable mixture of good and evil, of true and false, of creative and destructive forces—both individual and social. . . . The awareness of the ambiguity of one’s own highest achievements (as well as one’s own deepest failures) is a definite symptom of maturity.<sup>157</sup>

By now, in this chapter, we have explored Tillich’s ecstatic, mystical experiences, his definitive expressions of mysticism, and his major theoretical foci penetrating his thoughts on mysticism. This exploration provided us with fundamental insights into the mystical character in his life and thoughts on the one hand and his vision of Christian mysticism on the other. We learned that Tillich’s distinctive idea of Christian mysticism was formulated late in his life in 1950s as “baptized mysticism” and yet already shown, if not explicitly, in different terms before the period of his life. In a sense, Tillich’s vision of Christian mysticism is a result of his continuous, lifelong efforts to find theological answers to the questions of the situation and, viewed that way, functions as a discerning principle that guides us through in our life process in various realms, e.g., culture,

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<sup>157</sup> “*Time*’s 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: the Ambiguity of Perfection,” *Time* (May 17, 1963).

morality, and politics. This shall become clear as we move on to the next chapter where Tillich's accounts of mysticism are assessed chronologically.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ANALYSIS OF PAUL TILlich'S ACCOUNTS OF MYSTICISM

In the preceding chapter I have presented an overview of Tillich's life experiences and thoughts on mysticism. This overview serves as the basic framework for the main task of the current chapter, i.e., analyzing Tillich's accounts of mysticism dispersed in his various writings and identifying distinctive features, which constitute the core of baptized mysticism and what I call "Tillichian spirituality." In doing so we will be able to see the context, scope, and significance, in which his idea of baptized mysticism is conceived and promoted. My analysis goes along with the chronological order of his writings that include substantial remarks on mysticism. It is divided into two major parts: his thoughts in the German period and in the American period. Portions of his remarks on mysticism shall be omitted that simply duplicate earlier ones or later ones that are more substantial.

Two methodological points need to be made prior to our analysis. First, in his writings on mysticism Tillich employs and/or creates the various terms that correspond, to greater or lesser degree, to what is meant by baptized mysticism. Those terms include "the religion of the Spirit and freedom,"<sup>1</sup> "the mysticism of grace,"<sup>2</sup> "true mysticism,"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 125.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematische Theologie*, in Uwe C. Scharf, *The Paradoxical Breakthrough of Revelation: Interpreting the Divine-Human Interplay in Paul Tillich's Work 1913-1964* (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 438.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Tillich, "Critical and Positive Paradox," ed. James M. Robinson, *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968), 138.

“the mysticism of love,”<sup>4</sup> “the revelation of depth,”<sup>5</sup> “self-transcending realism,”<sup>6</sup> “prophetic ecstasy,”<sup>7</sup> and “absolute faith.”<sup>8</sup> I will delve into those corresponding terms to shed a clearer light on the significance and implications of baptized mysticism. This will facilitate a more coherent presentation of his thoughts.

Second, the division of the chapter reflects not only a conventional practice within Tillich scholarship but also my argument that the year of 1933 marks in Tillich’s life a spiritual event, wherein his idea of baptized mysticism finds an apt expression, as well as a significant physical transition, i.e., his dismissal from professorship at the University of Frankfurt by Hitler’s regime and subsequent emigration to America. Tillich arrived at New York in November of 1933 and wrote a letter in the following January to Lily Pincus, in which he illustrated his spiritual state as undertaking the “second death”:

And I need to be upheld. Here I am experiencing the *second death*. The first began in 1915 in the battle of Champagne. The first was indescribable and threatening. This second death is finer and more bitter... everything is in order: my lectures have started off well... But none of these alters the fact that I am situated in death, in the necessity of having to relive the past and suffer through it, altogether unable to find a new meaning for myself. Yet that is the fate of all of us who have been cut off and stand between the “no longer” and the “not yet.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Tillich, “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture,” in *What Is Religion?* 169ff.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Tillich, “Justification and Doubt,” the Paul Tillich Archive, Harvard University, Massachusetts, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Tillich, “Realism and Faith,” *The Protestant Era*, 77ff.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Scribner, 1948), 90.

<sup>8</sup> Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 171.

<sup>9</sup> Victor Nuovo, “1934-1948, “Between the No Longer and the Not Yet”: Intellectual Biography of Paul Tillich,” The Paul Tillich Archive, Harvard University, Massachusetts. The letter concerned is published in the original German in *Gesammelte Werke* vol. 5, ed. Renate Albrecht (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1970), 218-210.

One can sense here inescapable unrest and insecurity of a person who has been alienated from his familiar, established world and entered upon a time of suspension “between the no longer and the not yet.” Tillich feels his life to be torn completely. Noteworthy is the symbolic expression of his existence as the “second death,” which is comparable to the “first death” he undertook as a military chaplain during the battle of Champagne in 1915. Just as the first death, as we already saw in the previous chapter, ultimately brought about a spiritual experience, that is, an encounter with the power of being-itself, so his experience of the second death as a émigré incurred an ecstatic encounter with God, this time the God who “separates,” which reminds us of Rudolf Otto’s notion of the holy as *mysterium tremendum*. We read in his autobiographical essay “Christianity and Emigration,” published in 1936:

The story of Abraham’s emigration has a typical character. It is the illustration of a fundamental element in the relation of God and man: God separates men, if he elects them... He separates every individual Christian whom he calls from the ultimate obedience to family and tribe, to nation and state, and makes him a citizen of another world. Finally he separates every man whom he wants to make his own, from himself; from his settled kind of thinking and feeling, life and action. He makes us emigres from the comfortable home of our stabilized internal existence driving us into the hardships of a new beginning... Every new emigration, whatever the external reason may be, is a new manifestation of his exclusiveness and absolute claim.<sup>10</sup>

A key word here is “separate.” In Tillich’s experience, God manifests Himself on this particular occasion as separating and destabilizing: God is the God who pushes the human person beyond “accepted lines of belief and thought” and the “limits of the

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Tillich, “Christianity and Emigration,” *The Presbyterian Tribune* 52, no. 3 (October, 1936), 13.

obvious” toward “radical questioning that opens up the new and uncharted.”<sup>11</sup> In this destabilizing or de-centering moment, the anxiety accompanied by the intrusion of nonbeing loses its possibility of becoming pathological. Instead, it functions as the quality of enabling him to resist against the tendency of finding consolation, security, and protection in finite realities, e.g., the nation, religious dogma, or sacramental objects, and achieve radical openness toward a new reality. What emerges in the whole process, then, is a reorganized, revitalized subject whose creativity and desire tries to find its fulfillment in history, both personal and communal.<sup>12</sup> Here is shown a glimpse of Tillich’s vision of baptized mysticism; baptized mysticism addresses the ecstatic encounter with God as separating, whereby one is revitalized in his/her courageous confrontation with the threats of nonbeing and goes forward toward the life of creativity and desire, while not resting in all forms of security and perfection, both psychological and spiritual.

## **A. Tillich’s Thoughts on Mysticism in the German Period**

### **1. *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling’s Philosophical Development (1912)***

A close engagement of Tillich’s autobiographical works suggests that Friedrich Schelling’s ideas of nature, abyss, freedom, and history made a huge impact on Tillich’s theory of mysticism in general and later formulation of baptized mysticism in particular. In *On the Boundary*, Tillich acknowledges that he found in Schelling’s philosophy of nature a conceptual tool with which he could express his mystical sensibility developed

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<sup>11</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 92.

<sup>12</sup> Regarding the transforming power of anxiety and the role of linguistic symbolization in Tillich’s theology, I rely on James J. DiCenso’s insights as shown in his comparative work of Paul Tillich and Jacques Lacan. James J. DiCenso, “Anxiety, risk, and transformation: Re-visiting Tillich with Lacan,” *Secular Theology*, ed. Clayton Crockett (New York: Routledge, 2001), 51-72.

in his early ecstatic encounter with nature.<sup>13</sup> He also holds that basic tenets of Lutheran mysticism, e.g., an awareness of the irrational and demonic nature of existence and an appreciation of the mystical element in religion, influenced him via Jacob Boehme and Schelling.<sup>14</sup> And, in a class lecture delivered in the 1962-63 at the University of Chicago, he asserts that what determined his own philosophical and theological development was Schelling's romantic philosophy, which addressed the principle of identity in its first period and the principle of contradiction in its second.<sup>15</sup>

*Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development* is Tillich's dissertation for the degree of Licentiate of Theology, whose major concern is to show the way in which the mystical and the prophetic can form a dialectical union in Schelling's philosophy: "How to unite mysticism and the Protestant principle... My doctoral dissertation was about this tension."<sup>16</sup> This concern, I suppose, is in line with the question that he would ask later in a seminar on Christian mysticism at Union Theological Seminary, "Can mysticism really be baptized or Christianized?"

Part I of the dissertation begins with Tillich's insight that the two religious forms of life, mysticism and guilt-consciousness, seem to be mutually exclusive but actually contain in themselves an "inner antinomy," which enables each to move beyond itself to the other. On the one hand, Tillich holds that "identity is the principle of truth, but

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<sup>13</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>15</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 438.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 370-371.

actuality and identity do not coincide. Actuality is the more comprehensive concept.”<sup>17</sup> One example is found in Nicholas Cusanus’ dialectic: the equation of the infinite and the finite is inescapable (*coincidentia oppositorum*) and yet cannot ultimately be realized and so one has to plunge into *docta ignorantia*. Tillich holds on the other hand that “logically considered, the greatest antithesis is possible only when the greatest identity is present.”<sup>18</sup> For example, the opposition between God and human person may be very sharply conceived, as in the form of Kierkegaardian repentance, but a moment of identity, i.e., an ontological continuity between them, should be presupposed since otherwise the opposition itself cannot be established. The inner antinomy can in no way be avoided in either case.

In Part II, Tillich considers how mysticism, i.e., the principle of identity, can be applied in Schelling’s first period to the areas of will, nature, art, and human mind to show ultimately that the principle of identity is “continually impeded by the moral categories, finally destroying morality and history.”<sup>19</sup> A serious consideration of Part II of the dissertation, thus, shall equip us with the systematic, philosophical account of Tillich’s repudiation of absolute mysticism.

“The mysticism of the will” (*Willensmystik*) designates Schelling’s earliest formulation of the principle of identity in the realm of practical reason. Schelling began his philosophy, following Fichte, with the positing of the absolute freedom of the ego in the sense of the ultimate ground of all reality, which excludes all oppositions, e.g., the

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<sup>17</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 31.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Günther Wenz, “An Introduction to Paul Tillich’s Philosophical Writings,” *Paul Tillich: Philosophical Writings*, ed. Günther Wenz (Berlin & New York: DeGruyter, 1989), 12.

opposition between subject and object. The postulate of practical reason, however, makes it impossible to conceive the absolute as realized or realizable. The realization of the absolute is an “infinite task”: absolute identity or “mystical self-negation” occurs only theoretically in the idea; it is realized only in particular, limited, free acts of the ego. In other words, it is an open-ended, actual process, in which absolute identity shall ever be limited by the actuality of the will. Tillich thus holds that the mysticism of the will “considers identity with God to be immediately given in particular moral acts of the will. The principle of identity is preserved, but with a limitation that lies in the essence of the actual will, and thus is the basis of the expression of the inner antinomy.”<sup>20</sup> For Schelling, the nonego or non-I is the source of the limitation, and the limitation of the nonego enables the will to proceed from identity to actuality. This proceeding is necessary, and sin is thus inherently necessary. However, Tillich argues against Schelling that, “sin is not joined with guilt. There is no repentance over the necessary “not yet.” The relation to God is either identity or negation, but never contradiction.”<sup>21</sup> Schelling’s earliest philosophy, on Tillich’s view, did not explain the concept of guilt successfully.

Tillich investigates the next move Schelling made in his so-called *Naturphilosophie*, whose basic premise is that nature is not exclusively opposed to the thinking subject, since the subject is itself part of nature. For Schelling, “nature is visible spirit, spirit is invisible nature.”<sup>22</sup> Tillich articulates that nature is “spirit and will, creative identity. The absolute synthesis is realized [not only in the ego] also in the natural process,

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<sup>20</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 50.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>22</sup> 53.

in living productivity, which is the cause of all natural products, and in nature as subject (*natura naturans*).<sup>23</sup> The “productivity” is unconditioned: it is what grounds the appearances of natural products, including the subjective, human ego as the highest product; the identity of spirit and nature is given in nature as a productive act. According to the early Schelling, God is, then, creative nature: God “is the concrete spirit who comprehends spirit and nature within himself and not the abstract spirit who remains beyond nature.”<sup>24</sup> The unconditioned productivity, however, is limited by an “original check” that lies inside nature itself. Viewed this way, nature is not pure identity but “polarity”: “The positive impulse must be opposed by another, as it were, anti-productive impulse, not as the negating but as the negative impulse that is *really opposed* to it.”<sup>25</sup> (italics original) In Tillich’s view, the principle of polarity in nature enabled Schelling to perceive the irrational and also the possibility of sin more effectively than in the mysticism of the will. What is problematic with nature mysticism, however, is the potential annihilation of the human subject by nature as both the unconditioned and the unconscious production: the human subject may be swallowed by the unconscious act of nature; then, human’s conscious experience is abandoned or simply reproduces what nature produces unconsciously.

A way out of the dilemma is art. For Schelling, it is art that successfully captures the unconscious element in acting and producing and its original identity with the

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<sup>23</sup> 54.

<sup>24</sup> 58. For Tillich, the idea of the identification of God with nature, *deus sive natura*, is acceptable as far as it expresses the mystical quality of the divine, i.e., the “universalistic feeling for the all-pervading presence of the divine.” It is problematic, however, when it claims that God is identified with the unity and totality of finite things and potentialities, because then God ceases to transcend them. Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 218-238.

<sup>25</sup> 60.

conscious. The work of art displays both the primordial trauma of self-alienation and the ecstasy of internal resolution.<sup>26</sup> It expresses the negotiation between reason and intuition in the function of the spirit; it reveals in the real the absolute, i.e., the indifference of the real and the ideal, which is neither possible in reason alone nor in human activity.<sup>27</sup> This means that the contemplation of the work of art entails contemplation of the inner self as well as the sensible world and further of the interaction of the two, which leads to the contemplation of the absolute.<sup>28</sup> This reminds us of Tillich's experience, as explored in the earlier chapter, of "divine revelation" through the contemplation of Botticelli's painting, which ultimately brought about the dissolution of inner conflicts. This aesthetic intuition Tillich calls the "mysticism of artistic creation." In his view, the "irreligious pharisaism" of a moralistic philosophy of religion was overcome by the mysticism of artistic creation, but still at the risk of endangering the moral categories: "The mystic of artistic creation goes beyond the standpoint where good and evil are valid norms. His relation to God is in no way oriented toward guilt-consciousness."<sup>29</sup>

What comes out next in the process of Schelling's philosophical development is what Tillich construes as "the highest principle of mysticism and the archetype of all later forms of the life of spirit,"<sup>30</sup> that is, the "mysticism of intellectual intuition." In an 1804 lecture at Würzburg Schelling speculates:

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<sup>26</sup> John Shannon Hendrix, *Aesthetics & The Philosophy of Spirit: From Plotinus to Schelling and Hegel* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 109.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>28</sup> 111-112

<sup>29</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 68.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

[The distinction between a subject and an object in knowledge] itself is already a product of our subjectivity and thus of our finitude... Not I know, but only totality *knows* in me, if the knowledge that I consider my own is to be a real, true knowledge. Yet this *One* that knows is also the only thing known, and neither difference nor correspondence exists here, for the *knowing* and the known are not different but the same.<sup>31</sup> (*italics original*)

The true substance of knowledge, which forever slips away all subjectivization of rational knowledge, is “absolute identity.” The cognitive mode of the absolute identity is called an “intuition of reason” or an “intellectual intuition.” Neither an external, sensible object nor the empirical self or any other object of the inner sense can become the correlate of an intellectual intuition; the object of intellectual intuition can only be something infinite, i.e., unlimited and absolutely affirmative, namely, the Absolute or God.

For Schelling, every particular individual has a double life, a life in the absolute and a life in itself: the individual can break away from the unity with the absolute, thereby affirming its own life apart from identity with the universal and fall under the dominion of individuality and selfhood [*Ichheit*]. In Schelling’s *Philosophy and Religion*, this is how the world of things, of the categories, of space and time come to exist:

In a word, there is no continuous transition from the Absolute to the actual; the origin of the phenomenal world is conceivable only as a complete falling-away from absoluteness by means of a leap... The absolute is the only actual; the finite world, by contrast, is not real. Its cause, therefore, cannot lie in an *impartation* [*Mittheilung*] of reality from the Absolute to the finite world or its substrate; it can only lie in a *remove* [*Entfernung*], in a *falling-away* [*Abfall*] from the Absolute.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, “System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular,” trans. Thomas Pfau, *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 143.

<sup>32</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophy and Religion*, trans. Klaus Ottman (Putnam: Spring Publications, 2010), 26.

The emergence of an individual implies that immediate identity is forever lost and the individuality always remains even in mystical union. Selfhood is not the in-itself but the for-itself, since it is only its own deed, its own action.<sup>33</sup> It is “the point in the fallen world where the archetypes are restored, where those supra-terrestrial powers, i.e., the ideas, are reconciled and in human science, art, and moral action descend into temporality.”<sup>34</sup> Intellectual intuition, however, “annuls all time, and posits absolute eternity in the midst of time.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, Tillich sees in the mysticism of intellectual intuition the destruction of moral categories. In the first place, the mysticism of intellectual intuition promotes the ideal of the ethical genius. The unity of knowledge and action is contemplated only in the person of God, who, untroubled by particular moral tasks, acts universally. Secondly, he points out that “The exaltation of the genius implies at the same time the rejection of the [moral] law.”<sup>36</sup> The final and decisive consequence of the mysticism of intellectual intuition is its view of sin as privation of reality, which causes the destruction of guilt-consciousness: in intellectual intuition what we experience as defect or sin in differentiated ego-consciousness is only the product of our imagination, not a reality; the contradiction between human beings and God is a false abstraction.

Part III of Tillich’s dissertation, which deals with Schelling’s second period, begins with the latter’s provocative idea that the freedom to be separate, to enter into opposition to identity, must lie within the absolute itself. According to Schelling, there is freedom where there is contradiction between freedom and necessity; freedom is such

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<sup>33</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 77.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>35</sup> 79.

<sup>36</sup> 83.

only when it breaks away from itself in its immediacy. For him, the absolute is now understood as the will, which is in itself divine; absolute identity is the will that wills itself. He writes, “In the final and highest judgment, there is no other Being than will. Will is primal Being [*Ursein*] to which alone all predicates of Being apply: groundlessness, eternality, independence from time, self-affirmation.”<sup>37</sup> The will is able to contradict itself and, because of this ability, eternally compelled to assert itself as the will. This is the “incomprehensible base of reality in things, the indivisible remainder, that which with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved in understanding but rather remains eternally in the ground.”<sup>38</sup> The irrational as well as contradiction are included within the absolute or God as absolute synthesis.

Included in God are two principles, the principle of selfhood and the principle of love, which represents the first and the second “potencies,” respectively, in Schelling’s system. In the activity and correlation of these two principles there emerges the personal reality of God’s existence. Tillich articulates:

For the former, Schelling uses the expression divine self, existing God, the ideal, light, freedom. The latter he calls nature in God, the ground of existence, the real, darkness, necessity... the ground of existence develops eternally toward the fullness of determinations that it contains within itself, and this fullness is annulled [*aufgehoben*] in eternity in the unity of the divine self. The will of the ground is, as it were, the longing to give birth to God, the dark will, in which there is no reason, but which, united with reason, is brought to the separation of forms, the birth of individual.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 21.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 95.

The “ground of existence” designates, as Slavoj Zizek puts it, “God’s self-deferral,” “that elusive X which lacks any proper ontological consistency.”<sup>40</sup> It desires to give birth to God as the individual, but God thus exists only in the mode of its own withdrawal. Schelling now clearly distinguishes within God between the prius of divinity, the “that,” and that which is, the “what,” ultimately to give primacy to the that over the what. The birth of the living God is the result of the dynamic tension of the three potencies of the what, i.e., what can be, what must be, and what ought to be or shall be. The first potency, the irrational, and the second, the rational, are united in the third. In this trinity of potencies God is perfect spirit, which is free from each one of the potencies and not bound even to the third, spiritual potency: “God is free spirit inasmuch as he renounces his immediate spirituality.”<sup>41</sup> By this “overflowing” freedom God is Lord; God’s sovereignty lies in His being the abyss of human reason, or the overwhelming “that” that is the very archetype and original ground of everything.

On the other hand, however, God’s “a priori incomprehensible becomes comprehensible in God... and his sovereignty over being is at the same time his acceptance of being as the basis of his sovereignty.”<sup>42</sup> God’s sovereignty lies also in the acceptance of God’s being as the individual. The incarnation of God is, thus, the true expression of God’s sovereignty since it presupposes and acknowledges guilt-consciousness. In the statement that God is the Lord of being there is the possibility of a personal relation to God that involves guilt-consciousness, the possibility of “communion

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<sup>40</sup> Slavoj Zizek, *The Abyss of Freedom* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 6.

<sup>41</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 98.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

with God through grace.” Tillich holds: “Whereas the anthropocentric way (negative philosophy, as Schelling called it) by itself leads to a self-sufficient mysticism, the theocentric way (positive philosophy) creates the possibility of a relation to God that is determined by guilt-consciousness.”<sup>43</sup>

Whereas the principles of selfhood (the ground, darkness, the irrational) and love (existence, light, the rational) are indissoluble in God by virtue of the eternal bond, they become dissoluble in human beings: “Because man is the will to selfhood, he desires to commit the will of love to his service, and because he is spirit, he has the power to exalt himself.”<sup>44</sup> This is the possibility of choosing good and evil. Evil is neither the split itself between the two principles, nor the selfhood as such; it is the perverted, false unity with essence, the universal will. It is the selfhood in the guise of its opposite.<sup>45</sup> On Schelling’s notion of sin, Tillich writes:

Sin is the attempt of the individual to resist the recurring process of the annulment of all individuals in the unity of the absolute synthesis. Sin is selfhood that chooses to establish itself as selfhood; sin is potentiated contradiction... Immediate contradiction is eternally annulled in identity with essence, but thereby contradiction is united with essence to spirit. Immediate contradiction is not sin; rather, sin is the contradiction of spirit against essence. Sin is the contradiction that has become spirit.<sup>46</sup>

The contradiction has arisen as spirit, i.e., the unified individual, and subjugated love to itself and created selfishness, time, and death. Sin is not an imposed entity but an act of spirit; it is selfhood’s own act. The individual ego as mere individual, as enslaving

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<sup>43</sup> 101.

<sup>44</sup> 103.

<sup>45</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters* (Verso: London & New York, 1996), 63-64.

<sup>46</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 104.

love, light, logos, or the communicating power, is the source of guilt-consciousness, and repentance, thus, becomes the basis of every religious relation. Even in the sinner the bond of spirit is effective, however, because “if this unity were entirely dissolved, then the contradiction would be dissolved along with it.”<sup>47</sup> Essence reveals itself in the contradiction, i.e., in the spiritualized contradiction. Wherever there is the consciousness of guilt there is also the underlying consciousness of true unity. Guilt-consciousness attests to, as it were, the sense of underlying unity with the power of being. Tillich holds: “What ought not to be [the first potency] can only become manifest in what ought to be [the second potency]. Guilt-consciousness includes the consciousness of true unity within itself.”<sup>48</sup>

For Schelling, the will of sin is at once divine and anti-divine: it is divine insofar as it as will can only exist by virtue of its unity with essence; it is anti-divine so far as it stands under the potentiated contradiction. God as the will has both attitudes toward sin, Yes and No. There is a necessary transition from the Yes to the No, and the No in its deepest form turns necessarily toward the Yes. What corresponds to the will of sin is the will of divine wrath; the wrath of God is not a judgment external to sin, but sin itself. Given that the wrath of God is the will of God, there is identity with God even in the sinner. Hence, the person who accepts the wrath of God as real is truly conscious of his/her indissoluble bond with God.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> 110.

God's wrath is dependent upon God's grace: God affirms the will to selfhood by himself becoming an individual, who is subject to the wrath and the immanent self-negation of all-selfhood; the will of the spiritualized contradiction is at once affirmed and negated. This is acutely shown in the event of the crucifixion of the Christ. The first potency, the will to selfhood, is overcome by the second potency, the principle of love, which, in order to overcome it, has subjected itself to the negation of the first potency. The Cross of the Christ as the supreme manifestation of the second potency is the act of self-sacrifice to the power and right of God the Father as the principle of darkness; and in this act of self-sacrifice and self-surrender, the ideal man is restored. All who participate in the sacrificial act with the Christ enter into the unity of love, a higher unity than the original, immediate unity; what has been restored in the redemptive work of the Christ is communion with the true God, that is, *communion with the personal self of the divine*.<sup>50</sup> The identity, which is fashioned in Christianity, is the identity that includes guilt-consciousness always already overcome. Tillich concludes: "The principle of mysticism triumphs, but not in the form of mysticism, not as immediate identity, but rather as personal communion that overcomes contradiction: it is "*the religion of the Spirit and of freedom*.""<sup>51</sup> (italics mine)

A last significant point to be mentioned in comprehending Schelling's view of the Christ is that for him the Christ is the bearer, not only of the second, but also of the third potency, whose function lies in uniting the first and second potencies and in which the perfect manifestation of the telos of being is created. Human beings whose wills are

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<sup>50</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Philosophy* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974), 111.

<sup>51</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 125.

united with the Christ are also included in the work of the third potency. Victor Nuovo is quite succinct on this point:

The Christ is also the bearer of the third potency, spirit, the final cause. Spirit is the unity of the first and second potencies. As actuality or entelechy, it is the self-possessing cause that does not lose itself, because it posits everything harmoniously within itself... It is the perfect, the living whole, the unity of the real and the ideal, the concrete universal... Spirit is *nous*, mind or intellect, but in addition to the clarity of intellect, it possesses the fullness and concreteness of life... Spirit is the principle of hope, of what ought to be and shall be.<sup>52</sup>

The Christ as Spirit is the “concrete universal,” toward which every thing and every being drives. This conceptualization anticipates Tillich’s notion of the “Religion of the Concrete Spirit,” the notion he proposed in his final public lecture in 1965, in which the three elements of the experience of the Holy, the sacramental, the mystical, and the prophetic, are creatively united. The Religion of the Concrete Spirit cannot be identified with any actual religion and yet can find its most eloquent expression in St. Paul’s doctrine of the Spirit.

We have thus far tracked down the path of Tillich’s analysis of Schelling’s philosophy that revolved around the theme of mysticism and guilt-consciousness. This has shown us the philosophical background, against which Tillich later develops a dialectical view of mysticism and finally suggests the form of mysticism that claims, not the identity with the divine, but the participatory communion with the personal self of the divine. This form of mysticism, I would argue, anticipates what he terms “baptized mysticism.” For now, I will make three following observations in relation to baptized mysticism.

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<sup>52</sup> Victor Nuovo, “Translator’s Introduction,” *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling’s Positive Philosophy*, 17.

First, Schelling's notion of *Abfall* provides an important conceptual basis for Tillich's baptized mysticism. According to Schelling, the individual personality cannot be lost or eradicated in any case, since it designates what has completely "fallen away" from the absolute thereby affirming its own life apart from identity with the universal. In other words, upon the emergence of the individual selfhood, immediate identity always already slips away. Following Schelling, Tillich's baptized mysticism adheres to the preservation of the individual personality even in "mystical union." It is due to this element of baptized mysticism that in his interreligious dialogue with Buddhism, as shall be explored later in this chapter, Tillich ultimately repudiates the type of mysticism based on the Buddhist doctrine of "no-self."

Second, Schelling's conception of sin as the "potentiated contradiction" is taken into serious consideration in baptized mysticism. Schelling views sin as the attempt to act against the "recurring process of the annulment of all individuals in the unity of the absolute synthesis" thereby creating selfhood (individuality). Given that it involves the moment of the birth of an individual and the individuality thus created is the permanent element of a personality, sin can never be eradicated in a course of life process: it is the ever-present reality of a finite existence; the attempt to do so only results in the annihilation of one's singularity and the loss of the union with God as well. Thus, baptized mysticism, as long as it takes the question of sin seriously, cannot support the idea that one can reach a state of perfection where there is the complete absence of sin or estranged realities in this life. Rather, it promotes the life of humble recognition of the ever-present demonic potentialities and estranged realities within the individual as well as the given society.

Third, baptized mysticism is Christ mysticism in that it promotes a communion with the Christ, God as personalized and also crucified. In Schelling, the first potency, the will to selfhood, is overcome by the second potency, the principle of love, which, in order to overcome it, has subjected itself to the negation of the first potency. The Cross of the Christ, which symbolizes the act of self-sacrifice and self-surrender, is the supreme manifestation of the second potency, and all who participate in the sacrificial act with the Christ enter into the unity of love, a higher unity than the original, immediate unity. On a structural level, thus, baptized mysticism resembles the ecstatic experience of “in Christ” St. Paul enjoyed and promoted in the New Testament, and so, Tillich explicitly relates this experience to baptized mysticism.<sup>53</sup> In baptized mysticism, as Celia Kourie writes:

The person in Christ has not lost his or her personality in another, nor does he or she feel merged into the ground of the universe, but lives uniquely in another, namely the risen and glorified Lord. Such a union is not spatial, but personal: to be in Christ indicates that the adherent is under the power and influence of the spiritual and personal Lord, who is identified with the crucified Jesus.<sup>54</sup>

## **2. *Systematische Theologie* (1913)**

*Systematische Theologie* is Tillich’s earliest attempt at formulating a theological system. It is divided into three parts, Apologetics, Dogmatics, and Ethics, and consists of seventy-one theses altogether. Tillich discusses mysticism in several places, and in the following we will focus on his distinctive term, the “mysticism of grace,” since this term reflects a fundamental dimension of Tillichian theory of mysticism. In the mysticism of grace the paradox of faith is creatively incorporated into the reality of mystical union with God.

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<sup>53</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 84.

<sup>54</sup> Celia Kourie, “Christ-Mysticism in Paul,” *The Way Supplement* 102 (2001), 75.

Tillich understands that the Protestant idea of *unio mystica* is a “mysticism of grace that has the paradox of unity with God.” In *Ethics*, he proposes three dimensions of Christian piety, that is, conversion as the emergence of Christian piety, sanctification as its development, and individualization as the formations of it, and defines sanctification as the “conveyance of the judgment of faith unto all moments of life, a constant consciousness and a being bound to God, through which each side of life receives its religious relation.”<sup>55</sup> The idea of *unio mystica* expresses the quality of a religious relation that can be found in the conveyance of faith into all dimensions of life. Tillich writes:

One shall then not forget that in the world of sinfulness also the perfect community with God is carried out through the paradox of faith, and that, therefore, mysticism is also no immediate community as in an absolute system, but is a mysticism of grace that has the paradox of unity with God all the time before its eyes. It is this mysticism without which religion cannot be, and through which it is the prolepsis of eternal life in the midst of time.<sup>56</sup>

What does Tillich mean by the “paradox of faith,” through which the “perfect community with God” is carried out? We can find a clue from his extensive discussion with Karl Barth and Friedrich Gogarten on the concept of paradox that occurred in 1920s. For Tillich, paradox means the living unity of judgment and grace, which is “non-objective, accessible only to faith.”<sup>57</sup> It is the “sensitivity to the depths of the eternal source of things.” The person of faith stands under the unity of judgment and grace and proclaims that he/she is the sinner and the beloved simultaneously. Mysticism is a

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<sup>55</sup> Uwe C. Scharf, *The Paradoxical Breakthrough of Revelation: Interpreting the Divine-Human Interplay in Paul Tillich's Work 1913-1964* (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 438.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Tillich, “Critical and Positive Paradox,” 135. Note that in the second volume of *Systematic Theology* Tillich provides a literal definition of paradox: what is paradoxical is “against man’s self-understanding and expectations” and “a new reality and not a logical riddle.” It is the appearance of the New Being under the conditions of existence. Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 92.

naming of this sensitivity to the depths of the eternal source of things, the double dimension of life, which can be embraced only in the person of faith. Tillich writes:

But it is not possible to do justice to true mysticism in this way. It has traces of unconditionedness, the “infinite degree” which characterizes its object. It knows how to speak of the paradoxicality of the source. It knows the abyss of grace and judgment, and in this it is believing. It is an indication of the *hybris* of the standpoint of faith if it overlooks the root of faith of the mystical standpoint.<sup>58</sup>

Notice that for Tillich “true mysticism” and faith are closely related to each other through the concept of paradox: true mysticism is the dialectical unity of grace and judgment and faith, as defined in *Systematische Theologie*, is the “pure receptivity of the human being toward the grace of God,” a turning “with absolute Yes and absolute No toward grace.”<sup>59</sup> “True mysticism” inherently belongs to the realm of faith, since it penetrates into the “paradoxicality” of the Unconditional, the “abyss of grace and judgment.” In the faith of a mystic, divine wrath as well as divine grace is accepted since both are the two interdependent aspects of the divinity. Here is easily found the correspondence between “true mysticism” and baptized mysticism. Baptized mysticism points to the union with God that includes not only the moment of being affirmed (grace) but also that of being negated (judgment). The ability to accept the moment of judgment signifies the element of faith in baptized mysticism; faith and mysticism are undoubtedly compatible with each other. The union with God, then, can be asserted not as a completed point but as a continuing process. We read: “the sublation (of the absolute and the relative) is not to be grasped as completed but as in the process of happening.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>59</sup> Scharf, *The Paradoxical Breakthrough of Revelation*, 436.

### 3. “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture” (1919)

Having been released out of army service as a chaplain in the January of 1919, Tillich started carving out his career as a *Privatdozent*, a lecturer, in the University of Berlin. The title of the first course he gave was “Christianity and the Social Problems of the Present” and this precisely attests to his determination to come to terms with the new situation around him, the determination that shall be persistent throughout his entire life. A corresponding effort was made in his first public address at the Kant Society entitled “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture” to provide a way of synthesizing culture and religion. The term “mysticism of love” is used here to express the synthesis found in various cultural creations, e.g., art, ethics, and politics. This synthesis Tillich calls “theonomy.” There is a notable correspondence, I suppose, between theonomy and baptized mysticism, which shall become clear below. The proper recognition of this correspondence will establish that baptized mysticism comprises the core of Tillichian, “theonomous spirituality.”

Michael Palmer rightly explains<sup>61</sup> that for Tillich the separation between religion and culture is the inevitable consequence of the conflicting ways in which the human mind encounters reality and the conflicting ways are made out of the interaction of the three structural elements of the mind, namely, autonomy, heteronomy, and theonomy. Autonomy is the obedience of the individual as a rational being to the law of reason and so goes against any authority, be it secular or divine. Heteronomy is the demand that autonomous reason should submit itself to the authority of ecclesiastical, semi-religious

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 374.

<sup>61</sup> Michael Palmer, “Paul Tillich’s Theology of Culture,” ed., Michael Palmer, *Paul Tillich: Main Works vol. 2 Writings in the Philosophy of Culture* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990).

and political powers. Thus autonomy and heteronomy are in radical conflict, and this conflict can be only resolved by the recognition that both are rooted in theonomy.

Theonomy does not impose a rule from outside and respects autonomy while seeking to unite it with its own spiritual base, which Tillich calls “import” or “substance.” In theonomous cultural creations the form is shattered by the import, which thus gives the form meaning or significance. And yet, this shattering is still a form. Tillich says: “The revelation of a predominant import consists in the fact that the form becomes more and more inadequate, that the reality, in its overflowing abundance, shatters the form meant to contain it; and yet this overflowing and shattering is itself still form.”<sup>62</sup> In theonomy every cultural act is united with the unconditioned ground of meaning and no division can be found between religion and culture.

On Tillich’s view, Expressionist art shows a strong religious passion for expressing the unconditioned ground of meaning. In it, the external factuality of objects and events (contents of an art work) lost their significance: nature, for example, is robbed of her external appearance, and instead her uttermost depth (import) is visible. What seizes us in the works of some Expressionist painters is horror. Tillich writes:

In their work a form-shattering religious import is struggling to find form, a paradox that most people find incomprehensible and annoying; and this horror seems to me to be deepened by a feeling of guilt, not in the properly ethical sense, but rather in the cosmic sense of the guilt of sheer existence. Redemption, however, is the transition of one individual existence into the other, the wiping out of individual distinction, the mysticism of love achieving union with all living things.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Tillich, *What Is Religion?*, 164.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

The horror Expressionist paintings try to capture is a bursting out of the depth, which necessitates the experience of “the guilt of sheer existence.” This experience is nothing other than the experience of the world that is split up into individual beings, i.e., the experience of nonbeing in Tillich’s idiom. What is needed, then, is the change of the mode of existence, i.e., the transition from existence as mere individual to existence as united with other beings, which precipitates a profound level of compassion and solidarity. The “mysticism of love” is, then, a designation of the transformative, redemptive event that can occur through theonomous art.

What Tillich means by the mysticism of love becomes clearer when he applies the principle of theonomy to social ethics. Around the time of this writing, he acutely perceives the uprising of the innovative ethics that, while not denying Kant’s formulae of ethical autonomy, breaks up with the formal system of ethics of reason and humanity oriented to Kant. Tillich writes:

In social ethics, it is the new mysticism of love now stirring everywhere that signifies a theonomous overcoming of the autonomous ethical forms without a relapse into the heteronomy of a specifically religious community of love... but the content of love overflows the narrow cup of this form in an inexhaustible stream... The man who thinks in terms of the individual can never attain to love, for love is beyond the individual; the man who thinks in terms of the end to be attained does not know what love is: for love is pure experience of being, pure experience of reality.<sup>64</sup>

For him, the innovative ethics of the mysticism of love “overflows the narrow cup” of the formal system of ethics, religious decree, or divine commandment; it cannot be limited by or reduced to them, since it adheres to “pure experience of being, pure experience of reality.” It is the direct encounter with the Unconditional, which goes beyond all forms

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<sup>64</sup> 172.

and all the ethical categories of virtue and reward, as exemplified in the idealistic socialists and communists, the poems of Rilke, and Tolstoi's new interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.

The concept of the mysticism of love is more solidly grasped as applied to the realm of the economy. Tillich holds: "For the economy, too, can be shattered in its pure autonomy and in its quality of being an end in itself, through the substance of the religious mysticism of love, which produces not for the sake of production but for the sake of human being."<sup>65</sup> The mysticism of love as the principle of the economy directs the process of production in accordance with theonomy; more concretely it takes the concept and reality of the poor seriously. If a state can integrate this mysticism of love with the governance of economy, he argues, the state can be called "church" in the sense of the theology of culture, i.e., the "universal human community, built up out of spiritual communities and bearing with it all cultural functions and their religious substances."<sup>66</sup>

Now, I want to make a brief comment on the mysticism of love in relation to baptized mysticism. The mysticism of love is obviously a form of baptized mysticism that has ethical bearings: it addresses the "theonomous overcoming of the autonomous ethical forms without a relapse into the heteronomy of a specifically religious community of love." It concerns itself with transformative power of love that drives toward the realization of justice based on genuine solidarity. It thus runs away from formalism and relativism in an ethical decision and instead takes an unambiguous position, the position in the sense of "not merely a subjective and therefore arbitrary collection of opinion" but

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<sup>65</sup> 174.

<sup>66</sup> 173.

the “real position,” on the basis of which “a responsible and creative criticism of one’s own time is possible.”<sup>67</sup> Taking a definite position enables the baptized mystic to make a proper ethical decision as he/she confronts the present situation. Tillich’s positioning himself on the principle of religious socialism and “socialist decision”<sup>68</sup> is, perhaps, illustrative of this feature of baptized mysticism, which will be shown just below.

#### 4. “Basic Principles of Religious Socialism” (1923)

Tillich joined a group of religious socialism in Berlin in 1920, known as the “Berlin group” or “Kairos Circle,” which was determined, then, not to belong to any socialist party or participate in political campaigns and yet had a strong conviction that the disaster of World War I set the stage for decisive acts of renewal.<sup>69</sup> A method of propagating their ideas was publishing a small journal entitled *Blätter für den Religiösen Sozialismus*, in which the current essay appears. Here, mysticism is illustrated as belonging to the line of “*reservatum religiosum*” (“religious reservation”), which needs to be complemented by “*obligatum religiosum*” (“religious obligation”) to guard against its demonization as shown in “mystical anarchism” or “mystical pacifism” and get in touch with the reality of kairos.

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<sup>67</sup> Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, 27.

<sup>68</sup> Tillich wrote a book entitled “*The Socialist Decision*,” in which he calls for a new form of social thought combining precise historical analysis with deep sensitivity to the dimensions of human nature. This book was enlisted on the Nazi blacklist to be burnt. Pauck and Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought*, 132.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-75. A number of excellent studies on the relationship between Tillich and religious socialism and social ethics have been done, among which the followings deserve our special attention: John R. Stumme, *Socialism in Theological Perspective: A Study of Paul Tillich 1918-1933* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978); Brian Donnelly, *The Socialist Émigré: Marxism and the Later Tillich* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003); Mark Lewis Taylor, “Tillich’s Ethics: Between Politics and Ontology,” ed. Russell Re Manning, *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 189-207; Ronald H. Stone, “On the Boundary of Utopia and Politics, in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, 208-220.

We begin with the second section where Tillich boldly announces that the goal of religious socialism is theonomy as “the unity of sacred form and sacred import in a concrete historical situation”<sup>70</sup> and draws upon the concept of the demonic to describe the embodiment of the forms that oppose the unconditioned form and are therefore destructive and self-destroying. Due to the potential demonization in various cultural creations, religion has a double function in its relation to culture. He argues:

It [Religion] contains within itself a No, a *reservatum religiosum*, and a Yes, an *obligatum religiosum*. By virtue of the *reservatum religiosum*, the religious spirit falls back upon itself in the face of the demonically distorted and conditioned forms of an epoch; that is, it falls back upon the sacred personality and the sacred community in a strict sense. In this way, the culturally negative attitude of early Christianity, of mysticism in late antiquity, and of Lutheranism may be interpreted as a religious withdrawal before the predominance of the demonic in social, personal, and political life.<sup>71</sup>

Mysticism is a critical response of religion to cultural demonization, which goes back to its original entities, i.e., the “sacred personality” and the “sacred community.” It is the radical renunciation of the demonized culture as a whole on the one hand, and the radical refocusing on what is formally religious such as the churches and confessions on the other. It belongs to the line of the *reservatum religiosum*, and yet, precisely for this reason, may fall prey to demonization too. Tillich continues to say: “But it becomes false, and opens the way to the demonic as soon as it forgets the other side, the *obligatum religiosum*.”<sup>72</sup> The *obligatum religiosum* designates a creative aspiration of religion for an emphatic Yes in conditioned circumstances, i.e., a transformative will to change, in

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<sup>70</sup> Paul Tillich, “Basic Principles of Religious Socialism,” in *Political Expectation*, 62.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

spite of actual realities of demonization. It is the demand for and participation in theonomy, the goal of religious socialism, in which religious symbols are the ultimate and most universal expression of autonomous cultural consciousness. Therefore, religious socialism, he argues, requires a unity of *reservatum religiosum* and *obligatum religiosum* and has to keep a critical eye on any one-sidedness, for example, found in mysticism. It is in this vein that Tillich says, in a 1926 essay on the same topic, that religious socialism attempts to transcend a “pietistic inwardness that sacrifices the social *obligatum religiosum* to the *reservatum religiosum*.”<sup>73</sup>

One more comment has to be added to the feature of *reservatum religiosum*: since it is a No to cultural demonization, it can serve as the foundation on which political resistance against the demonic power, e.g., the authority of the totalitarian state, is possible. In an exchange of correspondence with Emanuel Hirsch, which occurred in 1934, Tillich expresses that Hirsch rightly gives *reservatum religiosum* to the individual, but wrongly not to the church, and this makes the church “impotent over against the *Weltanschauungen* or myths that sustain the totalitarian state.”<sup>74</sup> *Reservatum religiosum*, if properly applied, enables the church to withdraw to consider the way of acting against the totalitarian power from the standpoint of its religious root, that is, the relation with God.

In the third section Tillich goes deeper into the analysis of the demonic to ensure that it is the main object religious socialism struggles with. He illustrates the demonic in a Schellingian fashion: it is the “contradiction of unconditioned form, an eruption of the

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<sup>73</sup> Paul Tillich, “Religious Socialism,” *Political Expectation*, 57.

<sup>74</sup> Paul Tillich, “Open Letter to Emanuel Hirsch,” ed. James Luther Adams, *The Thought of Paul Tillich* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 385-386.

irrational ground of any realization of form that is individual and creative.”<sup>75</sup> The irrational ground as a dual reality, “love” (the erotic) and “power” (the dynamic), can break out into divine and demonic ecstasy (“eruption” in the above quote). These two “form-giving” potencies are inseparably contained in every creative reality and yet one or the other has been more predominantly recognized: love in the philosophy of Plato and in various forms of mysticism; the will to power in voluntarism, in Schelling and Nietzsche. Tillich suggests that pacifism is a clear example of demonic eruption on the realm of politics and that an essential character of pacifism can be found in mysticism. Pacifism is demonic, since it compulsively clings to a “utopian faith in a world without arbitrariness, incapable of the demonic, but also, therefore, a world without eros and power, and hence an uncreative world.”<sup>76</sup> The utopian character of pacifism, which often leads to “mystical anarchism,” reflects the “mystical dissolution of form.” Religious socialism has to fight this tendency, since it insists upon the form of justice and the affirmation of individual creative powers. He announces:

There is no direct way from the mystical idea of community to the creation of political form. Between the two stands justice, and the justice-bearing power, and the use of force against injustice. Only the saint and the holy community can renounce justice in symbolically representative sense, but the recognition of justice and its stability presupposes that their renunciation of justice is meant to have religious and not anarchistic meaning.<sup>77</sup>

What does Tillich mean by “the creation of political form”? Viewed from the perspective of the whole argument of the essay, it is the reality of theonomous justice

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<sup>75</sup> Tillich, “Basic Principles of Religious Socialism,” 66.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

united with the principle of love, which is the telos of religious socialism. He argues that mystical love as one of the two basic potencies embedded in every creative reality has to take seriously actual power relations, the other basic potency, e.g., class struggle and the proper use of power against injustice, to enjoin the telos of religious socialism. Then, he reads the apparent ignorance of the question of justice often found in the saint and the sacred community as more of a symbolic representation of the moment of the unity between love and justice than of a denial of the actual necessity of the struggle for justice. What he rejects in his proposal for religious socialism is, rather, the erotic isolated from the dynamic, which inevitably creates demonic ecstasy. Put differently, the combat of religious socialism goes not against the irrational forces, love and power, as such but against, precisely, the attempts itself to do away with them. Rational utopianism and mystical pacifism are examples of those attempts. Tillich concludes:

This corresponds to the idea of Kairos, which also does not lead to rational utopianism or the mystical negation of the world, but rather, to a new and creative fulfillment of forms with an import borne by power and eros but penetrated by obedience to unconditioned form. It is therefore not demonic but divine.<sup>78</sup>

We have seen that throughout the essay Tillich calls for, as the principle of religious socialism, the unity of *reservatum religiosum* and *obligatum religiosum*. This then is the hope in baptized mysticism: not merely by retreating back to the sacred personality and the sacred community, but by actively getting involved in the resistance against the demonization of cultural creations and in the creation of a new form of the unity of power and eros, baptized mysticism hopes for a kairos, a “new and creative fulfillment of forms with an import borne by power and eros but penetrated by obedience

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 86.

to unconditioned form.” In baptized mysticism the two form-creating potencies, power and eros, are creatively incorporated into the expectation of and participation into kairos. Since kairos involves, as Richard Niebuhr rightly puts, both “to wait upon the invasion of the eternal and to act accordingly,”<sup>79</sup> baptized mysticism, as it were, attends to “contemplation in action.” It contrasts, thus, with a mystical utopianism or mystical pacifism, insofar as it does not seek after the eradication of power and eros as such in vain. It shares with religious socialism this hope. Recalling that in his proposal for religious socialism Tillich emphatically rejects the erotic isolated from the dynamic in mysticism, which inevitably creates demonic ecstasy, it can be said that baptized mysticism is the mysticism in which the erotic embraces the dynamic.

##### **5. “Justification and Doubt” (1924)**

In an autobiographical essay Tillich indicates the enormous influence of the insight of Martin Kähler, his teacher when he was a theological student at the University of Halle, that justification can be applied not only to a sinner but also to a doubter. It is said that the musings over the insight gave him a “strong feeling of relief.”<sup>80</sup> Tillich’s 1924 article “Justification and Doubt,” originally published in German entitled “*Rechtfertigung und Zweifel*,”<sup>81</sup> is an attempt to substantiate the significance of this insight as a basic principle of Protestantism. What interests us are: 1) his

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<sup>79</sup> Richard Niebuhr, “Translator’s Preface,” Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, 18.

<sup>80</sup> Paul Tillich, “Author’s Introduction,” *The Protestant Era*, xv. It is reported that Tillich said in a private talk that one could burn all his writings except the essay on the demonic and “Justification and Doubt.” Werner Schüßler, “Where Does Religion Come From? Paul Tillich’s Concept of *Grundoffenbarung*,” eds. de Michel Despland, Jean-Claude Petit, and Jean Richard, *Religion et culture* (Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 1987), 160.

<sup>81</sup> This work is extant at the Paul Tillich Archive in Harvard University in the form of a private translation by Lamar Cooper. The translator’s name is revealed by Peter John. Peter John, “Tillich: The Words I Recorded, The Man I Knew,” *NAPTSN*, vol. 29, no. 1 (Winter, 2003), 5.

conceptualization of doubt as “the expression of the complete suppression of the mystical, or Catholic principle”<sup>82</sup>; 2) his invention of the term “ground revelation,” whose conceptual function is to capture the emancipation from the existential state of the doubter.

Tillich locates the question of doubt in the context of the loss of the principle of “breakthrough” (“*Durchbruch*”). For him, justification, grace, and revelation are the concepts of breakthrough “in which a Nevertheless is contained, in which, however, that which [is] broken through is at the same time presupposed.”<sup>83</sup> The breakthrough indicates the quality of the Protestant principle that serves to criticize the absolutizing tendency of religious practices and authorities based on the law: one is justified not by the strict observances of the law but by grace alone. And, the law, religion, and Catholicism are presupposed, respectively, in justification, revelation, and the evangelical principle and preserved in the breakthrough. He calls this “realization.” Luther’s doctrine of the sacraments and Christ-mysticism and Calvin’s law of the church revealed in the Scripture are sheer examples of realization. For Tillich, breakthrough and realization, as it were, form a dialectical tension.

In the historical development of Protestantism, however, Tillich argues, the dynamic tension between the two principles was lost, when breakthrough gave up its “corrective,” i.e., critical and prophetic role and became in itself the only valid principle, thereby attempting to exclude the principle of realization. What followed was that that which is originally breakthrough has become a doctrine, a thing, and an object: God has

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<sup>82</sup> Paul Tillich, “Justification and Doubt,” 6.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

been made into an object, a limit, and a regulation; the religious immediacy of God is interrupted. The breakthrough principle is ultimately lost, and doubt expresses this situation of the loss of the principle: “It [doubt] no longer runs along as an accident which one must morally struggle against... it is the expression of the interrupted immediacy of the religious, of the complete suppression of the mystical or Catholic principle.”<sup>84</sup> The use of the word “suppression” implies that Tillich is calling for the necessity of retrieving the lost dimension of religiosity, the mystical as category in his idiom, which will help emancipate the doubter from meaninglessness and uncertainty. The doubter, not merely being content with the sense of meaninglessness but being radically struck by the demand to participate in the unconditioned meaning of life, in the unconditioned truth, seeks after a “new mysticism,” which is neither a substitute religion (mysticism as a type of religion) nor a revival of the old mysticism that revolves around *askesis*. The new mysticism is “the attempt to find again the lost immediacy of religion which must be the basis for every breakthrough to objectivity, to name and form.”<sup>85</sup> The mysticism the doubter turns toward in the midst of meaninglessness is the basic matrix on which breakthrough occurs.

Tillich finds the way of the new mysticism still insufficient for a doubter, however, because “this flight into mysticism is always still a holding fast to subjectivity and thus to work, although with negative bearing. The majesty of the divine is not reached, the ground of meaning is not found, because one can also again push the mystical experience aside.”<sup>86</sup> Uwe Scharf reads these passages as meaning that the focus of this new

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<sup>84</sup> 6.

<sup>85</sup> 7.

<sup>86</sup> 8.

mysticism still is not on the object of the mystical experience, the Unconditional, but on the mystical experience as such and on subjectivity.<sup>87</sup> This reading seems to miss the essence of Tillich's whole argument on doubt and mysticism. Tillich, basically, does not degrade mystical experience per se, since it is a realization on which breakthrough occurs. What he degrades is the doubter's "flight into mysticism," i.e., the doubter's compulsive adherence to mysticism as reduced to emotional, subjective feelings<sup>88</sup> and also a willful thinking that mystical experience is something that can be created or forgotten by human efforts ("work" in the quote). In this attitude, in fact, the sovereignty of the divine as the meaning ground cannot be penetrated enough and the doubter is inclined to doubt the veracity of the experience. And, the truth thus encountered is merely a "warming glow," which has no power of convincing. Tillich says: "Truth, which is not a consuming fire, but only a continuing glow, does not convince... If truth is to reach the unconditionedness of the divine, then it must assume the form of grace, the form of breakthrough."

In the midst of nothingness and uncertainty the doubter experiences the "breaking up of the ground of meaning as unconditional presence and simultaneously as unconditional demand to wrest for the ground of meaning."<sup>89</sup> This breakthrough of truth

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<sup>87</sup> Uwe C. Scharf, "The Breakthrough of Justification and Grace in History," ed. Gert Hummel, *Truth and History: A Dialogue with Paul Tillich* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 145.

<sup>88</sup> Tillich is concerned that Schleiermacher's notion of religion as the "feeling of absolute dependence" is often misunderstood to mean a sort of the subjective feeling of the indefinite that can be alluded to Freud's "oceanic feeling." In Tillich's analysis, what Schleiermacher appeals to in his understanding of religion is the presence of something unconditional beyond the knowing and acting of which we are aware," which parallels what Tillich himself calls the "unconditional concern," which involves the mind, the will, emotion, and act. Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 391-401.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-148.

and meaning Tillich calls the “breakthrough of the divine revelation of ground” or simply “ground revelation” (*Grundoffenbarung*). He writes:

[It] stands before all doubting and searching, brings emancipation in that it pushes into a second place every act of knowledge and reveals [the] presence of God before the knowledge of God and the presence of meaning before the knowledge of meaning. What is here revealed is the God of the godless, the truth of those without truth, the fullness of meaning of those empty of meaning. That is no meaningless paradox, not artificial idea, for thinking as action is foregone, but rather it is the breaking through of the fullness of meaning.<sup>90</sup>

Ground revelation *is presupposed* in the act of doubting and searching; it can *cause* the act. It emphatically symbolizes the presence of God beyond the knowledge of God and the presence of meaning beyond the knowledge of meaning; it is the “meaning-full” event where the knowledge of God, the knowledge of meaning ends or fails. It can be, thus, also called the event of *plethora*. It is, like Julia Kristeva’s “atheistic mysticism of meaning,” the eruption of the “impossible and nevertheless sustained connection between life and meaning,”<sup>91</sup> which the doubter finds “in that retreat to the unfathomable continent, concealed from the sensible body.”<sup>92</sup>

Ground revelation brings emancipation and a “new life” to the doubter. Tillich gives us an apt description of the upshot of the justification of the doubter in the mood of an inspiring sermon:

The justification of the doubter, however, is at the same time a re-birth of the doubter, it is the possibility of overcoming doubt and error in creative knowledge. It is a new-creating and a re-birth of the whole of cognition and every single act. And just that is the new element in it, that it cannot cognize except as out of the center of the living creative truth, out of the ground and abyss of meaning, that it-

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<sup>90</sup> Tillich, “Justification and Doubt,” 9.

<sup>91</sup> Julia Kristeva, *The Feminine and the Sacred* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 14.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

just as love does not do single works, but rather operates from the very center of love—does not effect particular knowledge in this way, but rather is in all Gnosis which springs from the depths of the godhead.<sup>93</sup>

Ground revelation creates regeneration: it gives the doubter, not a particular knowledge, but a new way of thinking and acting; he/she is now enabled to think “out of the center of the living creative truth,” “out of the ground and abyss of meaning.” The new way that the doubter has obtained and has to live with hereafter is, like the way of love, always firmly grounded in the center of the truth, in the “depths of the godhead” where all oppositions, all particulars are dissolved and only a loving unity shines forth in his/her thinking and acting. It is the way of wisdom (gnosis).

This description of ground revelation seems to be largely congruent with what is meant by mysticism. Tillich, however, differentiates between the two as we read:

This is not mysticism, for mysticism is the end; this, however, is the beginning. It is the hour of rebirth in which the birth of man, namely of the religious essence of man is repeated. It is going down into the depths and the beginning of all human religious creation and seeing on the height of radical criticism and of the loss of depth of meaning. It is not the flight away from names and from consciousness, as in mysticism; but it is rather the new birth of the names out of the creative ground. Not of mysticism but rather of *revelation of depth* do we speak.<sup>94</sup> (italics mine)

Two contrasting points are being made here. Firstly, ground revelation is the “birth,” the “beginning,” not the end, as in mysticism, of the “religious essence of man.” Ground revelation marks, as it were, an initial moment in the process of spiritual itinerary, whereas mysticism indicates the end of a long way toward mystical union that goes

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<sup>93</sup> Tillich, “Justification and Doubt,” 16.

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through different stages.<sup>95</sup> In other words, ground revelation expresses a drastic transition of the mode of existence from doubt to faith, from meaninglessness to meaningfulness, from despair to hope, which initiates the life of a “believer” and which thus resembles, I suppose, what is traditionally called “conversion.” Secondly, whereas mysticism “wishes out of fear to sink away in silence before the world of truths, names, forms of meaning,” ground revelation, not being content with the negation of the existing forms as in mysticism, creates a new form, by which a new way of thinking and acting can be expressed and realized. One can note here that ground revelation possesses a parallel meaning to Tillich’s “mysticism of love” as was explicated in our previous analysis of his essay “On The Idea of a Theology of Culture”: both express the shattering, breaking down of a form, which in turn creates a new form, e.g., a new form of art and a new trend of social ethics.

Tillich argues, though, that due to its quality of divine revelation, mysticism has a permanent significance of taking one back to the moment of regeneration: “It is the greatness of mysticism that it calls into memory over and over again this hour of birth of truth, of meaning. Thus, it is immortal, and it is divine revelation in it.”<sup>96</sup> It can thus be stated that ground revelation includes mysticism insofar as the latter expresses the moment of creation of truth and meaning and that it excludes mysticism insofar as the latter does not lead to the creative forms of a new life.

I suggest that Tillich’s concept of ground revelation provides essential characteristics of baptized mysticism in the following sense. First, ground revelation

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<sup>95</sup> Werner Schüßler, “Where Does Religion Come From?” 168.

<sup>96</sup> Tillich, “Justification and Doubt,” 10.

involves the mystical as a category, since it is basically “going down into the depths and seeing on the height of radical criticism and of the loss of depth of meaning.” It is, as Tillich himself designates, the “revelation of depth.” This is the dimension of religiosity, “realization,” which Protestantism has to recover in its struggle for providing a solution for the existential problems of meaninglessness and uncertainty. Second, ground revelation does not rest in the nihilistic emptiness of meaning but, rather, reveals the fullness of meaning in the Kristevaeen sense of the eruption of the “impossible and nevertheless sustained connection between life and meaning.” It is important to note, however, that it has nothing to do with a complete, successful appropriation of knowledge (of God); rather it is the “meaning-full” event where the knowledge of God, the knowledge of meaning ends or fails. Third, ground revelation brings about a new way of thinking and acting that is firmly rooted in “the center of the living creative truth,” “the ground and abyss of meaning,” thereby initiating the creative life of a *homo religiosus*.

## **6. “Realism and Faith” (1929)**

In a section of his 1936 autobiographical essay, “Between Reality and Imagination,” Tillich reveals an imaginative penchant built up into his character due to the difficulties he experienced in childhood and adolescence in coming to terms with reality and refers to art as the “highest form of play and the genuinely creative realm of the imagination.”<sup>97</sup> His study on visual arts having started during his chaplaincy at World War I provided a context in which he encountered a moment of ecstasy through the contemplation of Botticelli’s painting, for which I employed the phrase “the mysticism of beauty.”

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<sup>97</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 26.

Philosophical as well as theological reflections on this experience enabled him to embrace the expressionist style of art, which had first emerged in the “immanent mysticism” of Expressionism and successively and most genuinely in the movement known as the “new realism” (*die neue Sachlichkeit*). In the new realism the “form becomes more and more inadequate for the reality that is supposed to be contained by it, so that this reality in overwhelming abundance shatters it.”<sup>98</sup> The new realism involves a mystical attitude toward reality as shown in some artworks of Expressionism, i.e., the revelation of the abysmal side of the unconditioned ground of reality, and yet transcends it in that it does not rest in it to move forward toward the affirmation of the foundational power of that ground to sustain and redeem finite reality.<sup>99</sup> Having said that, it seems to me to be clear that the attitude of the new realism Tillich presents in his essay, “Realism and Faith,” can serve as the basic attitude of a baptized mystic toward cultural creations. In addition, this essay is one of his works that convincingly proposes the interpenetration of mysticism and faith, which is a key feature of baptized mysticism.

Tillich argues that the emphasis on the real (realism) and the transcending power of faith form a dialectical tension and there are two possible ways of evading this tension: in the way of a realism without self-transcendence or in the way of a self-transcendence that is not realistic, which Tillich calls “idealism.” First, Tillich argues that idealism breaks down with a proper understanding of faith, since faith as an “ecstatic transcending of reality in the power of that which cannot be derived from the whole of reality and

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<sup>98</sup> Victor Nuovo, *Visionary Science: A Translation of Tillich's "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture" with an Interpretative Essay* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 26.

<sup>99</sup> Russell Re Manning, “Towards a Critical Reconstruction and Defense of Paul Tillich’s Theology of Art,” *The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2005), 37.

cannot be approached by ways which belong to the whole of reality”<sup>100</sup> takes the real seriously. Second, to point out the inadequacy of realism without self-transcendence he presents three types of realism, “technological realism,” “mystical realism,” and “historical realism.” “Technological realism” is the way of realism in which the rationality and the inner power of things are treated as identical. In this view, the power of being is discovered by thought, by the power of reason (the *nous*) and thus the thinking subject may become the bearer of all power. Then, things are subject to control and use by the rational man; the power of things are reduced to their theoretical calculability and their practical utility. In “mystical realism,” on the contrary, Tillich says:

The power of being within reality may be preserved also in a rationalized and spiritualized form. In this case the true being, discovered by the logos, becomes a matter of contemplation and union... Mere vital existence, the control and transformation of reality, practice generally, and even physical and mathematical knowledge are transcended, and the eternal essences and their unity and ground are sought.<sup>101</sup>

Matter has a negative, half-demonic power and the mind must transcend the material world as a whole to find the ultimate power of being in that which is beyond being, e.g., the One. Both technological realism and mystical realism, Tillich argues, share one thing in common: the incomprehension of concrete existence. Technological realism abstracts or flies from concrete existence by stressing only means and ends, whereas mystical realism focuses solely on essence and intuition.

The decisive characteristic of “historical realism” is its adherence to the principle of “contemporaneity”: it sees the power of being in the depth of the historical situation and demands active participation in all elements of life. In terms of the relation of the

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<sup>100</sup> Paul Tillich, “Realism and Faith,” 67-68.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

cognitive sphere to the whole of human existence, historical realism promotes the way of knowing in which knowing reality presupposes knowing the depth of one's personality and knowing the depth of oneself is transforming oneself, and, in this process, the historical situation is transformed as well. The way of cognition in historical realism also involves the penetration into the depth of one's social structure, which mystical realism is far from admitting. Tillich writes: "He who wants to know the power of reality in the depth of his historical existence must be in actual contact with the concrete, unrepeatable tensions of the present."<sup>102</sup> Historical realism, however, is incomplete in its striving to grasp the power of reality in a concrete situation, until it can grasp "that depth of reality in which its divine foundation and meaning become visible." Here, Tillich introduces the concept of "self-transcending realism" and opposes it to mystical realism as well as technological realism. Self-transcending realism, which is also based on the consciousness of the "here and now," unites the emphasis on the real and the transcending power of faith so that "The ultimate power of being, the ground of reality, appears in a special moment, in a concrete situation, revealing the infinite depth and the eternal significance of the present."<sup>103</sup> The ground of reality takes on a new significance and this is possible only in the ecstatic experience of faith. He asserts:

Self-transcending realism is the religious depth of historical realism... Mysticism is not aware of the unapproachable nature of the divine ground of reality (including the "soul"). It tries to reach the unconditional in conditioned steps, in degrees of elevation to the highest. Mystical self-transcendence is a continuous approximation to the ultimate; it does not realize the infinite gap between the

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<sup>102</sup> 75.

<sup>103</sup> 78.

finite and the infinite; it does not realize the paradoxical character of faith and of a realism which is united with faith.<sup>104</sup>

In Tillich's view, the difficulty with mystical realism lies in its lack of understanding of the unapproachable nature of the depth of reality and of the unbridgeable gap between finite and infinite. Mystical realism attempts to transcend faith in the experience of mystical union and disregards the historical situation and its power and its depth. We can see here that what he means by mystical realism is nothing other than the mystical as a type of religion, forfeited of the prophetic element. Then, self-transcending realism can be read as the attitude toward reality attributed to a baptized mystic, who is "grasped, in the experience of faith, by the unapproachably holy which is the ground of our being and breaks into our existence and which judges us and heals us."<sup>105</sup> It is the attitude in which "the more it [the present] is seen in light of the ultimate power, the more it appears as questionable and void of lasting significance."<sup>106</sup> The present is affirmed and negated at the same time when it becomes transparent for the ultimate ground; reality is transcended in the ecstatic experience of faith and obtains the quality of newness.

## **B. Tillich's Thoughts on Mysticism in the American Period**

### **1. "Totalitarian State and the Claims of Church" (1934)**

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<sup>104</sup> 77.

<sup>105</sup> 78.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

Upon his settlement in New York in 1933, Tillich began to write and give lectures on the demonic character of National Socialism and aid and work with other émigrés fleeing the new tyranny. He soon joined the Fellowship of Christian Socialists, which combined two strains of thought, Reinhold Niebuhr's indigenous American social ethic rooted in the liberal Social Gospel, and German Religious Socialism represented by Tillich and other German exiles, most of whom taught at the New School for Social Research.<sup>107</sup> In 1934, the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science of the New School launched the journal titled *Social Research: An International Quarterly of the Political and Social Sciences*, in which Tillich's first post-emigration essay "Totalitarian state and the claims of church"<sup>108</sup> appeared. In this essay, while not treating mysticism as a major topic, he deploys the expression "mystic consecration" to criticize the distorted mystical character of the myth of the nation, on which, according to him, the totalitarian state is founded.<sup>109</sup> Hence, the importance of the essay in relation to the subject of our research lies in its reasoning on the aspects of a mysticism that are susceptible to distorted political ideology, which is to be ultimately overcome in baptized mysticism.

Tillich argues that the establishment of the unlimited authority of the national state is possible only when founded upon a myth that has the inherent power of encompassing people's entire being and driving them on to unconditional self-surrender. This myth, when elevated to the rank of "absolute sanctity," "possesses reality, but it also

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<sup>107</sup> Pauck and Pauck, 311, n. 62.

<sup>108</sup> Paul Tillich, "The Totalitarian State and the Claims of Church," ed. Erdmann Sturm, *Writings in Social Philosophy and Ethics* (Berlin & New York: Water de Gruyter, 1998).

<sup>109</sup> Tillich takes up this theme again in his 1952 writing, *The Courage To Be*. It is discussed here in the context of the association of mysticism with "neo-collectivism." Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 96-103.

transcends reality in passing over into enthusiasm and mysticism.”<sup>110</sup> In his view, the mystical character of the myth of the nation tied up with the basic conceptions of the totalitarian state is clearly seen in the concept of “mysterious sovereign” (*verborgener Souverain*) of Emanuel Hirsch, the leading theologian of the German-Christian movement. Tillich writes:

The individual member of the nation has no real existence outside of this union of blood... His goal must be the realization of whatever is best for the creative and determining forces in the nation. The triumph of this myth and the reality from which it proceeds over all opposing forces represent the “sacred hour” of the nation, which must be experienced with enthusiasm and unconditional surrender. It is the “fullness of time,” in the religious sense of the term. “Even the harshest measures of the state,” even the resolution of the entire life within the state, is necessary and sacred if it serves the purposes of the nation, the “mysterious sovereign.” He is not God, but he is an immediate revelation of God.<sup>111</sup>

The myth of the nation makes room for mystifying or sanctifying all activities of the state, even “the harshest measures of the state” and in doing so justifies the suppression of all opposing forces against it. The state is considered the “immediate revelation of God,” which all people within the state are to receive with “enthusiasm and unconditional surrender.” In this sense, the totalitarian state receives “mystic consecration.” Hirsch’s mysterious sovereign is, according to Tillich, an ideological apparatus, which justifies the idea of divine consecration and sacred origin.

The totalitarian state is “born out of insecurity of historical existence during the epoch of late capitalism and designed, through national concentration, to create security

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<sup>110</sup> Tillich, “The Totalitarian State and the Claims of Church,” 430.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

and reintegration.”<sup>112</sup> It is a product of the aspiration that, in confrontation with insecure realities of the present and of the late capitalism, tries to find security and harmony in an absolute power system, whose ideological strategy drives people into a mistaken view of reality and a blind obedience toward the system. This, precisely, goes contrary to what is signified by Tillich’s notion of the “living on the boundary,” the *modus vivendi* of a baptized mystic, which repudiates all attempts to flee from the ultimate threat in human existence and offer spiritual security and surrender to “heteronomy.” Recall that in his essay “The Protestant Message” Tillich tackles mystical and sacramental piety that does not take the human border situation seriously. That view is now reiterated in his critical view of the myth of the totalitarian state.

An important aspect of the mystical piety that supports and justifies the myth of the nation is that it is purely abstract and so does not effect any concrete decision. In a letter to Hirsh, Tillich writes that the mysterious sovereign is a “mystical reality, if it is a reality. No one can derive from it a concrete decision.”<sup>113</sup> That mystical piety serves to thwart the possibility of a concrete decision and thus an active engagement with a social project designed to enhance democracy and justice. Reminiscent of the “mystical realism” as introduced in the essay “Realism and Faith,” it is the worldview where the gravity of historical existence is not taken seriously and the pursuit of the eternal essences and their unity and ground is exploited by the totalitarian ideology geared toward the suppression of all r ésistance endeavors.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Paul Tillich, “Open Letter to Emanuel Hirsch,” 379.

It is necessary here to refer to Tillich's 1933 writing, *The Socialist Decision*, since it gives a more comprehensive analysis of the relation between the "myth of origin" and mysticism and considers this relation in the context of the principle of religious socialism, which makes justice precedent over the myth of origin. In the first place, Tillich identifies the twofold aspect of human nature, out of which the two roots of all political thinking grow, conservative and romantic thought and liberal, democratic, and socialist thought. The first aspect is that the human being finds him/herself in existence; he/she has an origin that is not him/herself and so raises the question of the "Whence." The second is that the human being experiences the demand, which liberates him/her from being merely and completely bound to what is given, i.e., the origin, to embrace the question of "Whither." What is important is Whither is not contained within the limits of Whence: the demand is something unconditionally new over against the origin; and by this nature it can break the myth of origin. This implies:

The origin is ambiguous. There is a split in it between the true and the actual origin. The actual origin is not the origin in truth. It is not the fulfillment of what is intended for humanity from the origin. The fulfillment of origin lies rather in what confronts us as a demand, as an ought. The "Whence" of humanity finds its fulfillment in the Whither"... The ambiguity of the origin is first revealed to it when the experience of the unconditional demand frees this consciousness from bondage to the origin.<sup>114</sup>

The actual origin, e.g., blood, nation, or a social group, cannot be identified with the true origin. The true origin is elsewhere; it is found in the process of separating oneself from the actual origin and creatively responding to the unconditional demand, which is experienced as an "ought," the power of destabilizing and de-centering. This recalls Tillich's experience of God around the time of his emigration, on which we have

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<sup>114</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Socialist Decision* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 5-6.

already made some observations in the introduction of the current chapter: “He separates every individual Christian whom he calls *from the ultimate obedience to family and tribe, to nation and state*, and makes him a citizen of another world.”<sup>115</sup> (italics mine) It also recalls Tillich’s typology of religion as the mystical and the prophetic type: the mystical type represents the experience of the holy as “what is,” whereas the prophetic the holy as “what ought to be”; both are dialectically united in baptized mysticism. From this, we are in a better position to understand Tillich’s association of the myth of the nation with mysticism: the myth of the nation, which often effects “mystic consecration” of the totalitarian state, has to be transcended in the process of the fulfillment of the true origin, which is experienced as the “unconditional demand.” In short, the unconditional demand breaks up with ideological dangers of mysticism in general and the mystical type of religion in particular.

## **2. “The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism” (1941)**

“Disintegration” and “meaninglessness” are key words for Tillich in illustrating and analyzing the contemporary situation of 1930-40s.<sup>116</sup> Disintegration is the event of the split that occurred in society and in human psyche as well, which consists in the sense of insecurity and the loss of an ultimate meaning of life with its accompanying result of the loss of personality and community. What is demanded is “a convincing restatement of the meaning of life, for the discovery of symbols expressing it, and for the

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<sup>115</sup> Tillich, “Christianity and Emigration,” 13.

<sup>116</sup> See the following articles of Tillich: “The End of the Protestant Era?” (1937) in *The Protestant Era*, 222-233; “Our Disintegrating World” (1941) in *Writings in the Philosophy of Culture: Main Works*, vol. 2, 157-164; “Spiritual Problems of Postwar Reconstruction” (1942) in *The Protestant Era*, 261-269; “The World Situation” (1945) in *Writings in the Philosophy of Culture*, 165-196.

reestablishment of personality and community on a new basis.”<sup>117</sup> The task of Protestantism, thus, is to find a “new foundation,” which holds on to the prophetic principle and at the same time can incorporate Catholic elements, including mysticism, in a creative way.<sup>118</sup> This is the context in which the current article is to be understood.

Tillich begins by stating the twofold way of experiencing the holy: the “holiness of being” and the “holiness of what ought to be.” Depending on the predominance of the one or the other, there ensue two types of religion, the sacramental type and the eschatological type, which are represented by the priest and the prophet, respectively. He states:

Protestantism needs the permanent corrective of Catholicism and the continuous influx of sacramental elements from it in order to live. Catholicism, by its very existence, reminds Protestantism of the sacramental foundation without which the prophetic-eschatological attitude has no basis, substance and creative power. Catholicism represents the truth that the “holy of being” must precede the “holy of what ought to be,” that without the “mother,” the priestly-sacramental Church, the “father,” the prophetic-eschatological movements has no roots. It becomes cultural activism and moral utopianism.<sup>119</sup>

According to Tillich, Catholicism as the sacramental type of religion functions as the remainder that Protestantism as the eschatological type needs “the sacramental foundation” so as not to lose its vitality and power. In other words, Catholicism reminds Protestantism of the fact that the sacramental elements are indispensable and necessary in its prophetic-eschatological protest. It also reminds that the holiness of being precedes the

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<sup>117</sup> Tillich, “Spiritual Problems of Postwar Reconstruction,” 262.

<sup>118</sup> Tillich, “The End of the Protestant Era?” 225-233.

<sup>119</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism,” ed. Gert Hummel, *Theological Writings: Main Works*, vol. 6 (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 236. Tillich’s typology of the father type and the mother type is found again in his 1953 lecture, “The Jewish Question: A Christian and a German Problem,” *NAPTSB*, vol. xxx, no. 3 (Summer, 2004), 3-24.

holiness of what ought to be. Therefore, without a creative incorporation of Catholic elements, Protestantism falls prey to “cultural activism” and “moral utopianism,” thereby losing its religious character as a whole and becoming a “shallow secularism.”

According to Tillich, the disintegration of the period is manifest in the fact of the absence of uniting symbols, and Protestantism, to be sure, has deprived Christian symbols of their “mystical meaning” and even developed an anti-symbolism. What occurred in the historical development of Protestantism is the moralistic distortion of Christianity in an increasing replacement of mysticism by activism. In its original attitude, however, Protestantism affirmed the mystical, as Tillich asserts:

But it is not anti-mystical in itself. It cannot be because the “mystical” is an essential and general category of religion as such (besides being a special religious type). There was and is Protestant mysticism as a special form of Protestantism. And there was and is the mystical element in all forms of Protestantism which have preserved their religious character. In both respects the refutation of mysticism as non-Protestant is wrong and even destructive.<sup>120</sup>

Protestantism as a religion preserves within itself the mystical as the fundamental category of religious experience, although it does not belong to the mystical type of religion. If there is a Protestantism that makes no room for meditation and contemplation, for ecstasy and mystical union, it loses its religious character and merely becomes an intellectual and moral system. Tillich holds that “the immense reservoir of Catholic mysticism must be opened for the Protestant people who under the pressure of activism and moralism have lost the approach to the depth of their souls and try to find it with the help of psycho-analytic and –therapeutic methods.”<sup>121</sup> Catholic mysticism is what

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<sup>120</sup> 241.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

Protestantism has to turn to in its attempt to find a way to the depth of the soul. He concludes: “The prophetic type of Christianity cannot live in the long run without the priestly type, not [*sic*] the eschatological without the sacramental: this is the general answer to the question of the permanent significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism.”<sup>122</sup>

Now, a brief comment on Tillich’s arguments is in order. His major concern in the essay is to consider a successful way of responding to the contemporary need for finding the meaning of life, and it is out of this concern that he refers to mysticism, which has been preserved in the Catholic Church but generally lost in Protestantism. Mysticism, which belongs to sacramental types of religion such as Catholicism, can give a corrective to Protestantism as the eschatological type. By this argument he implies that Protestantism needs to embrace mysticism to reclaim its original value as a religion in which the sacramental (mystical) and the eschatological (prophetic) can form a dialectical union. This is why he says in conclusion, “the prophetic type of Christianity cannot live in the long run without the priestly type, not the eschatological without the sacramental.” My contention is that Tillich’s calling for the retrieval within Protestantism of mysticism as a Catholic element is best understood in light of his idea of baptized mysticism.

### **3. “The Word of Religion” (1942); “Vertical and Horizontal Thinking” (1945)**

The previous chapter has shown that throughout his life and work Tillich is quite consistent both in regarding the mystical as an essential element of religion and religious life and in calling for the dialectical union of the mystical and the prophetic as the telos of religion and religious life. There is a notable fact, however, that the point of emphasis

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<sup>122</sup> 242. Note that in Tillich’s time there was an uprising of ecumenical movement, in which similarities rather than differences between Catholicism and Protestantism were emphasized.

changes depending on the way he understands the question of the contemporary situation and also the way he personally engages the situation. In his paradigmatic 1923 essay on religious socialism, the emphasis lies in the prophetic: he draws on the significance of *reservatum religiosum* ultimately to point out the necessity of guarding against its demonization and having to be complemented by *obligatum religiosum* to get in touch with the reality of kairos. The change of emphasis is insinuated in his 1941 essay, which we have explored in the preceding section, and clearly found in the two essays to be dealt with in the current section. In the two essays, Tillich's interest lies in grounding religious life in the mystical. This change of emphasis is, perhaps, due to the change of his vision of the transformation, personal as well as social, as attested to in his autobiographical writing of 1949. Here, while maintaining his long-held conviction that the basic conceptions of religious socialism are valid, he sees only a very limited possibility of the realization of a creative kairos, as we read: "I see a vacuum which can be made creative only if it is accepted and endured and rejecting all kinds of premature solutions, is transformed into a deepening "sacred void" of waiting."<sup>123</sup>

We begin with Tillich's claims in "The Word of Religion" that the word of religion that can appeal to people of the contemporary era consists in the threefold quality of "transcending," "judging," and "transforming." There are two directions a religion can take for the appeal: the vertical and the horizontal. The vertical line points to the eternal meaning as such, while the horizontal stands for the temporal realization of the eternal

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<sup>123</sup> Paul Tillich, "Beyond Religious Socialism," in *Writings in Social Philosophy and Ethics*, 527.

meaning.<sup>124</sup> A more comprehensive account is given in “Vertical and Horizontal Thinking”:

Vertical and horizontal are spatial metaphors for qualities of our religious experience. “Vertical” points to the eternal in its presence as the ground of our being and the ultimate meaning of our lives. It points to our ability to elevate ourselves over the inescapable anxiety of finitude and over the destructive despair of guilt, in our personal and social existence... “Horizontal,” on the other hand, points to the transforming power of the eternal whenever it manifests itself. “Horizontal” is the prophetic fight for social justice and personal righteousness, the struggle against the structures of evil in our souls and our communities, the work for the formation of men and the world.<sup>125</sup>

These two lines of thinking are the “spatial metaphors” expressing the way in which the ultimate concern manifests itself. Both are united in a living religion, and, Tillich argues, the exclusion of either metaphor results in “a world defying, static mysticism” and “a world-controlling technical activism.”<sup>126</sup>

Upon giving an account of the two lines, however, Tillich emphatically calls for a revitalization of the vertical line. In “The Word of Religion,” he argues that in the present era of insecurity and tragedy the emphasis on the horizontal line has lost its power, because the people have a feeling that whatever they do, that will make no big difference. What is called for, then, is the power of the vertical line, by which they are empowered to say “in spite of” and resist the terrible impact of a historical catastrophe on their minds. Put otherwise, what has to come first is, as it were, not so much the will to transform the society as the empowerment of their being. In the later essay, “Vertical and Horizontal Thinking,” he locates the necessity of the revitalization of the vertical within a larger

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<sup>124</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Word of Religion,” in *The Protestant Era*, 186.

<sup>125</sup> Paul Tillich, “Vertical and Horizontal Thinking,” *The American Scholar*, vol. 15, no. 1 (Winter, 1945-1946), 103.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

context. In his analysis, the five hundred years of Western civilization up to the present time is characterized by the predominance of the horizontal and the gradual loss of the vertical. The ultimate concern of humans expresses itself in terms of scientific and technical progress, moral imperatives, educational norms and social ideals, and the prophetic protest against the demonic distortion of the established churches. The expulsion of the vertical, however, deprived the horizontal of its depth and its spiritual foundation and thus ensued an atmosphere of unconquerable anxiety, a feeling of meaninglessness, and a despair of the future.

Hopeful, though, is an emerging tendency toward a more vertical expression of the ultimate concern. To sketch out this tendency, Tillich presents a typology of the appearance of the vertical: the mystical type and the faith type. Included in the first is the rediscovery of the meaning of mystical experience in theology and philosophy of religion, partly in connection with a deeper understanding of the Asiatic religions. The second type includes the rediscovery of faith as a possible and meaningful attitude by the prophetic-revolutionary movements of the present period as well as by the philosophers of Existentialism. Added to these expressions of the vertical are the emergence of depth psychology and liturgical reformations in Protestantism as well as in Catholicism. He does not go further than this, but it is worth noting that he considers both mysticism and faith as belonging to the vertical.

The fact that Tillich appeals to ground religion and religious life in the vertical, however, should not be read as meaning its isolation from the horizontal, since his ultimate vision is always on the dialectical union of both. Thus we read: "The pendulum is swinging back to the vertical element in religion, and the danger is that it will swing

too far.”<sup>127</sup> The future of religion and religious life has to take the direction of a creative union of the vertical and the horizontal, which will generate the virtue of hope. He concludes: “Hope never dies, because it is the application of the venturing “in spite of” to the tragedy of historical action. Hope unites the vertical and the horizontal lines, the religious reservation and the religious obligation. Therefore, the ultimate word that religion must say to the people of our time is the word of hope.”<sup>128</sup> This is a significant utterance of Tillich, since in it he expresses a fundamental attitude of baptized mysticism. What he upholds when he says, “hope unites the vertical and the horizontal lines,” is not a disengaged, but a participatory stance toward reality, with which he waits and takes required actions for the breaking-in of the eternal. Without hope, one could not uphold the engaged stance toward reality; without hope one could not anticipate the presence of the eternal in the temporal. Put differently, the person of hope maintains within him/herself both the awareness of the presence of the divine and the demand for socio-political engagement. Hope is, thus, the necessary attitude of a baptized mystic, who is willing to accept the nonbeing of human existence in the courage to be.

#### **4. *Systematic Theology I* (1951)**

In this section we are going to explore Tillich’s doctrine of revelation, which comprises Part I of *Systematic Theology* and takes a central role, I argue, in constructing his theology of mysticism. Due to the limited space and the adherence to the theme of our research, we will restrict ourselves to such topics as the marks of revelation, prayer, and the concept of “transparency.”

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<sup>127</sup> Tillich, “Vertical and Horizontal Thinking,” 105.

<sup>128</sup> Tillich, “The Word of Religion,” 191.

Tillich's doctrine of revelation begins with three marks. The first mark of revelation is mystery. The two terms, revelation and mystery, are interrelated in their proper senses: "revelation," literally meaning "removing the veil," points to a special and extraordinary manifestation which removes the veil from something which is hidden in a special and extraordinary way, and this hiddenness is often called "mystery." The word "mystery" is derived from *muein* meaning, "closing the eyes" or "closing the mouth," and the experience of a genuine mystery occurs through the attitude that goes beyond ordinary cognition. It is the characterization of a dimension, which precedes the subject-object relationship. A vital feature of mystery is that what is essentially mysterious cannot lose its mysteriousness even when it is revealed, since it appears, according to Tillich, when reason is driven beyond itself to its ground and abyss, which he calls the "depth of reason." The abysmal dimension of being cannot be, as it were, ultimately appropriated, and thus a mystery. This is the "negative side" of mystery as opposed to the "positive side" of mystery, in which mystery appears as ground and not only as abyss, i.e., as the power of being, thereby conquering nonbeing, and as the "ultimate concern." These two sides of mystery create a contrasting effect, namely, "shattering" and "transforming," as he writes in a 1930 article on revelation:

Revelation is neither the fulfillment nor the destruction of the natural. It is rather its shattering and transformation. In "shattering" we find the negative element, which appeals to supernaturalism; the natural does not remain in its natural balance or equilibrium. The "transformation" is the positive supplement to that: the natural tendency of the finite, which is turned away from the Unconditioned-Transcendent, is transformed, that is turned towards it.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Paul Tillich, "Revelation," The Paul Tillich Archive, Harvard University, Massachusetts, 5.

For Tillich, revelation is the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately because it brings an effect that is shaking, transforming, demanding, and significant in an ultimate way. This implies that revelation is both a subjective and an objective event in strict interdependence: subjectively there is someone who is grasped by the manifestation of the mystery; objectively there is something that occurs through which the mystery of revelation grasps someone. Ecstasy and miracle express the manifestation of mystery as the subjective and objective events, respectively.

Ecstasy, literally meaning “standing outside one’s self,” points to the subjective reception of the revelatory event, where one experiences and transcends “ontological shock,” the negative side of the mystery of being. In the ecstatic experience the ontological shock is preserved in the annihilating power of the divine presence (*mysterium tremendum*) and is transcended in the elevating power of the divine presence (*mysterium fascinans*). Tillich says: “Ecstasy unites the experience of the abyss to which reason in all its functions is driven with the experience of the ground in which reason is grasped by the mystery of its own depth and of the depth of being generally.”<sup>130</sup> Noteworthy, here, is Tillich’s idea that the ecstatic state does not destroy the rational structure of the mind, and this is the criteria by which he differentiates between divine ecstasy and demonic possession: the former preserves and elevates the rational structure of the mind whereas the latter destroys. Divine ecstasy affirms the ethical and logical principles of reason and demonic possession negates them. He asserts: “The demonic blinds; it does not reveal. In the state of demonic possession the mind is not really “beside itself,” but rather it is in the power of elements of itself which aspire to be the

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<sup>130</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 113.

whole mind which grasp the center of the rational self and destroy it.”<sup>131</sup> In contrast, divine ecstasy drives one toward the wholeness of the centered self.

The third mark of revelation is miracle. Originally meaning, “that which produces astonishment,”<sup>132</sup> miracle is the term Tillich employs to designate the objective dimension of revelation. To avoid the distorted connotation of a supernatural interference, he adopts and often uses the term, “sign-event,” interchangeably with miracle. He notes that many miracle stories illustrate the “numinous dread,” which grasps those who participate in the miraculous events: there is the feeling that the solid ground of ordinary reality is radically shaken. This he calls the “stigma of nonbeing,” which, together with the shock of nonbeing, expresses the negative side of the mystery of being.

All the three marks of revelation, in which the divine Spirit grasps, shakes and moves the human spirit, are present in an every authentic prayer. Tillich holds:

Every prayer and mediation, if it fulfills its meaning, namely, to reunite the creature with its creative ground, is revelatory in this sense. . . . Speaking to God and receiving an answer is an ecstatic and miraculous experience; it transcends all ordinary structures of subjective and objective reason. It is the presence of the mystery of being and an actualization of our ultimate concern. If it is brought down to the level of a conversation between two beings, it is blasphemous and ridiculous. If, however, it is understood as the “elevation of the heart,” namely, the center of the personality, to God, it is a revelatory event.<sup>133</sup>

Prayer and meditation are illustrated as the reunion with the ground of being and revelatory. In prayer, the mystery of being is revealed and yet cannot be completely appropriated; ontological shock is experienced and transcended; and the solid ground of

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>132</sup> 115.

<sup>133</sup> 127.

reality is completely shaken. Prayer may start as a conversation with God and cannot eventually be reduced to the level of the conversation, because it is the “actualization of ultimate concern.”

On presenting the three marks of revelation, Tillich moves on to explore the media of revelation. What draws a particular attention of us is the concept of “transparency.”<sup>134</sup> Revelation can occur through every personality who is “transparent” for the ground of being. What makes a personality the bearer of revelation is not personal perfection but the quality of transparency embedded in the personality. Saints, thus, are persons who are transparent for the ground of being and whose being can become a sign-event for others. The transparent personality emulates, as it were, mystagogical effects upon others. One receives revelation not merely for him/herself but for his/her group and implicitly for all mankind. This is typically shown in the revelatory experiences of the prophets and also of the mystics in diverse religious traditions. “Prophetic revelation” is, therefore, “vocational.”<sup>135</sup> It is in this vein that Tillich prefers “prophetic ecstasy” to “mystical ecstasy” in a sermon delivered at Union Theological Seminary upon the sixth chapter of Isaiah:

The difference between mystical and prophetic religion lies in that insight. For even in the greatest ecstasy, a prophet does not forget the social group to which he belongs, and its unclean character, which he cannot lose. Consequently, the prophetic ecstasy, as opposed to the mystical ecstasy, is never an end in itself, but rather the means of receiving the divine commands, which are to preach to the people. Isaiah’s vision reveals the two conditions for prophetic existence.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> The use of this concept is also found in Part IV of *Systematic Theology*, this time in the context of “images of perfection,” which will be explored later in the last section of the current chapter. Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 237.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>136</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Experience of the Holy,” *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948), 90.

The proper response to the divine commands, which is created by “prophetic ecstasy,” is holding on to the vocational life. The vocational life as a creation of prophetic ecstasy is based on the freedom of choice, not on the compulsive dialectic of commandment and obedience. The transparent personality must decide whether or not he/she will dedicate him/herself to the task of God’s mission.<sup>137</sup> The holding on to the vocational life implies, then, that prophetic revelation or ecstasy is inherently historical and inter-subjective; it promotes the life of meaning-fulfillment in a relational context.

In conclusion, I want to highlight two important points in relation to baptized mysticism. First, note that Tillich’s concept of ecstasy addresses both *mysterium tremendum* and *mysterium fascinosum*, i.e., both the experience of the abyss and the experience of the ground. Since these two kinds of experiences correspond to the holy as what is and the holy as what ought to be, respectively, and the dialectical unity of the two experiences is what is meant by baptized mysticism, it is well to say that the term “ecstasy” in itself expresses a key characteristic of baptized mysticism. Second, in his notion of “prophetic ecstasy,” which leads inescapably to vocational consciousness, the meaning-fulfilling element of baptized mysticism is well indicated. Baptized mysticism involves prophetic ecstasy in that it does not wish to rest in a state of mystical union with the divine but proceeds to fulfill the meaning of the mystic’s being and life in an inter-subjective, relational, and social context.

### **5. *The Courage To Be* (1952)**

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 91.

In this highly psychological as well as philosophical analysis of the concept of courage, essential components of Tillich's baptized mysticism are presented in a way that can serve to provide an integrated way of being (ontology) and relating (ethics) for a baptized mystic. The way of a baptized mystic is the way of courage precisely based on the experiential recognition of "absolute faith" and the "God above God," which, I argue, comprises Tillichian apophaticism. The primary focus in our research is on the final chapter of the book where Tillich's theory of courage culminates.

The chapter begins by reiterating Tillich's definition of courage: "Courage is the self-affirmation of being in spite of the fact of nonbeing."<sup>138</sup> Courage as self-affirmation enables one to take into him/herself the threefold anxiety of nonbeing, i.e., the anxiety of fate and death, emptiness and meaninglessness, and guilt and condemnation. It has two sides, "individualization" and "participation," which is one of the three basic polarities in Tillich's ontology. Individualization is the affirmation of the self as a "separated, self-centered, individualized, incomparable, free, self-determining self,"<sup>139</sup> which cannot be divided and exchanged. In contrast, participation is the affirmation of the self as a part in the world to which he/she belongs and at the same time from which he/she is separated. These two sides are dialectically interrelated, but, under the conditions of human finitude and estrangement, disintegrate in their isolation, thereby making the anxiety they had taken into themselves unloosed and destructive. Notably, the affirmation of the self as a centered person and as a participant is rooted in the power of being-itself; the power of being-itself is, as it were, the source of the courage to be. Then, Tillich holds that courage

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<sup>138</sup> Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 155.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

has three characteristics according to the way in which the relation to being-itself is determined: if the element of participation is dominant, the relation to being-itself has a mystical character, if that of individualization a personal character, and if both are accepted and transcended it has the character of faith.

First, in the striving for a participation in the ground of being, the mystic affirms his/her own essential being over against the elements of nonbeing. Nonbeing is no threat to him/her, i.e., unreal, since being in finitude is ultimately unreal; the anxiety of meaninglessness is also conquered in the mystical courage to be, since the ultimate meaning is not something definite but the abyss of every meaning system; guilt is not entirely absent in a mystic, but the anxiety of guilt does not become the anxiety of condemnation as long as the certainty of final fulfillment is given through a mystical participation in the ground of being. Tillich asserts, however, that there is a limit in the mystical courage to be: "Its limit is the state of emptiness of being and meaning, with its horror and despair... In these moments the courage to be is reduced to the acceptance of even this state as a way to prepare through darkness for light, through emptiness for abundance."<sup>140</sup> Here, he seems to argue that mystics, with their construal of the state of emptiness as the preliminary stage for a more perfect state of "light" and "abundance," do not accept into their beings the anxiety of doubt and meaninglessness in a full-fledged way. In other words, their attempt to transcend the lures of the final realm creates an illusion that they at some point would certainly be lead into a state where they find ultimate meaning and security.

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<sup>140</sup> 159.

Second, the courage to be has the character of a personal communion with the source of courage, which creates the courage of confidence. According to Tillich, as the courage to accept acceptance in spite of the anxiety of guilt, which dominated the Reformation period, it stands in the center of the Protestant courage of confidence. The courage to accept acceptance is rooted in the personal, total, and immediate certainty of divine forgiveness: it is the acceptance of the unacceptable sinner into judging and transforming communion with God. Only in a person-to-person relation the acceptance of the unacceptable, namely, divine forgiveness, can be accepted. An ostensible confusing point is, however, that while Tillich considers the courage of Luther and the Reformers in the context of the personal communion where the pole of individualization is dominant, he raises an objection against the view of regarding the courage of confidence as the courage to be oneself. He asserts:

The courage of the Reformers is not the courage to be oneself-as it is not the courage to be as a part. It transcends and unites both of them. For the courage of confidence is not rooted in confidence about oneself. The Reformation pronounces the opposite: one can become confident about one's existence only after ceasing to base one's confidence on oneself. On the other hand the courage of confidence is in no way based on anything finite besides oneself, not even on the Church. It is based on God and solely on God, who is experienced in a unique and personal encounter.<sup>141</sup>

Tillich seems to hope to point out that the confidence as shown in Luther and the Reformers is the confidence, not about oneself, but about God, who is the ground and abyss of being. The confidence created in a person-to-person encounter with God means neither a belief in the existence of God nor a trust upon the possibility that the depleted self in the midst of doubt and meaninglessness shall be revitalized. Rather, it is the

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<sup>141</sup> 163.

acceptance of the unconditionality of God and of the fragile character of human existence represented by the ever-present reality of the threefold anxiety. Thus, the courage and confidence of the Reformers transcend mystical union and personal encounter and integrate both. And, the integration of mysticism and personal communion characterizes the third form of the relation to being-itself, namely, faith or “absolute faith,” which is, I argue, the fundamental element in baptized mysticism.

Tillich defines faith as “the state of being grasped by the power of being which transcends everything that is and in which everything that is participates.”<sup>142</sup> Then, he identifies three elements of absolute faith: first, it is the experience of the power of being which is present even in the midst of the most radical manifestation of nonbeing; second, in absolute faith the experience of nonbeing, the experience of meaninglessness, depends on the experience of being, the experience of meaning; third, it involves the paradox of the acceptance of being accepted and thus the courage of taking the anxiety of nonbeing into the self. On this basis, he asserts that absolute faith transcends both mystical experience and divine-human encounter: it transcends mysticism, since it includes an element of skepticism, which cannot be found in mysticism; it also transcends the divine-human encounter, since it goes beyond the subject-object scheme that is still valid in the person-to-person encounter. Then, a question may arise: would there be specific contents conceivable in absolute faith? It is here that Tillich brings into discussion the concept of the “God above God,” which shows a Dionysian influence.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> 173.

<sup>143</sup> In a lecture on Pseudo-Dionysius Tillich comments: “Thus, all the names must disappear after they have been attributed to God, even the holy name “God” itself. Perhaps this is the source-unconsciously-of what I said at the end of my book, *The Courage To Be*, about the “God above God.” Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 92.

The God above God as the object of absolute faith transcends theistic understandings of God, whether the latter means the “unspecified affirmation of God” used in a popular rhetoric, the exclusive attachment to the personalistic image of God, or “theological theism,” in which God becomes a being, not the ground of being. The God above God is the God as the source of the courage to be, namely, the God experienced in the accepting of the acceptance “without somebody or something that accepts.”<sup>144</sup> The overcoming of the anxiety of doubt and meaninglessness takes place in a space where God appears in His absence, where the attachment to theistic conceptions or images of God is altogether transcended. For Tillich, absolute faith concurs with the faith implied in mysticism in that both go beyond the theistic objectification of the God who is a being: “For mysticism such a God is not more real than any finite being, for the courage to be such a God has disappeared in the abyss of meaninglessness with every other value and meaning.”<sup>145</sup> On the other hand, the God above the God of theism is also found in every divine-human encounter. Biblical religion and Protestant theology recognize that personalism is to be balanced by a transpersonal presence of the divine and know the paradoxical character of every prayer, “of speaking to somebody to whom you cannot speak because he is not somebody.”

An important point Tillich makes for absolute faith is that it points to both a continuous proceeding and a state of being on the boundary, as we read:

It never is something separated and definite, an event which could be isolated and described. It is always a movement in, with, and under other states of mind. It is the situation on the boundary of man’s possibilities. It *is* this boundary. Therefore

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<sup>144</sup> Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 185.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

it is both the courage of despair and the courage in and above every courage. It is not a place where one can live, it is without the safety of words and concepts, it is without a name, a church, a cult, a theology. But it is moving in the depth of all of them. It is the power of being, in which they participate and of which they are fragmentary expressions.<sup>146</sup>

Absolute faith is a “movement” that cannot be located properly at a specific point of experience and can only be identified in a continuum of the life-experiences. It is thus also the boundary as opposed to the resting place where no security or ultimate solution can be found in a name, a church, a cult, or a theology. It follows, then, that “The God above God is a name for God who appears in the radicalism and the seriousness of the ultimate question, even without an answer.”<sup>147</sup> The life of absolute faith is, therefore, the life in accordance with the moving force effective in the depth of all those realities. It is indeed the life of a baptized mystic. This does not mean, however, that only a baptized mystic can have absolute faith: it rather means that he/she is an exemplary personality whose life is best characterized by the life of absolute faith.

### **6. *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions (1963)***

Tillich’s personal encounter with Buddhism took place in meeting two influential Zen masters in America, Daisetz T. Suzuki and Shin’ichi Hisamatsu in 1950s. With Suzuki he participated in the Eranos lectures in Switzerland in 1953 and also in a symposium organized by Abraham Maslow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1957.<sup>148</sup> With Hisamatsu he had extensive conversation sessions at Harvard University in 1957 while Hisamatsu was visiting scholar and Tillich University Professor. These

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<sup>146</sup> 189.

<sup>147</sup> Paul Tillich, “The God above God,” in *Theological Writings*, 418.

<sup>148</sup> Marc Boss, “Tillich in dialogue with Japanese Buddhism: A Paradigmatic Illustration of His Approach to Inter-Religious Conversation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, 254-255.

personal encounters set the significant stage for reconsidering the universalist claim for Christianity,<sup>149</sup> which he had espoused in a distinctive way. They were deliberately incorporated into the Matchette Lectures he gave at Wesleyan University in 1958 upon the title “The Protestant Principle and The Encounter of World Religions.”<sup>150</sup> In 1960, he visited Japan during ten weeks to give lectures and have discussions with Japanese Buddhists, including the two Zen masters mentioned above,<sup>151</sup> and Masao Abe, who took him to the Buddhist temples,<sup>152</sup> and the following year saw him delivering the four Bampton Lectures at Columbia University, later published as *Christianity and The Encounter of the World Religions*, the third lecture of which draws our special attention in this section. Here, Tillich contrasts the ontological symbols of Christianity and Buddhism, the Kingdom of God and Nirvana, on the basis of his theory of two types of religion and religious life, the mystical and the ethical.

Tillich makes clear from the beginning that his interest lies basically in establishing “signposts pointing to *types* of religions, their general characteristics, and their positions in relation to each other.”<sup>153</sup> Thus ensues the use of his “dynamic typology,” in terms of which it is “impossible to call Christianity the absolute religion, as Hegel did, for Christianity is characterized in each historical period by the predominance

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<sup>149</sup> Ruwan Palapathwala, “Beyond Christ and System: Paul Tillich and Spirituality for the Twenty-first Century,” *Religion in the New Millennium: Theology in the Spirit of Paul Tillich*, ed. Raymond F. Bulman & Frederick J. Parrella (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2001), 205-219.

<sup>150</sup> The conversation with Hisamatsu and the Matchette Lectures are published in *The Encounter of Religions and Quasi-Religions*, ed. Terence Thomas (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

<sup>151</sup> Two of the discussion sessions are published. “Tillich Encounters Japan,” ed. Robert W. Wood, *Japanese Religions*, vol. 2, no. 2, 3 (May, 1961), 48-71.

<sup>152</sup> Masao Abe, “In Memory of Dr. Paul Tillich,” *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. Steven Heine (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1995), 121.

<sup>153</sup> Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, 54.

of different elements out of the whole of elements and polarities which constitute the religious realm.”<sup>154</sup> And, the dynamic typology requests a “silent dialogue” in the similar sense of Raimundo Panikkar’s “dialogical dialogue,” which “involves both self-other and self-self,”<sup>155</sup> thereby creating a total renewal within the self. Tillich proposes that while both grow out of a sacramental basis, Christianity has broken the sacramental basis in the direction of the ethical and Buddhism in the direction of the mystical. He, then, relates these two directions to the two contrasting symbols representing the two intrinsic aim of existence, the Kingdom of God and Nirvana. He states:

The Kingdom of God is a social, political, and personalistic symbol. The symbolic material is taken from the ruler of a realm who establishes a reign of justice and peace. In contrast to it Nirvana is an ontological symbol. Its material is taken from the experience of finitude, separation, blindness, suffering, and in answer to all this, the image of the blessed oneness of everything, beyond finitude and error, in the ultimate Ground of Being.<sup>156</sup>

For Tillich, the Kingdom of God represents the establishment of a social, political and interpersonal justice as the telos of being, whereas Nirvana the ontological state of “blessed oneness of everything in the ultimate ground of being” as the answer for existential questions of human finitude. The attempt to bring about justice in Christianity is based on a negative valuation of existence and yet its negative valuation is directed against the world in its existence, not in its essence. In contrast, the concept of a world as such is negated in the Buddhist symbol of Nirvana, since “the fact that there is a world is

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>155</sup> Kenneth P. Kramer, “A Silent Dialogue: The Intrareligious Dimension,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, vol. 10 (1990), 127. Kramer considers Tillich’s “silent dialogue” as exemplifying Panikkar’s method.

<sup>156</sup> Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, 64-65.

the result of an ontological Fall into finitude.”<sup>157</sup> To this difference he adds that the Christian Ultimate is symbolized in personal categories and the Ultimate of Buddhism in transpersonal categories, e.g., “absolute non-being”; a human being in Christianity is a sinner who is responsible for the Fall and in Buddhism the element of responsibility is lacking and, instead, the fact of a finite creature innately bound to the wheel of life is emphasized. There are clear different emphases in the two types of religion and yet Tillich’s dynamic typology enables one now to find the presence of the mystical in Christianity and of the ethical in Buddhism. He focuses on the personal and transpersonal characters of the divine:

The *esse ipsum*, being itself, of the classical doctrine of God, is a transpersonal category and enables the Christian disputant to understand the meaning of absolute nothingness in Buddhist thought... Vice versa, it is obvious that in Mahayana Buddhism the Buddha-Spirit appears in many manifestations of a personal character, making a nonmystical, often very primitive relation to a divine figure possible.<sup>158</sup>

A more important point Tillich suggests is that behind the conflicting symbols of the Kingdom of God and Nirvana lie the two differing ontological principles, which are “participation” and “identity.” He does not elaborate on these two principles and just states: that “One participates, as an individual being, in the Kingdom of God. One is identical with everything that is in Nirvana.”<sup>159</sup> By this statement he hopes to reveal that whereas in participation the self as an individual is not merged and lost into oneness, in identification the individual self is so lost. The question of individuality, as shall be clear

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>158</sup> 67.

<sup>159</sup> 68.

shortly, takes a significant place in his intra/inter-religious dialogue and also in his conception of baptized mysticism.

The contrasting feature of the two ontological principles is revealed most immediately in the different conceptualization of the relation of human to nature, which creates different ethical consequences. The principle of participation can potentially be reduced to the attitude of technical control of nature (Tillich has in mind here the creation story in Old Testament in which Adam is assigned the task of ruling over all other creatures), but this potentiality is greatly prevented under the principle of identity owing to its “sympathetic identification with nature,”<sup>160</sup> as expressed in the Buddhist-inspired art in China and Korea and Japan. Then, Tillich draws an interesting point:

In the long history of Christian nature-mysticism the principle of participation can reach a degree in which it is often difficult to distinguish it from the principle of identity, as, for example, in Francis of Assisi. Luther’s sacramental thinking produced a kind of nature-mysticism which influenced Protestant mystics and, in a secularized form, the German romantic movement. It is not Christianity as a whole, but Calvinist Protestantism whose attitude towards nature contradicts almost completely the Buddhist nature.<sup>161</sup>

The first line of the quote seems to indicate that the clear boundary between participation and identification is blurred in Christian nature mysticism as expressed in Francis of Assisi and Martin Luther. The melting of the boundary is, I argue, due to Tillich’s understanding of participation, as we saw in the earlier chapter, as “partial identity,” which is a tricky and yet optimal word for him to articulate the mystical dimension of a human-nature relation as founded upon the claims of Christianity.

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<sup>160</sup> 69.

<sup>161</sup> 70.

Now, Tillich considers ethical ramifications of the two ontological principles in light of agape and compassion: simply put, participation leads to agape, identity to compassion. Agape in the sense of the New Testament accepts and transforms the unacceptable in the direction of what is meant by the Kingdom of God. Contrastingly, the Buddhist compassion as he understands does not accept the other in terms of “in spite of” or try to transform the other, but only suffers with the other through identification. It, thus, can be a very active way of love that brings more immediate benefit to the other being loved than can a moralistically distorted commandment to exercise agape. Compassion, however, cannot be equated with agape in that it lacks the double quality that agape has, that is, the acceptance of the unacceptable and the will to transform the other by transforming the socio-political and also psychological structures by which he/she is conditioned. Then, Tillich comes to the final point of divergence between the two contrasting sets of principles, namely, history. Under the predominance of the symbol of the Kingdom of God, history is a dynamic movement in which the new is created and which runs ahead to the absolutely new. In Tillich’s view, there is no analogy to this in Buddhism. We read:

Not transformation of reality but salvation from reality is the basic attitude. This need not lead to radical asceticism as in India; it can lead to an affirmation of the activities of daily life-as, for instance, in Zen Buddhism-but under the principle of ultimate detachment. In any case, no belief in the new in history, no impulse for transforming society, can be derived from the principle of Nirvana. If contemporary Buddhism shows an increased social interest...this remains under the principle of compassion.<sup>162</sup>

While being aware of the world-affirming character of Zen Buddhism and also a new trend of Buddhism geared towards enhancing the involvement of Buddhists in the

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<sup>162</sup> 73.

transformative works on a socio-political realm, Tillich locates them within the context of the principle of Nirvana, in which “no belief in the new in history, no impulse for transforming society is positively addressed.” Compassionate acts, as long as they are done in a course of achieving Nirvana, are “not transformation of reality but salvation from reality.” It is not clear here what he means by salvation from reality, but, given that he illustrates Nirvana as the “blessed oneness in the ultimate ground of being” and usually interprets salvation in light of its literal meaning, “being made whole,”<sup>163</sup> it can be conjectured that it means the state of being in which one is withdrawn from reality and finds total integration and reconciliation. But, then, a question arises: Does this not reflect parochialism inherent in Tillich’s understanding of Buddhism? Does Buddhism also not have doctrinal as well as practical resources for social transformation, for example, as shown in the Eight-fold Noble Path? While agreeing with those who think that there are insufficient, if not entirely wrong, understandings of Buddhism in Tillich,<sup>164</sup> I wish to make two points here. First, his primary concern of this lecture is to pinpoint the nature of the mystical, that is, the experience of the holy as what is as opposed to the ethical as what one ought to do; second, what seems to be a parochial judgment is due primarily to his dynamic typology itself, in which there always have to be two poles in the first place.

In the last analysis, Tillich points out that in Christianity there is an inescapable presence of the mystical, “a strong, sometimes even predominant experience of the

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<sup>163</sup> Tillich’s most extensive study on this point is found in his 1948 essay, “The Relation of Religion and Health,” published in *The Meaning of Health*, 16-52.

<sup>164</sup> Victor Nuovo, “Translator’s Introduction,” *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling’s Positive Philosophy*, 26-32; Carl Olson, “Tillich’s Dialogue with Buddhism,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 7 (1987), 190-193; Taitetsu Unno, “Compassion in Buddhist Spirituality,” in *Religion in the New Millennium: Theology in the Spirit of Paul Tillich*, 165-176.

vertical line,”<sup>165</sup> and also the affinity with the unhistorical approach that all creatures long for the eternal rest in God. And yet, he does not, as it were, attempt to find the ethical in Buddhism and only states that “history itself has driven Buddhism to take history seriously” and (Japanese) Buddhism in its struggle for democracy needs to take up the Christian anthropology which “sees in him a person, a being of infinite value and equal rights in view of the Ultimate.”<sup>166</sup> On his view, there are “no roots” in Buddhism for that sort of anthropology. This view is, as it were, I suppose, the conclusive result of his long-time and yet limited scope of conversations with (Japanese) Buddhists, in which the question of individuality, that is, the question of the self, takes the central place. For him, the relation to the ultimate is always participation, which of course includes a mystical moment, but not identity in the Buddhist sense of non-duality. Thus, Tillich’s baptized mysticism cannot give in to the type of mysticism where the particularity or singularity of an individual is absorbed and lost into the ultimate, because this is incompatible with the Christian telos of being, which combines the will to transform and the longing for “blessed oneness,” thereby fulfilling, not negating, the individuality.

### **7. *Systematic Theology III* (1963)**

In problematizing the tendency among researchers of mysticism to regard the language of union as the absolute category, Bernard McGinn suggests “the notion of *presence* provides a more inclusive and supple term than *union* for encompassing the variety of ways that mystics have expressed how God comes to transform their minds and

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<sup>165</sup> Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, 73.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

lives.”<sup>167</sup> This recalls that Tillich often uses the language of “presence” in defining mysticism, as already shown in the earlier chapter: the “immediate presence of the divine,” an “experience of the immediate presence of the divine,” and the “presence of the Spirit in the depths of the human soul.” In Part IV of *Systematic Theology* titled “Life and the Spirit,” an exploration of which is the main task of this section, Tillich’s notion of presence appears in a full-fledged way to symbolize the indwelling of the Spirit in the human spirit, thus termed, “Spiritual Presence.” Relying on McGinn’s argument and given that Tillich considers Jesus the Christ as the ultimate manifestation of Spiritual Presence without distortion<sup>168</sup> and overtly relates St. Paul’s experience of being “in Christ” to baptized mysticism,<sup>169</sup> it is plausible to say that Spiritual Presence most comprehensively expresses what baptized mysticism implies.

A basic point of Tillich’s understanding of spirit is that as a “dimension” of life spirit unites the power of being with the meaning of being; it can thus be defined as the actualization of power and meaning in unity, which occurs only in humans. Hence, as the Spirit of God dwells and works in the human spirit, the power and meaning of the human person is fully revealed. This Tillich expresses by saying that “The Spiritual Presence creates an ecstasy in both of them [saving and revelatory experiences] which drives the spirit of man beyond itself without destroying its essential, i.e., rational, structure. Ecstasy does not destroy the centeredness of the integrated self.”<sup>170</sup> The ecstatic character

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<sup>167</sup> Bernard McGinn, “Introduction,” *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: The Modern Library, 2006), xv. An earlier version of McGinn’s argument is found in “General Introduction,” *The Foundation of Mysticism*, xi-xx.

<sup>168</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 144.

<sup>169</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 84.

of the Spiritual Presence creates “unambiguous” life, which is nothing other than the reunion of essential and existential being. This union he calls “transcendent union,” two appearances of which are faith and love. Faith and love express the ecstatic, mystical movement of transcendent union: they are not so much effects of mysticism as different expressions of mysticism. Faith and love as the ecstatic movement of the Spiritual Presence are interrelated: “faith is the state of being *grasped* by the transcendent unity of unambiguous life-it embodies love as the state of being *taken into* that transcendent unity.”<sup>171</sup> What is in order now is a brief account of faith and love as the two manifestations of the Spiritual Presence.

According to Tillich, faith cannot be created by the procedures of the intellect, or by endeavors of the will, or by emotional movements, but comprehends all these mental functions within itself, uniting and subjecting them to the Spiritual Presence’s transforming power. As the human reaction to the Spiritual Presence’s breaking into the human spirit, faith has three elements: “first, the element of being opened up by the Spiritual Presence; second, the element of accepting it in spite of the infinite gap between the divine Spirit and the human spirit; and third, the element of expecting final participation in the transcendent unity of unambiguous life.”<sup>172</sup> These three elements are not linear but interpenetrating: they are within one another and do not follow one after the other. The first element points to the receptive, passive character of faith, the second the paradoxical, courageous character, and the third the anticipatory, hopeful character. They,

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<sup>170</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 112.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>172</sup> 133.

then, reflect and correspond to the threefold character of the “New Being” as regeneration, justification, and sanctification. The “New Being” is Tillich’s term for the “essential being under the conditions of existence, conquering the gap between essence and existence.”<sup>173</sup>

On the other hand, Tillich defines love as the drive toward the reunion of the separated and by this definition implies that love is the innermost dynamic of life itself. Love concerns the whole personality and has within itself emotional, volitional, and intellectual elements: the drive for reunion gives pleasure, joy, or blessedness; love under the dimension of self-awareness involves the will to unite; it includes the knowledge of the beloved, which is not “the knowledge of analysis and calculating manipulation” but rather “the participating knowledge which changes both the knower and the known in the very act of loving knowledge.”<sup>174</sup> There are various kinds of love, e.g., *philia* (friendship), *eros* (aspiration toward value), *epithymia* (desire), and *agape*, which has first to be ascribed to God’s agape toward His creatures and then to the agape of creature toward creature. It is agape that as the creation of the Spiritual Presence is able to conquer the ambiguities of all other kinds of love. Agape, thus, has the basic structure of the New Being, namely, the receptive, paradoxical, and anticipatory:

The first quality is evident in its acceptance of the object of love without restrictions; the second quality is disclosed in agape’s holding fast to this acceptance in spite of the estranged, profanized, and demonized state of its objects, and the third quality is seen in agape’s expectation of the re-establishment of the holiness, greatness, and dignity of the object of love through its accepting him.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 118-119.

<sup>174</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 137.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

This threefold quality of love, like the threefold character of faith, corresponds to the threefold character of the emergence of the New Being as regeneration, justification, and sanctification. Tillich asserts: “the Spiritual Presence, elevating man through faith and love to the transcendent unity of unambiguous life, creates the New Being above the gap between essence and existence and consequently above the ambiguities of life.”<sup>176</sup>

In the section on ecclesiology Tillich elaborates on the threefold experience of the New Being as creation (regeneration), paradox (justification), and process (sanctification), and what particularly interests us is his theory of “four principles” as the process of sanctification. These principles, i.e., increasing awareness, increasing freedom, increasing relatedness, and increasing transcendence, comprise an “indefinite but distinguishable image”<sup>177</sup> of what has been traditionally called Christian perfection or holiness and, I argue, an image of baptized mysticism.

First, the principle of awareness, which is closely related, Tillich says, to contemporary depth psychology, indicates that a baptized mystic in the process of sanctification becomes increasingly aware of his/her ambiguous, demonic realities and also of the power of affirming life and its vital dynamics in spite of its ambiguities. The impact of the Spiritual Presence enables him/her to mature in the “sensitivity toward the demands of one’s own growth, toward the hidden hopes and disappointments within others, toward the [superego’s] voiceless voice of a concrete situation, toward the grades of authenticity in the life of the spirit in others and oneself.”<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> 138-139.

<sup>177</sup> 231.

<sup>178</sup> 232.

Second, the principle of increasing freedom points to the capacity to be free from particular “compulsions” and to judge the given situation, not in the light of the commandments of the law, but in the light of the Spiritual Presence, and to decide upon an adequate action often in apparent contradiction to the law. It includes the power of resisting the destructive, enslaving forces arising from the personal self and its social surroundings and yet excludes “willfulness,” which such freedom may entail as a surrender to enslaving conditions and compulsions.

The third principle, increasing relatedness, addresses the need to balance the principle of increasing freedom, which through the necessity of resisting enslaving influences may isolate the maturing mystic. Tillich discusses increasing relatedness in two ways: the relation to the other and self-relatedness. First, an impact of the Spiritual Presence is manifest in elevating the individual person above him/herself ecstatically to find the other person. It conquers loneliness, self-seclusion, and hostility and provides a baptized mystic with the power to sustain solitude. Second, the process of sanctification effected by the Spiritual Presence creates a mature self-relatedness in which the quality of self-acceptance conquers self-elevation on the one hand and self-contempt on the other. Tillich further explains on this point as follows:

Such a reunion is created by transcending both the self as subject, which tries to impose itself in terms of self-control and self-discipline on the self as object, the self as object, which resists such imposition in terms of self-pity and flight from one’s self. A mature self-relatedness is the state of reconciliation between the self as subject and the self as object and the spontaneous affirmation of one’s essential being beyond subject and object.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> 235.

Increasing relatedness means the ability to transcend both the self-imposed control and ascetic discipline and its reactionary self-pity and escape from the self. The baptized mystic empowered by the Spiritual Presence matures in reconciling with his/her own self and the reconciliation thus achieved leads inescapably to the spontaneous affirmation of the “essential being,” which “transcends every contingent state of its development and remains unaltered in its essence through such changes.”<sup>180</sup>

The last principle determining the process of sanctification is the principle of self-transcendence, which means a continuous transcendence of oneself in the direction of the ultimate, that is, participation in the holy. Given that the holy as Tillich understands it embraces both itself and the secular, self-transcendence is actual in every act in which the impact of the Spiritual Presence is experienced: “This can be in prayer or meditation in total privacy... in the experience of creative works of man’s spirit, in the midst of labor or rest, in private counseling, in church services.”<sup>181</sup> Overall, the element of “increasing” in Tillich’s theory of sanctification implies that “the Christian life never reaches the state of perfection-it always remains an up-and-down course-but in spite of its mutable character it contains a movement toward maturity, however fragmentary the mature state may be.”<sup>182</sup> Then, he moves on to delve into “images of perfection” where he suggests a model of holiness that can incorporate both doubt and the eros-quality of love, which are, I suppose, characteristic elements in the life of a baptized mystic.

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> 236.

<sup>182</sup> 237.

Tillich holds that while Protestantism has rejected the concept of the saint altogether, it does recognize sanctification: “Protestantism can find representatives of the power of the New Being in the religious as well as in the secular realm, not as a particular grade of sanctity, but as representatives and symbols of that in which all participate who are grasped by the Spirit.”<sup>183</sup> The “representatives” or “symbols” of the power of the New Being are among those who are grasped by the Spiritual Presence and cannot be considered having reached the state of perfection in which no signs of the demonic forces are visible. Rather, they are also “both estranged and united: it may be that in their inner selves not only the divine but also the demonic forces are extraordinarily strong-as medieval art expressively shows.”<sup>184</sup> It is here that Tillich introduces the questions of doubt and eros.

To the self-posed question, “Does the state of perfection include the removal of doubt?” Tillich tries to answer first by evaluating the views of doubt in orthodox Protestantism and Pietism. Orthodox Protestantism’s intellectual distortion of faith into acceptance of the literal authority of the Bible supports an idea of perfection that aspires to drive out doubt while preserving sin as unavoidable. In contrast to orthodoxy, Pietism knows that subjection to doctrinal laws can in no way overcome doubt and seeks for the conquest of doubt in an immediate experience of God, which gives a sense of regeneration and reunion with God and also certainty, a certainty which obedience to a doctrinal authority cannot give. He rejects both views from the perspective of the Protestant principle: the finitude of human existence, i.e., the infinite distance between

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<sup>183</sup> 238.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

God and human beings, is inevitable at any stage of life process and what is needed as an element of faith is creative courage, which involves in itself risk and doubt. He states: “Faith would not be faith but mystical union were it deprived of the element of doubt within it.”<sup>185</sup> And, “even the most immediate and intimate feeling of union with the divine, as in the bride-mysticism describing the union of the Christ and the soul, cannot bridge the infinite distance between the finite self and the infinite.”<sup>186</sup> In short, the postulate of the element of doubt is a theological, if not psychological, necessity.

Eros for Tillich is basically, as Alexander Irwin rightly captures, “the driving, life-giving force in the highest forms of spirituality,”<sup>187</sup> which operates in sexual love, participating knowledge, transmoral ethics, and religious aspiration including mystical union. Therefore, eros does not decrease in the process of sanctification: “An increase in awareness, freedom, relatedness, and transcendence does not imply a decrease in vital self-expression.”<sup>188</sup> By this statement he does not exclude the necessity of a non-ascetic, yet equally, strict discipline supported by creative eros and wisdom at a given moment of life process, but gives a caution against the attempt to repress eros: “But directing one’s life toward an integration of as many elements as possible is not identical with an acceptance of repressive practices as they are used in Roman asceticism as well as in Protestant moralism.”<sup>189</sup> Thus Tillich repudiates a shallow valuation of the power of the

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<sup>185</sup> 239.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Alexander C. Irwin, *Eros toward the World: Paul Tillich and the Theology of the Erotic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 44.

<sup>188</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 240.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

vital dynamics in human nature that some pleasures are innocent and others guilty and that religion has to seek only for the pleasures that are innocent and “harmless.”

Contrastingly, a balanced, comprehensive view of eros suggests the acceptance of life in its divine-demonic ambiguity. He writes: “He who tries to avoid the demonic side of the holy also misses its divine side and gains but a deceptive security between them. The image of perfection is the man who, on the battlefield between the divine and the demonic, prevails against the demonic, though fragmentarily and in anticipation.”<sup>190</sup> Noteworthy, here, is the word “prevails”: Tillich’s saintliness means, rather than a perfect triumph over the demonic, an incisive, growing awareness of the ongoing struggle between the divine and the demonic underlying the human nature. A question may arise, then, “Does Protestantism exclude the mystical experience from its interpretation of sanctification?” His answer is negative, since his model of sanctification takes account of the element of contemplation. A brief assessment of Tillich’s concept of prayer and contemplation is necessary here.

Tillich explains prayer and contemplation as the elements of worship, which belong to the “constitutive” function of the church.<sup>191</sup> The reflection on Romans 8:26, as Sebastian Painadath rightly observes, forms the core of Tillich theology of prayer.<sup>192</sup> Prayer is the transcending of the subject-object scheme of “talking to somebody” in that it is the Spirit that speaks to the Spirit. In this sense, prayer is also contemplation, which carries as its essential character the mystical participation. Tillich says:

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<sup>190</sup> 241.

<sup>191</sup> The three functions of the church Tillich envisions are constitutive, expanding, constructing, and relating. 188-216.

<sup>192</sup> Sebastian Painadath, S.J., “Paul Tillich’s Theology of Prayer,” *Paul Tillich: A New Catholic Assessment*, ed. Raymond F. Bulmann & Frederick J. Parrella (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1994), 224.

Contemplation means participation in that which transcends the subject-object scheme, with its objectifying (and subjectifying) words... The Protestant churches neglect of contemplation is rooted in their personal-centered interpretation of the Spiritual Presence. But Spirit transcends personality, if personality is identified with consciousness and moral self-integration. Spirit is ecstatic, and so are contemplation, prayer, and worship in general.<sup>193</sup>

For Tillich, since it is an ecstatic event, contemplation does not mean “a degree but a quality, that is, a quality of prayer which is aware that the prayer is directed to Him who creates the right prayer to us.”<sup>194</sup> In short, contemplation is the mystical participation in the God who is both the subject and the object of prayer.

### C. Conclusion

We have thus far analyzed Tillich’s accounts of mysticism dispersed in his various writings to identify distinctive features, which constitute the core of baptized mysticism and Tillichian spirituality. In the following lines I will attempt to provide a concluding summary.

Schelling’s philosophy of identity and freedom serves as the fundamental background against which Tillich builds up his dialectical view of mysticism. In an appreciation of Schelling’s ideas of *Abfall* and sin as the potentiated contradiction, he adheres to the ever-present individuality of the human agent and the ineradicability of sin even in mysticism and thus safeguards against any idolatrous attempts to idealize a person, an institution, or propaganda, either religious or secular. The way that he preserves the principle of identity in his idea of baptized mysticism is by proposing the

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<sup>193</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 192.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 192-193.

concept of the “personal communion with the personal self of the divine,” i.e., with the Christ as Spirit, where the first potency, the principle of power, which is the unconscious ground of personality, is overcome by the second potency, the principle of love; in the personal communion with the Christ, the Spirit operates as the uniting force of the two principles. In fact, then, Tillich’s theory of baptized mysticism appears as the call for the unity of the two principles, which is made as a creative response to the existential situation of the time.

Tillich’s call for the unity of the two principles is shown in “On the Idea of Theology of Culture” as commanding “theonomous spirituality,” in which the form of a cultural creation is shattered by the meaning-giving import and transformed into a new form of art, ethics, or politics that is united with the unconditioned ground of meaning. Tillich uses the term, “mysticism of love,” to illustrate the quality of theonomous spirituality, in which a profound level of solidarity with others and justice can be established. Tillichian theonomous spirituality is reiterated in “The Basic Principles of Religious Socialism” as uniting the principles of power and love thereby precipitating a hope and meaningful action for *kairos*. He claims that *reservatum religiosum*, the returning to the religious root, of which mysticism is a major expression, is the spiritual basis of resistance and needs to be complemented by *obligatum religiosum*; in the unity of *reservatum* and *obligatum* power and love are united to create a form of justice. Notably, this dialectical view of mysticism is expanded into a radical criticism of ideologies, especially, in “Totalitarian State and the Claims of Church,” where he points out the potential dangers of mysticism when it is coupled with distorted political ideologies, as typified in Hirsch’s idea of “mysterious sovereign.” This aspect of criticism

of ideologies in baptized mysticism is crucial in that it always underlies Tillich's developments of mysticism; even in his later years when he appears to be more inclined toward psychotherapeutic analysis of the individual than that of the socio-political situation, this aspect is still present in the form of Tillichian apophaticism.

Tillich's call for the unity of the mystical and the prophetic is based on his clear conviction that Protestantism has to retrieve the lost tradition of mysticism, which, contrastingly, is well preserved in the Catholic Church, in order not to remain "cultural activism," or "moral utopianism." In both "Justification and Doubt" and "The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism," he is keenly aware of the interrelation of disintegration and meaninglessness of the time and the lack of mysticism in Protestantism and also of the fact that Protestantism is not anti-mystical in itself, since the "mystical" is an essential category of religion as such (besides being a special religious type). I suppose that he keeps in mind, here, such lines of Protestant mysticism as the mysticism of Boehme, Pietism, Quakers, and also the uprising concern for meditation and contemplation in the liturgical movements of the early twentieth century of Europe.

The new religiosity Tillich demands in "Justification and Doubt" is "revelation of depth," or "ground revelation," which, while incorporating the mystical, is different from the mysticism that is the end in itself in a religious itinerary. Ground revelation is the breaking up of the ground of meaning as unconditional presence and simultaneously as unconditional demand to wrest for the ground of meaning the doubter experiences in the midst of nothingness and uncertainty. It is surely mystical in the sense that it pushes into a second place every act of knowledge and reveals the presence of God before the

knowledge of God, the presence of meaning before the knowledge of meaning. This is an important trait of Tillichian apophaticism.

In Tillich's typology in "The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism," Protestantism belongs to the eschatological type—the father type of religion, whereas Catholicism fits the sacramental (mystical) type—the mother type of religion; the former is based on the experience of the "holiness of what ought to be" and the latter the "holiness of being." In the two essays, "The Word of Religion" and "Vertical and Horizontal Thinking," Tillich's typology uses the different terms of "vertical" and "horizontal," which, nevertheless, carry the similar connotations as those already used in his earlier writings. A unique feature of this typology is that in the final statement he introduces the concept of hope as the force of uniting the vertical and the horizontal: "Hope never dies, because it is the application of the venturing "in spite of" to the tragedy of historical action. Hope unites the vertical and the horizontal lines, the religious reservation and the religious obligation."<sup>195</sup> Hope is not a disengaged but a participatory stance toward reality, with which one can wait and take required actions for the breaking-in of the eternal. By relating hope to faith, Tillich ensures that faith is the indispensable element of Tillichian mysticism and spirituality.

The significance of faith in Tillich's theory of mysticism is shown very early in his theological enterprise. In *Systematische Theologie*, Tillich construes faith in the context of the "mysticism of grace," where the paradoxicality of the Unconditional, the abyss of grace and judgment, is penetrated: in the faith of the baptized mystic divine wrath as well as divine grace is accepted since both are two interdependent aspects of the

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<sup>195</sup> Tillich, "The Word of Religion," 191.

divinity. This aspect of Tillichian mysticism is affirmed again in his 1929 essay, “Realism and Faith”: self-transcending realism, which is also based on the consciousness of the “here and now,” unites the emphasis on the real and the transcending power of faith so that “The ultimate power of being, the ground of reality, appears in a special moment, in a concrete situation, revealing the infinite depth and the eternal significance of the present.”<sup>196</sup> The ground of reality takes on a new significance and this is possible only in the ecstatic experience of faith. In *The Courage To Be*, faith as embracing mysticism is further discussed in the context of the therapeutic dynamic of the courage to be. Tillich maintains that courage as the affirmation of the self as a centered person and as a participant is rooted in the power of being-itself, and that when the relation to the power of being-itself both accepts and transcends individualization and participation, courage takes on the character of “absolute faith.” Absolute faith points to the experience of the power of being that is present even in the midst of the most radical manifestation of nonbeing, and its object goes beyond the theistic concept of God. The God above God as the object of absolute faith transcends the “unspecified affirmation of God” commonly used for a popular rhetoric, namely, the exclusive attachment to the personalistic image of God, or “theological theism,” in which God becomes a being, not the ground of being. It is the God experienced in the accepting of the acceptance “without somebody or something that accepts.” This God of Tillichian apophaticism seems to have an equivalent meaning to the Buddhist notion of Emptiness.

In fact, in *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, Tillich explicitly states that “The *esse ipsum*, being itself, of the classical doctrine of God, is a

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<sup>196</sup> Tillich, “Realism and Faith,” 78.

transpersonal category and enables the Christian disputant to understand the meaning of absolute nothingness in Buddhist thought.”<sup>197</sup> For him, there is in Christianity an inescapable presence of the mystical, a strong experience of the vertical and also the affinity with the unhistorical approach that all creatures long for the eternal rest in God. This does not mean, however, that he equates his notion of the God above God with the Buddhist doctrine of absolute nothingness. For him, the conflicting symbols of Christianity and Buddhism, the Kingdom of God and Nirvana, are related to the two differing ontological principles, participation and identity, respectively: in the participation in the Kingdom of God the self an individual is not merged and lost into oneness; in the identity of Nirvana, the individual self is dissolved into nothingness. The Kingdom of God is, unlike Nirvana, not emptiness, but fullness.

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<sup>197</sup> Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, 67.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **REVIEW OF THE APPRAISALS OF TILlich'S THEORY OF MYSTICISM**

In the preceding chapters, we have seen that Tillich had a strong mystical sensibility deriving from his experiences with the mystical and he thus developed a distinctive theory of mysticism. His theory of mysticism appears in the writings of his early and later life, and centers on the concept of “baptized mysticism,” in which the mystical and the prophetic form a dialectical union. The aim of this chapter is to evaluate various appraisals of Tillich’s theory of mysticism. This evaluation shall have a two-fold effect upon our research. First, it will help to sharpen and enhance our understanding of his thoughts on mysticism; second, in doing so, it prepares us for a better theoretical framework in which we can suggest the spiritual theological implications of his theory of mysticism, which is the main task of the following chapter. Among a considerable number of researchers who have shown appreciation for Tillich’s theory of mysticism from different vantage points, we select five authors to focus upon in this chapter: James Horne, in a philosophical perspective; John P. Dourely, in a psychological perspective; A. J. Reimer, in a theological perspective; Frederick Parrella, in a spiritual theological perspective; and Mary Ann Stenger, in an inter-religious perspective. Keeping in mind their denominational backgrounds is, perhaps, helpful in understanding their arguments: Horne is Anglican; Reimer, Mennonite; Dourley, Parrella, and Stenger, Catholic.

#### **A. Philosophical Perspective**

This section will engage and evaluate the arguments of James Horne, who pays due attention to Tillich's dialectical attitude toward mysticism. In a 1978 essay, "Tillich's Rejection of Absolute Mysticism,"<sup>1</sup> Horne notes the term "absolute mysticism" that Tillich invented in *A History of Christian Thought* as a warning against identifying it with the mysticism that is present in Christianity—namely, baptized mysticism. He also notes Tillich's concern for "baptizing" mysticism and, elsewhere<sup>2</sup>, is aware of the fact that Tillich used the term "baptized mysticism" twice in his later works to designate that Christian mysticism. The primary concern of Horne's essay is to enumerate the reasons Tillich rejects absolute mysticism. Horne's analysis is amplified in his subsequent essay, "Mystical Characteristics of Tillich's 'Absolute Faith,'"<sup>3</sup> in the context of Tillich's understanding of the interrelation of mysticism and "absolute faith." In these two essays, Horne presents, overall, an accurate knowledge of Tillich's dialectical attitude toward mysticism.

In his 1978 essay, Horne, while briefly mentioning Tillich's positive stance toward mysticism, focuses his analysis on the five reasons that Tillich rejects radical or absolute mysticism,<sup>4</sup> all of which "have to do with the need for recognition of the reality

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Horne, "Tillich's Rejection of Absolute Mysticism," *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 58, no. 2 (April, 1978), 130-139.

<sup>2</sup> James R. Horne, *The Moral Mystic* (Walterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983), 11.

<sup>3</sup> James R. Horne, "Mystical Characteristics of Tillich's 'Absolute Faith,'" *Theonomy and Autonomy: Studies in Paul Tillich's Engagement with Modern Culture*, ed. John J. Carey (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), 157-170.

<sup>4</sup> Horne's presentation of the five reasons has been appreciated by a few Tillich scholars: YoungHo Chun, "Mystical Impulse and Protestant Principle," *Mystical Heritage in Tillich's Philosophical Theology*, ed. Gert Hummel & Doris Lax (Münster: LIT, 2002), 56-59; Donald F. Dreisbach, "Tillich's Ambiguous Attitude toward Mysticism," in *Mystical Heritage*, 403.

of concrete and specific experiences and beliefs.”<sup>5</sup> The first reason Tillich criticizes mysticism is that it tends to annihilate the (centered) self. Horne finds this theme in the concluding line of Tillich’s Schelling thesis: “the principle of mysticism triumphs, but not in the form of mysticism, not as immediate identity, but rather as personal communion that overcomes contradiction.”<sup>6</sup> A “personal communion” requires a prior centered self. He also observes that this theme is found in Tillich’s later writings. In *Dynamics of Faith*, “[mysticism] neglects the human predicament and the separation of man from the ultimate;” in *Systematic Theology*, “The solution aspired to in radical mysticism is analogous to the answer to the problem of suffering given in Buddhism. There is no loneliness in the ultimate; but neither is there solitude or communion, because the centered self of the individual has been dissolved.”<sup>7</sup>

Second, Tillich decries mysticism as flawed since it wrongly avoids confronting the ultimate threats that are inherent in human existence (e.g., doubt, death, and meaninglessness), and gives these negative experiences the status of mere illusion, mere preliminaries to the unitive experience. In considering this aspect of Tillich’s rejection of mysticism, Horne has in mind and quotes Tillich’s argument in *The Courage To Be*: “The experience of meaninglessness is more radical than mysticism. Therefore it transcends the mystical experience.”<sup>8</sup> In my view, Tillich, here, points out insufficient dealings with the human condition of meaninglessness often found in the mystical type of religions

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<sup>5</sup> Horne, “Tillich’s Rejection of Absolute Mysticism,” 132.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> 134; Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 178.

such as those found in India in contrast to “absolute faith,” which accepts those experiences with sufficient seriousness.

The third deficiency of mysticism lies in its withdrawal from hope for a *kairos*. For this aspect of Tillich’s criticism of mysticism, Horne makes reference to *Systematic Theology*, in which Tillich proposes two types of the quest of the “New Being.” For Tillich, mystical reactions against polytheism are non-historical, i.e., they disregard this historical situation in its power and depth.

To fully appreciate Tillich’s argument, some background information is required. In the second volume of *Systematic Theology*, Tillich proposes two types of the quest of the New Being—the non-historical and the historical—and attributes Brahmanism and Buddhism to the first and Christianity to the latter. In the non-historical type of religion, which Tillich considers as the mystical reaction against polytheism, the appearance of the New Being does not occur through history; history is envisaged as a circular, self-repeating movement, and the manifestation of the divine is received by individuals rather than being directed to social groups. The New Being, in this type, is “the negation of all beings and the affirmation of the Ground of Being alone.”<sup>9</sup> In contrast, a transformative process of the social structure is highly valued in the historical type:

The New Being is expected predominantly in a horizontal direction rather than from the vertical one... The transformation occurs in and through a historical process, which is unique, unrepeatable, irreversible. Bearers of this process are historical groups, such as families, nations, and the church; individuals bear it only in relation to historical groups.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 87.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Horne interprets this line of Tillich's assertion as indicating the imperative both that humans take their historical situation seriously and endow it with meaning, and that meaning should be understood as objectively present in history. He further explains this in reference to Tillich's 1951 lectures delivered at the Deutsche Hochschule für Politik in Berlin, "The Political Meaning of Utopia." He rightly observes that "This is not to say that we are to anticipate the appearance of a literal and objective utopia at the end of history, but rather that it is possible for us to interpret [the myriads of events which have actually occurred] selectively under the guidance of a vocational consciousness."<sup>11</sup> Horne also observes that for Tillich, absolute mysticism lacks this vocational consciousness and fails to interpret things in particular concrete terms as the Kingdom of God.

This is related to, Horne argues, Tillich's fourth reason for rejecting absolute mysticism, namely, its exclusive attachment to the "vertical" dimension to the detriment of the "horizontal." As was explained in the second chapter, the vertical and the horizontal are Tillich's metaphors for the qualities of religious experiences; the vertical points to the presence of the eternal as the ground of being and meaning, while the horizontal stands for the transforming power of the eternal. Horne attributes the fourth reason to Tillich's consistent disapproval, as a Christian socialist, of a way of life that he sees as withdrawing before the predominance of the demonic in social, personal, and political life. He then introduces Tillich's uneasiness concerning the dangers the exclusion of either metaphor can entail, i.e., "a world defying, static mysticism" and "a world-controlling technical activism,"<sup>12</sup> and calling for the unity of the vertical and the

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<sup>11</sup> Horne, "Tillich's Rejection of Absolute Mysticism," 134.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

horizontal. For Tillich, an old socialist, mysticism as belonging to the vertical could dissipate man's hopes for reform and render him passive before the evils of the world.

The fifth reason, which Horne considers is the most surprising and important reason, is that it is "so excessively rational as to be incompatible with faith."<sup>13</sup> In delineating the fifth point, Horne first cites Tillich's two remarks in *A History of Christian Thought* and *Systematic Theology I*: "It is popular nonsense that reason and mysticism are the two great opposites"<sup>14</sup>; "In men like Plotinus, Eckhart, Cusanus, Spinoza, and Boehme, mystical and rational elements were united which criticized and transformed sacramental traditions."<sup>15</sup> He refers to these remarks as meaning that absolute mysticism can be a religious but critical reaction to the misuse of religious language and symbols and, in this respect, it resembles skeptical rationality:

In his purification of himself from moral and theological error, the absolute mystic carries this denial of the possibility of speaking about the ultimate to an extreme in which no symbols at all are employed, and, of course, no literal statements are made either. The result is that the mystic's attitude is similar to that of the skeptic mentioned by William James in "The Will to Believe."<sup>16</sup>

Shunning errors is the whole purpose, Horne argues, of both absolute mystic and "the skeptic" in the Jamesian sense; they are both keenly aware of the inadequacy of the expressions of religious knowledge and reject them as a whole. In addition to this apophatic refusal of language, there is another commonality between the mystical and the rational, namely, emphasis on the significance of individual experience in realizing and confirming the truth. He thus quotes Tillich: "modern rational autonomy is a child of the

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 286.

<sup>15</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 141.

<sup>16</sup> Horne, "Tillich's Rejection of Absolute Mysticism, 136.

mystical doctrine of the autonomy of the inner light... Rationalism is the child of mysticism, and both of them are opposed to authoritarian Orthodoxy.”<sup>17</sup> He also finds the alliance of the mystical and the rational in Tillich’s Schelling thesis: “The *noesis noeseos*, the self-intuition of God in the ideal world, is the highest principle of mysticism.” This utterance is aligned to Tillich’s reference to Aristotle’s symbol of highest fulfillment, which is human participation in the eternal self-intuition of the divine nous; it points to the fact that the active intellect performs a mystical function.

Horne asserts, then, that “in the case of the absolute mystic, however, this can lead to a dismissal of all theological doctrine in favor of reliance on individual experience,” and that this aspect of absolute mysticism is ultimately unacceptable to Tillich, since Tillich understands faith as the total and centered act of the personal self, in which both the rational and non-rational elements of one’s being are transcended. In fact, absolute mysticism cannot appeal to Tillich, who is aware of “the believer’s need to associate himself with the religious community to which he finds himself called, to be engaged by its moral and social concerns, to adopt its historical consciousness, and to speak its theological language.”<sup>18</sup> In the following, I will expand upon this observation of Horne’s by commenting on the two remarks of Tillich, which Horne mentions to introduce the fifth reason for Tillich’s refusal of absolute mysticism.

When Tillich says, “It is popular nonsense that reason and mysticism are the two great opposites,” his intended point is that modern rational autonomy is rooted in the “mystical autonomy” of pietistic mysticism as in the Quaker doctrine of the inner light.

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<sup>17</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 286; 287.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

He does not mean by this statement, though, that the aspiration to autonomy against the church authority and the authoritarian Orthodoxy produced a rejection of religious symbols and doctrines as a whole. What he contends is that pietistic mysticism includes not simply the emotional but the rational so that it can criticize and re-appropriate the religious symbols and doctrines given by the authority of the church. In addition, pietistic mysticism, in its emphasis on subjective, personal experience of the divine and its notion of individual sanctification, developed a strong social ethic.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, in Tillich's theology of mysticism, the alliance of mysticism with rationality does not lead to the denial of religious languages and symbols, but rather goes in the opposite direction, i.e., it facilitates the creation of a new language and symbol.

This is confirmed when we look into Tillich's remark in the first volume of *Systematic Theology*, where he holds that the mystical and the rational are united in such mystical thinkers as Plotinus, Eckhart, and Boehme to criticize and transform sacramental traditions. Note that this remark is made in the context of the "preparatory revelation," the revelation that precedes the final revelation—the revelation of the Christ. The earliest preparation, namely, the sacramental, tends to elevate something conditional to the status of the unconditional and falls prey to demonization; there arises the critical approach in three forms: the mystical, the rational, and the prophetic. Mysticism has criticized the demonically distorted sacramental-priestly substance by devaluing every medium of revelation at the expense of removing the concrete character of revelation and making it irrelevant to the actual human situation. On the other hand, the rational in itself is not revelatory, but has a revelatory function, either in terms of cultural creations or rational

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<sup>19</sup> 283-287.

criticisms directed against distorted revelations. Tillich says: “in every creation of reason the depth of reason is present and makes itself felt, in form as well as in content.”<sup>20</sup> It is the “depth of reason” to which mysticism is correlated, and this depth of reason does not simply break through the existing form but also creates a new form. In Tillich, the rational, when united with the mystical, does not reject religious symbols and knowledge as a whole, but creates new ones. What is problematic for Tillich is not the alliance between them but the isolation from each other.

In a 1984 essay, Horne tries to amplify the arguments in the preceding essay and makes clear that the mysticism Tillich warned against is “pure mysticism.” Horne’s use of this term seems to be based on his reading of W.T. Stace, in that he introduces Stace’s description of mysticism in defining the type of mysticism, which Tillich rejects:

The mysticism he warned against is mysticism in its “pure” form, unmixed with religious language, interpretation, belief, or moral or social concerns. Such mysticism occurs by a process in which, using ascetic contemplative exercises, the mystic seeks to realize a pure and unified state of consciousness that can bring about a sense of salvation.<sup>21</sup>

Also, Horne is not ignorant of the fact that Tillich uses the term pure mysticism several times in his works, although he does not specify Tillich’s usages. In my analysis, it is in *The Religious Situation* that Tillich uses the term to designate the tendency in which “the eternal is regarded as the present, as that which supports and fills the present and its temporal forms with meaning,”<sup>22</sup> as opposed to the other tendency present in eschatological movements. In *What Is Religion?* Tillich also says: “Pure mysticism

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<sup>20</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 140-141.

<sup>21</sup> Horne, “Mystical Characteristics of Tillich’s “Absolute Faith,”” 158.

<sup>22</sup> Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, 160-161.

penetrates and identifies the symbolic character of cultus and goes beyond it through an ecstasy that no longer employs concrete forms.”<sup>23</sup>

In the beginning, Horne recapitulates the statement of the preceding essay: “it is finally Tillich’s principal reason for rejecting pure mysticism. To wit, mysticism is so exceedingly rational as to exclude true faith.”<sup>24</sup> It is notable that Horne employs the term pure mysticism in the context of the typology of mysticism he himself proposed in *The Moral Mystic* according to the behavior of the mystics and characteristic patterns of language they display.

As a memory aid, let us call it (following Tillich, Von Hugel, and others) “pure mysticism,” because in its ideal form it is pure in the sense of being without obvious doctrinal content. The other mysticism, which ideally (but not always in fact) finds the mystic fully engaged in solving rational, moral, emotional, and spiritual problems, can be called “mixed mysticism.” At its best, it is the mysticism of a whole self, involved in seeking an integrated solution of all the self’s problems, in many fields, including the moral life.<sup>25</sup>

To me, there is a certain correspondence between Tillich’s typology and Horne’s in terms of the relationship of mysticism and morality; in both Tillich’s baptized mysticism and Horne’s mixed mysticism, the mystic finds him/herself “involved in seeking an integrated solution of all the self’s problems including the moral life.” According to Horne’s typology, whereas mixed mystics approach illumination experiences through involvement with religious images and religious problems and become more active and excited both emotionally and intellectually, pure mystics engage in technical, activity-cancelling exercises designed only to end their preoccupation with

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<sup>23</sup> Tillich, *What Is Religion?* 113.

<sup>24</sup> Horne, “Mystical Characteristics of Tillich’s “Absolute Faith,”” 161.

<sup>25</sup> James R. Horne, *The Moral Mystic* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1983), 39-40.

images and doctrinal interpretation and associated intellectual, moral problems. Pure mysticism, thus, may easily become oblivious to morality.

Horne further elucidates the distinction between the two types by contrasting the two different kinds of reason, “strong reason” and “broad reason,” which correspond to, he supposes, Tillich’s “technical reason” and “ontological reason.” Strong reason is rationality in the sense of acting in accordance with the religious beliefs and acquiring and confirming them in a logical, scientific manner; the rationality of broad reason means that the person involved is concerned with a broad range of concerns in combination with one another, e.g., aesthetic, moral, psychological, and other concerns. Thus, while pure mysticism corresponds to strong reason, mixed mysticism corresponds to broad reason. What demarcates between the two sets is morality; the first set tends to disregard morality and the second takes it into serious account.

Horne then argues that Tillich’s rejection of pure mysticism is echoed in his rejection of technical reason. The rationality of pure mysticism is technical reason, not ontological reason. Here, a brief note on Tillich’s distinction between ontological reason and technical reason is in order. Ontological reason is Logos in the classical tradition from Parmenides to Hegel, thus also called “classical reason,” which is effective in the cognitive, aesthetic, practical, and technical functions of the human mind. In contrast, “technical reason” indicates the cognitive side of classical reason, i.e., the reason that is reduced to the capacity for “reasoning.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, when Horne asserts that Tillich rejects mysticism since it is “so exceedingly rational,” he argues that pure mysticism is engrossed only in the cognitive side of reason, that is, technical reason, which is why

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<sup>26</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 72-75.

Tillich rejects mysticism. It is right that Tillich discards the tendency to replace ontological reason with technical reason, the tendency that has become predominant since the breakdown of German classical idealism and in the wake of English empiricism. Below I want to provide some more details of Tillich's understanding of reason to make clearer Horne's observation.

In Part I of *Systematic Theology*, Tillich makes clear that the relation of reason to revelation should not be discussed on the level of technical reason, because no existential problem is involved in its use.<sup>27</sup> Helpful here is his more precise view on the relation. He thinks that reason points toward the depth of reason, which appears both in the subjective structure of the mind and in the objective structure of reality, but transcends them in power and meaning. The depth of reason is not an additional reason, but that which precedes reason and could thus be called "substance," "being-itself," "ground," "abyss," the "infinite potentiality of being and meaning," etc. It points to the state where reason is driven beyond itself to its ground and abyss, namely, revelation, which is the manifestation of the ultimate concern; and so, it is God in the religious term.

Since it is the unambiguous answer for the quest of reason, revelation elevates but does not destroy reason: "Ecstasy unites the experience of the abyss to which reason in all its functions is driven with the experience of the ground in which reason is grasped by the mystery of its own depth and of the depth of being generally."<sup>28</sup> Tillichian ecstasy is, then, baptized mysticism in that both claim the indestructibility of the rational structure of the mind. That revelatory ecstasy does not destroy the rational structure of the mind is the

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., , 74.

<sup>28</sup> 113.

criterion by which Tillich differentiates divine ecstasy from demonic possession; the former preserves and elevates the rational structure of the mind whereas the latter only destroys. In the former, the ethical and logical principles of reason are affirmed and in the latter they are negated. Hence, an important quality of divine ecstasy is its driving toward fulfilling one's personality; this is a major characteristic of baptized mysticism. In short, when he addresses the interrelation between mysticism and reason, Tillich has in mind ontological reason, not technical reason, and pure mysticism is the type of mysticism where reason and the rational structure of the mind are negated and so no positive ethical, logical principles of reason are found.

In grasping the relation of (pure) mysticism and rationality (of technical reason), Horne correctly observes that Tillich rejects pure mysticism because it neglects morality. To be more precise, he brings into discussion Tillich's concept of "beyond morality," which "guides" but does not impose exact directions. Such "guiding stars" as agape and "listening love," Horne explains, "have to do with paying attention to other persons and treating their concrete needs seriously." This leaves morality up to each individual, and thus risks the tragedy of wrong decisions, but it encourages "the creative excitement of moral life."<sup>29</sup> In Horne's observation, Tillichian morality beyond morality is, however, not abstract but concrete and gives "ultimate seriousness" to the individual in making a deliberate decision; the individual as a centered personality responds to emotional, psychological, practical, and social demands and finds a solution in his/her own way, so to speak. Pure mysticism lacks this quality of concreteness. In a passage, which Horne does not refer to in the essay, Tillich writes:

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<sup>29</sup> Horne, "Mystical Characteristics of Tillich's "Absolute Faith,"" 166.

The moral act establishes man as a person, and as a bearer of the spirit. It is the unconditional character of the moral imperative that gives ultimate seriousness both to culture and religion. Without it culture would deteriorate into an aesthetic or utilitarian enterprise, and religion into an emotional distortion of mysticism.<sup>30</sup>

But, then, a question may arise: in what ways would Tillich's baptized mysticism—unlike pure, abstract mysticism—be related to his “morality beyond morality?” To this self-posed question, I would respond by explaining Tillich's concept of morality.

For Tillich, the moral imperative is “the demand to become actually what one is essentially and therefore potentially” and “since his true being is the being of a person in community of persons,”<sup>31</sup> the moral demand is to become a person in the community of persons. Given that morality concerns an interpersonal relationship, the moral demand inevitably calls for justice. For Tillich, however, since justice cannot be realized without creating a participatory relationship, justice requires love. Love literally means reuniting that which is self-centered and separated: “the desire for union of the separated (which is ultimately re-union) is love. All communions are embodiments of love, the urge for participation in the other one. Justice is taken into love if the acknowledgement of the other person as person is not detached but involved.”<sup>32</sup> In Tillich's view, love can be called “justice in ecstasy,” which is confirmed by St. Paul when he derives both revelatory experiences and the working of love from the divine spirit. The dialectical relation of justice and love in personal encounters can adequately be described through three functions of creative justice, i.e., listening, giving, and forgiving. Tillich then says:

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<sup>30</sup> Tillich, *Morality and Beyond* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 18.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>32</sup> 39.

“In none of them does love do more than justice demands, but in each of them love recognizes what justice demands.” This is how justice and love are interpenetrated in Tillichian morality beyond morality, and this interpenetration characterizes baptized mysticism.

In short, Horne’s presentation of Tillich’s dialectical attitude toward mysticism is clear and exacting when it comes to the relationship between mysticism and reason. Horne makes clear that in Tillich’s understanding, pure or abstract mysticism is the type of mysticism that is not compatible with (ontological) reason; mysticism and rationalism are opposed to each other in that type of mysticism. In contrast, in the dialectic of the mystical and the prophetic, namely, in baptized mysticism, mysticism and reason are integrated in such a way that reason goes beyond itself to be grasped by the ground of being, and that the process of self-integration and also the ethical demand are highly appreciated. In other words, love and justice are interrelated in baptized mysticism.

## **B. Psychological Perspective**

In this section, we are concerned with John Dourley’s works on the relationship between Paul Tillich and Carl Jung. Dourley has the conviction that both Tillich and Jung stand in the Augustinian tradition and tried in their respective ways to retrieve the lost dimension of religion, namely, mysticism. What draws our particular attention is his presentation of both thinkers’ respective appropriations of the two Christian mystics, namely, Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme. Sufficient knowledge of their appropriations will equip us with a sharpened understanding of the distinctiveness of Tillich’s baptized mysticism in contrast to the Jungian approach to mysticism.

In a 1990 article, Dourley proposes that both Jung and Tillich understand the reality of God as the immanent power within life, which grounds the integration, creativity, growth, and enhancement of life and affirms the human capacity to experience immediately the presence of God within human life and consciousness. For both thinkers, the diminution of the religious sensitivity symptomatic of the current state of Western civilization means that people have lost touch with the deeper divine and life-giving source of their own being. Dourley relates this loss of touch with the immanent divinity to the loss of the sense of mystery and mysticism. According to him, both thinkers emphatically called for a retrieval of the lost tradition of mysticism:

Tillich called for a return to an older theology based upon a strong sense of divine immanence as the basis for an understanding of both God's integrating presence to life and of his transcendence beyond it. He was convinced that this religious sensibility was most powerfully expressed in the Platonic-Augustinian tradition and in its historical recurrences. The sense of the point of coincidence of the infinite and the finite in all that is lies at the heart of his understanding of God as the ground or power of being.<sup>33</sup>

Dourley, here, is referring to Tillich's 1946 essay, "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," where Tillich distinguishes two ways of approaching God—ontological and cosmological. According to Tillich, the ontological method espouses the immediate, mystical way of knowing God as the "experience of the identity of subject and object in relation to Being itself,"<sup>34</sup> whereas the cosmological is the inferential, mediated way to God, which "does not give unconditional certainty" and so "must be completed by the

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<sup>33</sup> John P. Dourley, "Jung, Tillich, and Christian Development," *Jung and Christianity in Dialogue: Faith, Feminism, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Robert L. Moore & Daniel J. Meckel (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 67.

<sup>34</sup> Tillich, "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," 14.

way of authority.”<sup>35</sup> The former is the basis of every philosophy of religion, and the latter without the former as its basis “leads to a destructive cleavage between philosophy and religion.”<sup>36</sup>

An important point, which can be quite useful for a more accurate understanding of both thinkers’ indebtedness to the Augustinian tradition, but which Dourely does not mention, is that Tillich calls the ontological method the way of “overcoming estrangement” and the cosmological method that of “meeting a stranger”:

In the first way man discovers himself when he discovers God; he discovers something that is identical with *himself* although it transcends him infinitely, something from which he is estranged, but from which he never has been and never can be separated. In the second way man meets a *stranger* when he meets God... they may become friends on a tentative and conjectural basis. But there is no certainty about the stranger man has met.<sup>37</sup> (Italics original)

Worth noting is Tillich’s emphasis of the two words, “himself” and “stranger;” in the ontological, mystical method, the encounter with God means the encounter with the deepest dimension of a human person, as mentioned above, “from which he is estranged, but from which he never has been and never can be separated.” By contrast, in the cosmological method, it is not the most innate self but the total strangeness outside the self that one encounters in his/her meeting with God. For Tillich, the experience of God and the experience of the deepest dimension of the human person point primarily to the same reality, thus the God experienced is the “ground” and “power” of being. In the article, “The Interface of Jung and Tillich,” Dourely argues that Jung explicitly agrees on

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>36</sup> 10.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

this point and quotes the latter's remark: "It is therefore psychologically quite unthinkable for God to be simply the 'wholly other,' for a 'wholly other' could never be one of the soul's deepest and closest intimacies—which is precisely what God is."<sup>38</sup>

To return to Dourley's observation of the 1990 article, the mystical sensibility of "the point of coincidence of the infinite and the finite in all that is,"<sup>39</sup> suggests a possibility of the human participation in the being of God. In this participation, as shown in Augustine and the Franciscan scholastics of the thirteenth century like Bonaventure, "[the human being's] truest reality was located from which it had fallen in existence yet from which it was never severed and to which it was driven to return."<sup>40</sup> Jung also belongs, according to Dourley, to this Augustinian tradition of mystical ontology:

Jung, too, admitted a certain indebtedness to this side of Plato and Augustine and called upon humanity to look inward to a power in the depths of each individual working there for the wholeness of the individual yet in some sense "supraordinate" to the individual and to the totality of individuals while remaining the deepest possibility of their interconnectedness.<sup>41</sup>

Given Jung's acute sense of the "power in the depths of each individual working for the wholeness of the individual" and his late interest in Gnosticism and the alchemists, it is natural that he took note of and tried to revive in his own psychological program the enduring power of the Christian mystical tradition in its ability to entice people into an immediate experience of God or the unconscious. His consistent appreciation of the Christian mystical tradition, Dourley says, is primarily based on his presupposition that "such mystical experience constitutes the genesis and substance of religious experience

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<sup>38</sup> John Dourley, "*Psyche and Theos: The Interface of Jung and Tillich*," in *Religion et culture*, 475.

<sup>39</sup> Dourley, "Jung, Tillich, and Christian Development," 67.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

itself and so of the religions and is always closely related to the operation of the unconscious.”<sup>42</sup> For Jung, the encompassing process of psychic maturation called “individuation” is inherently religious in that its foundational telos is a movement toward the state of consciousness commonly called mystical. In delving into this point, Dourley states:

The initial point, then, is that for Jung the psyche is natively religious and moves in accord with its own telos to mystical states of consciousness... He argues consistently throughout his works that the archetypes, those powerful latencies in the collective unconscious, are vested with so great an energy that when they impact on consciousness they generate a sense of the numinous. This experience of the numinous is the basis of the human experience of the divine in both its benevolent and its malevolent forms.<sup>43</sup>

For Jung, mysticism or the experience of “the numinous” is the telos the psyche naturally drives toward in its dynamic movement. It also involves the uncovering and coming to conscious awareness of the archetypes, the “powerful latencies in the collective unconscious.” In “The Tavistock Lectures,” Jung thus defines the mystic as one who possesses a particularly vivid experience of the processes of the collective unconscious, and mystical experience as the experience of “archetypes.” In my analysis, this definitive understanding of Jung on mysticism as the experience of the archetypes is well noted by Tillich in his 1962 address in commemorating Jung: “The archetypes lie in the unconscious and break into the conscious life in experiences which show something of the ecstatic character attributed to revelatory experiences.”<sup>44</sup> One can see here that

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<sup>42</sup> 70.

<sup>43</sup> John Dourley, “The Innate Capacity: Jung and the Mystical Imperative,” *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology and Philosophy*, ed. Robert K. C. Forman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 124.

<sup>44</sup> Tillich, “Carl Jung,” in *The Meaning of Health*, 176.

Tillich explicitly relates the “ecstatic,” “revelatory” experience to the archetypes’ breaking into consciousness.

Dourley takes Jung’s definitions to mean that “symbols or other forms of archetypal expression that bear a highly numinous charge are at once archetypal, mystical, and needless to say, religious, regardless of the literary genre to which they belong.”<sup>45</sup>

Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme are two Christian mystics in whom Jung found great inspiration in developing his idea of individuation and to whom Tillich also paid a great respect, yet with certain reservations. In various places, Dourley thus compares Jung and Tillich in their respective appropriations of the two mystics. A concise review of Dourley’s presentation of both thinkers’ positions follows below, first on Eckhart and then on Boehme.<sup>46</sup>

Dourley notes that Eckhart’s theology and spiritual experience has two sequential moments. The first moment is the birthing of God (*der Gottes*) in the human soul (*gottesgeburt*), which is based on the life of Trinity as an *ebullitio*, a boiling over into creation, (thereby connoting the compulsion to act). The second moment indicates an even deeper movement into divinity, the “breakthrough” (*durchbruch*), in which one is identified with the Godhead (*die Gottheit*) that goes beyond the compulsion of the Trinitarian God to create. This second moment belongs to what contemporary scholarship calls a “*unitas indistinctionis*,” a union without distinction, in contrast to a “*unitas spiritus*,” a union sustaining the distinction between the divine and the human. *Gottheit*, a

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> The following articles of Dourley are used here to see his major arguments: “Tillich on Boehme: A Restrained Embrace” (1995), “Bringing up Father” (1999), “The Goddess, Mother of the Trinity: Tillich’s Late Suggestion” (2001) in John P. Dourley, *Paul Tillich, Carl Jung, and the Recovery of Religion* (London & New York: Routledge, 2008); “Tillich’s Appropriation of Meister Eckhart: An Appreciative Critique,” *BNAPTS*, vol. 31, no. 1 (Winter, 2005), 9-17.

feminine noun, refers to the Godhead beyond the Trinity, i.e., the Goddess, which is divested of all form and seeks no expression beyond itself. In this second moment, there is no urgency or compulsion to act, because the Goddess precedes the vitalities and urgencies of the Trinitarian God. Herein lies Eckhart's profound doctrine of *gelassenheit*, "resignation" or "letting be," in which one rests in a wholly undifferentiated identity with the Godhead, and feels no compulsion to act.

From Jung's perspective, according to Dourley, the birth of God in the soul means the incarnation of the self in the individual, and the breakthrough points to the state of a mystical identity where the ego and the unconscious attain an identity beyond distinction, wherein "God disappears as an object and dwindles into a subject, which is no longer distinguishable from the ego."<sup>47</sup> Jung is judicious in giving a psychological interpretation to the second moment of the breakthrough because of its "psychotic potential." Dourley writes: "Such a moment raises the question of what then would move the ego back from such identity with its origin to its engagement with the world and would also raise the psychotic possibility that such a return could fail."<sup>48</sup>

In spite of Jung's allegedly cautious treatment, however, elsewhere Dourley takes the moment of *unitas indistinctionis* as a shared experience between mysticism and Jung's individuation: "it is this side of the individuation process that aligns Jung's psychology with the mystical experience of a loss in a formless nothingness which the mystics take to be a moment of identity with the divine."<sup>49</sup> The immersion in the formless

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<sup>47</sup> Dourley, "Bringing up Father," 122.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> John Dourley, "Memory and Emergence: Jung and the Mystical Anamnesis of the Nothing," in *Paul Tillich, Carl Jung, and the Recovery of Religion*, 127.

nothingness, since it is the experience of the Goddess that mothers all beings, creates the life of a more encompassing sympathy. Dourley holds: “The cycle of the ego’s birth from the divine, a recovered identity with the divine and a return from this moment becomes the cycle of individuation itself. This cycle is a residual human resource and necessity though rarely enacted in such depth and drama as with the great apophatic mystics.”<sup>50</sup>

Whereas Jung, in his theory of individuation, fully accepts Eckhart as involving the experience of *unitas indistinctionis*, Dourley argues, Tillich is reserved in fully accepting Eckhart due to his commitment to orthodox Christianity’s Trinitarian paradigm and its logocentrism. Dourley singles out the two major loci in the theologian’s work where Eckhart is mentioned. The first is Tillich’s treatment of Eckhart in *A History of Christian Thought*, where he addresses the major themes of Eckhart—e.g., the distinction between God as ground and God as trinity, the close relation of the generation of the Logos within the divine life and beyond the divine life into creation, and humanity’s natural, universal sense of the divine. In Dourley’s view, Tillich here “mutes the note of Eckhart’s conclusive doctrine of the breakthrough, the total fusion of the human and the Godhead in the God beyond the Trinity as the ultimate resolution of the estrangement inextricably attached to the creature’s relation to God as other.”<sup>51</sup>

The second locus is Tillich’s 1957 Harvard dialogue with Hisamatsu Shin’ ich. In the “First Conversation,” Hisamatsu introduces Eckhart’s concepts of detachment and poverty in response to Tillich’s question of how to get to the state of what Hisamatsu earlier mentioned, i.e., the “calm self” or “formless self.” Although Tillich acknowledges

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<sup>50</sup> John Dourley, “Jung’s Equation of the Ground of Being with the Ground of Psyche,” *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, vol. 56, no. 4 (September, 2011), 520.

<sup>51</sup> Dourley, “Tillich’s Appropriation of Meister Eckhart,” 13.

that Eckhart's poverty frees the individual from the subject-object duality, he only partially agrees to insist that what can never be emptied from human interiority is the residual spark of the divine, that is, the logos. For Tillich, the actualization of this spark, comparable to the birth of God in the soul, must take the form of the birth of the logos. Dourley, then, rightly observes: "Tillich cannot abide formlessness or that nothingness beyond all need for expression in form and so wholly beyond the mind's antinomies in that formlessness experienced by Zen, by Eckhart, and by Boehme."<sup>52</sup> Tillich's "fear" of formlessness is, in Dourley's analysis, grounded in his Trinitarian theology where the abyss dimension of God is to be expressed and completed in the Logos as the light and communicable moment in the life of the divine and in this way the antinomy of dark and light can be perfectly balanced in mutual completion by the Spirit as the precondition and possibility of their synthesis in a created life.

Having in mind this observation of Dourley, I wish to make a point that Tillich is highly sensitive to the possibility of an ideological abuse of pantheism. In *A History of Christian Thought*, he describes pantheism as the "tendency toward the complete extinction of the individual," which "was able to dissolve all the concreteness of medieval piety and led to the philosophy of the Renaissance," and includes within that condemnation Eckhart's mysticism.<sup>53</sup> In the review essay of an English translation of Eckhart's works, he mentions the translator's reminder, that the Nazi ideologists used Eckhart as a representative of genuinely German spirit. Tillich asserts that "it is true that mysticism, separated from prophetic Christianity, is in danger to become pantheistic and

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>53</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 144.

naturalistic, and that the doctrine of the unity of God and man can be abused by the claim of man to be God himself.”<sup>54</sup> For Tillich, the mystical when isolated from the prophetic, i.e., “absolute mysticism,” is susceptible to the ideological trap. Recall that in a 1934 article, “Totalitarian State and the Claims of Church,” Tillich warns against the potential danger in mysticism; the totalitarian authority claims to be the immediate revelation of God and all people within the state are to receive it with enthusiasm and unconditional surrender. Recall also that Tillich’s ecstasy as presented in the first volume of *Systematic Theology* does not destroy the rational structure of the mind and this is the criterion by which he differentiates between divine ecstasy and demonic possession—the former preserves and elevates the rational structure of the mind whereas the latter destroys.

Now, let us move on to Dourley’s presentation of Jung and Tillich in their respective appreciation of Jacob Boehme. An interesting feature of Dourley’s reading of Boehme is that Boehme posits the eternally unresolved divine self-contradiction, which finds its resolution in the unified human consciousness. The divinity Boehme envisions always struggles with its own unresolved self-contradiction and is ultimately driven to create humanity as the only center of consciousness; the human, in turn, experiences divine antinomies and then suffers the resolution of the divine failure to work its integration within its own life eternally. Dourley writes:

Here Boehme makes two points. First, the opposites in divine life are not united in eternity as traditional Trinitarian theology would have it.<sup>55</sup> Second, divinity

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<sup>54</sup> Paul Tillich, “Meister Eckhart,” Review of *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation* by Raymond B. Blakney, *Religion In Life Book Reviews*, vol. 11, no. 4 (Autumn, 1942), 626.

<sup>55</sup> Dourley’s reading that in Boehme the opposites in the life of divinity are not united in eternity but in human consciousness seems to be debatable. Daniel Peterson presents a different view from Dourley’s: in Peterson’s view the goal of self-reconciliation is achieved not within time but in eternity; Boehme and Tillich are united in this respect. Daniel Peterson, “Jacob Boehme and Paul Tillich: A Reassessment of the Mystical Philosopher and Systematic Theologian,” *Religious Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2

necessarily creates to unite in finite consciousness the opposites it could neither perceive nor unite in itself. In the dialectic Boehme then establishes on the basis of this side of his experience the *ungrund* craves for manifestation and self-realization through the Trinity and into the creature just as the creature craves for immersion in the healing nothingness of the *ungrund*.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, a paradoxical statement can be established that the fourth dimension of divinity is the human consciousness. Dourley writes:

If the two mystics [Eckhart and Boehme] were combined they would present a double quaternity in which a moment of identity with the divine beyond Trinitarian opposites becomes the necessary prelude to the resolution of Trinitarian conflict in human consciousness as the fourth in time and history.<sup>57</sup>

Human history and suffering become meaningful since they are the locus of reconciliation in divinity as well as in humanity.

In Dourley's analysis, this "double quaternity" is well reflected in Jung's later work, *Answer to Job*. Jung depicts the Hebrew God as an impersonal, unstable force, i.e., the agency of the natural, unconscious energy devoid of all rational discriminations yet pushing blindly toward consciousness. The instability of Yahweh necessitates the creation of human consciousness, in which it can become conscious and also moral; the human consciousness clearly perceives Yahweh's instability and works toward its resolution in human history and consciousness. The evolving movement of the unconscious to become conscious in humanity symbolizes the process of incarnation; Yahweh, with the gentle urging of Sophia as its missing feminine, fully enters into the

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(2006), 225-234. Michael Stoeber also claims that in Boehme's mystical theodicy, the first two principles of the divine essence, i.e, the *Ungrund* and the Word, are united in God, and in this process springs forth Love, the third principle. Michael Stoeber, *Evil and The Mystics' God: Towards a Mystical Theodicy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 146-160.

<sup>56</sup> Dourley, "Tillich on Boehme," 66.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

suffering of finite humanity, which in its deepest sense is really His own suffering.

Dourley explains:

The redemption of divinity through the pain of the unification of its opposites in the human is, for Jung, the substance of the answer to Job... In the image of the crucifixion, divinity tastes to the dregs in suffering humanity the cost of the resolution of divinity's eternal irresolution that necessitated the creation of human consciousness in the first place. From the human viewpoint, in the image of crucifixion, humanity realizes that its deepest meaning in history is to be redeemed by suffering the progressive unification in itself of the living unresolved conflict that is the eternal and universal life of Yahweh in the depths of the human.<sup>58</sup>

Here, "the pain of the unification of its opposites in the human" indicates an arduous process of individuation, which involves Eckhart's two moments of mystical experiences, the birth of God in the soul, and the breakthrough, which is comparable to Boehme's experience of *Ungrund*. In short, for Jung, the nothingness, the Goddess (Eckhart's *Godhead* and Boehme's *Ungrund*), and the furthest reach of the archetypal psyche point to the same reality of a mystical union where the individual ego dissolves into the unconscious totality and both the divine and the human find the resolution of their respective conflicts.

The central question Dourley raises in his approach to Tillich's appropriation of Boehme is to what extent Tillich incorporates Dourley's perception of Boehme's primary experience into his theological system, namely, that the conflictual opposites of divinity are resolved not in eternity, but in human, historical consciousness. According to Dourley, Tillich's indebtedness to Boehme is evident when he introduces the demonic dimension of divinity in the theory of God. The first moment of Tillich's Trinitarian principle is a "chaos," "burning fire," or the irrational, potentially demonic when isolated from the

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<sup>58</sup> Dourley, "Bringing up Father," 116.

light of the Logos—the second moment—which resembles Boehme’s first principle of the Father as a “living hell,” into which “the angels were cast in their opposition to the light and love of the second principle and in their implied reluctance to follow the logos into manifest creation.”<sup>59</sup> It is remarkable that Dourley relates the conflictual relation between the first and second principles, found both in Boehme and Tillich, to Jung’s conception of the relation of the unconscious to consciousness. For Tillich, the conflict or tension between the two moments is completely resolved in the work of the Spirit, and this resolution, since it occurs in eternity, is the basis of the integration of opposites in the temporal life of the human. In contrast, Boehme does not locate the resolving work of the Spirit within divine life, but in the evolving consciousness of humanity. Dourley argues:

Rather all of nature and human consciousness are stamped or signed with the unresolved conflict in their creative ground... Only in the “*blick*” of human intuition in which God and the human jointly experience the union of their opposites does the Spirit work their syntheses, a synthesis that Tillich locates in divinity from eternity.<sup>60</sup>

Boehme’s imagery such as “crack,” “shriek,” and “flash of lightning” symbolizes the suffering both divinity and humanity undertake as the Spirit works toward an integration. In short, in Dourley’s Boehme, the resolution takes place in human and divine consciousness concurrently and the divinity is in the real process of “becoming”; for the early Tillich, this is absurd since, if so, God would be fated by a reliance on the human. Dourley detects in the late Tillich, however, a notable change in envisioning the divine-human economy. He introduces Tillich’s late appropriation of Schelling’s concept of “essentialization,” which means “the return of the essential, immersed and enriched in

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<sup>59</sup> Dourley, “Tillich on Boehme,” 66.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

and through historical existence, to its origin in divine life and specifically to its origin in the *Logos*.”<sup>61</sup> What is interesting in Dourley’s interpretation is that the process of essentialization “confers on the Trinity an ontological fullness and completion it would lack without this distillate of the essential realized in time and preserved in eternity.”<sup>62</sup> He thus interprets the poetic image Tillich uses, “eternal memory,” as a real contribution to the ontological wealth of the divine life. He also notes Tillich’s notion of the “divine blessedness” to argue:

But now in his eschatology [in contrast to his doctrine of creation] one side of Tillich shifts ground and argues that the “fight and victory” of divine blessedness were not achieved only in some primary sense in eternity as the basis of fragmentary victories in time moving to unqualified eschatological victory. Rather the victories in time become the very content of divine victory and blessedness in the eschaton. From this side of his thought history does indeed contribute radically to the fullness of divine life.<sup>63</sup>

What Dourley suggests here is that the late Tillich proposes, like Boehme and Jung, that the conflicts of divinity are not resolved in eternity but rather in/through human history and so divine life is enhanced and enriched accordingly in time. Tillich’s God is, then, a God in the making, like Whitehead’s consequent God, and Tillich’s humanity is “the fourth through whom the Trinity contributes to its own blessedness.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, Dourley’s Tillich concedes both to the basic claim of process theology, namely, God’s being dependent on human action and history, and to Boehmean (also Jungian) idea of humanity (human consciousness) as the fourth dimension of divinity.

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<sup>61</sup> 70.

<sup>62</sup> 71.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> John P. Dourley, “The Problem of the Three and the Four in Paul Tillich and Carl G. Jung,” in *Paul Tillich, Carl Jung, and the Recovery of Religion*, 102.

An important and related point is that Dourley understands the late Tillich as promoting the recovery of the missing fourth of the Goddess, which Jung envisions as a personalized description of the collective unconscious itself, and thus opening up “the possibility of the recovery of a vital apophatic theology through the recovery of the experience of self-loss in the nothing from which the all proceeds.”<sup>65</sup> In the 1999 article, “The Goddess, Mother of the Trinity: Tillich’s Late Suggestion,” Dourley notes that Tillich, in the third volume of *Systematic Theology*, considers a dimension of divinity that precedes and authors all differentiation within divinity and transcends the male-female dichotomy—the divinity to be radically differentiated from the three *personae*, Father, Son, and the Spirit. What draws Dourley’s particular attention is Tillich’s symbolic concept of the ground, which is imbued with a mother quality, as Tillich explains, i.e., the quality of “giving birth, carrying and embracing, and also calling back, resisting independence of the created, and swallowing it.”<sup>66</sup> Thus the experience of the ground points to what Dourley understands as the apophatic moment, the moment of self-loss in the nothingness, which Eckhart, Boehme, and Jung all share in their experiential philosophy of religion, and now Tillich joins.

Tillich’s late search to find an alternative to masculine symbolism in a Christian doctrine of God, his speculation about the maternal nature of divinity as ground of divine and human life, and his search for the God beyond the God of theism resonate with Eckhart’s experience. The point at issue is that both...uncovered the experiential basis of Goddess consciousness by locating such experience in the preceding dimension of divinity from which all differentiation within and beyond Trinity derives.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> John P. Dourley, “The Goddess, Mother of the Trinity: Tillich’s Late Suggestion,” in *Paul Tillich, Carl Jung, and the Recovery of Religion*, 76.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>67</sup> 85.

In short, Dourley understands that the late Tillich espouses the shared claims of Boehme and Jung (as Dourley understands), namely, that divine conflicts are resolved not in eternity but in time, and that the humanity (human consciousness) is the fourth dimension of divinity where both divine and human conflicts are resolved. Here, I wish to make three points to give a clearer view of Tillich's position on the matters Dourley discusses.

First, note that Tillich's eschatological concepts, "essentialization" and "divine blessedness" are discussed within the context of "Eternal Life," which is for him a metaphor, not a temporal event. In the third volume of *Systematic Theology*, Tillich makes clear that "Eternal Life" *symbolizes* the "end of history," which is to be understood as the telos of a being—a being's drive toward Eternal Life. He writes: "It symbolizes the "transition from the temporal to the eternal, and this is a metaphor similar to that of the transition from the eternal to the temporal in the doctrine of creation."<sup>68</sup> As a religious symbol, it functions to open up the depth dimension of reality, i.e., "a level of reality, which otherwise is not opened at all, which is hidden."<sup>69</sup> In other words, its function is to invite people into the experience of the dimension of reality wherein the ultimate power of being itself is revealed. Indeed, Tillich's symbol is mystagogical; the symbols of the Eternal Life such as essentialization and divine blessedness are designed to "give an

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<sup>68</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 395.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Tillich, "Religious Symbols and Our Knowledge of God," ed. John Clayton, *Paul Tillich: Writings in the Philosophy of Religion* (Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 1987), 398.

infinite weight to every decision and creation in time and space.”<sup>70</sup> They express “our standing in every moment in face of the eternal, though in a particular mode of time.”<sup>71</sup>

To put it more precisely, Tillich’s concern is to provide an existential, experiential, and even mystagogical horizon, within which one is empowered to go forward with sufficient courage in a process of decision and creation. In introducing those eschatological concepts, he hopes to provide an ongoing vision of human life, which is the realization of the New Being that remains fragmentary and anticipatory in reality, but must continue to be upheld, especially in the face of the threats of nonbeing, thereby creating hope and the courage to be.

Second, although Tillich juggles with the problem of quaternity in his late endeavor to find a religious symbol transcending the alternative male-female, this does not amount to the endeavor of promoting a Boehme-Jungian apophaticism, which “uncovered the experiential basis of Goddess consciousness by locating such experience in the preceding dimension of divinity from which all differentiation within and beyond Trinity derives.”<sup>72</sup> Dourley rightly observes that in considering the quaternitarian problem, Tillich introduces his concept of the ground of being, which points to the mother quality of divine life. To be sure, the ground of being, for Tillich, symbolizes the abysmal dimension of divinity, i.e., “the basis of Godhead,”<sup>73</sup> and thus the motherhood of divinity is clearly and distinctively affirmed in this idea of God. It must be remembered,

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<sup>70</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III.*, 400-401.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 395.

<sup>72</sup> Dourley, “The Goddess, Mother of the Trinity,” 85.

<sup>73</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 250.

however, that Tillich's concern here is to correct the biased exclusiveness within Protestantism of the male image of divinity by retrieving the lost dimension of the femininity of the divine. His ultimate aim is to present a dialectical view of divinity in its gender image. Recall that in "The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism," he identifies Catholic sacrament and Protestant prophetism as "mother" and "father" and ultimately calls for the unity of both elements, warning that Protestantism without the mother element represented by Catholic mysticism would become "cultural activism and moral utopianism."<sup>74</sup>

At a deeper level, for Tillich, an inheritor of Boehme and Schelling, the ground and power of being is the first principle of divinity, which is correlated to Logos, the second principle, the principle of meaning and structure. The third principle, namely God as Spirit, then means the unity of both principles, and so neither side is to be denied or exclusively emphasized:

The meaning of spirit is built up through the meaning of the ontological elements and their union. In terms of both sides of the three polarities one can say that spirit is the unity of power and meaning. On the side of power it includes centered personality, self-transcending vitality, and freedom of self-determination. On the side of meaning it includes universal participation, forms and structures of reality, and limiting and directing destiny... If one of these sides is absorbed by its correlate, either abstract law or chaotic movement remains.<sup>75</sup>

According to Tillich's dialectic, "Without the second principle the first principles would be chaos, burning fire, but it would not be the creative ground. Without the second principle God is demonic, is characterized by absolute seclusion, is the 'naked

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<sup>74</sup> Tillich, "The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism," 236.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 249-250.

absolute.”<sup>76</sup> Thus, Tillichian experience of the ground of being is dialectically related to that of the meaning of being, i.e., that of Logos, which “opens the divine ground, its infinity and its darkness,” and “makes its fullness distinguishable, definite, and finite.”<sup>77</sup> The two kinds of experiences of the divine are dialectically unified in Tillich’s theological imagination to promote a mysticism that accepts and yet does not exclusively promote the eventual resting in the Goddess dimension where all differentiations and meaning-creating activities are dissolved, namely, baptized mysticism.

The final subject is what Dourley appraises as the highest point of mystical experience, i.e., the Eckhartian –Jungian apophaticism, which is, in Tillich’s mystical theology, analogous to the “radical ecstasy that seeks to grasp the import itself beyond all forms,”<sup>78</sup> which, if lacking the other element of religious experience, the affirmation of form, would be susceptible to demonization. It is the “abstract mysticism” deprived of the dynamic movement of the Spiritual Presence, to which Tillich persistently makes objections. Tillich’s baptized mysticism does not endorse immersion in the formless nothingness wherein the individual loses its singular character into the abyss of the divine, and thus also its ethical responsibility. This is the point, I believe, where Tillich and Jung cannot be reconciled on the question of the mystical journey of the soul.

### **C. Theological Perspective**

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<sup>76</sup> 251.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Tillich, “Philosophy of Religion,” 90.

This section introduces A. J. Reimer's exploration of Tillich's understanding of prayer. Reimer's works on the subject are neither comprehensive nor systematic and yet deal with the central issues pertaining to Tillich's theology of prayer. In a 2000 essay, "Mysticism or Spirituality? The Concept of Prayer in Tillich's Theology,"<sup>79</sup> Reimer argues that in his view of prayer, Tillich incorporates mystical elements into Protestant spirituality, thereby not fully accepting the personal element in the act of prayer, which is strongly manifest in Spiritualism and Pietism. This argument is reiterated in the subsequent essay, "Prayer as *Unio Mystica*: Tillich's concept of Prayer in Contrast to Barth's Christological Realism and Hirsh's Pietistic Personalism."<sup>80</sup> Here, Reimer identifies key features of each theologian's concept of prayer and shows the ways in which their concepts of prayer are related to their views of God and to their ethics. Throughout the two essays, Reimer considers Tillich as bringing together "Mysticism" and "Spiritualism" and yet not doing justice to Pietism. In his view, Tillich's theology of prayer does not fully account for the significance of the personal element in divine-human relationship, and this is related to the weakness of Tillich's theological ethics.

In the aforementioned essay, Reimer presents the three types of religious experience, which are logically differentiated and yet intertwined in their concrete historical manifestations: "Mysticism," "Spiritualism," and "Pietism." Mysticism in Reimer's typology "assumes an ontological continuity between the divine and the human—a relatively optimistic anthropology, in which prayer and contemplation are

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<sup>79</sup> A. James Reimer, "Mysticism or Spirituality? The Concept of Prayer in Tillich's Theology," in *Mystical Heritage*, 205-219.

<sup>80</sup> A. James Reimer, "Prayer as *Unio Mystica*: Tillich's concept of Prayer in Contrast to Barth's Christological Realism and Hirsh's Pietistic Personalism," eds. Werner Schüssler, A. James Reimer, *Das Gebet als Grundakt des Glaubens : philosophisch-theologische Überlegungen zum Gebetsverständnis Paul Tillichs* (Münster: LIT, 2004), 109-135.

understood as an opening-up of the inner, finite self to its own deepest self and infinite ground.”<sup>81</sup> God is usually imagined in the Mystical type as an impersonal power, although in the Latin West (represented by St. Bonaventure and Bernard of Clairvaux), a personal relationship between God and humans is consistently affirmed. Spiritualism by contrast is based on a discontinuity between God and humanity; God in this context is viewed predominantly in personal terms. The Spiritualistic type is largely congruent with the Reformation view, as over against the medieval mystical view, in the sense that it puts a greater emphasis on pneumatology than the Mystical type does, especially the active role of the divine Spirit in a revelatory experience. Pietism, having been grown up in the soil of German Lutheranism, brought into the Reformation-Spiritualist tradition the element of mysticism, i.e., the emphasis on the nearness of God, and yet adopted the view of a highly personalistic God as much as in Spiritualism. Reimer asserts:

In its emphasis on a highly individualistic and personal relationship with Jesus as God’s son (the Jesus within), prayer as communion with, supplication to, and wrestling with God, and its strong moralism and stress on following Jesus in daily life, it [Pietism] brought to Spiritualism a mystical favor but it remained in the Lutheran camp in its keen awareness of sin, need for repentance, and acceptance of the substitutionary theory of atonement so important to the Lutheran confession.<sup>82</sup>

In Pietism, individual experiences of the Spirit or the inner light take precedence over external, objective authorities such as Church, tradition, creed, sacraments, etc.<sup>83</sup>

In Reimer’s understanding, Tillich endeavored throughout his life to bring together the mystical and spiritualistic traditions while maintaining discomfort with

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<sup>81</sup> Reimer, “Mysticism or Spirituality?” 206.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

certain traits of both traditions. Reimer then presents a good summary of Tillich's writings on prayer and on God. In his very early thesis on Schelling, Tillich tries to avoid two possible errors in the concept of God: the dogmatic, orthodox view in which God is portrayed as a secluded, egotistic, individual being; and the pantheistic view where God is dissolved into universal substance. With Schelling's dialectic, Tillich understands that "love is the underlying principle of God as universal being, and power is that through which love comes into existence. God becomes personal through divine love's conquering divine egotism."<sup>84</sup>

Reimer rightly observes that Tillich's seeming uneasiness about Mysticism and Spiritualism derives from his holding to the "critical, prophetic protest-impulse," that is, the Protestant Principle, of which his 1929 essay, "Nichtkirchliche Religionen," provides an excellent overview. In the essay, Tillich takes the mystical direction in his attempt to find a way that goes beyond the ambiguity of both "church/sect religion" and "autonomous religion" with a great ability to answer for the question of a doubter being stuck in a state of meaninglessness. The concept of ecstasy is introduced here; religion is a state of being grasped, which can lead to ecstasy. God in the experience of ecstasy cannot be conceived of as an object and so it is absurd to say the experiencing subject prays to God as object. This way of perceiving religion and religious experience is mystical and yet cannot be equated with (classical) mysticism, since it is the way of the prophetic breaking-in of the meaning of life from its ground, i.e., "believing realism," a religious-cultural-political alternative to romantic conservatism, revolutionary utopianism, and critical skepticism. Reimer concludes: "It is this concern with applying the critical,

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<sup>84</sup> 211-212.

prophetic spirit to all of social-cultural-political life which in my view distinguishes Tillich's thought from pure Mysticism, Spiritualism, or Pietism."<sup>85</sup>

This recognition of Reimer of the Protestant Principle as a distinctively Tillichian way of life is crucial. Recall Tillich's critique of "mystical realism" and ultimate proposal of "self-transcending realism" in his 1929 essay, "Realism and Faith," of which we have made an in-depth study in the preceding chapter. Mystical realism, a form of realism forfeited of the prophetic element, attempts to transcend faith in the experience of mystical union and does not take seriously the contemporary historical situation and its power and its depth, whereas self-transcending realism penetrates the depth dimension of reality in the ecstatic experience of faith. Indeed, Tillichian mysticism, since it is undergirded by the Protestant Principle, not only breaks away from the existing form, but also creates a new form in which the fulfillment of a meaningful, vocational life is envisioned and realized, though fragmentarily and anticipatorily. In this sense, it is called "theonomous."

Reimer is clearly aware of Tillich's dialectic of the mystical and the prophetic when he reviews Tillich's paradigmatic article, "Vertical and Horizontal Thinking." Then he moves on to elucidate Tillich's dialectic by exploring his 1951 lecture series entitled *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* where he correlates the personalistic, biblical concept of God and the impersonal ontological concept of God as Being, which, in Reimer's view, corresponds to the contours of Spiritualism and Mysticism, respectively. For Tillich, an encounter with the Holy can never be less than personal. What differentiates biblical religion from other religions is, however, the

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<sup>85</sup> 213.

radicalism of its personalism. We do not first know what personhood is and then apply it to God; rather, inversely, our encounter with God allows us to discover what authentic personhood means and how to protect us from sinking into sub-personhood. How can this biblical view of God as personal be reconciled with the ontological view of God as being? Tillich finds an answer in the biblical concept of the Word; the God of the Bible speaks to humans, but

His Word is an event created by the divine Spirit in the human spirit. It is both driving power and infinite meaning. The Word of God is God's creative self-manifestation and not a conversation between two beings...It is ontological in its implications, although it is a genuinely religious symbol...The Word is an element in ultimate reality; it is the power of being, expressing itself in many forms, in nature and history, in symbols and sacraments, in silent and in spoken words.<sup>86</sup>

In Tillich's view, the Word as the combination of power and meaning is the event of the Spiritual Presence, which goes beyond the dichotomy of God as object and humans as subject. In the event of the Word, "reciprocity" and "participation," which, according to Reimer, fits most easily with Spiritualism and Mysticism, are unified. Tillich continues to hold: "God stands in the divine-human reciprocity, but only as he who transcends it and comprises both sides of the reciprocity."<sup>87</sup> In this way, Spiritualism and Mysticism are brought together in Tillich, thereby eventually overcoming the limit of the symbols of reciprocity, i.e., of Spiritualism. One can glimpse here a (baptized) mystical bearing in Tillich's view of God and of prayer, which is further confirmed in the concluding lines of his lectures:

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<sup>86</sup> Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), 78-79.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

The God who is a being is transcended by the God who is Being itself, the ground and abyss of every being. And the God who is a person is transcended by the God who is the Person-Itself, the ground and abyss of every person... Religiously speaking, this means that our encounter with the God who is a person includes the encounter with the God who is the ground of everything personal and as such not a person.<sup>88</sup>

In turning to *Systematic Theology*, Reimer argues that Tillich stands in the Spiritualist tradition where pneumatology is so important. Tillich rehabilitates the term “ecstasy” by defining it as the state of mind being grasped by the ground of being and meaning. Ecstasy is the union of the experience of the abyss and that of the ground, and prayer is one of the means through which one experiences this ecstasy. Every prayer (and meditation) aims at the reunion of the creature with its divine, creative ground, and so is revelatory and ecstatic. Then, Reimer argues:

Although Tillich shares a great deal with the mystical tradition at this point, he veers off quite sharply in his suspicion of external techniques, strategies and disciplines by which human beings play an active role in helping to bring about his reunion. Here Tillich does really reveal his own indebtedness to the Reformers. It is the divine Spirit that “grasps, shakes, and moves the human spirit” in revelation, ecstasy, meditation, and prayer.<sup>89</sup>

In Reimer’s view, as long as Tillich remains critical of the attempt to emphasize “external techniques, strategies and disciplines” to bring about revelatory ecstasy, he stands in the Spiritualist tradition. Reimer ensures here that he uses the term of Spiritualism, not in the narrow sense of what Tillich defines as the attitude of the enthusiasts of the Reformation period and the early eighteenth century, but in the broad

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<sup>88</sup> 82-83.

<sup>89</sup> Reimer, “Mysticism or Spirituality?” 216.

sense of what he himself defines, i.e., placing due emphasis on the active role of the Spirit in the ecstatic, revelatory event of prayer.

Reimer highlights the active role of the Spirit in a revelatory prayer again in his exploration of *Systematic Theology III*, where Tillich's view of prayer is reiterated in the context of pneumatology and ecclesiology. He quotes Tillich:

The divine Spirit's presence in the experience of contemplation contradicts the idea we often find in mysticism that contemplation must be reached by degrees, as in the movement from meditation to contemplation, and that it itself may be a bridge to mystical union... Contemplation in the Protestant tradition is not a degree but a quality, that is, a quality of a prayer [that] is aware that the prayer is directed to Him who creates the right prayer in us (*ST III*, 192-93).<sup>90</sup>

According to Reimer, this is the place where one can see the essential Protestant element of Tillich's spirituality. He also points out that, in spite of the ineradicable presence of that element, Tillich consistently tries to bring together the Catholic-Mystical tradition and the Protestant-Spiritualist tradition; the way Tillich does this is "through a highly nuanced analysis of the distinction and relation between the human spirit and the divine Spirit."<sup>91</sup>

The last feature of Tillich's theology of prayer, which Reimer hurriedly mentions, is his "paradox of prayer" and criticism of Pietism's "profanized" notion of prayer. For Tillich, the prayers of intercession and supplication cannot be excluded in the life of prayer; otherwise, there would be a "completely unrealistic relation to God." This view, he argues, would be "shallow and profanized," if the Pauline paradox of prayer were not considered, namely, that it is the Spirit who speaks to the Spirit in a right prayer. Prayer is

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

not a profanized conversation with another being called God, but “participation in that which transcends the subject-object scheme, with its objectifying (and subjectifying) words, and therefore the ambiguity of language as well (including the voiceless language of speaking to oneself).”<sup>92</sup>

The profanization of prayer often found in Protestantism is rooted in its pietistic tendency, i.e., its person-centered interpretation of the Spiritual Presence. In short, Pietism is wrong when it reduces the dialectical character of divine-human relation, i.e., “the identity and non-identity of him who prays and Him who is prayed to,”<sup>93</sup> to a person-to-person conversation and so loses the contemplative dimension of Protestant spirituality. It is here that while being doubtful of whether Tillich does justice to the Pietistic tradition, Reimer raises a critical question concerning Tillich’s overall notion of prayer as contemplation:

Despite Tillich’s caveats, for many praying Christians the personal element in his concept of prayer simply gets lost within too generic a view of personality as ground of personhood. In the end, is it adequate to say that prayer is God praying through to us to God? Does not something of the Reformation view of the anguished sinner crying out to God for help get lost in Tillich’s formulation? Is it not closer to the Pauline concept to say that God’s Spirit helps our spirit to utter words that we find impossible to utter?<sup>94</sup>

One can identify a threefold implication in this question of Reimer. First, in Reimer’s perspective, “too generic a view of personality as ground of personhood” weakens the appealing power of Tillich’s theology of prayer to ordinary Christians, for whom God is imagined as personal and the quality of person-to-person conversation,

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<sup>92</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 192.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Reimer, “Mysticism or Spirituality?” 219.

especially in the context of the prayers of supplication and intercession, is highly appreciated. Second, Reimer does not accept the key idea of Tillichian prayer that prayer is God speaking to Himself through the Spirit. This idea is only absurd to him because there is no place in it for “the anguished sinner crying out to God for help,” which is the quality radically appreciated both in the tradition of Pietism like Emmanuel Hirsh’s and in the “Christological realism” of Karl Barth, who is, however, highly critical of Pietism’s subjectivism. Third, Reimer supposes that Tillich’s view of prayer is inherently related to the weakness of his theological ethics, which could account for his “ambiguous” attitude toward nationalism as the ally of Pietism. This point is taken up in Reimer’s 2004 essay, “Prayer as *Unio Mystica*,” where the three theologians’ concepts of prayer and of God are contrasted finally to shed a clearer light on the distinctiveness of Tillich’s view.

In the 2004 essay, Reimer introduces a series of research confirming the interrelation between Pietism and nationalism. According to the research, Pietism brought an emotionalism into eighteenth-century Germany, and emotional enthusiasm combined with an emphasis on individuality provided the basis for the rise and growth of subsequent nationalism. Family, church, and national groups are highly valued as the greater individualities, to which one owes final allegiance. In Reimer’s judgment, Hirsh as a typical Pietist and unapologetic Lutheran nationalist supported National Socialism; Barth was the radical opponent both to Pietism and to many types of nationalism. Although he attacked and was victimized by National Socialist oppression, Tillich’s ideas, i.e., “some remaining romantic myth-of-origin ideas,”<sup>95</sup> contributed to an ambiguity

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<sup>95</sup> Reimer, “Prayer as *Unio Mystica*,” 113.

toward nationalism. The ethical stance of each theologian toward nationalism, Reimer argues, is somehow related to each theologian's view of prayer. Thus, in the remaining part of the essay, he delineates the three theologians' views of prayer and its ethical ramifications.

For Barth, there are five criteria for authentic prayer. First, prayer is based on God's command, the imperative of divine grace, which makes human freedom possible. Humans are given permission to pray to God to express their needs, privations, and desires, and the permission becomes God's command; prayer then is understood to be a willing submission of our will to God's will, as shown in Jesus' wrestling with God in Gethsemane. Barth gives a Christological interpretation to Romans 8:33ff to assert that "the Spirit who frees us for this [calling upon God as our Father] and incites us to it is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the power of His Word and promise and command."<sup>96</sup> In calling this aspect of Barth's view of prayer "Christological realism" in the sense of highlighting the "objective nature of prayer, rather than its subjective, enthusiastic, emotive and ecstatic character,"<sup>97</sup> Reimer contrasts Barth from the other two theologians who appreciate and emphasize the "subjective" character of prayer.

Second, true prayer is petitionary in that one becomes aware of his/her own unworthiness and the abyss between God and him/herself. Third, prayer is a universal, communal act since it is "participation in the objective cause of God, the way prepared by Christ, and only derivatively God's participation in the human cause."<sup>98</sup> Fourth, quite

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>97</sup> 115.

<sup>98</sup> 116.

unlike Tillich, who embraces doubt as essential to all faith, true prayer has the character of unreserved and unquestioning certainty; our certainty of being relies on the fact that in Jesus Christ God has already made Himself our guarantor. This objectivity of what God has done in Christ is the basis of the certainty of our being. The last criterion is that prayer is always subject to the rule of obedience and freedom. Reimer concludes: “Barth is intent on dissociating prayer from Pietism, de-emphasizing the subjective, emotional, mystical and ecstatic understanding of prayer in favor of its objective and Christological character.”<sup>99</sup> This accounts for, according to Reimer, a strong ethical quality of Barth’s theology of prayer and more radical rejection of nationalism than Tillich’s.

Reimer then explores Hirsch’s “pietistic personalism” through his masterpiece on prayer, *Der Sinn des Gebets*, of which Tillich wrote a review. Hirsch begins by introducing general religious intuition and experience; one can have an immediate awareness of the ultimate mystery, lying behind the phenomenal world and our inner and outer experiences and inaccessible to reason and the senses, which conditions the whole world of the real. There are some inadequacies, however, in such general religious intuition and experience. It never involves our whole personality, which remains unaffected after it is passed and thus requires an additional experience of God in which the human being as a whole remembers him/herself before God. As an abysmal experience, it does not create a definite knowledge of God, but only a vague perception of the mystery. Prayer, then, is the additional experience whereby the soul contemplates and brings itself before God and makes a trustful, complete surrender to God. What

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<sup>99</sup> 118.

makes Hirsh's prayer truly ethical, Reimer argues, is its view that in prayer, God and the "individual conscience" encounter each other. Here, Reimer quotes Hirsh:

Prayer is a grappling with an experience of conscience that is in some way or other related to God. That is a decisive statement. It incorporates the ethical demand into the religious life... Prayer is necessarily an act of inner obedience. The one who prays has the job of making that piece of God's will, that has become clear to him, into his own will.<sup>100</sup>

For Hirsh, we all have a conscience that is related to the eternal mystery behind the realities. In its demands, the meaning and contents of the eternal are revealed and the direction of a life is determined. An interpretation of our life history in the light of our conscience awakens within us certain insights into God's will and intent, and we can have these insights in prayer, especially, in a "daring" prayer during which we speak to God as to a friend. Prayer, then, is above all thanks and request or invocation, which has to do with the duties and tasks in life: "Prayer contributes to the purification and sanctification of the whole personality, thus strengthening the character towards decisiveness in selfless commitment to serious tasks and duties. Prayerful piety and moral and ethical seriousness belong together."<sup>101</sup>

Here, Reimer notes how Hirsh relates prayer as the direct presence of individual conscience before God to the duties and obligations of individuals to others. Notably, for Hirsh, freeing oneself from the bonds of origin brings with it the danger of alienation from the whole and the giving oneself over into a solipsistic life-destroying preoccupation with the self. True prayer does not lead to a false individualism, but rather back into the community, for which one stands as a free, responsible being. Hirsh says:

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<sup>100</sup> 122.

<sup>101</sup> 123.

“We learn from God, that to be a person is to be a person for others.”<sup>102</sup> The awareness that concern for others and submission to another’s destiny are parts of one’s own life is increased and strengthened in prayer. Prayers of intercession are an expression of that awareness. Reimer concludes that in Hirsh’s view of prayer, “Our private, inner dealings with God impress upon us ever more strongly a responsibility for others, and presses upon our soul our duties and tasks among human beings ever more sharply.”<sup>103</sup>

Reimer presents Tillich’s critical comments on Hirsh’s view of prayer, which were originally published in the journal of *Theologische Blätter* in 1922. Tillich complains that Hirsh’s understanding of meditation is too narrow; it is restricted to the type of meditation, i.e., what Tillich calls the “aesthetic meditation,” which, as a general religious intuition, is prior to or falls short of prayer and thus pushes aside God through talk of mystery. Instead, according to Reimer, Tillich proposes the type of meditation, the “mystical meditation,” which is the goal of prayer, namely, the becoming one with the divine will as a loving submersion of the self in the divine essence; it is the transcending of the self into the *unio mystica*, which radiates back into the whole of finite existence, the unity of the arbitrary nature of finite life and the realm of the eternal. This is the sense of the mystery of the divine abyss, which goes beyond the form of a personal God, and brings Tillich to his fundamental criticism against Hirsh:

The personalistic prayer [of Hirsh] completes itself in the form of an objectified opposition of God and the human being. This, however, does not do justice to the Unconditioned, which stands beyond the opposition of subject and object, nor is it

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<sup>102</sup> 124.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

tolerable for the conditioned, which is oppressed by such an objectified Unconditioned.<sup>104</sup>

In my view, it is noticeable that Tillich identifies a twofold danger of Hirsh's personalism deriving from the "objectified opposition of God and the human being;" first, Hirsh's personalism locks the divine-human relationship within the confines of subject-object dualism and second, it justifies the oppression of that objectified, transcendent God. What is insinuated in the second point runs parallel with Tillich's ideological critique of Hirsh's concept of "mysterious sovereign," of which we have already mentioned in the preceding chapter. In Hirsh's conceptualization, the nation is elevated into an "immediate revelation of God," i.e., into the status of ultimacy; the myth of the nation thus formed makes room for mystifying or sanctifying all activities of the state, even of "the harshest measures of the state" and in doing so justifies the suppression of all opposing forces against it. Herein lies the potential pitfall of the personalism of Pietism like Hirsh's. Pietistic personalism can perhaps be the obstacle or even opposition to a properly ethical act and, often in a subtle way, function as an ideological apparatus that mystifies and justifies the oppressive regime of the sanctified nation.

In the concluding section of the essay, in which he reiterates that Tillich's view of prayer as *unio mystica* is distinguished from both Hirsh's pietistic personalism and Barth's Christological realism, Reimer states that there is in Tillich a "pietistic-like, romantic element" in the sense of his appreciation of Schleiermacher, i.e., of the subjective, the experiential, and the intuitive; this accounts for the fact that although Tillich repudiated National Socialism, he did retain residues of romantic myth-of-origin

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<sup>104</sup> 126-127.

ideas. He concludes that due to a pietistic leaning, Tillich's view of prayer and of God does not lead to a strong theological ethic as do Barth's and Hirsh's.

In my view, Reimer's observation that Tillich still had residual mention of romantic myth-of-origin ideas, which is systematically developed in his earlier essay, "Nation and the Myth of Origin in Tillich's Radical Social Thought,"<sup>105</sup> seems rather questionable. Tillich, as Reimer rightly points out, recognizes the power of the nation as both an historical reality and as a symbol and yet remains highly critical of any attempts to give the nation mythic significance. In *The Socialist Decision*, he incorporates the powers of origin ("Whence," space, and the priestly-sacramental dimension) within the framework of the demand ("Whither," time, and the prophetic-eschatological dimension). In his political theology, the consciousness oriented toward the myth of origin as the root of all political romanticisms has to be ultimately subjected to the prophetic demand of justice. He thus asserts: "The fulfillment of origin lies rather in what confronts us as demand, as an ought";<sup>106</sup> "socialism must understand the human person in terms of his or her spiritual and vital center. This must be done...but rather in accordance with the socialist principle, i.e., the subordination of the origin to the demand";<sup>107</sup> "socialism must place the people to which it belongs, and which it seeks to lead toward socialism, under the unconditional demand of justice, both at home and abroad."<sup>108</sup> Hence, Tillich's attitude toward nationalism, particularly in the form of National Socialism, is not an

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<sup>105</sup> A. J. Reimer, "Nation and the Myth of Origin in Tillich's Radical Social Thought," A. J. Reimer, *Paul Tillich: Theologian of Nature, Culture, and Politics* (LIT: Münster, 2004), 107-120.

<sup>106</sup> Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, 5.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>108</sup> 151.

“ambiguous” appreciation, as Reimer supposes, but a straightforward criticism, since it is a form of political romanticism that, in its attempt to return to the origin, lacks the prophetic demand of justice.

The questions remaining are: 1) is Tillichian prayer, as Reimer argues, not as strong as Barth’s and Hirsh’s in ethical implications? 2) Would not it perhaps be quite strong in its own way of perceiving ethics? 3) If there is, at least, an ethical quality in Tillichian prayer, what could be said about it?

In responding to these questions, I want to consider Tillichian prayer briefly in a broader framework of his theological system. Sebastian Painadath poignantly describes the fundamental dimension of Tillichian prayer as follows:

For him prayer is not a purely religious act that takes place outside the orbit of secular culture, but the central articulation of the dynamics of self-transcendence that opens up the depth dimension of the integrative and creative process of life in the world. Through prayer one becomes alert to the ‘grace and demands’ of the ‘ultimate concern’ operative in the realms of morality and culture.<sup>109</sup>

In Tillich’s divine-human interplay, made up of the dialectical experiences of the mystical and the ethical, i.e., the holy as “being” and “ought,” prayer is illustrated as the process in which “the dynamics of self-transcendence” evolves into the opening up of the depth dimension of reality, including morality (self-integration) and culture (self-creation). Prayer is then a discerning art of being and growing aware of the “grace and demands” (mystical participation and prophetic demands) of the “ultimate concern,” the state of being grasped by the ultimate, which occurs in the various realms of life-process such as art, politics, and economics. A lengthy quote of Tillich is worthwhile here.

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<sup>109</sup> Sebastian Painadath, S.J., “Paul Tillich’s Theology of Prayer,” 218. For a full-fledged version of Painadath’s arguments, see Sebastian Painadath, S. J. *Dynamics of Prayer: Towards a Theology of Prayer in the Light of Paul Tillich’s Theology of the Spirit* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1980).

Ecstasy... has in itself the manifold richness of the objective world, transcended by the Spiritual Presence's inner infinity. He who pronounces the divine Word is, as is the keenest analyst of society, aware of the social situation of his time, but he sees it ecstatically under the impact of the Spiritual Presence in the light of eternity. He who contemplates is aware of the ontological structure of the universe but he sees it ecstatically under the impact of the Spiritual Presence in light of the ground and aim of all being. He who prays earnestly is aware of his own situation and his "neighbor's," but he sees it under the Spiritual Presence's influence and in the light of the divine direction of life's processes.<sup>110</sup>

This passage epitomizes the ethical quality of Tillichian prayer. Let us first consider the ethical quality of contemplation, for which a brief consideration of Tillich's ontology is needed. The basis of his ontology is the self-world (other) dialectic,<sup>111</sup> i.e., self-relatedness: "Man experiences himself as having a world to which he belongs."<sup>112</sup> The individual self, which cannot be divided, participates in his/her environment; the person in its perfect form has communion with other persons. The presence of the other is unconditional. Tillich holds: "In the resistance of the other person the person is born. Therefore, there is no person without an encounter with other persons."<sup>113</sup> The phrase in the above quote, seeing "in light of the ground and aim of all being," refers to what Tillich describes as morality, the telos of a being, namely, the command to become what one essentially and therefore potentially is, a "person within a community of persons."<sup>114</sup> The idea of a person within a community of persons introduces justice as

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<sup>110</sup>Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 119.

<sup>111</sup> In criticizing the dualism based on the "inner-outer" discourse and the concomitant emphasis of the inner life, which are prevalent in the contemporary discussion of spirituality, Owen Thomas proposes Tillich's self-world dialectic as an alternative paradigm of understanding spirituality. Owen C. Thomas, "A Tillichian Critique of Contemporary Spirituality," in *Religion in the New Millennium*, 221-234.

<sup>112</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 169.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>114</sup> Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, 19-20.

acknowledgement of the other person as a person and “mutual participation” or “union,” and justice presupposes love, which is defined as the desire for union of the separated (self-centered, individualized) persons.

In Tillichian morality, “love becomes the ultimate moral principle, including justice and transcending it at the same time.”<sup>115</sup> There are three functions of the relation of justice and love in personal encounters—listening, giving, and forgiving<sup>116</sup>—and this actually occurs under the impact of the Spiritual Presence. In short, in Tillichian contemplation, one becomes ecstatically aware of the structure of interpersonal relations and ultimately driven toward the realization of justice as the inner telos of being and toward the ethical decision based on love, which is mystical. Tillichian contemplation, created by the impact of the Spiritual Presence, therefore, addresses the ethics of love as the concrete, not abstract, response to the situation. Tillich thus writes:

The Spirit, on the contrary, opens the mind to these potentialities and determines the decisions of love in a particular situation... Love, as the ultimate principle of morality, is always the same. Love entering the unique situation, in the power of the Spirit, is always different. Therefore love liberates us from the bondage to absolute ethical traditions, to conventional morals, and to authorities that claim to know the right decision perhaps without having listened to the demand of the unique moment.<sup>117</sup>

Second, Tillich’s illustration of prayer as the ecstatic way of seeing into the situation of oneself and the neighbor in the light of the divine direction of life’s processes, in my view, can be seen in terms of historical, eschatological awareness of the coming realities of the Kingdom of God as the inner telos of all life processes and its

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>116</sup> Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice*, 82-86.

<sup>117</sup> Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, 43.

accompanying impulse toward the participation in the struggle for it. The manifestation of the Kingdom of God in a particular breakthrough is, for Tillich, the *kairos*, “the historical moment in which something new, eternally important, manifests itself in temporal forms, in the potentialities and tasks of a special period.”<sup>118</sup> According to him, the awareness of the *kairos* is “not a matter of detached observation but of involved experience.”<sup>119</sup> Prayer, then, includes the participatory relation to the coming realities of the Kingdom of God; in prayer, one is called toward an action for the Kingdom of God.

This point can be further illuminated in remembering that Tillich considers prayer, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, as an element of worship, which belongs to the “constitutive” function of the church. The praying community is the eschatological community in which one is encouraged to participate in the struggle of the realization of the Kingdom of God. In short, Tillich basically considers prayer in inter-personal and communal relationships, whereby a creative, active participation in the struggle for the coming realities of the Kingdom of God is demanded. This is how Tillichian prayer is ethical and also how it is related to Tillichian baptized mysticism.

#### **D. Spiritual Theological Perspective**

In this section, we will review the works of Frederick Parrella, whose spiritual theological approach to Tillich’s theology highlights important aspects of Tillichian spirituality and mysticism. In “Tillich and Contemporary Spirituality,”<sup>120</sup> which is the

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<sup>118</sup> Paul Tillich, “Ethics in a Changing World,” in *The Protestant Era*, 155.

<sup>119</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 370-371.

main text for our task, Parrella persuasively outlines the three basic characteristics of Tillichian spirituality, namely, on the boundary, ontological/mystical, and sacramental. In doing this, he considers “the adaptability and usefulness of Paul Tillich’s theology in understanding the new renaissance in spirituality, especially in the Catholic tradition.”<sup>121</sup> In the following paragraphs, I will present Parrella’s constructive characterization of Tillichian spirituality with some additional comments and suggestions.

Parrella begins his 1994 article by identifying the reasons for the current cultural and theological “turn to spirituality.” There has been a “steady erosion of the objective order of truth” and a “loss of innocence about objective certainty, whether doctrinal or scientific,”<sup>122</sup> in the post-Enlightenment world of Western philosophy; this has precipitated a sincere concern for “participative” discipline. Advances in psychology enabled modern individuals to discover a new and more creative personal interiority than before, which often propelled them on a spiritual journey going beyond their own traditional theological paths; increasing popular interest in non-Western religions and spirituality accompanied awareness that there was a lost dimension of Christianity, which could now be retrieved in and through the spiritual traditions of other religions; the well-educated class of lay people grew in their search for both a deeper intellectual foundation and a personal connection with their inherited faith; and, finally, in confronting the shallowness of modern culture, i.e., the pursuit of material pleasures, the utilitarianism of life, and its continual purposive drive, people felt an urge to discover the meaning of their

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<sup>120</sup> Frederick J. Parrella, “Tillich and Contemporary Spirituality,” ed. Raymond F. Bulman & Frederick J. Parrella, *Paul Tillich: A New Catholic Assessment* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), 241-267.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>122</sup> 242.

life and existence. In short, in Parrella's view, the present turn to spirituality represents "both a cry of pain and a search for new wholeness and new depth, a quest for a different self-understanding and new and more inclusive, less rigidly structured and hierarchical forms of community."<sup>123</sup>

After providing this outline of the current renaissance of spirituality, Parrella describes how deeply Tillich was aware of the spiritual questions and crisis of the time, which could be characterized as a loss of meaning: "Tillich read the signs of his own times very well-suffering, meaninglessness, and a world threatened with demonic self-destruction on the one hand, and the shallowness of Christian symbols and the lack of courage within the Christian Churches to properly address this human situation on the other."<sup>124</sup> In Parrella's view, Tillich's theology is not separated from the subjective, the historical, and the concrete, i.e., it concerns itself with the concrete situation and the spiritual dimension of the person in the Pauline sense of *pneumatikos*. It is, thus, a "spirituality" in its deepest sense. One can find in Tillich, he boldly states, an anticipation of the present turn to spirituality and even consider Tillich a major factor in the renaissance of spirituality. He then singles out three characteristics for constructing Tillichian spirituality.

The first characteristic of Tillichian spirituality Parrella singles out is the spirituality of "on the boundary." He neither elaborates on this concept nor explains every complex issue of living on the boundary; instead, he simply focuses on certain aspects of

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<sup>123</sup> 243.

<sup>124</sup> 247.

it, especially, in terms of the significance of living between Church and society, between religion and culture. He states:

To be spiritual in the full and proper sense of the term is to be part of both Church and society, religion and culture, to stand, as Tillich said, between alternative possibilities of existence, to be completely at home in neither and to take no definitive stand against either.<sup>125</sup>

Parrella convincingly states that Christian spirituality “must seek the depth of God’s presence in every cultural expression, including the sacred in other religious traditions, insights into human nature and healing from medicine and the social sciences, new political and economic structures, and secular art and music.”<sup>126</sup> He also notes, however, that in Tillich’s boundary image, neither side triumphs over the other; thus Catholic churches cannot do away with their transcendence sacrificing it to an idolatrous immanence, whether secular or ecclesiastical.

This “living on the boundary between church and society” characteristic of Tillichian spirituality is dealt with again in Parrella’s subsequent essay, “Re-Reading Paul Tillich’s Sermons: A Spiritual Journey,”<sup>127</sup> which shows how Tillich’s theology of mysticism unfolds in a highly practical way that employs the popular language of Christians in the context of preaching. According to Parrella, Tillichian spirituality combines the inner and the outer life, i.e., it never separates the spiritual journey of the person from his/her life in society. In explaining this quality of Tillichian spirituality, Parrella draws upon Tillich’s sermon, “The New Being,” where Tillich explains the reality of the New Being in light of the threefold mark of healing, i.e., being reconciled,

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>126</sup> 251.

<sup>127</sup> Frederick J. Parrella, “Re-reading Paul Tillich’s Sermons: A Spiritual Journey,” eds. Peter Hagsis & Doris Lax, *Brücken der Versöhnung* (Münster: LIT, 2003), 366-381.

being reunited, and being resurrected. He notes Tillich's assertion that any type of healing creates the reunion with one's being, namely, not with a part (body or mind) but with the whole personality of being. Since the whole being of the self includes interpersonal and socio-political dimensions, real healing addresses transformation in a social relation. He quotes: "Nothing is more passionately demanded than social healing, than [the power of] the New Being within history and human relationships."<sup>128</sup> For Tillich, thus, the mystical participation in the New Being creates a twofold effect, which can be represented by two symbols, the Spiritual Presence and the Kingdom of God.

Parrella rightly observes that the union of the inner and the outer life stems from Tillich's mystical ontology where all beings are united in the mystery of being-itself. He quotes from another sermon, "The Riddle of Inequality": "There is an ultimate unity of all beings, rooted in the divine life from which they emerge and to which they return. All beings, non-human as well as human, participate in it. And therefore they all participate in each other."<sup>129</sup> The "ultimate unity of all beings" is for Tillich not a speculative assertion but a universal experience of the human being who is radically confronted with the realities representing human predicament, i.e., inequality, and yet, being grasped by the presence of God, participates in the suffering realities of all beings. In being grasped by the presence of God, a human individual becomes keenly aware of the internal connectedness and inseparable destiny of all beings, and this produces in the individual a strong motive for giving, sharing, and helping. Parrella concludes:

Tillich's words demand an inseparable link between personal salvation and a commitment to social justice for the poor and the oppressed. He would condemn

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<sup>128</sup> Parrella, "Re-reading Paul Tillich's Sermons," 376.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 377.

any spirituality that would serve as an escape from the world and blind the person to the eternal who beckons to us as both presence and demand in the midst of the temporal order.<sup>130</sup>

Here it seems that Parrella points out the basic character of baptized mysticism, i.e., dialectical union of the two contrasting tendencies or powers: the mystical and the prophetic, mysticism and guilt-consciousness, love and justice, the vertical and the horizontal, *reservatum religiosum* and *obligatum religiosum*, Catholic substance and Protestant principle, and participation and individualization.

In conclusion, I want to make two points. First, Parrella's characterization of Tillichian spirituality as "on the boundary," I suppose, well captures both the "theonomous" character of Tillichian spirituality and the inter-disciplinary character of contemporary spirituality as lived experience and academic discipline. As was discussed in the preceding chapter, one of Tillich's terms that can show the theonomous character of his spirituality is the "mysticism of love." This term is used to express a way of synthesizing culture and religion. In the mysticism of love, every cultural act is united with the unconditioned ground of meaning; the external factuality of objects and events as contents of an art work lose their significance and instead their uttermost depth is visible. The mysticism of love overflows the narrow cup of the formal system of ethics, religious decree, or divine commandment, since it adheres to "pure experience of being, pure experience of reality."<sup>131</sup> Thus, in Tillichian theonomous spirituality, creative analysis and transformative engagement with the cultural realms, e.g., art, politics, and economy, is not an option but a necessity.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Tillich, *What Is Religion?*, 172.

This character of Tillichian spirituality fits well with the contemporary emphasis on the inter-disciplinary dimension of spirituality as both lived experience and academic discipline. As cited by Parrella,<sup>132</sup> Sandra Schneiders proposes that the experience of the spiritual life as the object of Christian spirituality be approached not only theologically and historically but also psychologically, sociologically, aesthetically and even in terms of gender and comparative religion. This “hermeneutical” approach sees Christian spirituality “not as a particular subject matter or as an area of Christian theological study but as a regional area within the broader field of spirituality which is neither necessarily religious nor necessarily Christian” and “begins with the recognition that the capacity for the spiritual quest belongs to the *humanum* as such and can be, and has been, realized in many ways within the traditions of the great world religions and in primal religions.”<sup>133</sup> In Schneiders’ view, Christian spirituality as a particular field is concerned with the project of life integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate, and the ultimate that generates its horizon relates the person involved in the project to the whole of reality.<sup>134</sup>

Second, what should always be remembered in considering Tillich’s metaphor of “on the boundary” is that it combines the dual aspects of human existence, namely, “standing in both” and “standing in neither side” or “standing in a third space.”<sup>135</sup> It is good to recall that “on the boundary” is primarily Tillich’s symbolization of human

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<sup>132</sup> Parrella, “Tillich and Contemporary Spirituality,” 242-247.

<sup>133</sup> Sandra P. Schneiders, “Christian Spirituality: Definition, Methods, and Types,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed., Philip Sheldrake (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>135</sup> Tillich, “Boundaries,” *Theology of Peace: Paul Tillich*, 163.

existence as both the limit and the possibility. A function of this concept is to enable one to discern the absolutist claim or the ideological apparatus that nullifies or mystifies the existing realities of finitude and lures one to forget the impossibility of finding ultimate security in a given state of things, whether it be a powerful authority, an ideal community, or psychological states of peace and harmony produced in the course of the successful implementation of certain spiritual exercises. Its function is also to provide a hopeful vision of the breaking-through of the Eternal into time in a continuous process of creating “a third area beyond the bounded territories, an area where one can stand for a time without being enclosed in something tightly bounded.”<sup>136</sup>

Then, Parrella’s use of Tillich’s image of “on the boundary” seems to be focused solely on the “standing in both” aspect. In fact, however, Parrella is not unaware of the other aspect of “standing in neither side.” In “Re-Reading Paul Tillich’s Sermons,” he proposes that Tillichian spirituality is a “theonomous” spirituality in the sense that it breaks away from heteronomous structures of both churches and secular institutions as well as the dangers of the autonomous self cut off from its divine ground. Parrella then gives us a quote of Tillich’s sermon, “By What Authority?”

If there is no authority, we must decide ourselves... As finite beings, we must act as if we were infinite, and since this is impossible, we are driven into complete insecurity, anxiety, and despair. Or, unable to stand the loneliness of deciding for ourselves, we suppress the fact that there is a split authority. We subject ourselves to a definite authority and close our eyes against all other claims.<sup>137</sup>

In my analysis, what Tillich ultimately suggests in this sermon is a holding on to the authority of Jesus the Christ, which is not the authority of “the consecrated image of

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Parrella, “Re-reading Paul Tillich’s Sermons,” 377.

the man who rules as a dictator,”<sup>138</sup> but that of Him who emptied himself of all authority, namely, the authority of the Cross. The authority of the Cross is the ethical standard by which both the Church and the secular realm are to be judged, and so Tillich says elsewhere: “No representative of the church should criticize them [people outside the church] carelessly, as if speaking with the possession of maturity to those who are immature. Nor should a church representative criticize the secular world before having subjected the church to the same scrutiny.”<sup>139</sup> Parrella asserts that this prophetic and iconoclastic aspect of Tillichian spirituality still sounds as a significant warning in an age of new fundamentalisms, whether of the Bible or the Church, in that it “seeks to rescue us from taking either ourselves or our churches and their doctrines too seriously.”<sup>140</sup>

The second characteristic of Tillichian spirituality, Parrella singles out, is the spirituality of “mystical ontology.”<sup>141</sup> In Parrella’s view, Tillich, by incorporating the Platonic-Augustinian-Franciscan ontology of participation, retrieves the ontological perspective as shown in classical mystics and mystical theologians who pronounce the immediacy in knowing God and God as the ground of the knowledge of the self. In Tillichian mystical ontology, God is understood and experienced, not as a particular object of knowing, but as the ground of every being that is affirmed in the depth of the individual self. Every being has an inclination to return to or be united with God, the ground of being, which is not an object “out there,” but the infinite depth and ground of

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<sup>138</sup> Tillich, *The New Being*, 91.

<sup>139</sup> Tillich, *The Eternal Now*, 159. In his essay Parrella cites the second sentence only.

<sup>140</sup> Parrella, “Re-reading Paul Tillich’s Sermons,” 378.

<sup>141</sup> This line of argument is also found in: Frederick Parrella, “Paul Tillich and the Roman Catholic Mystical Tradition,” in *Mystical Heritage*, 253-277.

his/her own being. This God goes beyond the “God of theological theism” and restores “the foundation of mystical faith in a God beyond subject and object, of a God who is both ‘the wholly other’ and ‘the wholly same, the wholly present,’ the mystery of the self-evident, closer to the self than its own I.”<sup>142</sup> This presence of God, Parrella says, is experienced in the mystics of medieval and post-medieval times such as Bonaventure, Eckhart, and Silesius.

Thus, in Parrella’s view, Tillichian mystical ontology envisions a spirituality free of dualisms plaguing Western culture of subject and object, finite and infinite, the concrete and the universal, and the sacred and the secular, the spirituality which “expresses the paradox of mystical experience in which God remains both the ineffable abyss of being and, at the same time, the ground of a person’s essential and true self.”<sup>143</sup> It is in the deepest part of the self that the human quest for God, i.e., the human capacity to ask the question and receive answers, is realized. This mystical anthropology of Tillich, Parrella suggests, is relevant for the ecumenical dialogue between Eastern and Western religions. Briefly mentioning Tillich’s later concern for other religions, he says that Tillich’s mystical ontology can be compared to a number of Buddhist thinkers. He has in mind, here, the common character of the spiritual journey where “one seeks the Sacred not as an objective someone or something strange but as one’s estranged other and true self.”<sup>144</sup> It is remarkable to me that Parrella understands Tillich’s spirituality based on the mystical ontology in view of the contemporary concern for interreligious dialogue.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>143</sup> Parrella, “Tillich and Contemporary Spirituality,” 255.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 257.

The third characteristic of Tillichian spirituality is that it is profoundly sacramental. Parrella writes: “No matter how the spiritual life is expressed in a mystical dimension which transcends all forms, it remains grounded in the reality of the holy as present in some concrete expression; the ‘Spiritual Presence cannot be received without a sacramental element however hidden the latter may be.’”<sup>145</sup> In Parrella’s view, spirituality is grounded in the sacramental, i.e., the experience of the holy as present in concrete realities, and Tillich’s Spiritual Presence provides a conceptual basis for an authentic Christian spirituality since it affirms sacramental realities as the media of the Spirit.

Parrella takes note of Tillich’s lament that sacraments have lost their spiritual powers within Protestant churches and, as a result, the power and vitality of the Christian message is concentrated exclusively on the individual’s deliberate moral apprehension. He then adds that “without sacramental realities as windows to transcendence and authentic community, people become alone and isolated from one another, unable to find God within their empirical and self-contained world of spiritual effort, human interpretation, and abundant choice.”<sup>146</sup> Remarkably, he takes the symbol of the “window” as corresponding to Tillich’s concept of “Gestalt of grace.” By the Gestalt of grace, Tillich means that grace appears through the forms of grace and yet can in no way be identified with them. Parrella explicates:

While he was concerned about Catholicism’s tendency toward “sacramental objectification and demonization,” he also sought an alternative to an “unstructured, Gestalt-less Protestantism.” Grace needs a Gestalt, a form, to be present; it needs to be present sacramentally, that is, in an earthly form so that

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<sup>145</sup> 258. This quotation is originally from *Systematic Theology III*, 122.

<sup>146</sup> Parrella, “Tillich and Contemporary Spirituality,” 259.

the things of heaven might be visible. The Catholic substance, of course, must also appropriate the Protestant principle so that no form of grace can be objectified and transmuted into grace itself.<sup>147</sup>

According to Parrella, Tillich is critical both of the absolutization of a sacramental object commonly found in Catholicism and of the suppression of the sacramental within Protestantism to suggest the Gestalt of grace, in which the sacramental presence of the holy is fully affirmed and yet no form of grace is objectified and transmuted into grace itself. Thus, Tillichian spirituality, Parrella notes, provides a home for the pilgrim spirit where depth and meaning are given to one's life through the substance of liturgy and sacraments, doctrines and moral directives, the authority of the apostolic community and service to the world."<sup>148</sup> In his interpretation, Tillichian spirituality is largely appealing for contemporary Christians because it teaches that one can find the depth and meaning of life by accepting and fully participating in the given sacramental realities such as liturgy, sacraments (in the narrowest sense of the term), and the doctrines and authority of the Church. He concludes by recalling Tillich's remarks in the 1929 essay:

The Catholic church...has manifestly been able to preserve a genuine substance that continues to exist, although it is encased within an ever hardening crust. But whenever the hardness and crust are broken through and the substance becomes visible, it exercises a peculiar fascination; then we see what was once the life substance and inheritance of all of us and what we have now lost, and a deep yearning awakens in us for the departed youth of our culture.<sup>149</sup>

In my view, Parrella's characterization of Tillichian spirituality as sacramental goes well with Tillich's lifelong concern about the mystical. Seen in light of Tillich's

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 259-260.

<sup>148</sup> 260.

<sup>149</sup> 262; Tillich, "The Protestant Message and the Man of Today," 194.

distinctive use of the term, the sacramental, in his philosophy of religion as the basic religious tendency, out of which the mystical and the prophetic arise as criticizing its potential demonization, however, there remains a room for misunderstanding. Thus, to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding, I want to stress the background context of Tillich's remark above in "The Protestant Message and Man of Today." Tillich's proposal directs one into the thorough-going awareness that human existence "can at no time and in no way be made secure, neither through his submerging himself in the vital life-process, through intellectual or spiritual activity, through sacraments, through mysticism and asceticism, through right belief or strenuous piety."<sup>150</sup> For Tillich, this awareness is nothing other than the "radical proclamation of the human border-situation and the protest against all attempts, through religious expedients, to evade it, even though this evasion be accomplished with the aid of all the richness and depth and breadth of mystical and sacramental piety."<sup>151</sup> It is certain that he does not deny the "richness and depth and traditional wisdom" of the religious substance, i.e., the sacramental. What he is truly cautious of, though, is the attempt to deny the ontological presence of the ultimate threats of nonbeing, which is perhaps grounded in an illusion that the depth and meaning of life can be obtained in a complete surrender to those sacramental realities and so human freedom and responsible actions become no longer meaningful.

My question is then: where can we find assurance and affirmation in the age of the loss of religious substance and meaning of life, if not in the self-surrender to the sacramental realities? In fact, for Tillich, it is not the question of "where," but of "when"

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>151</sup> 196.

that matters;<sup>152</sup> the spiritual assurance comes if “we can discern God at the very moment when all known assertions about ‘God’ have lost their power.”<sup>153</sup> In other words, it is the apophatic moment when the divine No—the judgment—is radically sensed and proclaimed. Tillich states:

Protestantism must proclaim the judgment that brings assurance by depriving us of all security; the judgment that declares us whole in the disintegration and cleavage of soul and community; the judgment that affirms our having truth in the very absence of truth (even of religious truth); the judgment that reveals the meaning of our life in the situation in which all the meaning of life has disappeared. This is the pith and essence of the Protestant message and it must be guarded as such; it ought not to be changed into a new doctrine or devotional method or become a scheme that is used in every sermon.<sup>154</sup>

Hence, Tillich’s baptized mysticism as the core of Tillichian spirituality lies not in its simple affirmation of the presence of the holy in concrete, sacramental realities, but, rather, in its apophatic denial of the potential temptations inherent in that affirmation and its paradoxical faith in the presence of the holy in absence, as paradigmatically shown in the event of the Cross.

### **E. Interreligious Perspective**

This section focuses on Mary Ann Stenger’s comparative study of Tillich’s symbol of the Spiritual Presence and the Mahayana Buddhist concept of *sunyata*. In Stenger’s view, Tillich’s discussion of the mystical *a priori* as presented in the first volume of *Systematic Theology* can apply to the understanding of *sunyata* as well as to

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<sup>152</sup> Tillich, “The Struggle Between Time and Space,” in *Theology of Culture*, 30-39. In this essay, in which he prioritizes time over space, Tillich includes in the category of space polytheism, modern nationalism, and mysticism (of Hindu and Buddhist forms).

<sup>153</sup> Tillich, “The Protestant Message and the Man of Today,” 203.

<sup>154</sup> 204.

that of the Spiritual Presence and thus provides a solid basis for cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogue between the two belief systems. In doing so, she shows an awareness of the fact that Tillich distinguishes between the mystical as category and the mystical as a type of religion. Although she does not refer to Tillich's concept of baptized mysticism, she has a sense that underlying his understanding of the mystical is its dialectical unity with the prophetic or the ethical. Her essay included in the Proceedings of the VIII International Paul Tillich Symposium in 2000, "A Comparison of Spiritual Presence with Buddhist *Sunyata*,"<sup>155</sup> will be our primary text along with Masao Abe's several essays, given that she relies heavily on Abe in understanding and presenting the Buddhist doctrines.

Stenger begins her article by presenting Tillich's three definitions of the mystical *a priori*:<sup>156</sup> it is defined as 1) an immediate experience of something ultimate in value and being of which one can become intuitively aware, 2) a point of identity between the experiencing subject and the ultimate, and 3) an awareness of something that transcends the cleavage between subject and object. In Stenger's view, Tillich's symbol of the Spiritual Presence, the symbol for ecstatic experience of the presence of the divine, is a particular example of the mystical *a priori* in three ways.

First, the Spiritual Presence points to the ecstatic quality. It is a "meaning-bearing power which grasps the human spirit in an ecstatic experience;"<sup>157</sup> this ecstatic, "being

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<sup>155</sup> Mary Ann Stenger, "A Comparison of Spiritual Presence with Buddhist *Sunyata*," in *Mystical Heritage*, 463-478.

<sup>156</sup> Tillich introduces this concept as one of the two criteria-the other being "the Christian message"-for determining whether a theologian is inside the theological circle. He argues that both philosophy of religion and theology share a mystical *a priori* and the Christian message narrows the theological circle. Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*,

grasped” quality of the Spiritual Presence indicates immediate, intuitive awareness of ultimacy. Second, she notes that there is a point of identity rather than a growing or even eternal identity between the experiencing subject of faith and the ultimacy of the Spiritual Presence, since faith as a manifestation of the impact of the Spiritual Presence is mystical. She argues: “Tillich frequently distinguishes between the mystical element in all religious faith and mysticism as a type of religion. . . . For Tillich, mysticism, although not a totally negative type of religion, aims for identification with ultimacy and is in danger of annihilating the centered self.”<sup>158</sup> Third, the subject-object split, which is the basic ambiguity of life in the sphere of culture, is overcome through the Spiritual Presence.

Stenger then applies the three definitions of the mystical *a priori* given by Tillich to the Buddhist concept of *sunyata*, usually translated as emptiness, nothingness, or voidness, the concept that is designed to depict the Buddhist awakening experience of transcending the standpoint of being. In fact, her presentation is too brief to comprehend the sophisticated meanings of *sunyata* in contrast to the Spiritual Presence and yet enough to provide a simple comparison of *sunyata* and the Spiritual Presence and prepare for discussing later topics, i.e., the mystical *a priori* as a critical principle and its ontological, ethical implications in the two experiences.

First, *sunyata* is the awakening experience in which one immediately sees into the reality or “suchness” of things. The experience of *sunyata* transcends the split between thinking and not-thinking and enters into non-thinking. Thus, it is similar to the Tillichian experience of the Spiritual Presence in the sense of the “immediate, intuitive awareness

<sup>157</sup> Stenger, “A Comparison of Spiritual Presence with Buddhist *Sunyata*,” 465; Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 115.

<sup>158</sup> Stenger, “A Comparison of Spiritual Presence with Buddhist *Sunyata*,” 466.

of ultimacy.” Stenger notes, however, that the phrase, “intuitive awareness of ultimacy,” sounds too dualistic for Zen Buddhists, and that the symbol of the Spiritual Presence contains a more “substantial” ultimacy than the Buddhist concept of *sunyata*.

Second, Tillich’s description of the mystical *a priori* as a point of identity with ultimacy seems to Stenger to be modified to apply to *sunyata*. She argues in reference to Masao Abe that “Buddhists would not speak of an identity with Ultimacy, suggesting union with the realty, but rather of an experience of self as no-self, as nothingness. *Sunyata* is not a reality outside of oneself and cannot be objectified.”<sup>159</sup> What is experienced in *sunyata* is not so much an identity with ultimacy as an “identity with nothingness;” the emerging subject is empty of all images and thoughts and thereby liberated and free. She goes on to say that “This identity is sometimes expressed in terms of the dynamic identity of *samsara* (the secular, ordinary world) and *nirvana* (the sacred). Neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* is absolutized... One lives in the tension between *samsara* and *nirvana*.”<sup>160</sup>

Third, in Stenger’s view, whereas in the Buddhist experience of *sunyata* there is neither subject nor object, i.e., there is a complete transcendence of the subject-object split, Tillichian overcoming of the subject-object split still suggests a subject who is intuitively aware of the ‘object’ called Spiritual Presence. Here, she refers to D. T. Suzuki: “Because in the *satori* seeing there is neither subject nor object, it is a nothing seeing itself as such.”<sup>161</sup> In conclusion, she holds that the experience of *sunyata*

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 467-468.

<sup>160</sup> 468.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

exemplifies the mystical *a priori* Tillich posits in the beginning of his theological system and yet *sunyata* and Tillichian mystical *a priori* are not “ontologically similar.” This seems to me to suggest that in her view, Tillichian experience of the Spiritual Presence still maintains a sense of the substantial entity for subject and/or object, of which is totally emptied in the Buddhist experience of *sunyata*. This view of Stenger reminds us of John Dourley’s observation, as we have already seen in the second section of the current chapter, that Tillich “mutes the note of Eckhart’s conclusive doctrine of the breakthrough, the total fusion of the human and the Godhead in the God beyond the Trinity as the ultimate resolution of the estrangement inextricably attached to the creature’s relation to God as other.”<sup>162</sup>

In short, in Stenger’s view, Tillichian experience of the Spiritual Presence and the Buddhist experience of *sunyata* share the character of the mystical *a priori* and yet there is a clear difference between them; the former still retains a sense of duality, whereas in the latter, the sense of both the self and the ultimate are completely transcended, thereby obtaining perfect non-duality. This implies to me that there are contrasting principles underlying the two kinds of mystical experiences: the principle of participation for Tillichian mysticism, namely, baptized mysticism, and the principle of identity for the Buddhist mysticism of *sunyata*. Recall that in *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, in which he explores the Kingdom of God and Nirvana as the two contrasting symbols, Tillich observes that “One participates, as an individual being, in the Kingdom of God. One is identical with everything that is in Nirvana.”<sup>163</sup> For him, the

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<sup>162</sup> Dourley, “Tillich’s Appropriation of Meister Eckhart,” 13.

principle of participation signifies, as we have seen in the first chapter, both a partial identity and a partial non-identity; in baptized mysticism, the individual becomes a part of the divine without losing its identity. This is a source of his “residual substantialism,” which makes it difficult to imagine that “human beings can be free without standing in some ontological sense outside the divine life.”<sup>164</sup> According to him, participation leads to agape, while identity leads to compassion. Agape accepts and transforms the unacceptable in the direction of what is meant by the Kingdom of God; compassion as he understands it does not accept the other in terms of “in spite of” or try to transform the other, but only suffers with the other through identification. Stenger observes that in the Buddhist experience of *sunyata*, discrimination and differentiations disappear and there arises love of all being; compassion (*karuna*) flows from the experience of *sunyata*.<sup>165</sup>

Stenger moves on to point out that the mystical *a priori* that both the Spiritual Presence and *sunyata* share can ground a critical principle against the demonic or absolutization of the finite in each religious tradition. In the experience of the Spiritual Presence, in which the split between the sacred and the profane, between the religious and the secular, is overcome at least fragmentarily, the mystical element functions as a critical principle against demonic ecstasy, which is rooted in absolutizing the finite, or a destructive form of mysticism resulting in the loss of self or world. We can see here that she points both to the dangers underlying what Tillich calls “absolute mysticism,” though not mentioning the term directly and to the dialectic of the mystical and the prophetic in

<sup>163</sup> Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 68.

<sup>164</sup> John J. Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine*, 186.

<sup>165</sup> Stenger, “A Comparison of Spiritual Presence with Buddhist *Sunyata*,” 476.

Tillichian mysticism . She rightly notes that this critical principle is called in Tillich the “Protestant principle” and also notes that the Protestant Principle “is rooted in the mystical *a priori* that unites the ordinary and ultimacy—a dynamic, paradoxical unity symbolized by the term, “Spiritual Presence.”<sup>166</sup>

In Mahayana Buddhism as well, Stenger argues, *sunyata* holds a critical function. Here, she relies on Masao Abe again, who understands *sunyata* as the critical principle that works against all attachments, including attachment to the sacred realm of *nirvana* as well as attachment to the ordinary secular things of *samsara*. For Abe, the Protestant principle and *sunyata* share a dynamic interaction between the secular and the sacred, but

[T]he Mahayana principle posits more identity between the two spheres than does the Protestant principle; in fact, it is important to Tillich’s understanding of the Protestant principle that the union of the sacred and the secular does not dissolve the different dimensions. In contrast, it is essential to the Mahayana understanding that the secular and the sacred are identical through a dynamic double negation of each that posits the sacred as secular and the secular as sacred.<sup>167</sup>

To me, the key word here is “dynamic double negation,” which means in Abe’s analysis that “The ultimate in Mahayana Buddhism is *sunyata* as a dynamic fullness that is both *samsara* and *nirvana* as neither *samsara* nor *nirvana* at one and the same time.”<sup>168</sup> *Sunyata* as the critical principle points to a non-substantial emptiness that can penetrate both the sacred and the secular. In Abe’s view, however, Tillich’s affirmation of unambiguous life, while being understood as a double negation in the sense of the negation of the negation of unity/unambiguity, allegedly lacks one side of the double

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<sup>166</sup> The idea that Tillich’s Protestant principle is undergirded by the mystical is also advanced by YoungHo Chun. YoungHo Chun, “Mystical Impulse and Protestant Principle,” in *Mystical Heritage*, 51-61.

<sup>167</sup> Stenger, “A Comparison of Spiritual Presence with Buddhist *Sunyata*,” 470-471.

<sup>168</sup> Masao Abe, “Negation in Mahayana Buddhism and in Tillich,” in *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. Steven Heine (Honolulu: University of Hawai ‘i Press, 1995), 94.

negation needed in the realization of *sunyata*, namely, the double negation of nothingness or “nothingness as the negation of negation of nothingness.”<sup>169</sup> In other words, Tillich’s Protestant principle fails to include the dimension of the negation of negation of nonbeing, the dimension that is recognized in the Buddhist *sunyata*. It ultimately prioritizes being over nonbeing, as shown in Tillich’s formula: being precedes nonbeing in ontological validity, i.e., being embraces itself and nonbeing, while nonbeing depends on the being it negates. Being and nonbeing in Tillich’s ontology forms a polarity and yet do not represent a symmetrical correlation, so to speak.

Abe’s critical observation that Tillich’s Protestant principle is one-sided in applying the principle of dynamic double negation is understandable. I want to make three points, here. First, in Tillich’s system, the Protestant principle is not to be confused with the “Absolute” or with “Being” in traditional philosophies; it basically expresses the quality of all beings and objects in pointing beyond themselves and their finite existence to the infinite, inexhaustible, and unapproachable depth of their being and meaning; it guards against and unveils all sorts of distorted ideologies, either political or religious.<sup>170</sup> Second, it is Tillich’s ongoing position on the question of being that the reality of nonbeing is the threatening force and the source of anxiety, which, though, has not to be rejected but recognized and accepted into the self; this is the way in which it should be dealt with in the mystical faith of the courage to be. Third, thus, while its logic does not endorse the ultimate affirmation of nonbeing via double negation as the Buddhist *sunyata*

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<sup>169</sup> Stenger, “A Comparison of Spiritual Presence with Buddhist *Sunyata*,” 475; Masao Abe, “Double Negation as an Essential for Attaining the Ultimate Reality Comparing Tillich and Buddhism,” in *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*, 108.

<sup>170</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Protestant Principle and the Proletarian Situation,” in *The Protestant Era*, 161-176.

does, Tillichian baptized mysticism acknowledges the inevitable presence of the reality of nonbeing in its participation in Being-itself. It then promotes the life of the “eternal now,” the presence of the divine in the existential threats of nonbeing.

To return to Stenger’s argument, she brings into the discussion Abe’s assessment of Tillich’s notion of “God above the God of theism” in *The Courage To Be*. Given her presentation is more of a summary, below I will provide an extended argument of Abe in his 1990 article, “Double Negation as an Essential for Attaining the Ultimate Reality Comparing Tillich and Buddhism.” Abe thinks that Tillich’s notion of God is quite different from the traditional theistic one, since to him God is the ground and power of being that conquers non-being, i.e., God is being itself. Given Tillich’s priority of being over nonbeing, however, his God as being itself can lead to the complete negation of nonbeing, but not that of being. In contrast, the Buddhist experience of *sunyata* can lead to the complete negation of being as well as of nonbeing. Abe claims:

In Tillich, since the polarity of being and nothing is an asymmetrical polarity with being’s superiority over nothing, the overcoming of this asymmetrical polarity leads us *obliquely* on the side of being to reach the ultimate point of being, that is, Being or being-itself. By contrast, in Buddhism, since the polarity of being and nothing is a symmetrical polarity, with equal weight for being and nonbeing, the overcoming of this symmetrical polarity entails us *straightforwardly* to go beyond the horizon of polarity itself to attain a new horizon which is neither being nor nothing—that is, to a realization of *sunyata*. (Italics original)<sup>171</sup>

In Abe’s view, thus, Tillich’s God as the dialectical relation of being and nonbeing that overcomes the shock of nonbeing is only conceived within the framework of being, while in the Buddhist *sunyata*, the framework of being as such is negated as well as affirmed. This further indicates that Tillich’s courage to be as solving the question

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<sup>171</sup> Abe, “Double Negation as an Essential for Attaining the Ultimate Reality Comparing Tillich and Buddhism,” 106-107.

of existential anxiety ultimately affirms being whereas the Buddhist solution of the human problem is actualized in the realization of one's own self-contradictory existence, which is based on the symmetrical contradictions of being and nonbeing.<sup>172</sup> In short, as Stenger points out, "the unity in Buddhism is rooted in emptiness; the unity in Tillich's theology is rooted in the 'substantial' reality of God."<sup>173</sup> Thus, Abe holds elsewhere: "If the phrase 'God above God' is truly to signify that which is *above* God or *beyond* God, then what is signified cannot be spoken of as a 'God' at all. What is signified must be Absolute Nothingness."<sup>174</sup>

It seems to me that what makes Abe finally having difficulty with Tillichian apophaticism is Tillich's "residual substantialism," which, as Abe says, prevents one "to go beyond the horizon of polarity itself to attain a new horizon which is neither being nor nothing—that is, to a realization of *sunyata*." It is clear that Tillich's God as Being-itself is not the same as the Buddhist doctrine of "absolute nothingness." It is also clear, however, that it moves away from the conventional frame of theism to capture the dimension of the reality that is neither being nor nonbeing and yet sustains all beings and things; this dimension is neither the ontological state of "being" nor the psychological reality; also, it expresses the experiential reality of one's being grasped by the ultimate concern and thus affirmed in the courage to be. What ensues in Tillichian baptized mysticism, therefore, is the hopeful self that is able to live the apophatic life of "on the boundary," which,

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 107-110.

<sup>173</sup> Stenger, "A Comparison of Spiritual Presence with Buddhist *Sunyata*," 475.

<sup>174</sup> Masao Abe, "A Response to Professor Langdon Gilkey's Paper, 'Tillich and the Kyoto School,'" in *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*, 118.

perhaps, has some analogous meanings to the life of those who have undergone a Buddhist experience of *sunyata*.

The last part of Stenger's essay deals with the ethical quality of the mystical *a priori* applied to the Spiritual Presence and *sunyata*. In Stenger's view, in spite of the ontological differences mentioned above, the Spiritual Presence and *sunyata* show the similar ethical implications that stem from the negation or transcendence of ego. For the ethical quality of the Spiritual Presence, Stenger introduces Tillich's understanding of love and justice. Love, especially agape love, as an ecstatic manifestation of the Spiritual Presence, directs one toward a non-selfish relationship with and unrestricted acceptance of others, as Tillich asserts that "There is no pure Spiritual Presence where there is no humanity and justice."<sup>175</sup> The ecstatic experience of the Spiritual Presence not only fulfills the self in itself but directs the self beyond itself toward others and the ultimate. On the other hand, the Buddhist experience of *sunyata* is expressed in the practice of *prajna* (wisdom) and *karuna* (compassion). Stenger holds: "emptiness becomes the basis for love of all beings. Discrimination and differentiations disappear; compassion for all flows from the experience of *sunyata*."<sup>176</sup>

What distinguishes between the Spiritual Presence and the Buddhist *sunyata* with respect to ethics, Stenger argues, is that Tillich emphasizes justice in connection with love and the Mahayana Buddhists compassion in connection with wisdom. She points out the weaknesses prevalent in each side; Buddhism has shown a sort of indifference to social evil and Christian love of agape tends to be locked within the sphere of humans.

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<sup>175</sup> Stenger, "A Comparison of Spiritual Presence with Buddhist *Sunyata*," 476; Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 144.

<sup>176</sup> Stenger, "A Comparison of Spiritual Presence with Buddhist *Sunyata*," 476.

Thus, what is needed is a mutual learning; Buddhists must learn from Christians how to engage social problems and evils and Christians can learn from Buddhists how to extend their love beyond humans to the cosmos. In this introductory comparison of the ethical quality of Tillichian mysticism and the Buddhist *sunyata*, Stenger shows that the ethics is the embedded quality in both types of mysticism.

Our review of these various approaches to Tillich's ideas of mysticism shows that in spite of their acknowledgement of what Tillich does with mysticism they have not always attended to his emphasis on baptized mysticism in an integrating way and at places have displayed insufficiency or implausibility in their understanding. Being aware of Tillich's lifelong concern for baptized mysticism, James Horne identifies the five reasons that Tillich rejects mysticism and also the ethical character of Tillichian mysticism shown in the latter's concept of "morality beyond morality." In comparing Jung and Tillich, John Dourley rightly notes that both thinkers stand in the Augustinian tradition of mystical ontology and yet unconvincingly suggests that the late Tillich espouses Jungian apophaticism, i.e., the eventual resting in the Goddess dimension where all differentiations and meaning-creating activities are dissolved, which, I have argued, is analogous to the "abstract mysticism" in Tillich's mystical theology. A. J. Reimer's critical assessment of Tillich's understanding of prayer has finally obliged us to advance the ethical significance of Tillich's concept of prayer as the discerning art of being and growing aware of the grace of mystical participation and the prophetic demands of the ultimate concern. In Frederick Parrella's constructive proposal, some basic features of Tillichian spirituality have been aptly shown and yet its dialectical character has been treated insufficiently. Mary Ann Stenger's comparative work, while showing a possibility

of Tillich's theology of mysticism for advancing interreligious dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity, serves to emphasize the singular character of what Tillich envisions as Christian mysticism, i.e., baptized mysticism.

What comes in the following chapter, then, is to present pastoral theological implications of Tillich's theology of mysticism in terms of the two important loci in the study of spirituality, i.e., the model of holiness and prayer. This serves to show the ability and significance of Tillichian spirituality grounded in the proper apprehension of baptized mysticism in providing systematic and practical guidelines for the spiritual life of Christians in their constant desire of the encounter with the divine.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SPIRITUAL THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TILlich'S THEOLOGY OF MYSTICISM

Our exploration of Tillich's theology of mysticism in the preceding three chapters, which revolved around Tillich's concept of baptized mysticism, has hopefully shown its ability to provide resources for understanding Christian mysticism on the one hand and systematic guidelines for the spiritual life of Christians in their constant desire of encounters with the divine on the other. Indeed, Tillich's theology of mysticism, I suspect, carries a mystagogical value in that it not only informs us of the experiential aspects of religiosity, but also invites and empowers us to be open, receptive to the hitherto unknown mysteries of God and beings. It then functions as a "perlocutionary act,"<sup>1</sup> whereby a "shaking, transforming, and healing power"<sup>2</sup> is effected in the person engaged; it helps the person respond to the problems of life that Tillich identifies in *The Courage To Be*, namely, fate and death, guilt and condemnation, and emptiness and meaninglessness. Put differently, it is a "pragmatic construction" aiming at the "phenomenon of self-transcendence," in which "the self is able to participate in something that transcends it but retains itself the sense of identity and selfhood."<sup>3</sup> Viewed

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<sup>1</sup> This expression is from Robison James, who explains the proclamatory character of Tillich's theology in an analogy to J.L. Austin's theory of the three levels of speech act, i.e., locution, illocution, and perlocution. Robison B. James, "Tillich's Theology Is Proclamatory Preaching Because He Belongs to the New World," in *Paul Tillich, pr licateur et th logien pratique*, ed. Marc Dumas, Mireille H bert & Douglas Nelson (Berlin: LIT, 2007). 61-73.

<sup>2</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 167.

this way, Tillich's theology of mysticism is inherently practical; it concerns the ways of dealing with the issues, problems, or questions that arise in our confrontation with the surrounding reality. It is on this basis that we are going to discuss spiritual theological implications of Tillich's theology of mysticism in this final chapter.

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section proposes the Tillichian model of "holiness," which is characterized in the fourfold way as a "spirituality of fragmentation and anticipation," a "spirituality of the mystico-prophetic dialectic," a "spirituality of desire and eros," and "living on the boundary as mystic 'wanderer.'" Our proposal is built up upon the conversation with the view of holiness suggested by a contemporary scholar of spirituality, Philip Sheldrake. In the second section, I attempt to present Tillich's theology of prayer, which arguably displays a close affinity with the so-called contemplative traditions of Christianity.<sup>4</sup> Thomas Keating's "centering prayer" is considered as an exemplary, though not the only, form of Tillichian prayer.

Two preliminary points are in order. First, our selection of the question of holiness as the way of showing the spiritual theological implications of Tillich's theology of mysticism is based on the conviction that the concept of holiness can aptly express the quality and value of a given spirituality. According to Sandra Schneiders, spirituality is "the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Grigg, "Remaking Tillich as a Pragmatist: From Foundationalist Ontology to Pragmatic Construction," *BNAPTS*, vol 3. No. 2 (Spring, 2004), 38.

<sup>4</sup> While being aware that the "contemplative tradition" is a modern, scholarly construct, I simply mean by the term the collection of the spiritualities that are highly appreciative of the mystical dimension of religiosity. In fact, contemplation and mysticism are often used interchangeably. William H. Shannon, "Contemplation, Contemplative Prayer," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 209. This title is abbreviated hereafter as *NDCS*.

transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives.”<sup>5</sup> By conscious involvement in the project, what Schneiders implies is that spirituality—both as lived experience and as academic discipline—deals with an “ongoing and coherent approach to life as a consciously pursued and ongoing enterprise.”<sup>6</sup> Underlying this definition of spirituality is the perception that the spiritual life has a great deal to do with a set of conceptualizations or images of what it is to be authentically spiritual and, furthermore, with characteristics and virtues a spiritual person apprehends and realizes in his/her lifelong project of self-transcendence toward ultimate concern. In other words, there is, perhaps, an idealized image of holiness or sanctity in the spirituality of a person or a group, which exerts considerable influences in the process of discernment and also in the choice and implementation of certain spiritual practices. To what extent the ideal image is sound and healthy is a major factor that determines the quality and value of a given spirituality. A modest proposal of Tillichian model of holiness puts us in a better position to appreciate the validity and effectiveness of Tillichian spirituality, which is based on Tillich’s conception of baptized mysticism.

Second, we assume that prayer, as defined as a universal human activity which expresses some form of relationship to the divine, in which one discovers both the divine mystery and the mystery of the authentic self and in doing so fosters and consents to the transformation that results in healing, justice, intercommunion, and love in our world,<sup>7</sup> is

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<sup>5</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, “Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum,” *Spiritus*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Fall, 2003), 166.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>7</sup> The whole idea of this definition of prayer comes from: Janet K. Ruffing, R.S.M., “The Human Experience of Prayer: East and West,” *Proceedings of the Theology Institute of Villanova University*, ed. Francis Eigo (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1996), 1-3.

a major practice in spirituality both as lived experience and as academic discipline and that it is the locus where a model of holiness can be properly articulated, practiced, and cultivated. This assumption can be supported by Philip Sheldrake, who holds that “‘spiritual practice’ refers to ways in which a particular spiritual vision is both expressed and facilitated in patterns of behavior, rituals, prayer or other religious disciplines and so on.”<sup>8</sup> Prayer as a spiritual practice expresses and facilitates the spiritual vision of a given spirituality, so to speak. It, then, establishes that Tillichian prayer expresses and facilitates Tillichian holiness as the “spiritual vision” of Tillichian mysticism. Herein lies our rationale of choosing the model of holiness and prayer as the two major loci for showing spiritual theological implications of Tillich’s theology of mysticism.

### **A. Tillichian Model of Holiness**

This section grapples with the question of Christian holiness and attempts to construct a Tillichian model of holiness. Upon a concise semantic clarification of the term, holiness, in part, with the help of Tillich’s understanding of the idea of the holy, we will use Philip Sheldrake’s theory of holiness as the conversation partner in exploring Tillichian holiness. Our use of Sheldrake’s theory of holiness provides us a contact point between Tillich’s theology of holiness and the contemporary discourse of holiness in the study of spirituality.

#### **1. Defining Holiness**

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<sup>8</sup> Philip Sheldrake, “Practice, Spiritual,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 502. Hereafter, the title of this dictionary is abbreviated *NWDCS*.

The term, holiness or sanctity,<sup>9</sup> shares certain qualities with such terms as godliness, piety, and devotion. They are often used in the Protestant circles in preference for spirituality because they seem less tainted with the erroneous doctrine of supererogation.<sup>10</sup> Although the origin of the term “holiness” is undeniably biblical, it emerged with a new intensity during the Protestant Reformation and found its culminating usages in Pietism and in Puritanism where it often signified radical and public conversion.<sup>11</sup>

What differentiates the term most from the others of similar connotations, however, is a note of the quality of otherness. Lawrence Cunningham in a detailed study of holiness defines it as “the state of being set apart for religious purposes or being consecrated for God.”<sup>12</sup> According to Cunningham, the notion of holiness and its cognates, i.e., the sacred, take their most fundamental meanings from the phenomenological analyses by Rudolf Otto and other theorists of phenomenology of religion and imply “that which is of the transcendent order as opposed to that which is of the finite or limited order.”<sup>13</sup> Hence, holiness is attributed to individuals who participate in the otherness of God (in the Old Testament) and who possess the spirit of the Christ (in the New Testament). From a biblical analysis, Cunningham identifies three kinds of holiness, which are not always discrete categories with vigorous divisions but reflect

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<sup>9</sup> Given that the Latin word *sanctus* literally means holy, the two words, holiness and sanctity, are interchangeable. Yet, the term *holiness* is preferred in the current research because of its more inclusive, nuanced connotations.

<sup>10</sup> Philip F. Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method*, revised ed. (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 207.

<sup>11</sup> Oliver Davies, “Holiness,” in *NWDCS*, 342.

<sup>12</sup> Lawrence S. Cunningham, “Holiness,” in *NDCS*, 479.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 480.

detectable strands within the biblical tradition: 1) a *priestly* understanding that emphasizes separation, purity, and segregation for cult; 2) a *prophetic* understanding that underscores the relationship between worship, social justice, and conversion of heart; 3) a *sapiential* holiness that puts emphasis on the need for individual integrity as it develops under the eye of God.

It may well be recognized that Tillich, in his philosophy of religion and doctrine of God, appropriates Rudolf Otto's idea of the holy by relating it to the quality of the divine, namely, ultimate concern. Holiness, for Tillich, is the quality of what concerns us ultimately and what concerns us ultimately, in turn, has the quality of holiness. Hence, the concept of holiness designates the presence of the divine; it embraces the quality of the mystical, the quality of transcending the subject-object structure of reality, which is nothing other than "mysticism as category" in Tillich's idiom:

When Otto calls the experience of the holy "numinous," he interprets the holy as the presence of the divine. When he points to the mysterious character of holiness, he indicates that the holy transcends the subject-object structure of reality. When he describes the mystery of the holy as *tremendum* and *fascinatum*, he expresses the experience of "the ultimate" in the double sense of that which is the abyss and that which is the ground of man's being... it is implicit in his analysis.<sup>14</sup>

What is noteworthy in Tillich's appropriation of Otto is locating holiness in the context of mysticism and giving it the double sense of ultimacy—the abyss and the ground of being. Tillich's conception of holiness, then, is not necessarily attributed to the priests, the prophets, or the morally advanced individuals; it applies more universally to the personality through whom the divine mystery manifests. Tillich asserts:

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<sup>14</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 215-216.

The term “saint” has been misunderstood and distorted; saintliness has been identified with religious and moral perfection. Protestantism, for these reasons, has finally removed the concept of sainthood from theology and the reality of the saint from religion... Saints are persons who are transparent for the ground of being which is revealed through them and who are able to enter into a revelatory constellation as mediums. Their being can become a sign-event for others.<sup>15</sup>

For Tillich, a saint is a medium of the divine revelation and the “sign-event.” This implies that the Tillichian saint is not allowed to claim to be a personality who has achieved absolute holiness; as such, he/she is a saint as long as he/she remains “transparent” to the divine mystery. Tillichian saints are, like every ordinary believer, “both estranged and reunited, and it may be that in their inner selves not only the divine but also the demonic forces are extraordinarily strong-as medieval art expressively shows.”<sup>16</sup> They are “representatives,” “examples,” or “symbols,” of the embodiment of the Spirit: “Protestantism can find representatives of the power of the New Being in the religious as well as in the secular realm, not as a particular grade of sanctity, but as representatives and symbols of that in which all participate who are grasped by the Spirit.”<sup>17</sup> Here is shown Tillich’s Lutheran heritage of the paradoxical nature of Christian living, *simul justus et peccator*.

A crucial point Cunningham makes is that in the biblical, Christian holiness, both the withdrawal from the world and worldly concerns and the committed and often transformative participation in the world form a dialectical union. This view is shared by Oliver Davies, for whom the two dimensions are interconnected and what matters is

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>16</sup> 238.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

emphasis. Where the transcendence of God is stressed, holiness indicates the patterns of withdrawal from the world and elevation of the mind above earthbound images; where the emphasis lies upon the immanence of God, the active life comes into the fore.<sup>18</sup>

Cunningham takes note of various uses in Scripture of the term *the world* to state that it is used in many cases to signify the option against the world in order to live a life fully centered on God. Such a life may, however, paradoxically enough, results in the transformation of the world, as was attested to in the life of St. Antony of the Desert. Cunningham thus holds: that “Any coherent understanding of the Christian concept of holiness must make sense of that *coincidence of opposites* implicit in a faith that affirms creation and incarnation while calling us to a state that implies a separatedness that is for God alone.”<sup>19</sup> It may well be remembered, here, that Tillich emphasizes the principle of justice in his discussion of holiness: “Justice is the criterion which judges idolatrous holiness.”<sup>20</sup>

By way of summary, we could state that Christian holiness has to do with the ontological, mystical quality, in which the divine mystery of God is perceived, experienced, and promoted in the form of ultimate concern as the appropriate pattern of personal integrity and praxis for the spiritual life of a Christian, namely, Christian spirituality.

## **2. Philip Sheldrake’s Proposal for Holiness**

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<sup>18</sup> Davies, “Holiness,” 341.

<sup>19</sup> Cunningham, “Holiness,” 484.

<sup>20</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 216.

In considering a new form of spiritual theology distinguishable from the traditional one, which is often subordinate to moral theology, Robert Hughes argues that a theology of Christian perfection—which deals with those aspects of Christian life that come after the commandments of obligation necessary for salvation—is no longer valid since the anthropological teaching of Vatican II, the “universal call to holiness.” For, according to Hughes, the old spiritual theology of perfection is founded upon the elitism of the degrees of merits and works of supererogation and also incurs the image of the person, who have passed the relatively less-advanced stages of purgation and illumination and successfully reached the highest stage of the spiritual life, as described in such terms as “infused contemplation,” “spiritual marriage,” or sometimes “mystical union,” which applies only to “perfect souls.”<sup>21</sup> This observation is accentuated by Philip Sheldrake, who claims that such elitism is closely related to a priority of ‘spiritual’ over ‘material’ reality, often linked to a suspicion of human sexuality, and has contributed to the division within the Church between the perfect and the imperfect.<sup>22</sup>

In a paradigmatic study of Christian holiness, *Images of Holiness: Explorations in Contemporary Spirituality*, Philip Sheldrake problematizes the language of perfection because of its alleged connotation of “possessing” the consummate state. In his view, the idea of being in a state of perfection or even conceiving perfection as a state at all is most dangerous in imagining Christian holiness. He asserts:

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Davis Hughes III, *Beloved Dust: Tides of the Spirit in the Christian Life* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 29-30; 45-46.

<sup>22</sup> Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, 68-69. In Sheldrake’s analysis, it is in Origen that human perfection as a more Platonic, static union with the Godhead in the sense of final ‘arrival’ is clearly expressed. In contrast, Gregory of Nyssa’s apophaticism portrays perfection as a never-ending progress. “Journey, Spiritual,” in *NWDCS*, 388-389.

Holiness, as I will suggest later, has a great deal to do with a realization and acceptance of imperfection and even failure and of the need for continual conversion. Holiness is a process, a continual movement towards God. In the end the core of the process is a realization of all as gift which means that holiness cannot be identified simply with the performance of externals-holy actions or spiritual exercises to be fulfilled.<sup>23</sup>

What is to be noted here is that Sheldrake's conception of holiness escapes from the threefold conventional thinking: a) in which holiness is perceived as a thing or a state that can be possessed and maintained at one's own disposal; b) in which the possibility of achieving the highest state of moral virtues and religious ideals is taken for granted; c) in which holiness is promoted and pursued as the ultimate destination of a Christian spiritual life where no more desires or proceedings are really needed.

In contrast, holiness as Sheldrake understands is the "continual movement towards God," in which the human finitude characterized as "imperfection and even failure" is fully recognized and humbly accepted and thus "continual conversion" is required. It is in this context that he warns against the view whereby holiness is identified with the wholeness in a psychological sense of the term, i.e., "perfectly psychologically balanced person."<sup>24</sup> Growing closer to God, as it were, involves a deepening awareness of the ever-present fact of the human condition, that "we are far from perfect and far from sinless balanced," and yet with the "increasing trust and hope based on the realization that we are not called and loved by God as a result of our efforts to make ourselves

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<sup>23</sup> Philip Sheldrake, S.J. *Images of Holiness: Explorations in Contemporary Spirituality* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1987), 22-23.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

worthy.”<sup>25</sup> In this sense, Sheldrakean holiness can be branded as a “spirituality of imperfection.”<sup>26</sup>

Sheldrake identifies two potential dangers in some distorted views of holiness, namely, disengaged gnosticism and shallow activism. The first danger addresses the preoccupation with special knowledge (gnosis) that is said to be reached through certain meditation techniques or willpower and that can bring about peace and certainty in a world of doubt and confusion. In this view, the direct experience of God and the sense of tranquility are sought after as the ends in themselves and human anxiety and conflicts are only to be eradicated. Very little renunciation and radical commitment for the betterment of society are, thus, offered in such an approach. In Sheldrake’s understanding, this approach is often oblivious to the socio-political concerns and problems and even susceptible to cultural conformism.<sup>27</sup>

The second danger concerns a sort of activism that has lost touch with its spiritual foundation and remains only at the level of social theory. According to Sheldrake, that spiritual foundation is the mystical-contemplative dimension of spirituality, which, as the liberation theologian Segundo Galilea proposes, initiates a

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<sup>25</sup> 28-29.

<sup>26</sup> This phrase is used by Wil Hernandez in his attempt to capture Henry Nouwen’s spiritual journey. In Hernandez’ view, Nouwen’s spirituality is basically “counter-intuitive and counter-cultural,” in that the integrated pursuit of wholeness and holiness actually constitutes inherent imperfections, psychological, ministerial, and theological, and that such spirituality runs counter to cultural ideals of “instant progress, quick fix, self-empowerment and actualization, the inordinate drive for wholeness.” Wil Hernandez, *Henri Nouwen: A Spirituality of Imperfection* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2006); “A Spirituality of Imperfection,” in *Turning the Wheel: Henry Nouwen and Our Search for God*, ed. Jonathan Bengston and Gabrielle Earnshaw (New York: Orbis Books, 2007), 84-95.

<sup>27</sup> Sheldrake, *Images of Holiness*, 65. Sheldrake finds this danger in “some contemporary schools of meditation and even in the less critical circles within the charismatic renewal.” It is not clear whether he has certain aspects of Zen meditation in mind here. His consideration of “disengaged gnosticism,” however, seems to share some connotations with Tillich’s observations about Zen in the sense of “demonic ecstasy,” which, according to Tillich, is often found in the mystical type of religion like Buddhism.

“growth from an initial ethical response to social situations to a ‘spiritual experience’ where the Christian will discover in the poor the reality of God’s compassion and of Christ’s humanity.”<sup>28</sup> Mystical participation in the reality of God and of the Christ Jesus as liberator is the inevitable, primary basis for a prophetic engagement with the world, so to speak.

This theme is reiterated and developed in his 2003 essay, “Christian Spirituality as a Way of Living Publicly,”<sup>29</sup> in which Sheldrake states that the dialectic of the mystical-contemplative and transformative-prophetic practice is a necessary foundation for conceiving spirituality as a “way of living publicly.” In a brief analysis of Augustine’s symbol of the heart, he explains that interiority in the early Christian tradition, especially in Augustine and in the tradition of Augustinian monasticism, refers not to the privatized, secluded self, but to the depth of the self, where the indwelling of God and the authentic sense of solidarity with other selves are acutely perceived and experienced.

The heart or interiority is the space where “a striking sense of the personal self and an equally striking sense of the fundamentally social nature of human existence”<sup>30</sup> coexist. Closely related to this dialect is the proper understanding of prayer, namely, “the deepening awareness of God as ‘all in all’ leading to a greater engagement with the world of everyday events.”<sup>31</sup> In prayer, which is becoming contemplation as it develops, a spiritual sensitivity toward the whole of the reality is increasingly aroused and this

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>29</sup> Philip F. Sheldrake, “Christian Spirituality as a Way of Living Publicly,” *Spiritus*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Spring, 2003), 19-37.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 22.

<sup>31</sup> Sheldrake, *Images of Holiness*, 78.

includes “a great deal of pain as the darker side of reality impinges more strongly on the sensitized consciousness.”<sup>32</sup> In this sense, to contemplate is to see in and through love; this love “provides both the inner strength to maintain resistance against the forces of evil in the face of overwhelming odds, and also that freedom from self-seeking which will eschew fanatical ideology.”<sup>33</sup> This view of prayer reminds us of our discussion in the preceding chapter on the ethical quality of Tillichian prayer as a discerning art of being and growing aware of the “grace and demands” (mystical participation and prophetic demands) of the “ultimate concern,” which appears in the various realms of life-process such as art, politics, economics, etc. Tillich holds:

He who contemplates is aware of the ontological structure of the universe but he sees it ecstatically under the impact of the Spiritual Presence in light of the ground and aim of all being. He who prays earnestly is aware of his own situation and his “neighbor’s,” but he sees it under the Spiritual Presence’s influence and in the light of the divine direction of life’s processes.<sup>34</sup>

A notable feature of Sheldrake’s theory of holiness is that it takes the question of human desire seriously. Sheldrake believes that if Christian holiness is not the search for tranquility and invulnerability or the preservation of innocence, but the face-to-face confrontation with our own reality that includes weakness and failure, what matters is how to come to terms with human desires. There has been a mistaken view of Christian asceticism, he argues, according to which human desires and passions get in the way of growth in the Spirit and so the proper way of dealing with them is radical rejection. This attitude is normally associated with the neglect of the body and matter, which is “open to

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 99.

<sup>33</sup> 100.

<sup>34</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 119.

the danger of the abandonment of the essentially materialistic and historical character of the Christian spiritual path.”<sup>35</sup> He then calls for the “uncaging” of desires and passions with the conviction that it is there in the ensuing struggle that the encounter with God occurs. This is the major topic of his systematic study on the “spirituality of desire” in *Befriending Our Desires*.<sup>36</sup>

In Sheldrake’s analysis, desire is not a transcendental, impersonal power that controls us “out there,” but the “most honest experiences of ourselves, in all our complexity and depth, as we relate to people and things around us.”<sup>37</sup> It has to do with the depth of a personality and opens up for “the fullness of *what is* rather than to *what ought to be*”<sup>38</sup> (Italics original). According to him, engaging desire is accepting the invitation to the ontological awareness of the self; authentic desires come from the “essential self” and tend to reach into the very heart of one’s identity. He claims:

The more authentic our desires, the more they touch upon our identities and also upon the reality of God at the heart of our being. Our most authentic desires spring ultimately from the deep inner wells where the longing for God runs freely. This is even so if the desires are not always expressed in explicitly religious terms. Our deepest desires, therefore, to some degree move us beyond self-centeredness to self-giving.<sup>39</sup>

According to Sheldrake, in traditional Christian spirituality, there has been a radical separation of agape love and eros love, which, perhaps, hindered rather than

<sup>35</sup> Sheldrake, *Images of Holiness*, 37.

<sup>36</sup> Philip Sheldrake, S.J. *Befriending Our Desires* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1994). A concise form of Sheldrake’s arguments is found in his 1995 essay, “Befriending Our Desires,” *The Way*, vol. 35, no. 2 (April, 1995), 91-100.

<sup>37</sup> Sheldrake, *Befriending Our Desires*, 12.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>39</sup> 22.

enhanced the possibility of a mystical experience of God. Then he draws upon Tillich's idea of eros as the mystical quality of love: "If the eros quality of love with respect to God is rejected, the consequence of this rejection is that love toward God becomes an impossible concept...replaced by mere obedience to God."<sup>40</sup> He then proposes with Tillich and Pseudo-Dionysius that "true loving, true eroticism, is always an experience 'in God.' God *is* erotic power properly understood and is the erotic power between people. God is our capacity to love revealing itself in the matrix of all human relations."<sup>41</sup> Worth noting is Sheldrake's construal of God as the "erotic power" or the "capacity to love," which reminds us of the Schellingian notion of the second potency of love, i.e., the force of attraction, as distinct from the first potency, the dispelling force of selfhood.

For Sheldrake, eros love can be defined as the striving for union with whatever we perceive to be the source of all value for us, e.g., harmony, unity, integrity, and meaning. This indicates that eros as the movement toward union involves a process of transcending our sense of fragmentation and separation, in which one views the other as a subject with whom one seeks to be united, rather than an object to be used for pleasure or exploit. Unlike false eroticism, which is an uncontrolled desire to draw others into oneself, namely, "concupiscence" in Tillich's doctrine of sin and estrangement,<sup>42</sup> a true eros desire "recognizes the sacrament for what it is—something that points beyond itself to a profound unity between persons."<sup>43</sup> Thus, Christian sexuality cannot be reduced to genital activity, and, instead, covers our whole experience of embodiment; it enables us

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<sup>40</sup> 39-40; Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice*, 30.

<sup>41</sup> Sheldrake, *Befriending Our Desires*, 40.

<sup>42</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 51-55.

<sup>43</sup> Sheldrake, *Befriending Our Desires*, 72.

to express “intimacy,” namely, tenderness, closeness, compassion, and openness to touch.<sup>44</sup>

The call to intimacy is also an invitation to take risks, since human experiences of love include a certain level of deception, partiality, and unreliability; yet, it eventually invites one to find within this risk of human loving the love of God that is universal, i.e., agape love. In Sheldrake’s conception, agape represents the spiritual, disinterested, and universal dimension of love in contrast with eros as the engaged, passionate, and particular dimension. Agape and eros, however, are “not two different loves but two qualities in the one human love, just as they are complementary aspects of Love itself or God.”<sup>45</sup> One thus in his/her spiritual journey has to seek the eventual integration of eros and agape, particular and universal love. In short, sexuality or sexual union is “eucharistic, a liturgy that may heal and restore loving partners to a spiritual centeredness,”<sup>46</sup> and this sacramental quality applies to the union with God and with all that is. The mystical quality of eros love is experienced and expressed as “ecstasy,” Sheldrake argues, which is the “experience of the temporary dissolution of the normal boundaries of perception and living,”<sup>47</sup> often without loss of personal identity, that serves “to deepen our personalities and to deepen our perceptions of the way reality is.”<sup>48</sup> The embrace of eros love, therefore, enables one to live up to the life of a full personality, i.e., to fulfill one’s

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<sup>44</sup> This quality of eros desire can be found in Rollo May’s description of Tillich’s life: “He [Tillich] had a way of looking not *at* but *into* a woman, with his attention fully concentrated on her... The intensity of presence gave a security to the woman as well as the experience of being fully known, united with him.” Rollo May, *Paulus: Reminiscences of a Friendship* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 53-54.

<sup>45</sup> Sheldrake, *Befriending Our Desires*, 39.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>47</sup> 84.

<sup>48</sup> 85.

destiny, not in the sense of transcendental fatalism, but in the sense of immanent vocation, of “what lies in us.”<sup>49</sup> The discovery of what is, as it were, leads to the realization of the vocational destiny of what one ought to do.

It is remarkable that Sheldrake, although he gives due attention on the relationship between desire and personal images of God, is keenly aware of the significance of the apophatic denial of any images of God in a spiritual life, especially in the context of prayer: “Some spiritual writers mention a deepening of desire in association with the gradual loss of images of God. The inability to pin God down, as it were, to this or that image drives us ultimately into a certain darkness or unknowing in which desire alone becomes the force that drives us onward.”<sup>50</sup> The reality of God is found in the depth of a being and cannot be locked by an image, a metaphor, or a concept of God; the experience of this reality of God moves one forward toward a very dynamic spiritual journey of “continual transition,” wherein the human condition of incompleteness and the hope in a positive future are continually affirmed. This is how apophaticism and the process of ongoing conversion are related: both remind us of the “condition of incompleteness, of openness to possibility and to the future.” Sheldrake asserts:

Our desires imply a condition of incompleteness because they speak to us of what we are not or what we do not have. Desire is also, therefore, a condition of openness to possibility and to the future. Desires may ground us in the present moment, but at the same time they point to the fact that this moment does not contain all the answers... Being people of desire implies a process of continually choosing.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> 90.

<sup>50</sup> 24.

<sup>51</sup> 25.

Understanding desire as the condition of incompleteness, of openness to possibility implies that the spirituality of desire concerns the life of the “always more” of the Ignatian sense of *magis*, which is also living in a permanently liminal state: “As body-spirit people, we naturally bridge two worlds—the world of here-and-now material reality and the ‘other’ world, which we have traditionally called the world of the spirit.”<sup>52</sup> In the spirituality of living the permanent liminal state, one endures movement, change, and a lack of final clarity, which is often disturbing enough to create an illusion, e.g., a vision of life after death as a condition that compensates for what one lacks in the present life. One also carries with him/herself a clear sense of “provisonality” that “Ultimate truth or fulfillment is never to be found in any specific this or that, whether a time, a place, or a person.”<sup>53</sup> This life of the liminal state and provisonality, ironically enough, enhances the ability to make commitments, often full of risks, uncertainties, and contingencies, because human desires are “always searching for something within which to become consciously grounded.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, the spirituality of living in the permanent liminal state and provisonality is clearly expressed, Sheldrake suggests, in the theology of the Moses school of thinking, as opposed to the King David school, where the experience of wandering, i.e., of desiring but never totally arriving, and so of complete trust in God is central. This experience is acutely represented in the lives of the Hebrew exile and of the desert fathers and mothers in the early Christianity.

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<sup>52</sup> 110.

<sup>53</sup> 115.

<sup>54</sup> 116.

The image of “wandering” or “wanderer” plays a central role in Sheldrakean holiness. Sheldrake derives the image from Michel de Certeau, for whom desire expresses a drivenness, an intensity, and a movement ever onwards inspired by what is not known, not possessed, not fixed or final: “They are drunk with what they do not possess. Drunk with desire. Therefore, they may all bear the name given to the work of Angelus Silesius: *Wandersmann*, the ‘wanderer.’”<sup>55</sup> With a more or less tentative self-transcendence experienced in a succession of fragmented encounters with everyday ‘others,’ the wanderer “cannot stop walking” and “lives nowhere.”<sup>56</sup> The wanderer is a kind of person, commonly called a “mystic,” for whom the particularity of the event of Jesus Christ, which measures all authentic forms of Christian discipleship, is symbolized by the “empty tomb” in the gospel narrative of resurrection. The discipleship of the mystical wanderer demands simultaneously a ‘place’ and an ‘elsewhere,’ a ‘further,’ or a ‘more.’ Holiness as represented by de Certeau’s sense of wandering means, in fact, living on “the boundary or limit.” Sheldrake quotes:

Within the Christian experience, *the boundary or limit* is a place for the action, which ensures the step from a particular situation to a progress (opening a future and creating a new past)... Both elements, the place and the departure, are interrelated, because it is the withdrawal from a place that allows one to recognize the enclosure implicit in the initial position, and as a result it is this limited field which makes possible a further investigation.<sup>57</sup> (Italics mine)

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<sup>55</sup> Philip Sheldrake, “Unending Desire: De Certeau’s ‘Mystics’” *The Way Supplement*, vol. 102, no. 3 (Autumn, 2001), 39; Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 299.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Sheldrake, “Unending Desire,” 45; Michel de Certeau, “How Is Christianity Thinkable Today?” in Graham Ward, ed. *The Postmodern God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 151.

In conclusion, the following four characteristics stand out in our presentation of Philip Sheldrake's proposal of holiness: 1) Christian holiness is not the possession of ideal perfection, but the acceptance of human imperfection; 2) it is based on the dialectic of the mystical-contemplative and transformative-prophetic practice; 3) it promotes a spirituality of desire, in which one tends to reach into the very heart of his/her identity by making a faithful, honest engagement with all the inner movements including *eros* in the depth of the self; and 4) it is the life of a mystic wanderer living on the boundary, liminality, or provisionality.

### **3. Tillichian model of Holiness**

Our construction of the Tillichian model of holiness shall be done in conversation with Sheldrake's proposal that revolves around the four characteristics identified above. This results in the fourfold description of Tillichian holiness, which includes a spirituality of fragmentation and anticipation, a spirituality of the mystico-prophetic dialectic, a spirituality of desire and *eros*, and living on the boundary as mystic wanderer.

First, Tillichian holiness expresses a spirituality of "fragmentation and anticipation" borne out of the radical awareness of human finitude. Like Sheldrake, who problematizes the language of perfection as the moral ideal of the Christian life and practice that can be possessed and maintained at one's disposal, Tillich is quite firm in asserting that "The Christian life never reaches the state of perfection-it always remains an up-and-down course."<sup>58</sup> This rather Protestant view of holiness is based, in Tillich's view, on the threefold rationale: 1) theological establishment of a state of perfection

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<sup>58</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 237.

creates the qualitative distinction between those who are called saints and the other Christians and contradicts the paradox of justification, according to which it is the sinner who is justified; 2) the spirit of Protestantism is directed against the superstitious practice whereby saints become cultic objects of veneration; 3) the idea of perfection is connected with a dualistic valuation of asceticism, i.e., the spiritual versus the material. For Tillich, Protestant theology of holiness cannot accept any hierarchical views of human personalities, since every human is a sinner and, through faith by grace, a saint simultaneously; the ultimate effect of being a Protestant saint lies not so much in the achievement of moral integrity or psychological wholeness as in the symbolization of the presence of the infinite within the finite, a “sign-event” of the mystical encounter with the divine.

It is well to be reminded that for Tillich, mysticism is a real possibility but “within the limits of human finitude and estrangement-fragmentary, anticipatory and threatened by the ambiguities of religion.”<sup>59</sup> The demonic elements within the limits of human finitude and the ambiguities of life cannot be eradicated at all and instead have to be clearly recognized and accepted; a certain level of ongoing struggle ensues even in and after a mystical union. Mystical participation in the reality of God is provisional and eschatological, so to speak. Holiness, thus, has to do with the capacity of recognizing and accepting the reality of imperfection and the ever-present reality of struggle, as Tillich poignantly asserts:

There is no nicety in the images of perfection in the saints of the Catholic church or in representatives of the new piety of the Reformation. He who tries to avoid the demonic side of the holy also misses its divine side and gains but a deceptive security between them. The image of perfection is the man, who, on the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 242.

battlefield between the divine and the demonic, prevails against the demonic, though fragmentarily and in anticipation.<sup>60</sup>

It is significant to note here that Tillich does not reject the idea of perfection as such but attempts to redefine it. In the Tillichian model of holiness, the struggle to choose between the divine and the demonic is unavoidable; the attempt to avoid it only results in “deceptive security.” A Tillichian saint “prevails” against the demonic and this is possible by grace, i.e., by the power of the ground of being; and yet the prevailing is only fragmentary and anticipatory. Spiritual security and complete freedom from ambiguities of human life are not the goal for one’s faith journey; the measure of spiritual maturity does not lie in whether a perfect union with the divine has been achieved or not, but in the extent to which he/she is aware of the ambiguous character of human life, as Tillich pronounces in his 1963 address at the fortieth anniversary of *Time*:

It is my conviction that the character of the human condition, like the character of all life, is “ambiguity”: the inseparable mixture of good and evil, of true and false, of creative and destructive forces—both individual and social.... The awareness of the ambiguity of one’s own highest achievements (as well as one’s own deepest failures) is a definite symptom of maturity.<sup>61</sup>

This view of holiness reminds one of Sheldrake’s statement: “Holiness has a great deal to do with a realization and acceptance of imperfection and even failure and of the need for continual conversion.”<sup>62</sup> Although Sheldrake does not talk as explicitly as Tillich does about the ontological character of imperfection and failure, it is clear that he construes imperfection and failure as an ever-present human reality. The first part,

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<sup>60</sup> 241.

<sup>61</sup> Tillich, “The Ambiguity of Perfection.”

<sup>62</sup> Sheldrake, *Images of Holiness*, 22.

specifically, the realization and acceptance of imperfection and failure, corresponds to the language of fragmentation in Tillich; the second corresponds to the need for continual conversion, the language of anticipation. Holiness, for Sheldrake as well as for Tillich, requires a continuous struggle; for the former it is related to discipleship, namely, “to take up the cross of unconditioned discipleship; to respond with increasing depth, generosity and openness to the Lord’s call,”<sup>63</sup> as is illustrated in St. Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises*. For the latter, it is patterned after the threefold character of salvation in which the effect of the divine atoning act upon human being is expressed, i.e., the participation in, acceptance of, and transformation by the New Being.

Second, Tillichian holiness takes as its fundamental dynamic the mystico-prophetic dialectic. Since this is what has been suggested and explained in the preceding chapters, it suffices now to pinpoint certain aspects of Tillich’s theory of baptized mysticism that can speak directly to Sheldrake’s arguments. Throughout his life and works, Tillich persistently warns against the dual tendencies in religion, roughly comparable to the “disengaging gnosticism” and “shallow activism” Sheldrake identifies in his proposal for holiness, namely, “demonic ecstasy” and “theocratic legalism” or “moralistic righteousness.” Recall that “demonic ecstasy” is Tillich’s designation of the exclusive predominance of love (the erotic) over power (the dynamic) often found in the mystical type of religion in its attempt to penetrate into the holy itself without any mediation of forms, i.e., the unconditioned import itself in the abysmal dimension. Its concrete expressions include, in Tillich’s analysis, “mystical pacifism” “mystical anarchism” or “mystical dissolution of form,” whereby a utopian faith in a world without

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 43.

arbitrariness, eros, or power, leads to the development of an uncreative world. In such a religious life of demonic ecstasy, as in Sheldrakean disengaging gnosticism, very little concerns about and responsible commitments to the transformative process of a given society can be found.

On the other hand, Tillich attributes the words “theocratic legalism” or “moralistic righteousness” to the limitations incumbent upon the prophetic type of religion and its religious life. Due to its emphasis on the infinite demand and law as the manifestation of the holy, the type of religion can be reduced to theocratic legalism, both autonomous and heteronomous on the one hand, and moralistic activism based on the command-obedience relationship between God and human on the other. In such a type, the meaning of the holy changes into righteousness and moral perfection, which is easily discernible in Calvinism’s repression of the demonic. This often results in the loss of touch with its spiritual foundation, the unconditioned import in Tillich’s idiom, a recovery of which Sheldrake tries to find in liberation spirituality in its seeing and participating in the reality of God’s compassion and of Christ’s humanity through a solidarity with the poor.

In “Basic Principles of Religious Socialism,” Tillich announces that the goal of religious socialism is theonomy, “the unity of sacred form and sacred import in a concrete historical situation,”<sup>64</sup> i.e., the unity of *reservatum religiosum* and *obligatum religiosum*. In the face of the demonically distorted and conditioned forms of the era, *reservatum religiosum*, if isolated from *obligatum religiosum*, simply falls back upon the sacred personality and the sacred community and does not create a kairotic reality—a “new and creative fulfillment of forms with an import borne by power and eros but

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<sup>64</sup> Tillich, “Basic Principles of Religious Socialism,” in *Political Expectation*, 62.

penetrated by obedience to unconditioned form.”<sup>65</sup> *Reservatum religiosum*, however, since it is a *No* to cultural demonization, can serve as the foundation whereby political resistance against the demonic power, i.e., the authority of the totalitarian state, is made possible.

In a 1941 essay, Tillich reinstates the imperative of the dialectic by arguing that without the “holiness of being” as represented by Catholicism, Protestantism becomes “cultural activism and moral utopianism”: “Catholicism represents the truth that the ‘holy of being’ must precede the ‘holy of what ought to be,’ that without the ‘mother,’ the priestly-sacramental Church, the ‘father,’ the prophetic-eschatological movements has no roots. It becomes cultural activism and moral utopianism.”<sup>66</sup> In “Vertical and Horizontal Thinking,” he provides a much more precise description of the two lines of religious thinking and practice:

“Vertical” points to the eternal in its presence as the ground of our being and the ultimate meaning of our lives. It points to our ability to elevate ourselves over the inescapable anxiety of finitude and over the destructive despair of guilt, in our personal and social existence... “Horizontal,” on the other hand, points to the transforming power of the eternal whenever it manifests itself. “Horizontal” is the prophetic fight for social justice and personal righteousness, the struggle against the structures of evil in our souls and our communities, the work for the formation of men and the world.<sup>67</sup>

The vertical way points to the eternal as the ground and meaning of being, as in mysticism, which enables humans to go beyond anxiety and guilt, whereas in the horizontal way, the eternal as the transforming power by which humans are empowered

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 86.

<sup>66</sup> Tillich, “The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism,” 236.

<sup>67</sup> Tillich, “Vertical and Horizontal Thinking,” 103.

to take prophetic action for justice. Both are united in a living religion, and, Tillich argues, the exclusion of one or the other metaphor results in either “a world defying, static mysticism” or “a world-controlling technical activism.” While his emphasis in this essay lies clearly in calling for revitalization of the vertical way as a proper response to the given situation of the 1940s, as we have already pointed out in Chapter Two, what he ultimately envisions is the dialectical union of both: “The pendulum is swinging back to the vertical element in religion, and the danger is that it will swing too far.”<sup>68</sup>

In conclusion, there are two crucial points that should not escape our attention in the consideration of Tillichian holiness as embracing the dialectical union of the mystical and the prophetic.

First, Tillichian dialectic leads to the assimilation of the vocational consciousness often discovered and expanded in mystical, revelatory experience. In the second chapter, I have argued that for Tillich, the “transparent” personality of a saint has mystagogical effects upon others; one receives revelation not merely for him/herself but for his/her group and implicitly for all mankind, as typically shown in the revelatory experiences of the prophets and the mystics in diverse religious traditions. Vocational consciousness is aroused and expanded in “prophetic ecstasy,” wherein “a prophet does not forget the social group to which he belongs and its unclean character, which he cannot lose.”<sup>69</sup> In other words, holding on to the vocational life is a natural response to the divine commands created in “prophetic ecstasy,” and the vocational life as a creation of prophetic ecstasy is, to be sure, based on the freedom of choice, not on the compulsive

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Experience of the Holy,” *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948), 90.

dialectic of commandment and obedience. It is also based on the clear awareness of one's "destiny," since destiny is "the infinitely broad basis of our centered selfhood," "the concrete totality of everything that constitutes my being which decides."<sup>70</sup> Destiny includes body structure, psychic strivings, spiritual character, the communities to which one belongs, the environment which has shaped one's personality, etc., and thus constitutes the conditions and limits of freedom. This goes well with Sheldrake's observation that the embrace of eros love enables one to live up to the life of a full personality, i.e., to fulfill one's destiny, in the sense of immanent vocation, of "what lies in us." In short, Tillichian dialectic of the mystical and the prophetic promotes a vocational life that is inherently historical and inter-subjective.

Second, the mystico-prophetic dialectic of Tillichian holiness involves a serious consideration of power relations and justice and ventures taking an unambiguous position, on which "a responsible and creative criticism of one's own time is possible."<sup>71</sup> This is to say that Tillichian holiness is to be differentiated from what is implied in the conventional view of "engagement" or "action" as correlative to mystical vision or experience. In the conventional view, mystical experience precipitates an active engagement with the world rather than a withdrawal; and yet, the engagement often remains in the general, abstract level such that it does not, in fact, accompany radical awareness of the social condition and its concurrent act of resisting against the given authorities, e.g., military regime. In other words, this conventional discourse claims to be based on the dialectic; but, in reality, may only espouse the abstract level of justice and

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<sup>70</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 184-185.

<sup>71</sup> Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, 27.

often fails to discern ideological strategies disguised in its claim to maintain neutrality in a given political situation. Sometimes it is in itself ideological; its acclaimed dialectic is not authentic but forfeited the prophetic and thus lost the mystical side as well.

Scheldrake's incorporation of the liberational spirituality in his proposal of holiness is meaningful in this context; the mystico-prophetic dialectic of Sheldrakean holiness is realized in the preference for and solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, which the liberational spirituality promotes as a foundational praxis.

Tillich's view is more systematic and radical than Sheldrake's. Recall Tillich's call for the "mysticism of love," which concerns itself with the transformative power of love that drives toward the realization of justice based on genuine solidarity. It runs away from formalism and relativism in an ethical decision and instead takes an unambiguous position—the position in the sense of "not merely a subjective and therefore arbitrary collection of opinion" but the "real position," on the basis of which "a responsible and creative criticism of one's own time is possible." Thus ensues Tillich's positioning himself on the principle of Religious Socialism, undertaking "socialist decision," and advocating the proletarian protest as both a political and an ethical quest.

In "Basic Principles of Religious Socialism," he directs his criticism against pacifism as demonic eruption.<sup>72</sup> In spite of its alleged claim to be a socially-engaged spiritual contribution to the transformation of the world, pacifism, in his view, compulsively clings to the utopian faith that is not sufficiently undergirded by the principle of justice. It lacks what Religious Socialism insists upon, namely, "theonomous justice," the unity of eros and power; it does not take seriously actual power relations,

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<sup>72</sup> Paul Tillich, "Basic Principles of Religious Socialism," in *Political Expectation*, 66.

class struggle, and the proper use of power against injustice. Furthermore, in the first post-emigration essay, “Totalitarian State and the Claims of Church,” he puts forth sheer criticism against the political campaign launched by the German-Christian movement and its proponent idea of “mysterious sovereign” by Emanuel Hirsch as susceptible to political ideology. For him, Hirsch’s philosophy and movement is based on the “mystical piety” that does not take the human border situation seriously and so thwarts the possibility of a concrete decision; it rather runs the risk of being exploited by the totalitarian ideology geared toward the suppression of all r ésistance endeavors.

The third characteristic of Tillichian holiness is that it takes eros and human desires seriously. In our consideration of this feature of Tillichian holiness, it is necessary to point out first that whereas in Sheldrake’s proposal, desire is the all-encompassing concept of what comes out of the deepest center of the self, including eros, in Tillich’s proposal, eros and desire—*epithymia*—are understood, basically, in the context of love. Prior to beginning our analysis of both thinkers’ understandings of desire and eros, the following point is to be made to avoid potential confusions. A comparison of Sheldrake and Tillich in their understandings of desire and eros, in fact, is somewhat complicated because in Sheldrake, those concepts are used without clear definitions and also interchangeably. As shall become clear below, for example, what Sheldrake means by eros love is similar to desire as *epithymia* in Tillich, and Sheldrake’s desire roughly corresponds to the combined meaning of Tillich’s eros and desire (*epithymia*). Notwithstanding this complexity, our work of rigorous comparison will shed more light on certain fundamental points of their thoughts and ultimately show the characteristic of

Tillichian holiness, which neither denies nor represses but acknowledges and accepts the elements of eros and human desire.

As we have seen above, Sheldrake understands desire as the experience of the depth of personality, or the “essential self,” in a relational context, where both the very heart of one’s identity and the reality of God are found; it is the “most honest experience of ourselves, in all our complexity and depth, as we relate to people and things around us.” Sheldrake’s desire includes eros defined as “the striving for union,” which is not confined to a physical sexual activity but points to the profound unity between persons that expresses intimacy. In short, for him, desire is the general term for human needs and passions, constitutive of a personal self, that are to be “uncaged” in an ever-growing awareness of the self toward “the fullness of what is.”

In contrast, in *Love, Power, and Justice*, Tillich uses the term *desire* as designating the libidinal quality of love and, together with eros, philia and agape express different qualities, not types, of love; desire and eros all belong to the larger concept love. Love, for him, is the moving power of life. This means that “being is not actual without the love which drives everything that is towards everything else that is;” it is thus defined as “the drive towards the unity of the separated.”<sup>73</sup> Given this definition and our consideration in the preceding chapters of Tillich’s definitive expressions of mysticism and references to love, it is clear at once that Tillichian love is basically and inherently mystical and also ontological, i.e., it expresses what it means to be human: “The power of

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<sup>73</sup> Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 25.

love is not something which is added to an otherwise finished process, but life has love in itself as one of its constitutive elements.”<sup>74</sup>

Tillich problematizes the traditional use of the term *epithymia* (desire), since it has been considered the lowest quality of love, being identified with the desire to sensual self-fulfillment. In his view, the Latin correlate, *libido*, means the desire, not for hedonistic pleasure, but for the union with that which fulfills the desire; there is pleasure in a fulfilled desire and pain in an unfulfilled desire, and yet one cannot derive from this fact that life essentially consists of fleeing from pain and striving for pleasure. Tillich writes: “Only a perverted life follows the pain-pleasure principle. Unperverted life strives for that of which it is in want, it strives for union with that which is separated from it, though it belongs to it.”<sup>75</sup> *Epithymia* or libido as desire is “the normal drive towards vital self-fulfillment,”<sup>76</sup> which includes the sexual, procreative drive towards union with another. This meaning of desire as the normal drive has been missed, he argues, in many puritans including Sigmund Freud.

Tillich goes on to point out that there have been attempts to establish an absolute contrast between agape and eros and this presupposes an identification of eros and *epithymia*. In his analysis, eros includes, yet goes beyond the element of *epithymia*, since it refers primarily to the striving for the union with that which is a bearer of values because of the values it embodies, i.e., the union with the beauty in nature, with the beautiful and the true in culture, and the mystical union with that which is the source of

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 26.

<sup>75</sup> 29.

<sup>76</sup> 30.

the beautiful and the true. Eros, thus, as Alexander Irwin poignantly puts, is “the driving, life-giving force in the highest forms of spirituality,” which operates in sexual love, participating knowledge (gnosis), transmoral ethics, and religious aspiration, including mystical union.<sup>77</sup>

Eros and *epithymia* can be united to each other, though: “This eros is united with *epithymia* if *epithymia* is the desire for vital self-fulfillment and not for the pleasure resulting from this union.”<sup>78</sup> The unity of both qualities of love indicates that Christian holiness involves both eros and desire—the mystical striving for the union of aesthetic, cultural, and religious realms with the vital self-fulfilling desire, which are manifest in a Tillichian saint. The attempt to eradicate or suppress them can in no way succeed in any ascetical practices and even the attempt is erroneous. Thus we read: “There is an element of libido even in the most spiritualized friendship and in the most ascetic mysticism. A saint without libido would cease to be a creature. But there is no such saint.”<sup>79</sup> The interrelation of both qualities of love explains, as Frederick Parrella argues, Tillich’s appreciation of the human body and rejection of the body-spirit dichotomy, which is also shown in Tillich’s vision of God as Related: the divine life includes the ontological element of vitality, namely, desire and eros, since God is spirit. He holds:

But if it is said that he is Spirit, the ontological elements of vitality and personality are included and, with them, the participation of the bodily existence in the divine life. Both vitality and personality have a bodily basis....therefore, some Christian mystics and philosophers have emphasized that “corporeality is

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<sup>77</sup> Alexander C. Irwin, *Eros toward the World: Paul Tillich and the Theology of the Erotic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 44.

<sup>78</sup> Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 30.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

the end of the ways of God (Öttinger). This is a necessary consequence of the Christian doctrine of creation.<sup>80</sup>

Hence, like Sheldrake, who, in criticizing the tendency in the mistaken view of Christian asceticism toward radical rejection of human desires and passions on the basis of the separation of agape and eros, calls for acknowledging and accepting them, Tillich suggests cultivating the attitude of acceptance. In the third volume of *Systematic Theology*, Tillich, after establishing the premise that Protestant holiness means being transparent to the ground of being, raises the question of eros, in particular, the question of the relation of the eros quality of love to its increase in agape quality: does eros necessarily decrease as agape increases in the sanctification process? In his systematic thinking, agape and eros both are love in the sense of the urge toward the reunion with the separated, and what differentiates agape from other kinds of love, including eros, is the quality of the “ecstatic participation in the transcendent unity of unambiguous life.”<sup>81</sup> In short, agape emphasizes the ecstatic, transcending quality of the impact of the Spiritual Presence. Hence, Tillich’s answer to his self-raised question is quite clear: “An increase in awareness, freedom, relatedness, and transcendence does not imply a decrease in vital self-expression.”<sup>82</sup>

According to him, Christian holiness does not endorse the repression of vital dynamics of human nature and the attainment of the “innocent pleasures of life,” since such a practice “leads to continuous explosions of the repressed and only superficially

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<sup>80</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 278.

<sup>81</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 136.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

admitted forces in the totality of man's being."<sup>83</sup> Rather, it fosters an acceptance of the vital dynamics in human beings as a necessary element in all their self-expressions (passions and eros), i.e., an acceptance of life in its divine-demonic ambiguity, the depths of human nature. Agape and eros, for Tillich as well as for Sheldrake, do not contradict each other, and in this respect, Tillich is much more systematic and comprehensive. In the James Richard Lectures he delivered in 1951, Tillich states that the desire for God is both the desire for him as love (agape) and the desire for Him as truth (eros); God is love and truth; divine desire of love and philosophical eros are identical. He thus writes: "Eros drives the soul through all levels of reality to ultimate reality, to truth itself, which is the good itself."<sup>84</sup> In his analysis, the interpenetration of *agape* and *eros* created in Christianity a full receptivity toward mysticism: "And there is eros in agape, and agape in eros, a fact that permitted Christianity to receive into itself the eros-created classical culture, both rational and mystical."<sup>85</sup>

He says elsewhere that "Love as eros is depreciated by those theologians who depreciated culture and by those who deny a mystical element in man's relation to God."<sup>86</sup> *Eros* drives toward reunion with things and persons in their essential goodness and so with the good itself; it is through eros that philosophical love and religious love are united: "For mystical theology, God and the good itself are identical; therefore, the

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<sup>83</sup> 241.

<sup>84</sup> Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Truth* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), 72.

<sup>85</sup> Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, 40.

<sup>86</sup> Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 30.

love toward the good itself is, in religious language, love toward God.”<sup>87</sup> This can be further illumined by Sheldrake’s Pseudo-Dionysian statement that “true loving, true eroticism is always an experience in God. God is erotic power... God is our capacity to love revealing itself in the matrix of all human relations.”

Tillich argues that eros participates in the ambiguities of life; it may be confused with libido and drawn into its ambiguities, as even mystical eros can reduce the love toward God to an openly ascetic, unknowingly sexual level. Most crucially, it can degenerate into “aesthetic detachment,”<sup>88</sup> where existential participation and ultimate responsibility disappear in cultural eros. Here comes the transforming power of agape into play. For Tillich, agape “enters from another dimension into the whole of life and into all qualities of love;” it is the love “cutting into love, just as revelation is reason cutting into reason and the Word of God is the Word cutting into all words.”<sup>89</sup> An ecstatic manifestation of the Spiritual Presence, it has the power to “judge,” “transform,” and “fulfill” the other qualities of love.<sup>90</sup>

This does not mean, however, that agape as a creation of the impact of the Spiritual Presence does away with eros, since the basic nature of the Spiritual Presence includes the mystical quality of love, that is, eros. Tillich, thus, says: “The unity with God is not the negation of the desire for reunion of the finite with the finite. But where there is unity with God, there the finite is desired alongside this unity but within it.”<sup>91</sup> In this way

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> 118.

<sup>89</sup> 33.

<sup>90</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 137.

of integrating agape and eros, eros takes on the sacramental, therapeutic quality, that is, in Sheldrake's words, a "liturgy that may heal and restore loving partners to a spiritual centeredness." The theme of therapeutic quality of love as the manifestation of the Spiritual Presence will be revisited later in our consideration of Tillich's prayer.

In conclusion, the third characteristic of Tillichian holiness embraces eros and desire within a framework of Christian *agape*, corresponds in significant ways to Sheldrake's spirituality of desire, and does not deny or repress the vital dynamics of human nature but rather appreciates and respects them. What is to be cultivated in an ongoing process of Tillichian way of living, then, is the awareness or discernment of the movements arising from those dynamics. Herein lies the significance of Tillich's theory of sanctification, which, as explained in the second chapter, presents the four principles of the process of spiritual transformation: increasing awareness, increasing freedom, increasing relatedness, and increasing transcendence.

The fourth characteristic of Tillichian holiness promotes living on the boundary as a mystic wanderer. Sheldrake's proposal for holiness is based on the radical awareness of the human condition as "incompleteness," which ultimately leads to the life of continual change, movement, and a lack of final clarity, namely, the life of living in the permanent liminal state and provisionality; so also Tillichian holiness is founded upon the ontological awareness of human finitude and freedom. Human freedom makes two things possible: living always under the threats of nonbeing and transcending his or her vital existence

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<sup>91</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 129.

A Tillichian saint, often in a provisional way, is transparent to the ground of being and overcomes the estranged realities. Since he/she is aware of the inescapability from the conditions of existence, however, the saint does not seek complete freedom or ascendance from the concrete realities or the structure of being. The life of the Tillichian saint is “full of tension and movement” and stands in a “third area beyond the bounded territories,” as we read:

Existence on the frontier, in the boundary situation, is full of tension and movement. It is in truth no standing still, but rather a crossing and return, a repetition of return and crossing, a back-and-forth—the aim of which is to create a third area beyond the bounded territories, an area where one can stand for a time without being enclosed in something tightly bounded.<sup>92</sup>

It is well to remember that in the third chapter in evaluating Frederick Parrella’s understanding of Tillichian boundary, I have argued that Tillichian life of the boundary means not only standing in both between the two alternative possibilities but also taking no definitive standing against either; it ultimately means standing in a third space. There, two aspects of Tillich’s living on the boundary—the sacramental and the prophetic—are affirmed and the neglect of either misses the fundamental dynamic of the *modus vivendi* of Tillichian spirituality. I have also argued that the symbol of the boundary functions to maintain a hopeful vision of the breaking-through of the Eternal into time, in a continuous process of creating “a third area beyond the bounded territories, an area where one can stand for a time without being enclosed in something tightly bounded.”

Living in the third area is characterized by a continual transgressing of existing boundaries; as in Sheldrakean holiness, it is not a static enjoyment of “any specific this or that, whether a time, a place, or a person,” but rather a habitual transgression that is

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<sup>92</sup> Paul Tillich, “Boundaries,” 163.

inherently dynamic. Note that the spatial metaphor, the third area, is related to the temporal one, the provisional time during which one can stand “without being enclosed in something tightly bounded.” The temporality the Tillichian saint lives out is the “fulfilled moment, the moment of time approaching us as fate and decision, Kairos.” This belongs to what Tillich characterizes as the Boehme-Schellingian line of thinking, which, in his view, effected a deep spiritual and religious upheaval like Protestant mysticism. It is not one of a timeless contemplation but of a timely decision and action, since it compels us to the habitual practice of discerning, choosing, and acting in accordance with the demand of the Unconditioned.<sup>93</sup>

Recalling Shelldrake’s observation that “The inability to pin God down, as it were, to this or that image drives us ultimately into a certain darkness or unknowing in which desire alone becomes the force that drives us onward,” it would not be far-fetched to say that Tillichian apophaticism, notably represented by his concept of “God above God,” provides a conceptual basis for Tillichian holiness of living on the boundary as mystic wanderer. In fact, our analysis of *The Courage To Be* in the second chapter has already shown that the encounter with the God above God as the object of “absolute faith,” which transcends theistic, personalistic understandings of God and in that sense concurs with the faith implied in mysticism, can be understood in light of being on the boundary.

God above God is the God as the source of the courage to be, namely, the God appearing “in the radicalism and the seriousness of the ultimate question, even without an

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<sup>93</sup> Paul Tillich, “Kairos and Logos,” in *Interpretation of History*, 129.

answer,”<sup>94</sup> and experienced in the accepting of the acceptance “without somebody or something that accepts.”<sup>95</sup> The overcoming of the anxiety of doubt and meaninglessness takes place in a space where God appears in His absence, where the attachment to theistic conceptions or images of God is altogether transcended. For Tillich, however, absolute faith means neither “a separated, definite event” nor “a place where one can live;” rather it is “without the safety of words and concepts, it is without a name, a church, a cult, a theology. But it is moving in the depth of all of them. It is the power of being, in which they participate and of which they are fragmentary expressions.”<sup>96</sup>

Living with absolute faith, thus, signifies, as shown in Tillich’s experience soon after emigration, inescapable unrest and insecurity of a person who has been alienated from his familiar, established world and entered upon a time of suspension “between the no longer and the not yet” and nonetheless the ever-pervasive sense of the power of being-itself, often experienced in the form of “separating.” He narrates: “He [God] makes us émigrés from the comfortable home of our stabilized internal existence driving us into the hardships of a new beginning... Every new emigration, whatever the external reason may be, is a new manifestation of his exclusiveness and absolute claim.”<sup>97</sup> In the life of the boundary, God manifests Himself as separating and destabilizing; God is the God who pushes the human person beyond “accepted lines of belief and thought” and the

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<sup>94</sup> Tillich, “The God above God,” 418.

<sup>95</sup> Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 185.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>97</sup> Tillich, “Christianity and Emigration,” 13.

“limits of the obvious” toward “radical questioning that opens up the new and uncharted.”<sup>98</sup>

What occurs in this destabilizing or de-centering moment, as I have advanced in the second chapter, is twofold; first, the anxiety inherent in the life situation of uncertainty and insecurity enables the person to resist the tendency to find consolation, security, and protection in finite realities, e.g., the nation, religious dogma, or sacramental objects, but to move towards radical openness toward a new reality; second, consequently, there emerges a reorganized, revitalized subject whose creativity and desire tries to find its fulfillment in history, both personal and communal. It is clear by now that Tillichian living on the boundary leads to the life of a continual creativity and desire and thus the continual formation of the self; it is driven by what is not possessed, and moving to create a lifestyle that is unique and singular. It belongs to what Sheldrake identifies as the “Moses school of thinking” in the sense of the experience of wandering, of desiring but never totally arriving, and thus of complete trust in God.

That said, it is clear that Tillichian holiness as living on the boundary expresses an inherently dynamic quality of a Christian living driven by the acute sense of the hiddenness of God, namely, the life of “mystic wanderer.” Living on the boundary is a form of fluid and mobile practice; it cannot be restricted to a simply negative, hysterical rhetoric of saying “No” to the existing realities but is a continual repetitive practice of “crossing and return.” What motivates this repetitive practice is desire. Recall that for Tillich, desire and eros as the two interrelated qualities of love are understood as the moving powers of life; they are mystico-ontological drives that express what it means to

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<sup>98</sup> Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 92.

be human. The former is the desire for vital self-fulfillment and the latter is “the driving, life-giving force in the highest forms of spirituality,” which operates in sexual love, participating knowledge (gnosis), transmoral ethics, and religious aspiration including mystical union. Given that in Tillich’s life experience of the boundary, God is encountered in its absence, i.e., as the power of separating and destabilizing, it is quite plausible to say that the qualities of eros and desire are aroused and increased in an apophatic experience of the divine.

Sheldrake has much to say in relation to this aspect of Tillichian holiness. In Sheldrake’s understanding of de Certeau, mysticism is bound up with desire, which signifies de Certeau’s indebtedness to the Ignatian spiritual tradition,<sup>99</sup> and the mystic is the wanderer, whose ever-growing desire expresses an “embodiment in which an unstable and incomplete ‘self’ is continually being constructed in a movement outwards and in encounters with what is other than itself.”<sup>100</sup>

The mystical self is always in the making—its identity is formed according to the dialectic, as de Certeau himself asserts, of “the place and the departure,” symbolized by the “empty tomb” of Jesus; it is a postmodern self, who lives “in a kind of movement of perpetual departure” being “lost in the totality of the immense.”<sup>101</sup> The narrative and

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<sup>99</sup> Here, Sheldrake perhaps has in mind the Ignatian admonition of asking “what do you want?” as the first step of an interior reflection, especially in the context of the directed retreat according to *The Spiritual Exercises*. This questioning is, basically, a way of keeping one’s consciousness focused on the subject and theme of the meditations as proposed in the *Exercises*, but also promotes a way of living that is highly appreciative of human desires and passions. Given that Sheldrake’s theory of desire derives from Ignatian spirituality its basic inspirations, i.e., the appreciation of desire and promotion of the life of continuous movement, it would be quite plausible a project to relate Tillichian holiness to Ignatian spirituality. For a very introductory level of comparison between Tillich and Ignatius, see: Thomas E. Clark, “Ignatian Spirituality and the Protestant Principle,” *The Way Supplement*, 68 (1990), 52-61.

<sup>100</sup> Sheldrake, “Unending Desire,” 39.

symbol of the empty tomb governs the life of a mystic wanderer, i.e., keeps him/her moving in the direction of continuous desire for what is lacking, which finds its correlate in the encounter of the ground of being. To be sure, exactly what that mystic wanderer desires remains unknown, because the object of desire is the unknowable object, i.e., the God above God, as in Tillich's theory and practice, who pushes the human person beyond "accepted lines of belief and thought" toward "radical questioning that opens up the new and uncharted." Herein lies the truly subversive character of Tillichian holiness as living on the boundary; rather than attempting to "replace an ailing intellectual system of theology by setting up new systems of knowledge or alternative fixed places of power,"<sup>102</sup> it promotes a continual practice of transgressing fixed points, whether it be a given authority, a religious/secular ideal, or an ideology, within the context of transformative experiences of the divine.

### **B. Tillich's Conception of Prayer and Contemplation**

This section attempts to show that Tillich's theology of mysticism includes as its practical component a sophisticated, comprehensive view of prayer. In the first part, a modest construction of Tillichian prayer and contemplation is proposed, and this will be based on a selective, not comprehensive, reading of Tillich's corpus from the vantage point of Tillichian mysticism and holiness. In the second, it will be shown that Tillich's conception of prayer and contemplation can be further illumined in light of the

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<sup>101</sup> Philip Sheldrake, "The Crisis of Postmodernity," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Summer, 1996), 9. Sheldrake rightly observes that de Certeau draws parallels between postmodern culture and the mystical tradition.

<sup>102</sup> Sheldrake, "Unending Desire," 40.

contemporary views of prayer suggested by Thomas Keating and Ann Ulanov, whose concepts of “divine therapy” and “primary speech,” respectively, are of particular concern. Therein we will learn that Tillich’s theology of prayer shares much in common with the so-called Christian contemplative tradition and that it thus has much to say to the contemporary discussion of Christian prayer. Finally, the possibility of Keating’s centering prayer as a method of Tillichian prayer will be considered.

### **1. Construction of Tillichian Prayer and Contemplation**

In Tillich’s corpus, there are several definitive expressions of prayer, and for our purpose in this section, let us begin with Tillich’s most prevalent definition of prayer. In a sermon, “Spiritual Presence,” Tillich holds: “Prayer is the Spiritual longing of a finite being to return to its origin.”<sup>103</sup> Note that this definition is being made in the context of functions or effects of the impact of the Spiritual Presence upon an individual person. Prayer is, basically, a work of the Holy Spirit, as he says: “The Spirit can give you the power of prayer... For every prayer-with or without words-that reaches its aim, namely the reunion with the divine Ground of being, is a work of the Spirit speaking in us and through us.”<sup>104</sup> For Tillich, the origin of a finite being is the ground of being and returning to its origin means, then, reuniting with the ground of being. Prayer is oriented towards mystical union between the divine and the human, i.e., between the infinite ground of being and the finite being; but, in fact, it is a re-union since the original unity or identity is a lost reality.

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<sup>103</sup> Tillich, *The Eternal Now*, 86.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

Returning to the origin or reuniting with the ground of being is illustrated in Tillich's system as a function of life called "self-transcendence," in which life is "striving in the vertical direction toward ultimate and infinite being;" as stated in the poetic expressions of Paul (Romans 8:19-22), it is "the longing for all creation for the liberation from the 'subjection to futility' and 'the shackles of mortality.'"<sup>105</sup> Tillich writes: "The self-transcendence which belongs to the principles of sanctification is actual in every act in which the impact of the Spiritual Presence is experienced. This can be in prayer or meditation in total privacy... It is like the breathing-in of another air, an elevation above average existence."<sup>106</sup>

It is well to note, here, that this "striving" toward the ultimate is ontological, i.e., constitutive for the human self; returning to the origin is an ever-present desire or drive inherent and indestructible in the life process of a personal being. In mulling over Tillich's definition of prayer, three important points can be made: first, prayer is an existential act of the human as a finite being in which his/her quest for the self-transcendence, for the ultimate concern is acknowledged and articulated; second, since the ground of being as the object of the return and reunion refers to the divine depth, the unapproachable intensity of the divine being,<sup>107</sup> prayer as the longing for the return to and the reunion with the ground of being occurs in the depth dimension of the self; third, prayer is a matter of desire or drive for a mystical union with the divine ground. It is interesting to see that, as was seen in the first chapter, Tillich uses the word "mysticism"

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<sup>105</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 86-87.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>107</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 250.

to designate the innate tendency or drive that urges a person toward the ultimate or God: “Everything finite, by virtue of its inwardness, participates in the infinite, and the infinite is involved in everything finite.”<sup>108</sup>

Thus defined, prayer is inherently mystical and revelatory and so carries all the three marks of revelation, namely, mystery, miracle, and ecstasy. In the first volume of *Systematic Theology* Tillich writes: “Every prayer and meditation, if it fulfills its meaning, namely, to reunite the creature with its creative ground, is revelatory... it transcends all ordinary structures of subjective and objective reason. It is the presence of the mystery of being and an actualization of our ultimate concern.”<sup>109</sup> Ideally, prayer as mystery occurs in a dimension that precedes the subject-object relationship and at a point when reason is driven beyond itself to its ground and abyss, i.e., the “depth of reason.” It can then create a contrasting effect, namely, “shattering” and “transforming.” Prayer as miracle produces “astonishment” or “numinous dread” in a praying person, the feeling that the solid ground of ordinary reality is radically shaken. Prayer as ecstasy addresses the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the human spirit, i.e., the Spiritual Presence, which drives one beyond oneself without destroying his/her essential structure, namely, the centeredness of the integrated self.<sup>110</sup>

Ecstatic prayer is to be distinguished from “intoxication,” which is “an attempt to escape from the dimension of spirit with its burden of personal centeredness and responsibility and cultural rationality,” and so ultimately “destructive, heightening the

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<sup>108</sup> Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, 29.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>110</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 112.

tensions it wants to avoid,” thereby returning to “an empty subjectivity;” it rather embraces “the manifold richness of the objective world, transcended by the Spiritual Presence’s inner infinity.”<sup>111</sup> Prayer, for Tillich, is the awareness of the surrounding realities “in the light of the divine direction of life’s processes,” as we read: “He who prays earnestly is aware of his own situation and his ‘neighbor’s,’ but he sees it under the Spiritual Presence’s influence and in the light of the divine direction of life’s processes. In these experiences, nothing of the objective world is dissolved into mere subjectivity. Rather, it is all preserved and even increased.”<sup>112</sup> In short, in Tillichian prayer, socio-political consciousness is not diminished but enhanced.

It is well to remember, here, that in the preceding chapter, I have argued against Reimer’s judgment over Tillich’s theology of prayer being comparatively weak in its ethical quality; Tillichian prayer is the process in which the dynamic of self-transcendence evolves into the opening up of the depth dimension of reality, including morality (self-integration) and culture (self-creation), and so a discerning art of being and growing aware of the “grace and demands” of the ultimate concern. In quoting the passage of Tillich mentioned just above, while interpreting “seeing in light of the ground and aim of all being” as referring to Tillichian morality, I proposed that in Tillichian prayer, one becomes ecstatically aware of the structure of interpersonal relations and ultimately driven toward the realization of justice as the inner telos of being and also toward the ethical decision based on love. Indeed, Tillichian prayer and contemplation promotes a socio-historical, eschatological awareness of the coming realities of the

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

Kingdom of God as the inner telos of all life processes and its accompanying impulse toward the participation in the struggle for it.

It is noteworthy that Tillich considers prayer in the context of “God’s directing activity,” namely, Providence, literally meaning “fore-seeing” (*pro-videre*).<sup>113</sup> In his system, Providence is the side of the divine creativity, which is related to the future; the divine creativity drives every creature toward fulfilling its inner aim. A person of providential faith does not ask for a special divine activity that will alter the conditions of finitude and estrangement magically and supranaturally, but rather “believes, and asserts with the courage of faith, that no situation whatsoever can frustrate the fulfillment of his ultimate destiny.”<sup>114</sup> Tillich announces:

God’s directing activity is the answer to the question of the meaning of prayer, especially prayers of supplication and prayers of intercession... As an element in the situation a prayer is a condition of God’s directing activity, but the form of this creativity may be the complete rejection of the manifest content of the prayer. Nevertheless, the prayer may have been heard according to its hidden content, which is the surrender of a fragment of existence to God. This hidden content is always decisive.<sup>115</sup>

Not only in meditation and contemplation, but also even in the prayers of supplication and intercession, what determines the quality of prayer is the “hidden content” of prayer, that is, “the surrender of a fragment of existence to God.” Prayer as the awareness of fragmented realities culminates in the total surrender to God, so to speak.

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<sup>113</sup> Part II of *Systematic Theology* is devoted to the doctrine of God, where Tillich correlates being as the quest for God and the reality of God as the answer. In the second section of the reality of God he provides a fourfold feature of God: God as Being, as Living, as Creating, and as Related. God’s directing activity, Providence, is dealt with as an aspect of God as Creating, the other aspects being God’s Originating Creativity and God’s Sustaining Creativity.

<sup>114</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 267.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

What is validated and fostered in a continuous act of praying, then, is faith; faith is the power of prayer: “Every serious prayer contains power, not because of the intensity of desire expressed in it, but because of the faith the person has in God’s directing activity—a faith that transforms the existential situation.”<sup>116</sup>

Faith as the power of prayer in Providence carries the fundamental character of courage, i.e., “in spite of”: “Providence is not a theory about some activities of God; it is the religious symbol of the courage of confidence with respect to fate and death. For the courage of confidence says ‘in spite of’ even to death.”<sup>117</sup>

In the second chapter of our research, we have seen that Tillich understands the confidence shown in Luther and the Reformers to mean neither a belief in the existence of God nor a trust upon the possibility that the depleted self in the midst of doubt and meaninglessness shall be revitalized; rather, it is the acceptance of the unconditionality of God and of the fragile character of human existence represented by the ever-present reality of the threefold anxiety. What is remarkable is that Tillich relates this to the alternative form of the relation to being itself, namely, “absolute faith,” which both includes and transcends mystical union and personal communion, and whose object is only symbolized by the concept of the “God above God.” This Pseudo-Dionysian God, “unspeakable darkness,” cannot be spoken of or seen: “thus all the names must disappear after they have been attributed to God, even the holy name ‘God’ itself.”<sup>118</sup> For him, absolute faith is “without the safety of words and concepts... without a name, a church, a

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 168.

<sup>118</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 92.

cult, a theology;” it is “moving in the depth of all of them. It is the power of being in which they participate and of which they are fragmentary expressions.”<sup>119</sup> In short, prayer as faith in God’s directing creativity culminates in an apophatic experience of going beyond words and concepts to be grasped by the power of being itself.

Given that faith as Tillich understands it is the most centered act of the total personality, i.e., a unified act of cognition, emotion, and the will,<sup>120</sup> prayer is the “elevation of the heart as the center of the personality to God.”<sup>121</sup> This is another prevalent definition of prayer in Tillich. In some inspiring sermons he says: “praying means elevating oneself to the eternal”<sup>122</sup>; “But when we are in the state of silent gratefulness, we are aware of His presence. We experience an elevation of life that we cannot attain by profuse words of thanks, but that can happen to us if we are open to it.”<sup>123</sup> Two words are particularly important here, “elevation” and “the heart.”

First, while the word *elevation* elicits the spatial image of an upward movement, in Tillich, it primarily refers to the mystical quality of prayer, i.e., its ecstatic, self-transcending quality. Sebastian Painadath underscores the significance of Tillich’s use of the term *elevation* since it is the classical notion of prayer as presented by Augustine, John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas, and Martin Luther. Painadath identifies three conspicuous elements in Tillich’s appropriation of the classical term: 1) elevation is a receptive experience of grace, in that it is possible only through the impact of divine

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<sup>119</sup> Tillich, *The Courage To Be*, 189.

<sup>120</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 4-9.

<sup>121</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 127.

<sup>122</sup> Tillich, “The Eternal Now,” in *The Eternal Now*, 122.

<sup>123</sup> Tillich, “In Everything Give Thanks,” in *The Eternal Now*, 178.

power, the Spiritual Presence; 2) it is also, however, a human activity, because under the impact of the Spiritual Presence, the human person elevates him/herself to the divine Spirit in a free personal self-surrender; and 3) it is participation in the transcendent union with the divine, which does not mean emancipation from inter-personal encounters but rather enables the person to see the temporal in the light of the eternal and the present situation under the power of kairos.<sup>124</sup>

Second and more importantly, the heart as the center of the personality designates the deepest ground of one's being, which includes the unconscious elements of his/her character. It is the depth dimension of a being, out of which the crying out to God springs. It is important to recall, then, that Tillich uses the language of depth in defining mysticism. In a lecture on Pietism, he defines mysticism as the "presence of the Spirit in the depths of the human soul,"<sup>125</sup> which creates the "unambiguous life" in the realms of life process, morality, culture, and religion. Here, the "depths" symbolizes the innermost recesses of a person, i.e., the infinite and inexhaustible ground and abyss of being, whereby a divine-human encounter is made possible. In "Existential Philosophy: Its Historical Meaning," he provides another depth-related definition of mysticism: it is a "venture of faith toward union with the depths of life, whether made by an individual or a group,"<sup>126</sup> as shown in Existentialist philosophy in its turn to *Innerlichkeit*. Mysticism as a venture of faith is an attempt to return to a pre-Cartesian attitude in which the essence of objectivity could be found in the depth of subjectivity. Worth noting is that Tillich

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<sup>124</sup> Sebastian Painadath, *Dynamics of Prayer: Towards a Theology of Prayer in the Light of Paul Tillich's Theology of Spirit*, 203-204.

<sup>125</sup> Tillich, *A History of Christianity*, 287.

<sup>126</sup> Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 107.

understands the depth in terms of the spiritual attitude or quality of religious life, which has been experienced in “mystics and priests, poets and philosophers, simple people and educated people” in their “confession, lonely self-scrutiny, internal or external catastrophes, prayer, contemplation.”<sup>127</sup> In the experience of the depth, one is challenged to break away from the familiar, comfortable living on the surface and descend into an unknown ground, which is, perhaps, painful to the experiencing subject and yet ultimately, full of joy, hope, and truth.

For Tillich, the heart is the locus of the mystical encounter between divine and human, and prayer as the elevation of the heart to the divine opens up a new level of reality, of person. This is, perhaps, analogous to what Tillich terms “revelatory ecstasy,” or “divine revelation” to designate the mystical experience he undertook while looking at Botticelli’s painting at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin, of which we have made an in-dept analysis in the first chapter: “I... had an experience for which I do not know a better name than revelatory ecstasy. A level of reality was opened to me, which had been covered up to this moment, although I had some intimations of its existence”<sup>128</sup>; “I turned away shaken. That moment... brought vital joy and spiritual truth. I compare it with what is usually called revelation... The experience goes beyond the way we encounter reality in our daily lives. It opens up depths experienced in no other way.”<sup>129</sup>

In a lecture on Schleiermacher, Tillich considers this experience in view of the recognition or the contemplative awareness of a “dimension of reality of which otherwise

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<sup>127</sup> Tillich, “The Depth of Existence,” in *The Shaking of the Foundations*, 56.

<sup>128</sup> Tillich, “Art and Society,” in *On Art and Architecture*, 12.

<sup>129</sup> Tillich, “One Moment of Beauty,” in *On Art and Architecture*, 234-235.

I would never be aware, and a dimension in myself [which] would never be opened up except through participation in the painting.” He holds: “It is certainly true that the response of our whole being in immediacy-which might be the right definition of feeling-can be seen in an earnest prayer or in the worship service of a community, or in listening to the prophetic word.”<sup>130</sup> It is striking to see that this mystical experience graciously occurred in his contemplative seeing; he did not intend to focus or meditate consciously on it, but, consequently, his contemplative seeing functioned as a way of prayer; indeed, for him, seeing is uniting.

Thus understood, Tillichian prayer as the elevation of the heart to the divine shares much in common, I would argue, with the tradition of “prayer of the heart,” commonly known as “*hesychasm*” in the fundamental sense that the heart plays a central role as a symbol of the deepest ground of one’s personality. Thomas Merton suggests that meditation for the early monks was basically *meditatio scripturarum*, making the words of the Bible their own by memorizing and repeating them with deep and simple concentration from the heart, and this type of prayer was continued and developed as a specific meditation technique in the school of hesychastic contemplation, which flourished in the monastic centers of Sinai and Mount Athos. The prayer of the heart is a prayer of “silence, simplicity, contemplative and meditative unity, a deep personal integration in an attentive, watchful listening of ‘the heart;’” the proper response such

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<sup>130</sup> Paul Tillich, *Perspectives on 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 104.

prayer calls forth is a “wordless and total surrender of the heart in silence.”<sup>131</sup> Worth mentioning at this point is Merton’s definition of the heart.

The concept of “the heart” might well be analyzed here. It refers to the deepest psychological ground of one’s personality, the inner sanctuary where self-awareness goes beyond analytical reflection and opens out into metaphysical and theological confrontation with the Abyss of the unknown yet present-one who is “more intimate to us than we are to ourselves.”<sup>132</sup>

Here we have an immediate impression that there is a great similarity between Merton and Tillich on the concepts both of the heart and of God as the abyss. For both, the heart as the deepest ground of one’s personality is the locus of the mystical encounter between divine and human, the “inner sanctuary” in Merton’s poetic language, where God is experienced as the abyss of “the unknown yet present.” Merton’s illustration of God as the one “who is more intimate to us than we are to ourselves” is the classical, Augustinian expression of the immediacy of God, which is often used in Tillich’s corpus. In a comparative study of Merton and Tillich, Robert Giannini observes this stark affinity between the two mystical thinkers: “Like Tillich, Thomas Merton stressed the immediacy of God, and also like Tillich, he emphasized the point that God “is closer to us than we are to ourselves.” He was principally at one with what Tillich called the Augustinian-Franciscan tradition.”<sup>133</sup> In fact, a letter from Merton to Tillich, dated on September 4,

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<sup>131</sup> Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 29-30.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* 33.

<sup>133</sup> Robert E. Giannini, *Mysticism and Social Ethics: Thomas Merton Seen in the Light of Paul Tillich’s Theology* (Ph.D. diss., The University of St. Andrews, 1976), 364-365. For a brief comparison of Merton and Tillich, see Robert Giannini, “Paul Tillich and Thomas Merton: Kairos and the Ascetical Life,” ed. Frederick J. Parrella, *Paul Tillich’s Theological Legacy: Spirit and Community* (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 142-148. We know from sources that a series of book exchange concurred between the two thinkers via Tillich’s secretary and both appreciated each other’s ideas while disagreeing on certain points. Grace Cal í *Paul Tillich First-Hand: A Memoir of the Harvard Years* (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1996), 35-39.

1959, substantiates Giannini's observation: "Finally I want to tell you how happy I am with the earlier chapters of *The Theology of Culture*, in which I find all my Augustinian and Franciscan instincts vindicated."<sup>134</sup>

What is truly valued in the hesychastic practices, i.e., Jesus prayer, is the spiritual attitude or quality, as in Tillichian prayer, as the elevation of the heart, which involves "the whole man," not the mind alone, and proceeds "from the center of man's being, his heart renewed in the Holy Spirit, totally submissive to the grace of Christ."<sup>135</sup> Merton says: "Monastic prayer begins not so much with considerations as with a return to the heart, finding one's deepest center, awakening the profound depths of our being in the presence of God who is the source of our being and our life."<sup>136</sup> He goes on saying: "From these texts we see that in meditation we should not look for a method, or system, but cultivate an attitude, and outlook: faith, openness, attention, reverence, expectation, supplication, trust, joy."<sup>137</sup> This is the so-called "contemplative attitude," whereby, as Gerald May and others put, "one hopes to nurture a simple willingness to be open to God's movements, leadings, and invitations."<sup>138</sup>

In the contemplative attitude is actualized "the demand of total surrender to the subject of ultimate concern,"<sup>139</sup> and, notably, this is Tillich's characterization of genuine

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<sup>134</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985), 577.

<sup>135</sup> Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, 30.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> 34.

<sup>138</sup> Gerald May, Carole Crumley, Bill Dietrich, and Ann Kline, "What Is Contemplative Spirituality?" available from <http://www.shalem.org/index.php/resources/publications/articles-written-by-shalem-staff/contemplative-spirituality>, assessed on September 10, 2012.

faith: “the love toward God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might.”<sup>140</sup> Contemplative attitude, in Tillich’s view, thus, would have to do with a sort of shifting, from the concern that is only preliminary, transitory, and finite to the ultimate concern. Simply put, it means a loving attention to the ultimate concern, whereby the human longing for the ultimate concern is actualized: “The human heart seeks the infinite because that is where the finite wants to rest. In the infinite it sees its own fulfillment.”<sup>141</sup> Our involvement in the preliminary concern accompanies the feeling of anxiety, but, in our participation in the ultimate concern, the power of anxiety is broken and cannot destroy us anymore.<sup>142</sup> Hence, it can be said that the contemplative attitude of Christian spirituality is expressed well in Tillichian prayer as the “actualization of our ultimate concern.”<sup>143</sup>

It is thus not surprising that Tillich, unlike mainline Protestant theologians, holds in high regard the contemplative dimension of prayer. Before discussing Tillich’s view of contemplation, I now want to provide William Shannon’s description of contemplation as a theoretical backdrop. In Shannon’s view, what is basic in the use of the term in the history of spirituality is the “awareness of the presence of God apprehended not by thought but by love.”<sup>144</sup> Contemplation has to be distinguished from meditation since the latter is generally understood to involve discursive reasoning, which is based on the

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<sup>139</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 3.

<sup>140</sup> Deut. 6:5.

<sup>141</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 15.

<sup>142</sup> Tillich, “Our Ultimate Concern,” in *The New Being*, 152.

<sup>143</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 127.

<sup>144</sup> Shannon, “Contemplation, Contemplative Prayer,” 209.

dualism between a subject thinking and an object being thought about. Contemplation is always unitive and uniting; the distance between the subject and the object is blurred, which means in the divine-human relationship putting off the false self, empirical ego, and finding the true self in God. The contemplative is the person who sees everything in unity and rejects any dualism that would separate God from creation.

This sort of understanding is found in Tillich as well. For Tillich, contemplation is neither a specific method nor a degree of prayer; it is a mystical quality of prayer in which one is immediately aware of and participates in that which transcends the subject-object scheme, whether it be called the unconditional, the ultimate concern, the ground of being, or God as Spirit. As quoted earlier, he articulates on the effects of ecstasy as the creation of the Spiritual Presence: “He who contemplates is aware of the ontological structure of the universe, but he sees it ecstatically under the impact of the Spiritual Presence in light of the ground and aim of all being.”<sup>145</sup>

This idea of contemplation as mystical awareness appears also in Tillich’s famous essay, “The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion,” where he prioritizes the ontological principle in the philosophy of religion, i.e., he affirms the contemplative dimension of religiosity: “Man is immediately aware of something unconditional which is the prius of the separation and interaction of subject and object, theoretically as well as practically.”<sup>146</sup> Here, remarkably, he uses the term “awareness” to avoid what can be connoted in the terms like “intuition,” “experience,” and “knowledge.”

Awareness of the Unconditioned has not the character of “intuition,” for the Unconditioned does not appear in this awareness as a “*Gestalt*” to be intuited, but

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<sup>145</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 119.

<sup>146</sup> Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 22.

as an element, a power, as demand... Neither should the word “experience” be used, because it ordinarily describes the observed presence of one reality to another reality, and because the Unconditioned is not a matter of experiential observation. “Knowledge” finally presupposes the separation of subject and object, and implies an isolated theoretical act, which is just the opposite of awareness of the Unconditioned.<sup>147</sup>

Tillich’s contemplation, then, also avoids the connotations such terms may incur. It is not an intuition, an observable experience, or simply a cognitive act; rather, it is the existential participation in that which is the “*prius* of the separation and interaction of subject and object.” In a sermon, “Seeing and Hearing,” where he appraises the act of seeing as a kind of union, Tillich paraphrases: “Con-templation means going into the temple, into the sphere of the holy, into the deep roots of things, into their creative ground.”<sup>148</sup> A more theological expression of contemplation is found in his ecclesiology, where he considers prayer and contemplation as the elements of worship: “Contemplation means participation in that which transcends the subject-object scheme, with its objectifying (and subjectifying) words, and therefore the ambiguity of language as well (including the voiceless language of speaking to oneself).”<sup>149</sup> For Tillich, prayer, as long as it is genuine and serious, has to be transformed into contemplation: “one may demand that every serious prayer lead into an element of contemplation, because in contemplation the paradox of prayer is manifest, the identity and non-identity of him who prays and Him who is prayed to: God as Spirit...”;<sup>150</sup> “If the question is raised as to how such a Protestant mysticism can be described, I would refer to what was said about prayer

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>148</sup> Tillich, “Seeing and Hearing,” in *The New Being*, 130.

<sup>149</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 192.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

transforming itself into contemplation.”<sup>151</sup> It is clear here that he considers contemplation as an evolved element of prayer.

In contemplation the words, even the “voiceless language” employed in the so-called “mental prayer,” are gone beyond and only “sighing without words to God” remains and there ensues a solitary encounter with God; one is enabled to find ultimate rest and the sense of the true self. Tillich advises:

Better that we remain silent and allow our soul, that is always longing for solitude, to sigh without words to God... In these moments of solitude something is done to us. The center of our being, the innermost self that is the ground of our aloneness, is elevated to the divine center and taken into it. Therein can we rest without losing ourselves.<sup>152</sup>

In the symbol of “sighing without words to God,” the expression Tillich borrows from St. Paul’s description of prayer in Romans 8:26-27,<sup>153</sup> there is the heart of Tillichian prayer and contemplation: it is God as Spirit, not the praying person, who sighs; what occurs in contemplation is the disclosure or elevation of unconscious elements of the personality before the divine, e.g., unconscious wishes and hopes, fixations, and projections, the dynamics of which psychoanalysis has made known of. In other words, the innermost needs and desires of the praying person are disclosed and elevated, of which he/she may not clearly be aware (“for we do not know how to pray as we ought”), and yet which express who he/she really is (“he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit”).

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<sup>151</sup> 243.

<sup>152</sup> Tillich, “Loneliness and Solitude,” in *The Eternal Now*, 24.

<sup>153</sup> The verses go: “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

In this sense, what happens in the dynamics of Tillich's contemplation as a mystical quality of prayer is analogous to what Ann and Barry Ulanov call "primary speech," namely, the pre-verbal expression of who we authentically are, like the indiscriminate cry of the infant, whose first language is that of instinct, emotion, and images. In the Ulanovs' view, "to pray is to listen to and hear this self who is speaking," and "This speech is primary because it is basic and fundamental, our ground."<sup>154</sup> The subject of that speech is not the praying person but the *unknown God*: "The speech of prayer, finally, is a series of replies to the word that God sends to us. Prayer is as far as one can get from the self-indulgence of narcissism. It is imbued with otherness; its very nature is otherly."<sup>155</sup> This otherness, hidden in the depth of the personality, suddenly springs into open life in the forms of projections, fantasies, fears, aggression, and sexual urges. What is needed then is the contemplative attitude of a "simple willingness to be open to God's movements, leadings, and invitations," i.e., the attitude of "admission."

The Ulanovs assert: "Few experiences are so important in the development of the language of primary speech as those of admission. We must own up, stop denying, say yes to the moral bumps and rhythmic breaks and disfigurements."<sup>156</sup>

In a paradigmatic sermon, "The Paradox of Prayer," Tillich utters:

We talk to somebody who is not somebody else, but who is nearer to us than we ourselves are. We address somebody who can never become an object of our address because he is always subject, always acting, always creating. We tell something to Him who knows not only what we tell Him but also all the unconscious tendencies out of which our conscious words grow... The symbol of

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<sup>154</sup> Ann & Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1982), 1. A very short version of their view can be obtained in: Ann Belford Ulanov, "Prayer, Psychology of," in *NWDCS*, 506-507.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>156</sup> 6.

God interceding before Himself for us says that God knows more about us than that of which we are conscious.<sup>157</sup>

For Tillich, God is “above myself and every other, the one to Whom I cannot speak, but Who can make Himself manifest to me through a state of silent gratefulness.”<sup>158</sup> God as Spirit, who “searches the hearts of men” knows what is more than that of which humans are consciously aware, and this God cannot be appropriated completely at all by any human endeavors, e.g., ascetical practices, moral observances: “We cannot bridge the gap between God and ourselves even through the most intensive and frequent prayers.”<sup>159</sup>

This implies two things: first, contemplation is not a thing to be achieved or appropriated, but a gift; the praying person can only try to be open to the ultimate mystery and so with a contemplative attitude. For Tillich, contemplation points to a dimension in the evolving dynamics of prayer, whereby the person takes a somewhat passive role of being open, receptive, and appreciative, and instead God as Spirit works to bring him/her to an ecstatic encounter with Himself. The human efforts become, as Merton observes, “more and more directed to an obedient and cooperative submission to grace, which implies first of all an increasingly attentive and receptive attitude toward the hidden action of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>160</sup>

Second, in Tillich’s view, in contemplation the subject-object scheme of “talking to somebody” is totally transcended, and what is contemplated is not God as a person but

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<sup>157</sup> Tillich, “The Paradox of Prayer,” in *The New Being*, 137.

<sup>158</sup> Tillich, “In Everything Give Thanks,” in *The Eternal Now*, 178.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*, 41.

the “God above God.” Tillich, in fact, does not discard the act of addressing the personal God as such, because, if prayer—as he defines it—is the actualization of the ultimate concern, it is necessarily expressed in words that include the symbols of the personal God. He concedes: “Active religious communication between God and man depends on the symbol of the personal God.”<sup>161</sup>

We have seen in the preceding chapter when dealing with A. J. Reimer’s interpretation of Tillich’s prayer, however, that Tillich criticizes the “profinization” of prayer, in which the dialectical character of divine-human relation, i.e., the “identity and non-identity of him who prays and Him who is prayed to,” is reduced to a person-to-person conversation. For, in Tillich’s view, God is not a being but being-itself, the ground and abyss of being; God as Spirit “transcends personality, if personality is identified with consciousness and moral self-integration.”<sup>162</sup> The image of the personal God, as it were, is transcended in contemplation. This brings him to oppose Hirsh’s view of the personalistic prayer, which completes itself in the form of an objectified opposition of God and the human being. The personalistic prayer, he argues, does not do justice to “the Unconditioned, which stands beyond the opposition of subject and object.” In other words, the dynamics of prayer takes the person beyond the concrete symbols toward the “ultimacy of the ultimate.” Sebastian Painadath asserts: “The personal ‘thou’ of the dialogue-form of prayer should be transcended by the transpersonal ‘divine presence’ of

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<sup>161</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 245.

<sup>162</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 192.

contemplative experience. Tillich demands repeatedly that the ‘God of theism’ be transcended in every genuine religious experience.”<sup>163</sup>

We have thus far seen that Tillich locates prayer and contemplation in the context of the divine-human reunion that is characterized as mystical, ecstatic, and revelatory; they occur in a dimension that precedes the subject-object relationship, i.e., the dimension of the depths, and bring about the “shattering, transforming” effects on the person involved. Remarkable is that Tillich deliberately uses the expression, “healing,” when he articulates the practical meanings of the three fundamental realities the divine-human economy creates, namely, revelation, salvation, and the Spiritual Presence, where his theology of prayer and contemplation is also explicated.

The concept of healing is, basically, discussed in his soteriology; healing means “reuniting that which is estranged, giving a center to what is split, overcoming the split between God and man, man and his world, man and himself,”<sup>164</sup> and thus is the answer to the question of the human predicament he terms “estrangement” or “separation.” It is the mystical, ecstatic, revelatory event, in which “an original but disrupted unity” is re-established;<sup>165</sup> a return to the relative actualization of the integrated personality (body, mind, and spirit) as a centered whole incurs.<sup>166</sup> In the “ecstatic healing,”<sup>167</sup> one is “being

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<sup>163</sup> Sebastian Painadath, *Dynamics of Prayer*, 195.

<sup>164</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 166.

<sup>165</sup> Paul Tillich, “Estrangement and Reconciliation in Modern Thought,” in *The Meaning of Health*, 1.

<sup>166</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Relation of Religion and Health: Historical Considerations and Theoretical Questions,” in *The Meaning of Health*, 46-47.

<sup>167</sup> This expression comes from John Thatamil, who utilizes a medical model of illness-healing in comparing Sankara and Tillich and characterizes Tillich’s way as “ecstatic healing.” John J. Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament*, 149.

made whole” and driven toward the fulfillment of his/her personality, of his/her vocation. Under the conditions of existence, however, healing “remains fragmentary and stands under the ‘in spite of’ of which the Cross of the Christ is the symbol.”<sup>168</sup> As Derek Michaud puts it, “the ambiguities of temporal existence can be healed only through constant transparency to the eternal ground out of which everything stands in the experience he called the eternal now.”<sup>169</sup> The meaning of healing, thus, includes not only an ecstatic event but also a continuous process of being made whole. Herein lies the importance of Tillich’s fourfold principle of sanctification as process, increasing awareness, increasing freedom, increasing relatedness, and increasing transcendence.

For Tillich, the ecstatic healing as reunion occurs in the human’s acceptance of God’s initiating accepting grace; what transpires in it is accepting God’s acceptance of a person in spite of his/her being unacceptable. Tillich asserts: “Healing or saving does not mean the removal of our finitude, on the contrary, it means its acceptance. We are healed as finite beings, not from finitude.”<sup>170</sup> The act of acceptance as such is an act of reunion or love, the reunion of the separated, because it is made possible by the participation in the ground of being. Having this in mind and remembering Tillich’s definitions of prayer, it can be stated that prayer is the longing for the ecstatic healing, which takes places in the heart of one’s personality and drives one toward the process of self-integration. It is in prayer transforming into contemplation that “divine healing” occurs, since it is based on

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<sup>168</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 282.

<sup>169</sup> Derek Michaud, “Health as a Metaphor for the Created Condition,” *BNAPTS*, vol. 31, no. 2 (Spring, 2005), 30.

<sup>170</sup> Paul Tillich, “Psychotherapy and a Christian Interpretation of Human Nature,” In *The Meaning of Health*, 56.

the divine-human dialectic, namely, God's initial act of accepting those who are unacceptable and human's responsive openness toward accepting God's acceptance.

Tillich's understanding of acceptance as the way in which the ecstatic healing takes place can be further illuminated, I suppose, by the psychology of prayer suggested by the Ulanovs. In their view, as we have glimpsed earlier, all the psychological movements—e.g., desires, projections, fantasies, fears, and aggressions—suddenly springing into the consciousness of the person during prayer, must be listened to and accepted, since they are the “unconscious voice that exists in us from the very beginning, from the month of birth,”<sup>171</sup> that has been accumulated in the depth dimension of the psyche to be listened to.

When repressed, all those psychological movements serve to the formation of the false self: “Not to see what is there, or to turn away from it as an impossible nastiness within ourselves, is to compound a difficult or frightening fantasy with a really destructive fiction, that we are not what we are.”<sup>172</sup> In contrast, if they are honestly listened to, they extend us beyond our known, familiar self into the unknown God; they lead us into the “very origin of all self,” the ground and abyss of being. Ulanov and Ulanov write:

If we go on listening, we feel God pulling us, drawing us into another current, a larger, deeper, stronger one than our usual little force. Prayer tugs at us, pulls us into a life of abundance, of unceasing abundance. We become increasingly swept into the flowing of this other life through the small space of our self. Prayer takes us into our central self.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Ulanov & Ulanov, *Primary Speech*, 2.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>173</sup> 9.

In a willing acceptance of those psychological movements in prayer, one becomes more aware of and, at the same time, less troubled or distracted by their powerful presence and effects; one becomes a more integrated and whole person. For example, fantasy, when readily accepted in prayer, can show the “topography of our being” and sharpen our attention to all the regions of personality: “When looked at knowingly, courageously, and honestly, fantasy ceases to be distracting. Instead, it shows us our distractions... Rather than taking us away from the Lord of our being, fantasies thus noticed expose us to the topography of our being.”<sup>174</sup> In short, in prayer as primary speech, more awareness of the self and the surrounding realities are cultivated and thus a more self-integrated personality is created, and this is a genuine feature of Tillichian prayer as well.

## **2. Centering Prayer as a Tillichian Way of Prayer**

In spite of the sophistication and richness of Tillich’s theology of prayer, as we have seen above, one cannot find in Tillich’s writings any discussions on the method of prayer. This is, perhaps, due to his persistent worrying about what he calls the “mystical ways of self-salvation,” often found in the mystical type of religion, whereby one tries to reach the state of being united with the divine through bodily and mental exercises. In other words, what matters for him is the cultivation, not of a special method of prayer, but of a spiritual attitude of prayer, the contemplative attitude. This accords, to be sure, with his Lutheran heritage, the total dependence on grace in the question of the emergence of the New Being, which also penetrates his theory of baptized mysticism, as shown in the first chapter of this study. Given that the absence of a theory of the method

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<sup>174</sup> 37.

of prayer along with the ignorance of the mystical is a general phenomenon in the Protestant theologies, it is not unreasonable that as a Protestant theologian, Tillich does not develop a method of prayer, though being highly appreciative of the mystical character of the divine-human encounter in the dynamics of prayer.

This does not mean, however, that Tillich would degrade or deny the possibility of a practical theology of prayer that can facilitate a life of prayer in one's maturing process of spirituality. In fact, our modest proposal of Tillichian prayer and contemplation has hopefully shown that possibility. What I want to argue further here is that his theology of prayer could provide a theological basis for a specific method of prayer, which does not fall in the sort of trap that Tillich is wary of; Thomas Keating's "centering prayer" is that method of prayer. I do not propose, however, that Keating and Tillich agree completely on basic principles of prayer, nor that centering prayer is the only method of prayer that can be promoted along the principles of Tillichian prayer.

Keating, for example, unlike Tillich, retains and employs the image of the personal God, even in his apophatic understanding of the presence of God as Divine Indwelling. As was seen earlier, the Jesus Prayer, as Merton understands it, has some important commonalities with Tillichian prayer, as the elevation of the heart and can thus be promoted as a Tillichian way of prayer. Even the Ignatian Gospel Contemplation, in my view, can be supported within the principles and dynamics of Tillichian prayer. In employing active imagination, i.e., imaginatively situating oneself in the context of a gospel narrative, it adheres to the silent, contemplative seeing at the scene. This is largely congruent with Tillich's understanding of seeing as a union. In short, my purpose in this

section is quite modest—to accentuate the basic characters of Tillichian prayer and to consider a possibility of Tillichian methods of prayer.

Centering Prayer is a method of prayer that was designed and developed by Thomas Keating and two other Cistercians monks, William Menninger and Basil Pennington, who, while seeing the growing popularity of Zen meditation among young Christians in the 1970s, were concerned and also asked about promoting a Christian form of prayer that is contemplative. It is a contemplative way of prayer, and yet, in Keating's view, not contemplation in the strict sense of the term but a "preparation" for it: "If you are willing to expand the meaning of contemplative prayer to include methods that prepare for it or lead into it, centering prayer can be identified as the first rung on the ladder of contemplative prayer, which rises step by step to union with God."<sup>175</sup>

The practice of centering prayer is quite simple; after choosing what he calls a "sacred word" as the symbol of one's attention to "consent" to the immanent presence of God, one sits in silence and stays with the sacred word; if a thought, an image, or a feeling arises, neither analyze nor deny it and, instead, simply return to the sacred word to realign your intention toward the presence of God. In centering prayer, the sacred word is not the thing to be focused; it only functions to direct one's "intention" toward the presence of God within and foster a favorable atmosphere for the development of the deeper awareness. All one has to do is wait on God, "putting yourself at God's disposal;

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid. 34. Note that a metaphor of the ladder is used here. It seems that Keating follows a long tradition of Christian spirituality where the idea of gradual ascendancy toward the union is suggested and promoted as the goal of a Christian life, and this indicates a potential conflict with Tillich's view of holiness and also of contemplation as the quality, not the degree, of prayer. If Keating's use of metaphor is understood in terms of the necessity of the growth of spiritual maturity, however, it is quite reasonable and even compatible with Tillich's vision of the New Being as process, which is comprised of the fourfold increasing quality, namely, increasing awareness, increasing freedom, increasing relatedness, and increasing transcendence. This theme will be revisited later at the conclusion of this section of the chapter.

it is He who determines the consequences.”<sup>176</sup> In short, in a session of centering prayer, which can be described as a circular, tripartite movement of aligning-being distracted-realigning, the praying person *intends* to be in the presence of God, which is always and already there, whether one is consciously aware or not.

According to Keating, centering prayer is a highly receptive practice designed to facilitate the movement toward contemplation in the sense that it is an exercise of “intention,” the faculty of choice, the will, and divine love, which is the “disposition or attitude of ongoing self-surrender and concern for others similar to the concern God has for us and every living thing.”<sup>177</sup> This character of centering prayer, namely, an exercise of intention, is largely congruent, in my view, with what is implied in Tillich’s definition of prayer as the “elevation of the heart as the center of the personality to God.” As we saw earlier, elevation in its reference to the mystical, ecstatic quality of prayer expresses both a receptive experience of grace and a human activity, and the heart, as the center of the personality designates the deepest ground of one’s being, including the unconscious elements of his/her character, where the mystical encounter between divine and human takes place and accordingly a new level of reality—of person, is opened up. The exercise of intention in centering prayer refers to this sort of dynamics of prayer; it encourages an involvement of the whole personality.

Then, maintaining intention, which is the only action the person takes in a session of centering prayer, is a matter of faith in the sense of Tillich’s ultimate concern; it is choosing God alone, a total surrender of one’s whole personality to God. At work here is

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<sup>176</sup> 36.

<sup>177</sup> Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994), 18.

Tillich's concept of the hidden content of prayer, namely, "the surrender of a fragment of existence to God." In a sense, what is the most important task in centering prayer is, as in hesychastic tradition and in Tillichian prayer, the cultivation of the contemplative attitude, characterized by the qualities of faith, openness, receptiveness, and simplicity, whereby the power of anxiety is broken and the ultimate rest and fulfillment can be found.

Thus, the Tillichian attitude of acceptance lies also at the heart of Keating's centering prayer, as Keating asserts: "In this prayer we need to develop a certain joyful acceptance of our thoughts. We can't avoid them all. If we could, we would already be perfect in contemplation."<sup>178</sup> On a practical level, the contemplative attitude of acceptance is shown by the capacity to notice and let go of all psychological phenomena arising during the prayer and to maintain the intention to the presence of God. In this contemplative attitude of acceptance, the acceptance of God, who "reflects back the acceptance that we did not adequately experience in childhood," is clearly perceived. Keating asserts: "Deep rest is not only the result of freedom from attachments or aversions to thoughts, but also the feeling of being accepted and loved by the divine Mystery."<sup>179</sup>

Notice that in the following diagram,<sup>180</sup> the basic dynamics of centering prayer is illustrated as moving deeper into the center; the image of the depth is used.

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 27.

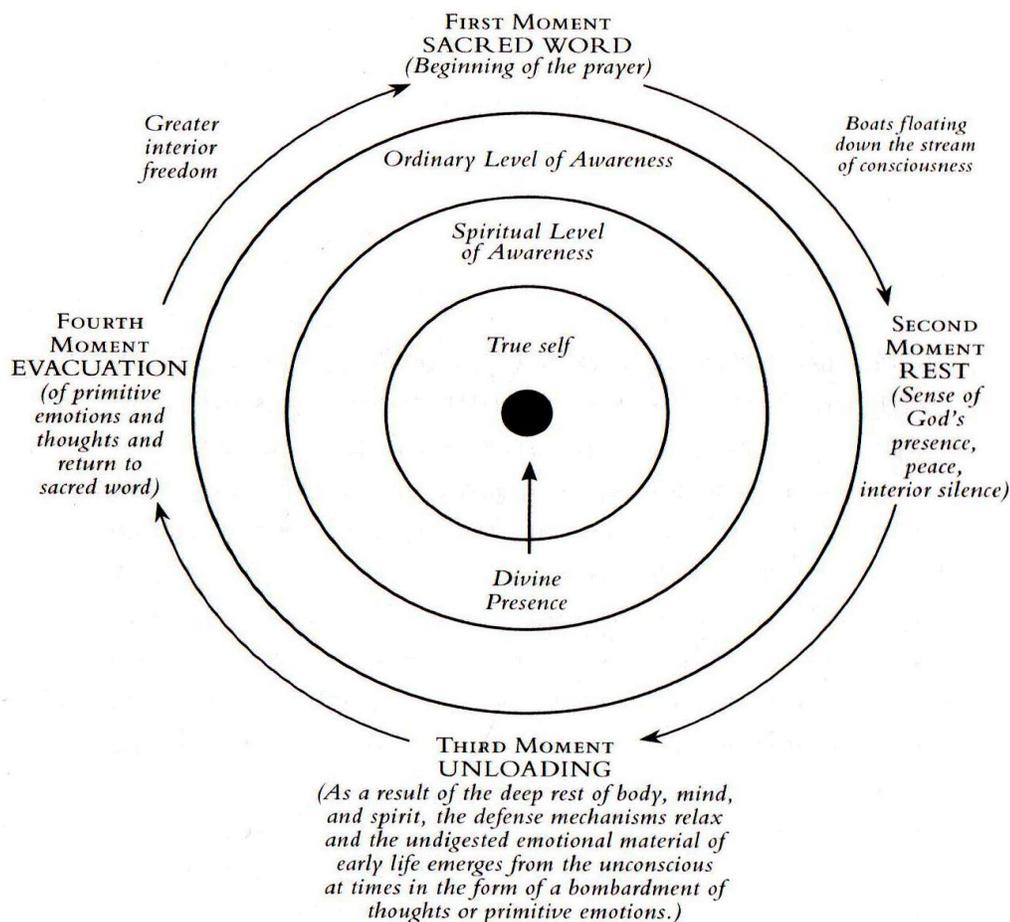
<sup>179</sup> 44.

<sup>180</sup> 46.

Diagram 5.

## THE FOUR "MOMENTS" OF CENTERING PRAYER

*(Representing the psychological dynamics of several years of practice, but which can also be experienced in a single prayer period.)*



Beneath the ordinary psychological level of awareness, there is the spiritual awareness, whereby one's intellect will function properly; "deeper still, or more centered, is the Divine Indwelling where the divine energy is present as the source of our being and inspiration at every moment. Personal effort and grace meet at the most centered or inward part of our being, which the mystics call the ground of being, or the peak of the

spirit.”<sup>181</sup> In Keating’s illustration, the “Divine Indwelling,” like Tillich’s “depth,” is imagined both as the “most centered or inward part of our being” and as the “ground of being,” the topography of the divine; it is thus a dimension or locus where the mystical encounter between human and divine takes place, i.e., where the “true self” unfolds and the divine energy manifests. As one goes deeper into the deepest center, one becomes more liberated from the conventional thinking process, which “tends to reinforce our addictive process-our frenzy to get something from the outer world to fuel our compulsions or to mask our pain.”<sup>182</sup> Unarticulated, traumatizing emotional experiences, which have been accumulated in the unconscious since the early childhood, become “unloaded,” i.e., reasserted and articulated, and healed in the experience of the divine acceptance. Keating calls this “Divine Therapy.”

The feeling of deep rest, especially when it involves a deep sense of the divine presence, leads to a kind of psychological transference with God. That is to say, God becomes the therapist in the psychoanalytic sense... The pain of rejection, which the emotions have stored in the unconscious and which is reactivated by every new rejection in life, is projected onto the therapist, who reflects back the acceptance that we did not adequately experience in childhood.<sup>183</sup>

In using the psychoanalytic language of transference, Keating emphasizes that divine healing occurs by grace in the accepting act of God, which is experienced in the praying person as the increasing capacity to accept his/her emotional wounds and further keep up his/her commitment to the spiritual journey forward. It is here that one can find stark affinities between Keating and Tillich in their conceptions of therapeutic effects of

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<sup>181</sup> 29.

<sup>182</sup> 32-33.

<sup>183</sup> 44.

prayer. For both, prayer is the locus where God's initiating act of accepting the person who is unacceptable is responded to with the human's acceptance of God's accepting—where the divine act and the human response meet, there occurs a “divine therapy” or “ecstatic healing.” In short, divine therapy is the ecstatic healing, in which one is reunited with that which is estranged, whether it be God, others persons, or him/herself and thus finds him/herself more integrated.

For Keating, the experience of “divine union” is a real possibility and yet cannot be the final destination of the life of centering prayer:

There are breakthroughs along the way, followed by plateaus in which we see our dark side as never before, but with growing serenity and acceptance. During these periods may also come experiences of divine union that then may take years to work into all our faculties, relationships, and bodies. But then the journey continues. We are called to a deeper humility, which in turn calls for a greater trust and an all-encompassing love of God.<sup>184</sup>

“Breakthroughs” and “plateaus” characterize the authentic dynamics of centering prayer: inner conflicts, uncertainties, and anxieties are resolved at a certain point and yet they appear later again at another level. Mystical experience of union does not conclude but precipitates one's spiritual journey. This passage at once reminds us of Tillich's assertion that mysticism in the sense of transcending the split of subject and object is “a reality in every encounter with the divine ground of being but within the limits of human finitude and estrangement.”<sup>185</sup> For him, the transcendent, mystical participation in the New Being is “unambiguous” and yet “fragmentary”:

The New Being is fragmentarily and anticipatorily present, but in so far as it is present it is so unambiguously... This distinction between the ambiguous and the

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<sup>184</sup> 63.

<sup>185</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 242.

fragmentary makes it possible for us to give full affirmation and full commitment to the manifestations of the Spiritual Presence while remaining aware of the fact that in the very acts of affirmation and commitment the ambiguity of life reappears. Awareness of this situation is the decisive criterion for religious maturity.<sup>186</sup>

In Tillich's view, the spiritual life of Christians "always remains in an up-and-down course and simultaneously contains a movement toward maturity, however fragmentary the mature state may be."<sup>187</sup> This implies that Tillich attempts to integrate the two models of Protestant spirituality, namely, the Lutheran and the Calvinist, in a way that dictates the need for both radical acknowledgement of human finitude and continual progress. Hence, what Keating and Tillich are concerned for in their visions of spiritual practice, e.g., prayer, is not about achievement or enjoyment of a certain state of perfection but about growing awareness of human conditions accompanying "deeper humility." It is here that Tillich's theory of the four principles as determining the sanctification process, namely, increasing awareness, increasing freedom, increasing relatedness, and increasing transcendence, can be utilized as a series of criteria or directives in the continuous practice of centering prayer for evaluating its procedures-i.e., "discernment."

The principle of awareness refers to increasing awareness of one's ambiguous, demonic realities as well as of the power of affirming life and its vital dynamics in spite of its ambiguities. The continuous practice of centering prayer enables him/her to mature in the "sensitivity toward the demands of one's own growth, toward the hidden hopes and disappointments within others, toward the [superego's] voiceless voice of a concrete

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 140.

<sup>187</sup> 237.

situation, toward the grades of authenticity in the life of the spirit in others and oneself.”<sup>188</sup> This is closely related to the second principle, increasing freedom, in that the latter points to the capacity to free from particular “compulsions” and to judge the given situation, not in the light of the commandments of the law, but in the light of the Spiritual Presence, and to decide upon an adequate action, often in apparent contradiction to the law.

Increasing freedom, however, does not lead to the willfulness or the isolation of the praying person; rather it enhances the capacity to relate to others and him/herself. In the increasing relatedness of Tillichian, centering prayer, which is the third principle, therapeutic effects are shown, on the one hand, in conquering loneliness, self-seclusion, and hostility and providing the power to sustain solitude, and in replacing self-elevation and self-contempt with the quality of self-acceptance, on the other. Lastly, increasing self-transcendence means the ecstatic quality of prayer, i.e., of transcending one’s own finitude toward the ultimate, which is in fact embedded in the preceding three principles.

By way of summary, I want to highlight the three major characteristics both Keating’s centering prayer and Tillichian prayer have in common. First, they belong to the contemplative tradition of prayer, in which the whole personality, whether symbolized by the heart or intention, is involved and cultivation of the contemplative attitude is prioritized over enjoyment of certain states of perfection; second, for both, prayer is the locus where God’s initiating act of accepting the person who is unacceptable is responded with the human’s acceptance of God’s accepting, where “divine therapy” or “ecstatic healing” occurs in the psychoanalytic sense of reassertion of and reconciliation

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<sup>188</sup> 232.

with “unarticulated, traumatizing emotional experiences, which have been accumulated in the unconscious since the early childhood”; and third, they acknowledge the limits of human finitude and advocates the need for continuous journey of seeking in which “deeper humility” is graciously given.

In this final chapter, we have considered spiritual theological implications of Tillich’s theology of mysticism in terms of the model of holiness and prayer. First, in using Sheldrake’s proposal for holiness, we identified the fourfold character of Tillichian holiness, that is, a spirituality of fragmentation and anticipation, a spirituality of the mystico-prophetic dialectic, a spirituality of desire and eros, and living on the boundary as mystic wanderer. Second, we have seen that Tillichian holiness can be expressed and facilitated in Tillichian life of prayer, which belongs to the contemplative tradition of Christianity. Thomas Keating’s centering prayer was shown to be a form of Tillichian prayer in its fundamental dynamics.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore Paul Tillich's theology of mysticism and its spiritual theological implications. For this purpose, we employed Tillich's distinctive term, "baptized mysticism," as a concept that threaded through and penetrated his entire theology of mysticism and grounded what we called Tillichian spirituality. We first gave a close look into his life experiences of the mystical in order to provide an experiential basis for his theory and examined his various expressions for mysticism. Then, we identified three theoretical foci to examine Tillich's thoughts on mysticism in a thorough and systematic way. Upon this foundational work and with an intent to illustrate the scope and context of his theology of mysticism and identifying the essential features of baptized mysticism, we explored his diverse writings in which mysticism was dealt with significantly. A critical review of the various appraisals of his theory of mysticism followed and this helped us to sharpen and enhance our understanding of his thoughts on mysticism and thus prepared us for a better theoretical framework for the next task, namely, suggesting spiritual theological implications of his theory of mysticism. Our analysis has ultimately shown that Tillich, while being a Protestant theologian, maintained a lifelong interest in mysticism as "the heart of every religion as religion,"<sup>1</sup> which belonged to the "Catholic Substance" in his idiom, and developed a consistent view of mysticism. It has also shown that Tillich's theory of

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<sup>1</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 83.

baptized mysticism is coherent and cogent enough to provide a Protestant theology of spirituality and prayer.

In our analysis, Tillich's lifelong interest in mysticism is correlated to his life experiences of the mystical, which we brand as the "mysticism of nature," the "mysticism of beauty," and the "mysticism of being." As Tillich himself illustrated, he was a "nature mystic," who had a strong predilection for and a participatory, aesthetic-meditative relation to nature in such a way that he was often intoxicated by the sight of green fields and trees and flowers and also by Gothic architecture. His experience of the ocean, i.e., the experience of the infinite bordering on the finite, had a particular significance in the development of his mystical concepts such as the "boundary situation," "breakthrough," and the "absolute as both ground and abyss." In his contemplative seeing of Sandro Botticelli's painting, *Madonna and Child with Singing Angels*, and reading of Nietzsche (arguably his "Midnight Song"), he was exposed to "divine revelation," an "encounter with the power of being itself," which would amount to what Evelyn Underhill understood as ecstasy.

We have proposed that Tillich, in his later life, attempted to distinguish between what he termed "mysticism as a category" and "mysticism as a type of religion." The former designates primarily an essential "element" or "quality" of religion, whereas the latter points to the type of religion where the mystical element predominates over the prophetic element. Given that the mystical type of religion negates the concrete object or being in its experience of the holy, in order to penetrate the holy itself in the abysmal dimension, it often causes the destruction of personality, which is symptomatic of the demonic. In contrast, the prophetic type, due to its emphasis on the infinite demand and

law as the manifestation of the holy, can be reduced to theocratic legalism and moralistic intellectualism. What is called for, then, is a dialectical unity of the two essential elements of religion. “Baptized mysticism” is Tillich’s peculiar phrase for this dialectical unity, which is contrasted to the “absolute mysticism,” where the attempts to transcend all realms of finite being to be united with the infinite prevail, and yet are doomed to fail in the end. In baptized mysticism, finite realities do not disappear, but rather are shown most clearly, and thus time and history are considered meaningful more than ever so that the baptized mystic is driven into the life of “eternal now,” that is, “the presence of the Eternal in the midst of the temporal.”<sup>2</sup> Baptized mysticism, however, acknowledges the ontological character of the threats of nonbeing that are experienced in the forms of insecurity, doubt, and meaninglessness. They cannot be eradicated, even in mystical experience, and can only be acknowledged and accepted by what he calls the “courage to be.” For Tillich, thus, mysticism is always “fragmentary” and “anticipatory.”

This threefold character of baptized mysticism penetrates Tillich’s entire writings. In his 1912 dissertation, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness*, Tillich adheres to the ever-present individuality of the human agent and the ineradicability of sin even in mysticism and proposes as integrating mysticism and guilt-consciousness the concept of the “personal communion with the personal self of the divine,” namely, the communion with the Christ, in which the two principles of power and love are united. This unity of the two principles is reiterated in his 1919 essay, “On the Idea of Theology of Culture,” as the “mysticism of love,” in which the form of a cultural creation is shattered by the meaning-giving import and transformed into a new form of art, ethics, or politics that is united

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<sup>2</sup> Tillich, *The Eternal Now*, 9.

with the unconditioned ground of meaning. In “The Basic Principles of Religious Socialism,” he again calls for the unity of the principles of power and love in the context of incorporating *reservatum religiosum* and *obligatum religiosum* into a form of justice that precipitates in the experiencing subject a hope and meaningful action for *kairos*. This call for the union of the two principles includes, as aptly shown in “Totalitarian State and the Claims of Church,” a radical criticism of distorted political ideologies.

Tillich’s call for the unity of the mystical and the prophetic, which is the central character of baptized mysticism, is based on his unrelenting conviction that Protestantism has to retrieve the lost tradition of mysticism, which, contrastingly, is well preserved in the Catholic Church, so as not to remain “cultural activism” or “moral utopianism.” In his paradigmatic essay on Protestantism, “Justification and Doubt,” he attempts to show that Protestantism is not anti-mystical in itself, since the “mystical” is an essential category of religion. In a similar vein, in “The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism,” he argues for the unity of the two religious types, i.e., the eschatological-father type and the mystical-mother type, which represent Protestantism and Catholicism, respectively. The former is based on the experience of the “holiness of what ought to be” and the latter the “holiness of being.” In his essays, “The Word of Religion” and “Vertical and Horizontal Thinking,” these two types correspond to the horizontal and the vertical, and hope is endorsed as the force of uniting them: hope indicates a participatory stance toward reality, with which one can wait and take required actions for the breaking-in of the eternal into the temporal. Hope is also “the application of the venturing “in spite

of” to the tragedy of historical action.”<sup>3</sup> In addressing this relationship of hope and faith, Tillich ensures that faith is an indispensable element of baptized mysticism.

The interrelation of faith and mysticism is also found in Tillich’s 1913 *Systematische Theologie*. According to Tillich, in the faith of the baptized mystic divine wrath as well as divine grace are accepted since both are interdependent aspects of the divinity. This character of baptized mysticism is reinstated in his 1929 essay, “Realism and Faith,” in which he employs the term “self-transcending realism” to integrate the emphasis on the real and the transcending power of faith, and further discussed in *The Courage To Be*, particularly in the context of what I call “Tillichian apophaticism.” Courage takes on the character of “absolute faith” when the relation to the power of being-itself is experienced in the midst of the most radical manifestation of nonbeing and goes beyond the theistic concept of God to embrace what Tillich calls the “God above God.” The God above God as the object of absolute faith transcends “theological theism,” in which God becomes a being or a thing, not the ground of being.

Thus, what ultimately matters in the life of a baptized mystic is not so much the achievement of the state of perfection *per se* as the continual search for the presence of the power and the meaning of his/her existence in everyday life within the framework of accepting the finitude of human existence. In the third volume of *Systematic Theology III*, Tillich endorses the four principles of sanctification: 1) increasing awareness of the ambiguous, demonic realities and the power of affirming life and its vital dynamics; 2) increasing freedom as the capacity to be free from particular compulsions, to judge the given situation in light of the “Spiritual Presence,” and to make an adequate, responsible

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<sup>3</sup> Tillich, “The Word of Religion,” 191.

action, e.g., resisting the destructive, enslaving forces arising in a personal self and its socio-political surroundings; 3) increasing relatedness to the other and the self, in which one matures in reconciling with his/her own self and finding solidarity with others; and 4) self-transcendence in the direction of the ultimate. In short, the element of “increasing” in Tillich’s theory of sanctification implies that the Christian life always remains an up-and-down course and the divine-demonic ambiguity of life has to be accepted.

This comprehensive exploration of Tillich’s thoughts on mysticism scattered in his various writings helps to construct Tillichian spirituality and prayer. In comparative consultation with Philip Sheldrake’s view of holiness, we identified the fourfold character of Tillichian holiness. First, Tillichian holiness is the spirituality of “fragmentation and anticipation” borne out of the radical awareness of human finitude and ambiguities of life. It acknowledges both mysticism as a real possibility and the limits of human finitude and estrangement and thus presumes a certain level of ongoing struggle, even in and after mystical union. What is needed then is the capacity to recognize and accept the reality of imperfection and the ever-present reality of struggle. Second, Tillichian spirituality takes as its fundamental dynamic the mystico-prophetic dialectic, the representative character of baptized mysticism, which guards against the dual tendencies in religious life, “demonic ecstasy” and “theocratic legalism” or “moral righteousness.” Third, Tillichian spirituality takes eros and human desires seriously. Distancing itself from the mistaken view of Christian asceticism, it promotes an acceptance of the vital dynamics in human nature as a necessary element in all their self-expressions, namely, an acceptance of life in its divine-demonic ambiguity. Lastly, Tillichian spirituality fosters living on the boundary as mystic wanderer. The life of a Tillichian saint is upheld by the pervasive

sense of the power of being itself as separating and destabilizing, i.e., by the acute sense of the hiddenness of God, and stands in a third area beyond the bounded, fixed territories to transgress them continually. What is created in the process is a postmodern self, the self in the making, who lives in perpetual departure driven by the unknown desire for the unknown God, the God above God.

This life of a Tillichian saint is accompanied by the practice of contemplative prayer. As in Thomas Keating's centering prayer, in Tillich's conception of prayer, the whole personality, symbolized by the heart, is involved to cultivate a contemplative attitude of recognizing, acknowledging, and accepting diverse movements and desires of human spirit. In it, God's initiating act of accepting the person who is unacceptable is responded to by the human's acceptance of God's accepting, whereby ecstatic healing or divine therapy occurs in the sense of the reassertion of and reconciliation with the thus far unarticulated, traumatizing emotional experiences. This encounter of God and human, however, does not conclude but initiates and precipitates one's spiritual journey.

If we have successfully shown that Paul Tillich's theory of baptized mysticism is coherent and cogent enough to provide a Protestant theology of spirituality and prayer, we can also consider the value and meaning of Tillich's theory of baptized mysticism within the context of Korean Protestantism, in which I serve as a ministerial member. It is a common observation that there has been a growing interest in "spirituality" among Protestants in Korea since the 1990s when they began looking for the ways of reclaiming the power and meaning of their Christian existence. This interest has manifested itself through the following phenomena: more people tend to seek certain spiritual practices that have to do with so-called Christian contemplative tradition, e.g., the methods of

silent prayer such as *lectio divina*, spiritual direction, and individual-directed-retreat; more courses on Christian spirituality are offered both inside and outside academic institutions; and pastors of local churches are increasingly aware of the significance of the interrelation of spirituality and ministry.

Against this growing interest in spirituality there immediately arose a series of critical questions: Is it not that all these specific practices are fundamentally “Catholic”? If these Catholic practices should be utilized, would not there be a Protestant theological principle, at least, that could provide cogent and effectual guidelines in having those practices incorporated into the lives of Korean Protestants? Is not spirituality just another name for the kind of mysticism, which stirs up emotional fanaticism of some heretical movements that have often plagued the churches in Korea?<sup>4</sup> Does not spirituality put a rather exclusive emphasis on “interiority” and separate spiritual experiences from social ethics, thereby contributing to the formation of religious conformism easily susceptible to distorted ideologies, either religious or political, and thus ultimately failing to provide a holistic vision for the Christian life? In my view, this state of affairs reflects the reality that there is a growing, urgent need within Korean Protestantism for a theologically grounded understanding of Christian spirituality, and Tillich’s theory of baptized mysticism can serve to meet this need. In what follows, I will make a brief note on the three essential points of Tillich’s theology of mysticism as responding to those questions.

First, Tillich’s conception of baptized mysticism addresses a point where Catholicism and Protestantism can form a dialectical, comprehensible tension. Tillich,

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<sup>4</sup> Speaking of emotional fanaticism, I have in mind those negative effects brought on by so-called charismatic, enthusiastic experiences, which often accompany fundamentalistic interpretations of the Bible and also practices designed to provoke collective ecstasy, either at a local church or at a prayer house.

unlike many Protestant theologians, was attracted to and highly appreciated the mystical element of religion, relatively well-preserved in the Catholic Church, and yet also within the framework of Protestantism, within what he called the “Protestant principle,” which was aptly expressed by the concept he frequently used with great significance, the “boundary situation.” For him, in spite of the ontological presence of self-transcendence as a dimension of life, the reality of finitude and estrangement in the earthly life of a person is inescapable, and the danger of the absolutization of a finite object, whether it be a holy personality, a religious institution, or a sacred object, should in no way be neglected before the sovereignty of the Ultimate. All forms of idolatry and heteronomy can and must be submitted to prophetic criticism, so to speak. In short, as Frederick Parrella poignantly puts it:

This point of tension between Protestant Principle and Catholic Substance was part of Tillich’s own life, and it is a legacy that he leaves not only to ecumenical theology, but also to spirituality... Christians today must live in the tension between Tillich’s two attitudes of a living faith: first, they must find the holy in and through-but never as-the visible and tangible things of earth; second, they must never make these forms the absolute itself, and must protest any finite ritual, book, community, or form of piety that makes an absolute claim on the believer.<sup>5</sup>

In a careful response to the criticisms directed against his theology by some Catholic theologians, Tillich introduces the concept of “participation” to argue that from the mystical elements of the early Luther on, to the doctrine of *unio mystica* in Protestant Orthodoxy, to Pietism, Schleiermacher, Rudolf Otto and the liturgical reform movements, the reality of participation is expressed, and here “Catholic substance” reappears under

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<sup>5</sup> Frederick J. Parrella, “Paul Tillich’s Life and Spirituality: Some Reflections,” *Correlatio*, vol. 6 (2004), 14: <http://www.metodista.br/ppc/correltio/correlatio06/paul-tillich-s-life-and-spirituality-some-reflections> (assessed on May 13, 2013).

the control of the “Protestant principle.”<sup>6</sup> For him, the concept of participation echoes a Protestant incorporation of mysticism into its own theological endeavor. As we have seen above, participation as one of his definitive expressions of mysticism involves a partial sense of identification, which implies that as in Origen-Bernardian mysticism of love, the individual becomes a part of the divine without losing his/her personal identity. Thus, this concept safeguards against the absolutist claim of the complete identification of a finite being with the infinite. Hence, in my view, Tillich’s theology of mysticism and Tillichian spirituality cannot be explained away as being Catholic and rather can serve as cogent and effectual guidelines in having those contemplative practices incorporated into the lives of Korean Protestants.

Second, Tillichian spirituality is based on Tillich’s conception of baptized mysticism, which has nothing to do with the emotional fanaticism, wrongly labeled as “mysticism,” that is often found in some heretical movements of Korean Protestantism. In “The Theology and Spirituality of Paul Tillich,” Janghwan Yoo identifies major characteristics of Tillich’s theology of the Spiritual Presence ultimately to argue that it can serve as a viable theological guideline for the spiritual life of Christians in Korea. One of the aspects of Tillich’s theology of spirituality that Yoo singles out for its relevance to the contemporary situation of Korean churches is that Tillich’s interpretation of ecstasy as transcending yet not destroying the rational structure of the person helps avoid the emotional fanaticism by which the unity of a given church community is often threatened and contribute to the restoration of the essence of Christian spirituality.<sup>7</sup> What

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Tillich, “Appreciation and Reply,” in *Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought*, eds., Thomas A. O’Meara & Celestin D. Weisser (Dobuque: Priory Press, 1964), 303.

occurs in Tillich's ecstasy is the reunion of essential and existential being, which manifests as faith and love and brings about "ecstatic healing" in the sense of being made whole, i.e., of being reunited and reconciled with God, other persons, and one's own self. In my view, Tillichian spirituality based on the dialectical union of the mystical and the rational cannot support or entertain the type of mysticism that leads to emotional fanaticism or enthusiastic spiritualism, which is often accompanied with a fundamentalist worldview and practices.

Third, Tillichian spirituality promotes a "thonomous spirituality," in which the radical dualism between inner and outer or personal and social is overcome, and a holistic discernment of all dimensions of life, including politics, is required to go beyond distorted ideologies, either religious or political. This aspect of Tillichian spirituality has been acutely shown throughout this thesis, I believe, and so it suffices, here, to note the comment by a Korean scholar on the relevance of Tillich's conception of prayer to the contemporary church of Korea.

In "Prayer in Korea from a Tillichian Perspective,"<sup>8</sup> Young-Ho Chun makes an interesting analysis that Koreans take prayer mainly as petition on the level of personal piety, due to a characteristic feature of the Korean history, i.e., the presence of constant threats from without by foreign powers over which they had no control; and that prayer as petition in Korea lacks a "prophetic impulse." He then introduces Tillich's understanding of prayer as the ecstatic surrender of a fragmented existence to God to

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<sup>7</sup> Janghwan Yoo, "The Theology and Spirituality of Paul Tillich," in *Jo-Jik-Sin-Hak-Non-Chong (Collection of Treatises on Systematic Theology)*, vol. 7 (Seoul: Korean Society of Systematic Theology, 2002), 145-147.

<sup>8</sup> Young-Ho Chun, "Prayer in Korea from a Tillichian Perspective," in *Das Gebt als Grundakt des Glaubens*, eds., Werner Schüßler & A. J. Reimer (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 137-151.

assert that the prophetic dimension of Tillichian prayer is clearly related to the doing of justice. In Chun's view, Tillichian prophetic prayer says *No* to all sorts of systematic evils and involves a critique of all ideologies. He concludes: "a true prayer of petition includes not only a wish to gain something for oneself but more importantly to participate in the transformative practice of the society to which one belongs. This I call a prayer of prophetic petition-petition for justice and peace for all."<sup>9</sup> Although his presentation of Tillich's concept of prayer seems very limited, Chun is certainly right when he relates Tillichian prayer to the "wish to participate in the transformative practice of the society to which one belongs."

Recall that Tillich's prayer as ecstasy is to be distinguished from "intoxication," which is the "attempt to escape from the dimension of spirit with its burden of personal centeredness and responsibility and cultural rationality."<sup>10</sup> It involves the process in which one becomes ecstatically aware of the structure of interpersonal relations and ultimately driven toward the realization of justice as the inner telos of being and also toward the ethical decision based on love. In short, Tillich's conception of prayer and contemplation promotes a socio-historical, eschatological awareness of the coming realities of the Kingdom of God and its accompanying impulse toward the participation in the struggle for it. Seen in this light, it can be a proper response to the suspicious question of dualism between inner and outer often raised in Protestant churches in Korea.

In conclusion, this presentation of essential features of Tillich's theology of mysticism and consideration of its spiritual theological implications illustrates that it has

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 119

powerful resources for understanding Christian mysticism and grounding a theology of spirituality that is cogent and coherent enough to provide effectual guidelines for the spiritual life of Christians. Regrettably, however, our research has focused itself only on prayer as a major practical locus of Christian spirituality. What remains for future study is to reflect on the relevance of the principles of Tillich's theology of mysticism to other practical areas of the contemporary discipline of spirituality such as spiritual direction and directed retreat. This will, I imagine, shed more light on the significance and value of Tillichian spirituality as responding to the contemporary need for a sound theology of spirituality.

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