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Paul Tillich's Communication Theology and the Rhetoric of Existentialism

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PAUL TILLICH'S COMMUNICATION THEOLOGY AND THE RHETORIC OF EXISTENTIALISM

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ABSTRACT

20$^{\text{th}}$ century theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich believed that religion could only be understood in the context of the surrounding culture. He attempted to assert Christianity's importance in the modern era, and did this through his use of language. In this study I examine how Tillich's rhetorical situation uniquely informed the communication style of his sermons. Drawing on the work of Lloyd Bitzer, this rhetorical situation includes Tillich's exigencies, rooted both in the personal and historical, his resources and constraints in the form of influences and limitations, and his audience which provided him with an arena. By examining selections from the three volumes of Tillich's sermons, it is possible to construct his communication theory in five parts. These five elements include logos, or the appropriate use of reason; kairos, or right-timing; language invention and reconfiguration, including translation of religious symbols into existential language; prophetic style; and a focus on community and love. This project is a unique contribution to Tillichian studies and homiletics, as I examine Tillich's sermons within a rhetorical and communicative frame.

CHAPTER 1: TILLICH'S RHETORICAL SITUATION

> …today man experiences his present situation in terms of disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness, and despair in all realms of life. This experience is expressed in the arts and in literature, conceptualized in existential philosophy, actualized in political cleavages of all kinds, and analyzed in the psychology of the unconscious…. The question arising out of this experience is …the question of a reality in which the self-estrangement of our existence is overcome, a reality of reconciliation and reunion, of creativity, meaning, and hope (Tillich 1951, 49).

Introduction

Paul Tillich, a 20th century theologian, developed his ideas as a rhetorical response to feelings of separation and existentialism brought about by his era and the events in his life. He examined his "present situation" of "disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness, and despair" as part of the culture of modernity. For Tillich, modernity was the era after World War I, in which human life became fragmented. Instead of being dominated by religion, daily life was run by science and technology, which became the new gods.

Method

In this study, I performed a textual analysis of Tillich's sermons in order to see how his rhetorical situation determined his rhetorical apologetic strategies. I categorized these strategies, creating a theory of communication in regard to homiletics. Once I established the categories, I found evidence of them in his sermons, and evaluated their effectiveness. I chose to examine his sermons as examples of his speaking style and language use, as they provide a good example of texts publicly delivered to an audience, and in them he spoke directly to his time and his culture. In Protestantism, sermons traditionally have played an important role, as the word is the focal

point of the service. Additionally, Tillich's sermons had a wider audience than some of his other works, and he believed his ideas were more accessible when expressed in the sermonic form.

Contribution

This project contributes to both Tillichian and rhetorical studies, as it is lays out a theory of homiletics and communication as a way to address existential separation. It is a theoretical contribution that examines the character and effectiveness of Tillich's method of apologetics and his method of crafting a religious message specific to his time and culture. I examine his rhetorical patterns and create a theory of effective persuasion, providing examples from his body of sermons. In the study I look at both his theory and praxis, and how he brought ideas and practice together in the form of the sermon.

According to Newport (1984) Tillich was one of the most influential systematic theologians in North America and that Tillich's *Systematic Theology* was "the most widely used textbook among North American systematic theologians" (16). Additionally, Newport argued for the relevance of Tillich's thought as "there is a renewed concern in the United States for making the Christian faith meaningful for modern readers, especially young people…. People continue to study Tillich because he sought to show how the Christian message meets people's perennial problems" (Newport 1984, 16)

Tillich's Apologetics and *Theology of Culture*

Through Tillich's sermons and writings he addressed existential concepts such as loneliness, despair, and anxiety, and attempted to answer the question of how to overcome the "self-estrangement of our existence." He believed that Christianity could provide the answer to

this question through reconciliation, reunion, creativity, meaning, and hope. As he examined such existential questions, Tillich became an apologetic theologian, defending Christianity against modern culture and its philosophers including Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud. In order to effectively defend Christianity, Tillich needed to make theology speak to modern culture.

Throughout his career, Tillich argued that culture and religion were linked. He expounded upon these ideas at great length in his book, *Theology of Culture*, in which he argued that "the religious and the secular are not separated realms. Rather they are within each other" (Tillich 1959, 41). He believed that every cultural act was touched by religion, and every religious act was embedded in culture. As he explained this relationship between religion and culture, Tillich said, "religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion…. Every religious act … is culturally formed…. He who can read the style of a culture can discover its ultimate concern, its religious substance" (Tillich 1959, 42). Thus, in order to defend Christianity and emphasize its importance to his modern culture, he translated antiquated religious symbols into the language and moods of modern culture, creating a bridge between modern philosophy and traditional Christian theology.

Tillich employed a modern language style to help religion speak to modern culture, and he defended Christianity in the same rational, existential, and philosophical language with which it was attacked. As an interpreter and defender of the Christian faith to the culture of modernity, Tillich was a man of his time. According to Tillich's student and friend, Rollo May, Tillich was aware that he spoke *only* to his time, as May wrote, "Once when I was reassuring him about how he would be read in future generations, he shook his head. 'I am determined too much by the present *Kairos*,' he said. Determined by the crisis of his time!" (May 1973, 92). Because of his belief that religion and culture should be linked, and his translation of old religious symbols for

modern culture, his theology was determined by his *Kairos*. Tillich's theology and his method

were truly determined by the culture and the crisis of his time, the crisis of modernity.

To make Christianity relevant to modernity, Tillich knew that he would need a new

method of apologetic theology, one concrete and grounded in existentialism, and that would

address the issues of modernity. Brauer viewed Tillich's mission as such:

> Tillich understood himself to be a new kind of scholar, quite
> different from his nineteenth-century teachers…. and he did
> exhibit a new way to be a scholar. …He did not search primarily
> for answers that would be true simply in an abstract sense. He
> passionately looked for answers that would be existentially true –
> for him and for modern man. That is why he had to keep in close
> contact with his fellow human beings and why he had to probe and
> search every aspect of their culture and action. Only religion was,
> by definition, interested in these issues in this particular way
> (Brauer 25).

In order to align his theology with the culture, the language, and the existential

philosophy that was prevalent at the time, Tillich infused his theology with existential

concepts and terminology. For Tillich, questions of being and existence were more

important than abstract theological concepts. Theory meant more than just

"philosophical contemplation of being. In religious truth the stake is one's very existence

and the question is to be or not to be. Religious truth is existential truth, and to that

extent it cannot be separated from practice" (Tillich 1936). He used the language of

modern culture to defend Christianity to the culture. As Allen described it, "According to

Tillich, each era of history is dominated by particular existential concerns. In each era,

the church correlates its understanding of the gospel and theology so as to address the

concerns of that era" (Allen 2002, 86).

Addressing the concerns of the era, and translating theology for the modern audience,

Tillich used a method, which he called the "method of correlation." This method correlated

theology and philosophy and answered existential questions with theological/philosophical responses. He described correlation as, the correlation "between existential questions and theological answers. The human situation … posits the question; the divine revelation, as interpreted in the symbols of classical theology, gives the answer" (Tillich 1949). As he examined existential philosophical questions, he answered them with Christian theological responses. One example of this is found in Tillich's translation of traditional Christian symbols and concepts into 20th century existential language.

He believed that his theology should address the concerns of his era. Tillich believed the answers to problems of human existence could be found in religious symbols, and his task was to translate these symbols, making them relevant to modernity. In his theological work, he attempted to find or reinvent the symbolic expression of Christian doctrine so that it would speak to the men and women of an age of secularism and materialism. After World War I, Tillich belonged to a group of Religious Socialists that wanted to "heal the catastrophic split between the churches and the labor in most European countries" (Tillich 1987, 229). As part of this group, his task was "to elaborate adequate concepts from the theological, philosophical, and sociological sides. This meant that I had to replace traditional religious terms, including the word 'God,' with words which could be accepted by the religious humanists who belonged to our movement" (Tillich 1987, 229). He did this throughout his work, emphasizing new associations for such concepts as God, faith, sin, and prayer. For example, he referred to sin not as an act, but as "separation;" he called God "the ground of being;" and he described faith or religion as "ultimate concern." By updating and renaming these theological concepts, he made them pertinent to modern culture. In addition, Tillich translated the kairos of religion, making it

an accessible moment for the modern mind. Thus, kairos became a strong theme throughout Tillich's works.

As a result of World War I, more than nine million soldiers died, while millions more died of disease and starvation. The terrible destruction and disillusionment created a reaction against organized religion in Europe. While anti-religious sentiment was nearly universal, it was particularly severe among the well educated. World War I and its effects became one of the great concerns of Tillich's era that he wanted to address. Tillich described his own task as interpreting his theology and philosophy to people:

> My task in the thirties was to give my students and other listeners an account of my theological, philosophical and political ideas as they had developed during the critical years from 1914 to 1933. I brought with me from Germany the "theology of crisis," the "philosophy of existence" and "religious socialism," and I tried to interpret these to my classes and readers. In all three of these fields -- the theological, the philosophical and the political -- my thinking has undergone changes, partly because of personal experiences and insights, partly because of the social and cultural transformations these years have witnessed (Tillich 1949).

Clearly, Tillich realized that his thinking in the fields of theology, philosophy, and politics was directly influenced by the social and cultural transformations of his time. For Martin, Tillich's importance "lies in the fact that he has made one of the few attempts in our time to bridge the gaps between the various anthropologies…– the scientific, philosophical and theological – and to construct a doctrine of man that will include, and do justice to, their various insights" (Martin 1963, Preface). In his autobiography, Tillich described himself as "on the boundary" in many aspects of his life. Not only was he on the boundary between philosophy and theology, he was also on the boundary between social classes, between city and country, between imagination and reality, between religion and culture, and between theory and practice. His position on these boundaries greatly affected his theology, his speaking, and his writing. As

Jerald Brauer (1970) explained in the introduction to Tillich's travel diary, "he understood himself as a man who lived on the boundary and theologized out of that situation" (11).

At a memorial service after Tillich's death in 1965, his former student Rollo May examined Tillich's contributions, concluding that "Tillich spoke out of our broken culture, but he spoke believing. Others have spoken out of our broken culture, but with defiance, not affirmation. Others have spoken with belief, but from an ethereal philosophical or religious height outside our human culture, which leaves us cold, for we psychoanalysts must stand upon the earth, no matter how slimy or muddy or fog-bound it may be" (May 1973, 109). May recognized that Tillich took this existential stance, rooted in being, standing "upon the earth." He did not simply theorize and philosophize; rather, as May put it, he truly stood "upon the earth."

Rooted in such existentialism, Tillich's task in his sermons was to translate the gospel into language that spoke to and reflected the experience of the 20th century. Before I examine these sermons, however, Tillich's rhetorical situation must be explored. In his article about the rhetorical situation, Lloyd Bitzer explains that "rhetorical discourse comes into existence as a response to situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question, or a solution in response to a problem" (Bitzer 1968, 3-4). For Tillich, this rhetorical situation was intimately tied to the notion of kairos or timeliness. The decision to speak was rooted not only in the convergence of audience, speaker, and culture, but also in the kairic moment. During his time, the major problem Tillich faced was the problem of modernity, a problem created by science, technology, and war. His rhetorical discourse was a response to his situation and the exigencies of his time. Tillich's rhetorical situation can be examined in terms of the exigencies, the resources and constraints, and the audience.

This study examines how and why Tillich developed this strategy, with respect to the sermon form. Tillich's rhetorical situation and style are dominated by exigencies such as personal and historical crises; resources and constraints, such as his influences and limitations; and his audience, which brought him to his solution. In Tillich, these elements of the rhetorical situation combined, creating an apologetic theologian philosopher who spoke to his time and culture.

Exigence

Bitzer (1968) described exigence as "an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (7). However, an exigence is rhetorical only when it can be resolved through discourse (Bitzer 1968, 7). According to Bitzer (1968), the rhetorical situation contains "one controlling exigence which functions as the organizing principle: it specifies the audience to be addressed and the change to be effected" (Bitzer 1968, 7). The organizing and controlling exigence in Tillich's time was the era in which he lived. Born in 1886, Tillich faced the problems of modernity, industrial society and war. During this time, and under these circumstances, Tillich developed his position of existentialism and feelings of separation. Martin believed that Tillich's existential theology stemmed directly from his life experiences (Martin 1963, Preface). The exigencies of Tillich's rhetorical situation included a variety of historical and personal events, including modernity, his mother's death, and World War I.

Modernity

According to Tillich, modern culture included the Western industrial society that was a

> logical or naturalistic mechanism which seemed to destroy individual freedom, personal decision, and organic community; an analytic rationalism which saps the vital forces of life and transforms everything, including man himself, into an object of calculation and control; a secularized humanism which cuts man and the world off from the creative Source and the ultimate mystery of existence (Tillich 1959, 105-6).

Thus, for Tillich, modernity, meant a culture focused on reason and technology at the expense of unity with the "creative Source." In *The Protestant Era*, Tillich (1948) wrote a chapter called "The Protestant Message and the Man of Today" in which he explained the human situation in his era and how to tailor the Protestant message for the "man of today." He described modern man, or the "man of today," as "the man whose outlook is molded by the present cultural situation and who, in turn, determines, preserves, or transforms it." In addition to being influenced by and influencing his cultural situation, the autonomous "man of today" was influenced by the emphasis on spiritual freedom and possessed a faith in reason and technology. Tillich described him "…as the man who, on a Christian background that has been qualified by Protestantism, has built an autonomous culture and lives in it, influencing it and being influenced by it" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). He has been affected by the idea of Protestantism, a sense of autonomy and modernity's focus on reason and technology, becoming increasingly fragmented. Tillich's "man of today", or the modern man, was an "autonomous man who has become insecure in his autonomy. A symptom of this insecurity is that 'man of today' no longer possesses a world view in the sense of a body of assured convictions about God, the world, and himself…" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). Tillich argued that this sense of autonomy and insecurity left humans "disturbed, frustrated, and often in despair". The modern person, "in this situation in which most of the traditional values and forms of life are disintegrating, …often is driven to the

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abyss of complete meaninglessness, which is full of both horror and fascination" (Tillich 1948

Protestant). This fragmentation and disintegration of traditional values and world views led to

increased feelings of existentialism. As he described the plight of humans in modernity, he

wrote, "modern man is without a world view, and just because of this he has the feeling of

having come closer to reality and of having confronted the problematic aspects of his

existence…" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). Another problem of modernity, according to Tillich,

dealt with faith in reason and technology, and was the "unbroken belief in scientific method as

the certain way to truth" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). Speaking out of his era, Tillich explained

how "the old traditions have disintegrated; the process has been replaced by horrible relapses;

and the utopias have created continuous mass disappointments" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). In his

Theology of Culture, Tillich (1959) explained existentialism's beginnings as a "protest against"

the "spirit of industrial society within the framework of industrial society" (43). According to

Tillich (1959), industrial society had become increasingly technical and "calculable," and

> since the beginning of the 18th century God has been removed from
> the power field of man's activities. He has been put alongside the
> world without permission to interfere with it because every
> interference would disturb man's technical and business
> calculations. The result is that God has become superfluous and
> the universe left to man as its master (44).

Tillich's existentialism was a protest against this spirit of modern industrial society and an

attempt to defend Christianity and the importance of God.

　　　　Tillich's views on modernity were similar to Max Weber's belief that too much reliance

on reason, objectivity, and science could lead to dis-enchantment and fragmentation. Weber

(1922) agreed with Tillich that the rationality of modernity signifies that "there are no mysterious

incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by

calculation" (8). While science and progress could explain the mechanics of the world, Weber

(1922) argued that the "increasing intellectualization and rationalization do not… indicate an increased and general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives" (8). Tillich and Weber both believed that excessive science and reason failed to explain the meaning of life. Tillich wrote that "recent attempts of all forms of therapeutic psychology to form secure personalities by technical methods which, in spite of their profundity and revolutionary power, are unable to give a spiritual center and ultimate meaning to life" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). Tillich agreed with Weber, that modern life had become fragmented. Indeed, modernity created problems for humanity. As Tillich described it,

> Man is supposed to be the master of his world and of himself. But actually he has become a part of the reality he has created, an object among objects, a thing among things, a cog within a universal machine to which he must adapt himself in order not to be smashed by it.… Out of this predicament of man in the industrial society the experiences of emptiness and meaninglessness, of dehumanization and estrangement have resulted. Man has ceased to encounter reality as meaningful (Tillich 1959, 46).

As humans in modernity or industrialized society became "thing[s] among things," they lost their power and gained new masters, culminating in this dis-enchantment, meaninglessness, dehumanization, estrangement, fragmentation, and existentialism. Tillich explained this estrangement as "the conflict between what man essentially is and what he actually is," and he sometimes referred to it as the "fallen state" (Tillich 1959, 44).

Personal Sources of Estrangement

In addition to the climate of modernity, another influential exigence that contributed to Tillich's existentialism was the death of his mother when he was 17. Indeed, his mother's death provided Tillich with his first contact with death, and his first experience with feelings of estrangement and anxiety. May (1973) described Tillich's close relationship with his mother,

writing that "at her death he felt the whole world disappear from under his feet. In all its concrete vividness he experienced the reality of nothingness…. His orientation to the universe was gone; there was no longer any up or down" (40-1). This "reality of nothingness" and feelings of disorientation marked the beginning of his feelings of anxiety and questions of being and nonbeing that he would continue to develop throughout his work. According May (1973), Tillich's mother's death was "the most important formative event up to that time, and in some ways of all his life" (40). This event "shook his mental life to its very roots, forcing him to give up his preoccupation with fantasy and accept the reality of the world. It was at this time that he formed his ideal of becoming a philosopher" (May 1973, 43). May quoted a poem that Tillich wrote after his mother's death, in which his existential roots can be seen; "Am I then I? who tells me that I am! / Who tells me what I am, what I shall become? / What is the world's and what life's meaning? / What is being and passing away on earth? / O abyss without ground, dark depth of madness! Would that I had never gazed upon you and were sleeping like a child!" (May 1973, 41). In this poem we can see the first existential tones in Tillich, as he confronted the ideas of being and non-being, using existential terms and concepts such as abyss, ground, darkness, depth. These themes and terms run throughout Tillich's work, and later, he used these existential concepts in his theology and his defense of Christianity.

World War I

Another exigence of his time that influenced his existential stance was World War I. In Tillich's own words, "the experience of World War I was crucial for my position. It revealed the demonic and destructive character of the national will to power, particularly for those who went to war enthusiastically and with a firm belief in the justice of their national cause" (Tillich 1966,

95). After his mother's death, Tillich served in World War I as a chaplain, a position that greatly changed his beliefs and his approach to his theology. He was raised in a traditional German Lutheran household, but when he was confronted by the realities of war, his theology began to change, becoming more grounded in existential reality.

Troubled not only by the meaningless death and the mass slaughter of war, but also by the mass mobilization of people through the use of false gods such as nationalism, Tillich began to stray from traditional Protestant thought into something more existential. He described Fascism, Nazism, and "the so-called 'West'" as "quasi-religions" which he described as "movement[s] toward new absolutes on the basis of secularism" (Tillich 1967). For Tillich, one of the consequences of these "quasi-religions" was the "quasi-religious war." As he observed the use of nationalism, Fascism, and Communism as such quasi-religions in a quasi-religious war, he realized that Christianity needed to be reconfigured for his era, so that it would find a place among these modern quasi-religions.

May (1973) described exactly how Tillich's experience in the war affected his thought:

> Tillich believed in the identity of essence and existence – that man could master the essence of his being by cognitive means. But one night, while he was a chaplain in World War I, in a battle on the Marne all that changed. His fellow officers were brought in on stretchers, chopped to pieces by gunfire, wounded or dead. That night 'absolutely transformed me,' he used to say. 'All my friends were among these dying and dead. That night I became an existentialist.' From then 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 (18).

Because of this experience, Tillich's ideas moved away from essentialism, becoming grounded in human existence. He pinpoints the exact moment he became an existentialist and

how that changed his theology. Tillich (1967), in his own words, described the transformative

power of the war:

> The First World War was the end of my period of preparation.
> Together with my whole generation I was grasped by the
> overwhelming experience of a nationwide community -- the end of
> a merely individualistic and predominantly theoretical existence. I
> volunteered and was asked to serve as a war chaplain, which I did
> from September 1914 to September 1918. The first weeks had not
> passed before my original enthusiasm disappeared; after a few
> months I became convinced that the war would last indefinitely
> and ruin all Europe. Above all, I saw that the unity of the first
> weeks was an illusion, that the nation was split into classes, and
> that the industrial masses considered the Church as an
> unquestioned ally of the ruling groups.

"Grasped" by this feeling of a "nationwide community," Tillich was under the spell of a

quasi-religion. However, as he witnessed widespread death and terror in war, he realized that the

unity presented in the quasi-religion was a façade. This changed his theology because it was no

longer enough to be "individualistic" and "theoretical." Rather, the war forced Tillich and others

to think of things in terms of existence and action. He began to see the interconnectedness of

humans, culture, and religion, and he realized that one could not be separated from another.

Tillich believed that existentialism had the power to speak to his era, and he wrote:

> I have been confirmed in my conviction of [existentialism's] basic
> truth and its adequacy to our present condition. The basic truth of
> this philosophy, as I see it, is its perception of the 'finite freedom'
> of man, and consequently of his situation as always perilous,
> ambiguous and tragic. Existentialism gains its special significance
> for our time from its insight into the immense increase in anxiety,
> danger and conflict produced in personal and social life by the
> present 'destructive structure' of human affairs (1949).

In addition to providing him with existential beginnings, the war also influenced Tillich's

stance as an apologetic, as he realized that the Church needed to be defended to the fragmented

"man of today". Tillich (1966) believed that the war "had threatened to obscure the idea of God

or to give it demonic coloration" (33). As he saw the idea of God being obscured or demonized by war, modern culture, and quasi-religions, he felt the need to defend Christianity to modernity.

Taking these personal and historical exigencies into consideration, Tillich realized that his theoretical philosophy and theology were no longer adequate, and he needed to find a way to ground theology in existential concern. Tillich knew he needed a new method. He wrote about himself and other theologians of his generation: "We are not scholars according to the pattern of our teachers at the end of the nineteenth century. We were forced into history in a way which made the analysis of history and of its contents most difficult. Perhaps we have had the advantage of being closer to reality than they were. Perhaps this is only a rationalization of our shortcomings" (Tillich 1967). Thus, he realized the importance of his situation in the formation and dispersal of his theological ideas.

Resources and Constraints

In facing the exigencies of his culture and time, and formulating his unique approach to theology, Tillich drew from many resources and faced certain constraints or limitations. According to Bitzer (1968), "every rhetorical situation contains a set of *constraints* made up of persons, events, objects, and relations which are parts of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence" (8). These resources included other philosophers that contributed to his development and his exile to the United States in 1933. Simultaneously, these resources also imposed limitations, and this is where Tillich's theology filled in the gaps that he perceived in other systems.

Influences

May (1973) described the influence of ancient Greek philosophy on Tillich, as he wrote,

"In the content of his thought, Paulus is closer to the archaic Greek philosophers, such as

Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Parmenides, than to those of the classical age… but his symphonic

way of thinking [is connected] with the 'circle' culture of ancient Greece. In Paulus' thinking

everything comes back, from the depths of the abyss as well as the heights of ecstasy, to fit

everything else" (15). While Greek philosophy provided a foundation for Tillich, he drew on

many other later philosophers for more existential ideas.

Tillich (1949) described his influences in an article on Religious Socialism, saying,

> 'Existentialism' was familiar to me long before the name came into
> general use. The reading of Kierkegaard in my student years, the
> thorough study of Schelling's later works, the passionate devotion
> to Nietzsche during the First World War, the encounter with Marx
> (especially with his early philosophical writings), and finally my
> own religious-socialist attempts at an existential interpretation of
> history -- all had prepared me for more recent existential
> philosophy as developed by Heidegger, Jaspers and Sartre.

Tillich studied Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Schelling, Kierkegaard, Husserl, Kant, and Kahler, all

of whom became important influences. Like Schelling and Hegel, Tillich equated the "God-

above-the-God-of-theism with being-itself" or "absolute spirit" and he drew on their "notion of

being-itself" (Grigg 1985, x). However, Tillich (1968) believed that "modern existentialism was

born as a protest against Hegel's essentialism" (418).

Schelling was, perhaps, Tillich's most important influence. Tillich (1967), himself, wrote

that his studies of Schelling "seemed to foreshadow a philosopher rather than a theologian" and

taught him much about philosophy. Nevertheless, Tillich "was a theologian, because the

existential question of our ultimate concern and the existential answer of the Christian message

are and always have been predominant in my spiritual life" (1967). As he studied and wrote

about Schelling, Tillich became increasingly interested in existentialism. According to Stone

(1984), Schelling, at the end of German idealism, ushered in the era of existentialism (13).

Similarly, both Tillich and Schelling believed that life is divided into three principles:

individuality and contraction, meaning and expansiveness, and spirit and love. In humanity, the

first two principles are "disunited" and can be solved by the third principle, divine spirit or love

(Stone 1984, 21). Stone (1984) argued that for Schelling, Tillich, and Hegel, "the beginning

involves a type of estrangement or isolation while the third stage is one of reunion and

enrichment" and that in Tillich this third stage is "present… in what he calls the Spiritual

Presence" (22). This structure of estrangement and reunion is seen throughout Tillich's work

and in his style.

Tillich (1967) described another early influence: Kierkegaard and "the shaking impact of

his dialectical psychology. It was a prelude to what happened in the 1920s when Kierkegaard

became the saint of the theologians as well as of the philosophers." Kierkegaard, as a Christian

existentialist, provided a model of one who successfully joined philosophy and theology.

Additionally, Tillich drew from Nietzsche, describing his reading of it as an "ecstatic experience

in the fields and forests, in my times off from the war duties" (May 1973, 18). Tillich (1966)

wrote that Nietzsche "made a tremendous impression" on him (53). However, he found

Nietzsche's atheism and cynicism problematic. As Nietzsche famously wrote, "God is dead,"

Tillich revised, "God does not exist." Tillich simply meant that God is beyond existence. He is

not a being; rather, he is the very ground of being. Tillich modified Nietzsche's ideas for

theological purposes.

Another important resource for Tillich was Martin Heidegger when they were colleagues

in Marburg, Germany. Tillich agreed with Heidegger that there is inevitable tension between the

ideas of being and nonbeing, which creates anxiety or angst (May 1973, 71). Like Heidegger,

Tillich was preoccupied with the concepts of both being and time, but Tillich applied these

concepts to Christianity.

Marx also influenced Tillich, especially as seen in his earlier works on religious

socialism. Tillich (1967) appreciated "the prophetic, humanistic, and realistic elements in

Marx's passionate style and profound thought," but disagreed with "the calculating, materialistic,

and resentful elements in Marx's analysis, polemics, and propaganda" (40). In Tillich's sermons

and later work, Marx's influence was not as profound, as Tillich focused more on theology and

less on politics and religious socialism.

Tillich appreciated Kant's rationality and looked to him as a resource. However,

according to May (1973), Tillich found Kantianism "too immediately ethical," saying that the

moral imperative "was too quickly present" and was lacking the "experience of the abyss. If you

leap too quickly to the ethical principle, he believed, you will miss the richness of the

experience. The abyss is a realm of creative chaos which transcends value. It is transmoral –

prior to the ethical" (69). Tillich added existentialism and the experience of the abyss to Kant.

Exile

In addition to these philosophers that encouraged and inspired Tillich's thought, another

constraint and resource was the fact that Tillich was forced into exile in 1933 after conflicts with

the National Socialist Party. Reinhold Niebuhr aided him in moving to the United States and

securing a professorship at Union Theological Seminary. Tillich (1967) described it as a "shelter

at the moment when my work and my existence in Germany had come to an end," and he found

his new community at Union was a "counteraction against the extreme individualism of

Germany." Through his new intellectual community, Tillich gained new ideas and insight as he connected with groups of philosophers and depth-psychologists at Union and Columbia. Tillich was situated, as he described it, on the boundary between native and alien lands, which was a "boundary between two inner forces, two possibilities of human existence" (Tillich 1966, 91). Indeed, the emigration is more than merely physical, as "the path into an alien country may also signify something wholly personal and inward: parting from accepted lines of belief and thought; pushing beyond the limits of the obvious; radical questioning that opens up the new and uncharted" (Tillich 1966, 92). He described the change this created in him, a change in "mode of expression," as English gave him "the spirit of clarity, soberness and concreteness" (Tillich 1949). The experience of moving to the United States was a moment of the new and uncharted, and Tillich found a change in mode of expression. When he moved to the United States, Tillich did not speak English, and, although it was difficult at first, moving to the United States gave him a new language and a new community. He explained this sense of belonging to two cultures, as he wrote, "emigration at the age of forty-seven means that one belongs to two worlds: to the Old as well as to the New into which one has been fully received" (Tillich 1967). Tillich clearly saw the benefits provided to him by his exile, as he wrote that "the New World grasped me with its irresistible power of assimilation and creative courage" and he described the lack of authoritarian systems in the family, school, administration, politics, and religion (1967). From his exile into this "New World," he learned "the American courage to go ahead, to try, to risk failures, to begin again after defeat, to lead an experimental life both in knowledge and in action, to be open toward the future, to participate in the creative process of nature and history" (1967, 53).

Besides being a major influence on his thought, Tillich's life as an exile allowed him to compare the treatment of theology and ethics in both German and American cultures. In Germany, Tillich wrote more about socialism and was active in politics and social movements, but in the United States he became more focused on theology. In exile, his writings became less Marxist, as he did not want to be subversive. He focused more on theology than philosophy because, according to Donnelly (2003), at that time the United States "would have been unreceptive to Tillich since the predominant philosophical interest lay not with Schelling, neo-Marxism, or religious socialism but with John Dewey and pragmatism" (4). Indeed, Tillich's exile out of Germany and into the United States greatly changed and influenced his thought and style.

<center>Audience</center>

Confronting the exigencies of his era and his personal life with his resources and constraints, Tillich's solution was to use the sermon form to reach an audience. This audience could take Tillich's rhetorical message and act according to it, creating change. Bitzer (1968) wrote that "rhetoric always requires an audience," and that a "rhetorical audience consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change" (8). Tillich wanted to defend the church through existentialist language to an audience that could perform this function of change. In addition to using this audience, he used several methods to employ his language of existentialism. In order to confront the exigencies of his time, he needed a new approach to defend Christianity to the culture of modernity.

Tillich realized that his sermons made his theology more accessible when he wrote, "Many of my students and friends outside the Seminary have told me of the difficulty they have

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met in trying to penetrate my theological thought. They believe that through my sermons the practical or, more exactly, the existential implications of my theology are more clearly manifest" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, Preface). He delivered most of his sermons at colleges in the northeastern United States, and he published some of the more influential ones in three volumes. According to May (1973), Tillich often spoke on Sunday mornings in a chapel at Union Seminary, where he taught from 1933 to 1955, and "in contrast to the white collars and banker like gray mien of most church congregations, this audience was colorful to say the least: blue collars, open collars, and sometimes no collars at all. Many had long hair; a good many were German exiles – flamboyant persons from the intellectual or art worlds who probably went to church only when Tillich was speaking…" (73-4).

In the introduction to *The Shaking of the Foundations*, Tillich (1948) described his audience and his language use, writing,

> A large part of the congregation at the Sunday services came from outside the Christian circle in the most radical sense of the phrase. For them, a sermon in traditional Biblical terms would have had no meaning. Therefore, I was obliged to seek a language which expresses in other terms the human experience to which the Biblical and ecclesiastical terminology point. In this situation, an 'apologetic' type of sermon has been developed (Preface).

Tillich translated the religious language to a language of the culture, and delivering his ideas in the form of sermons made them more accessible and simplified the ideas.

Tillich enjoyed the method of public speaking, specifically in sermon form. As he explained it, "Speeches…can be like screws, drilling into untouched rocks; they try to take a step ahead, perhaps successfully, perhaps in vain. My attempts to relate all cultural realms to the religious center had to use this method. It provided new discoveries -- new at least for me -- and, as the reaction showed, not completely familiar to others" (Tillich 1967). He enjoyed speaking

in the dynamic form of the sermon, and observing and adapting to the audience's reaction.

Tillich valued the ability to create a community through the sermon form. According to Brauer (1970),

> Human presence and response were highly stimulating for him and called forth his most creative work. He indicated that most of his writing emerged from the lectures and addresses that he was invited to give. These public appearances gave him both the greatest anxiety and the greatest joy. There was a communion between the audience and himself that was present in his act of writing even before he appeared before the audience. He wrote for them before he saw them, he anticipated their presence in his preparation for the address. He required an audience to do his most imaginative and inspiring work. The appearance itself, before the audience, actualized the communion, even if there were not questions and answers…. It was when the audience had a chance to respond that Tillich was most delighted, for there was the ultimate level of exchange between people. Question and answer, yes and no, formulation of views and rejection or revision of views – all of this occurred in discussion or disputation and provided the dialectics necessary for creative thought and interchange (22-3).

Tillich thrived on this interaction between speaker and audience, as he described it in his own words:

> Looking back at more than forty years of public speaking, I must confess that from the first to the last address this activity gave me the greatest anxiety and the greatest happiness. I have always walked up to a desk or pulpit with fear and trembling, but the contact with the audience gave me a pervasive sense of joy, the joy of a creative communion, of giving and taking, even if the audience was not vocal. But when it became vocal, in periods of questions or discussions, this exchange was for me the most inspiring part of the occasion. Question and answer, Yes and No in an actual disputation -- this original form of all dialectics is the most adequate form of my own thinking. But it has a deeper implication. The spoken word is effective not only through the meaning of the sentences formulated but also through the immediate impact of the personality behind these sentences. This is a temptation because one can use it for methods of mere persuasion. But it is also a benefit, because it agrees with what may be called "existential truth" -- namely, a truth which lives in the immediate self-expression of an experience (Tillich 1967, 45).

It was this contact with the audience, and the idea of creating connections and community that Tillich valued. The sermon provided him the exchange between himself and the audience, the "giving and taking"

All of these exigencies, including his historical and personal circumstances and resources and constraints, including his influences and his exile, defined Tillich's rhetorical situation. These events and people shaped Tillich's rhetoric and led him to a solution in which he attempted to bring Christianity to his modern audience through existential language.

CHAPTER 2: TILLICH'S COMMUNICATION THEORY

Tillich's rhetorical situation and his life during the 20th century led to his existential outlook and feelings of guilt, doubt and despair. As he understood it, the problem of modernity included "the breakdown of the religious tradition under the impact of enlightenment, social revolution, and bourgeois liberalism," and he argued that Christian existential philosophy was an appropriate response to this problem (Tillich 1959, 106). During this crisis of modernity, "religion lost its 'immediacy,'" and "it ceased to offer an unquestioned sense of direction and relevance to human living" (Tillich 1959, 106). Tillich understood that the problem of his time created the separation, anxiety, and estrangement of humans from themselves, others, and God. However, like other Christian existentialists, he believed it was possible to overcome this existential suffering by embracing religion. For Tillich, theology could only be understood in its larger culture, and vice versa. As a Christian apologist, he employed the language of existentialism so that he could mirror the culture of the time. Because his apologetic style was so embedded in his time and culture, Tillich, himself, was aware that his thinking would only be relevant to his age.

In his apologetics, he often used the form of the sermon as he defended Christianity. According to Sturm (2009), Protestant sermons must "preach to the human situation" (107). Perhaps no one understood this better than Tillich, who always preached directly to this "human situation," answering existential questions in a Christian light. Tillich believed that in his time, the message for Protestants could not be "a direct proclamation of religious truths as they are given in the Bible and in tradition, for the situation of the modern man of today is precisely one of doubt about all this and about the Protestant church itself…" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). Instead, the message for the modern Church must "insist upon the radical experience of the

boundary situation," or the "ultimate threat confronting human existence" (Tillich 1948

Protestant). This "boundary-situation" is described by Tillich not as death, but as despair,

"encountered when human possibility reaches its limit, when human existence is confronted by

an ultimate threat" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). In order to speak to the modern audience, Tillich

believed that the sermon must emphasize the boundary-situation and recognize the existential

element in humanity. Throughout his sermons, Tillich addressed this modern problem of the

boundary-situation by translating Christianity into an existential, scientific language of the 20th

century. Only after being translated into this language, the language of the culture, could

Christianity serve as an answer to the modern existential problem. In this way, Tillich provided

Christianity with immediacy and relevance in the modern era. The period after World War II saw

a gulf between culture and theology, and Tillich worked tirelessly to diminish it through his

writings and sermons.

 I chose to examine Tillich's sermons, as they provide an excellent example of a rhetorical

artifact, and a public speech in front of an audience. They have an interactive and immediate

quality, and they are directly related to his rhetorical situation. Tillich published three volumes

of sermons, printed as he delivered them: *The Shaking of the Foundations* (1948), *The New*

Being (1955), and *The Eternal Now* (1963). In the preface to the books, Tillich explained that

most of the sermons were delivered in the chapel at Union Theological Seminary or at other

university chapels. Although students made up most of the audiences, the services were open to

the public. Tillich explained that many people in his audience "came from outside the Christian

circle in the most radical sense of the phrase" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, preface). As an apologist,

he emphasized new connections between religion, culture, and language in order to make

religion relevant in his era. According to Tillich (1948 *Shaking*), he published his sermons to

demonstrate that theology could be practical and useful and "applicable to the personal and social problems of our religious life" (preface). In *The Shaking of the Foundations* (1948), he described his desire to show the "practical or, more exactly, the existential implications" of his theology (preface). More than a theology, he presented a phenomenological inquiry: how can religion answer the problems of existence on a daily basis? How can we Be-in-the-World? In his sermons, Tillich "was obliged to seek a language which expresses in other terms the human experience to which the Biblical and ecclesiastical terminology point" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, preface). In the preface to *The Eternal Now* (1963), Tillich wrote that he hoped "that this collection, like its predecessors, will show that the Christian message – be it expressed in abstract theology or concrete preaching – is relevant for our time if it uses the language of our time." Indeed, Tillich used the language of existentialism to demonstrate Christianity's relevance in his era. On the back cover of *The Eternal Now*, J. G. Davies says that "Here, in direct language, free from pietistic jargon and theological abstractions, Tillich speaks to twentieth-century man."

Using his method of correlation, in which he juxtaposed existential philosophy with Christian theology, Tillich composed each sermon following a similar pattern. The sermons typically began with a Bible quote, about which he provided commentary. He then related the scripture passage to a more general, modern, existential question, demonstrating what the passage meant for his own time. By the end of the sermon, he solved the problem by applying the answer of the Christian message, ultimately ending with hope. Rather than addressing the historical truth of the scripture, he emphasized the mythos, or the truth that is not factual. For Tillich, the important thing was not whether the events in the story actually took place, but what general lessons the stories could teach us about life and death. How could biblical stories be

translated to make these lessons relevant to the modern era? His homiletics followed a pattern of quoted scripture passage, existential question implied in the passage, reframing of question for modernity, and reinterpretation of Christian terms.

Although Tillich's method of interpreting religion to the culture was effective in dispersing his ideas and making Christianity relevant, it had its limitations. One problem was that the existentialist movement never enjoyed the popularity in the United States that it did in Europe. Another problem was that Tillich's method put him at odds with some more conservative Christians who disliked his philosophical Christianity. Indeed, some have referred to Tillich as a theologian for agnostics or an "apostle to the intellectuals" because of how he interpreted scripture philosophically and not literally (Tillich 1987, xii). In one sermon, Tillich quoted the scripture, "Behold, I am doing a new thing, even now it is springing to light." Tillich, himself, did "a new thing", in his method of correlation.

As he addressed his particular rhetorical situation and correlated existential philosophy and theology, Tillich created his own theory of culture. In his *Theology of Culture*, Tillich argued that religion and secular culture are inseparable. To do this, he pointed out the religious in the cultural, in such realms as art, philosophy, psychoanalysis, science, morality, and education. Other scholars have investigated his theories of art and education. I argue that Tillich's work additionally suggests a theory of communication. He subtly proposed a new form of communication that could be seen in five recurring themes throughout his work. He believed that through the knowledge and practice of communication in these five categories, one could ease the pain of existential solitude and human separation from self, others, and God. In his theological writings and his sermons, Tillich both defined and practiced all five of these concepts.

According to Robert Craig (1999), a good communication theory should be "relevant to a common practical life world" (120). Tillich's rhetorical theory of existential communication fits this definition and has pragmatic implications in that it can help people overcome the anxiety of existence and can bring people from solitude to community. In this analysis, I will develop Tillich's communication theory and show how, in his sermons, Tillich embraced and employed all aspects of this theory. His theology of communication is composed of the following elements: logos, kairos, language invention and reconfiguration, prophetic style, and community and love. The basis of Tillich's thought was reason, or logos, and he made a distinction between technical reason and ecstatic reason. In addition to reason, Tillich observed the importance of the timing, or the kairos, of communication. As Tillich witnessed the moment of possibility for Christianity in his era, he became aware of the kairos, and addressed it using logos and a new type of language. In addition to innovative language use, Tillich also adopted a prophetic style. Finally, his sermons promoted an ideal of community and participation to overcome the idea of solitude, and he translated these concepts and symbols into a new Christian existential vocabulary. Indeed, within his sermons, Tillich focused on creating a community of love among his audience. As I explicate each element of his theory I will examine Tillich's theological stance on the matter, and I will provide examples of it from his sermons.

Logos

> But in the Occident itself an opponent has risen against historical thinking, an opponent issuing from the mystical view of the world, nourished by the naturalistic attitude, and shaped by the rational, mathematical method of thinking—the technical-mathematical explanation of the world by means of natural science, the rational conception of reality as a ma Tillich 1948 chine with eternally constant laws of movement manifest in an infinitely recurring and predictable natural process (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*).

Tillich often discussed the modern use of technical reason and placed it in opposition to a mystical view of the world. He made a distinction between modernity's technical reason and another type, which he called ecstatic reason. Technical reason was the reason of science, logic, and technology, while ecstatic reason was reason above technical reason, reason saved through revelation. As Tillich (1951) defined it, ecstatic reason was deep reason that, although transcendent, was still rational. In this ecstatic reason, "reason" transcends itself and is "grasped by an ultimate concern. Reason is overpowered, invaded, shaken by the ultimate concern" (53). Martin (1963) explained Tillich's concept of ecstatic reason as "an objective state in which the mind actually transcends its ordinary situation" (61) Although he saw the negative possibility in extreme technical reason, Tillich employed rational thought as he crafted his sermons and his theological arguments. He turned to logos, establishing the position of reason in his thought and inventing his argument. In order to defend Christianity to the rational culture of the 20th century, he had to incorporate reason into his theological system.

Over-dependence on rationality was one of the major problems of modernity, according to Tillich. Although rationality could be beneficial in moderation, Tillich, like Weber, witnessed how reliance on reason, science, and objectivity led to dis-enchantment and fragmentation. Tillich agreed with Weber, that while science, technology, and progress could explain the mechanics of the world, technical reason had limits. Despite its ability to accurately calculate, explain, and predict much about the world, science and reason could not explain the meaning of life. As Weber (1946) quoted Tolstoy, "Science is meaningless" as it cannot answer the questions "what shall we do, and, how shall we live?" (9). Tillich agreed that the modern focus on science, technology, and objectivity had potentially negative consequences. According to Tillich's theology, humans should not search for the objective, scientific truths in scripture, but

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for the more subjective or mythological truths. Like Weber, Tillich believed that as humans became accustomed to accuracy and objectivity in science, they desired this in the realm of value, mystery, and theology. According to Weber (1946), the rationality of modernity signified that "there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation" (8). Muriel Rukeyser (2006) captured both Tillich's and Weber's feelings on the dialogue between science and mystery in her poem "The Speed of Darkness," as she wrote, "The universe is made of stories, not of atoms." The modern tendency to rationally explain the realm of mystery is detrimental to society, as the loss of sacred mythology leads to a state of fragmentation and dis-enchantment, one of the most lamentable characteristics of modernity. Tillich (1956) differentiated between wisdom and reason, and explained that, unlike reason, "wisdom and mystery do not exclude each other. It is wisdom to see wisdom in the mystery and the conflicts of life" (167). Thus, wisdom and mystery could, and do, coexist.

As he formulated his existential ideas during World War I, Tillich witnessed the negative aspect of modernity's obsession with science and reason. Indeed, this technical reason had culminated in the death and destruction that ignited Tillich's feelings of existentialism. Tillich (1959) argued that, despite their differences, all existential philosophers commonly opposed the modern "'rational' system of thought and life developed by Western industrial society and its philosophic representatives" (105). In order to address the problems created by this "rational system of thought and life" of his time, Tillich used his method of correlation, providing theological responses to universal, existential, philosophical questions. As he addressed these questions of anxiety, acceptance, and solitude, he framed them in a Christian perspective. According to Tillich (1959), the Church should speak to its time and culture and answer "the

question implied in man's very existence, the question of the meaning of this existence" (49). Theology should examine both the religious perspective of the human essential nature, and the philosophical perspective of human existential nature. As Tillich (1968) explained it, "the conflicts between [human] essential goodness and [human] existential estrangement cannot be seen at all without keeping essentialism and existentialism together. Theology must see both sides, [human] essential nature, wonderfully and symbolically expressed in the paradise story, and [human] existential condition, under sin, guilt, and death" (541). Instead of simply rejecting the rational turn of modernity, Tillich embraced it, incorporating reason in his theology. As he structured his logical arguments in defense of Christianity, Tillich imbued religious concepts with rational philosophy to make religion appealing for the 20th century. Through this correlation of philosophy and theology, of logic and mystery, Tillich created a new rhetoric of Christian existentialism and a new method of homiletic communication.

While Tillich believed that modernity placed too great of an emphasis on technical reason, he saw the importance in reason and logos. Technology, science, and reason had been the catalyst of his existential feelings, but he and other existential philosophers used rational thought and language to express this anxiety. Instead of denying logos, theologians and existentialists should use it to illustrate the importance of mythos. Tillich (1959) explained the importance of existentialism's use of reason:

> Like Bergson, Bradley, James, and Dewey, the existential philosophers are appealing from the conclusions of rationalistic thinking which equates Reality with the object of thought, with relations or 'essence,' to Reality as men experience it immediately in their actual living. They consequently take their place with all those who have regarded man's 'immediate experience' as revealing more completely the nature and traits of Reality than man's cognitive experience (77).

Although existential philosophers use reason to reach their conclusions, they privilege this

immediate experience and phenomenology, or an empirical description of lived experience, over

the cognitive experience. Tillich philosophically described the existential nature of human

reason and its contradictions, attempting to "show, in what is professedly a theological

discussion, that these conflicts and contradictions are 'overcome' and reason itself is

'reintegrated' and 'healed' only in the Christian revelation" (Martin 1963, 36).

Logos in "The Shaking of the Foundations"

In addition to using reason to craft his arguments and structure his theology, Tillich also

discussed reason and its place in modern culture and theology. The sermon that best illustrates

Tillich's treatment of logos and reason is the first sermon from *The Shaking of the Foundations*,

for which the volume is named. In typical Tillichian sermonic form, he quoted scripture and

related it to his era, discussing reason in the form of physics:

> In one of the later books, Second Peter, it says that 'the heavens
> will vanish with a crackling roar, and the elements will melt with
> fervent heat, the earth also and the works therein shall be burnt up.'
> This is no longer vision; it has become physics. We know that in
> the ground of our earth, and in the ground of everything in our
> world that has form and structure, destructive forces are bound
> (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 3).

For Tillich, physics and the rational modern mind could explain the same destructive forces that

existed in Biblical times. One defining feature of existentialism is that human existence and

freedom take place within a certain context. As such, the existentialism of the 20th century was

rooted in the context of war, industry, and technology. Speaking from this rhetorical situation,

Tillich addressed existentialist concerns in the context of his culture and society. He explained

that modern humans have used reason and science to unlock forces that have always existed, but have unfortunately used these forces for destruction.

> [Man] has discovered the key which can unlock the forces of the ground, those forces which were bound when the foundations of the earth were laid. He has begun to use this key. He has subjected the basis of life and thought and will to his will. And he willed destruction. For the sake of destruction he used the forces of the ground; by his thought and his work he unlocked and untied them (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 4).

Tillich cautioned against reliance on technical reason and progress, demonstrating how this has led to devastation and destruction. In the Scripture we can see the mythological and fundamental truth that Tillich translated into modern scientific language, that "the foundations shall be destroyed." He described that although science has "closed our eyes and thrown us into an abyss of ignorance about the few things that really matter," it has "opened our eyes, and has pointed, at least, to one fundamental truth – that 'the mountains shall depart and the hills shall be removed', and that 'earth shall fall down to rise no more', because its foundations shall be destroyed" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 5). Again, Tillich emphasized the mythological truth of Scripture as it was relevant in his era, and not the factual truth. The mystery or mythological truths are the "few things that really matter" that science has overshadowed. Tillich posed the question, "Have not our scientific discoveries revealed the mysteries of the ways in which the earth was founded?" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 6). As he discussed reason, he employed the traditional existential language, including despair, destruction, and imagery of the abyss. Still, at the end of the sermon, a sense of hope prevailed, that beyond the "sphere of destruction" there is a "sphere of salvation," and in the "doom of the temporal" there is the "manifestation of the Eternal" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 11).

Tillich wrote this volume during World War II, in the context of the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Sturm 2009, 112). This is the destruction of which he spoke as he translated the scripture for his time. He discussed the danger of technical reason and progress, saying,

> The greatest triumph of science was the power it gave to man to annihilate himself and his world. And those who brought about this triumph are speaking today, like the true prophets of the past – which is to say, not of progress, but of a return to the chaos of the beginning; not of peace, but of disruption; and not of happiness, but of doom (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 5).

As he described this power of science and reason, he brought the message from the ancient scriptures to the modern era, applying it to science, reason, and objectivity. Throughout the sermon he compared the scientist to the prophet of modernity. Like the Hebrew prophets, the scientist spoke in a language of doom, but to modern people. Tillich (1948 *Shaking*) described that God "spoke to the men of today through the mouths of our greatest scientists, and this is what He said: You yourselves can bring about the end upon yourselves. I give the power to shake the foundations of your earth into your hands. You can use this power for creation or destruction. How will you use it?" (4). Tillich used this play between science and religion, and he described the scientists as the modern prophet. By making these comparisons, Tillich made Scripture relevant in the modern era, and elucidated the non-scientific truth that can be taken from the Scripture, that there is grace to be found in darkness and doom.

Kairos

> We all experience moments in our lives when we feel that now is the right time to do something, now we are mature enough, now we can make the decision. This is the kairos (Tillich 1968, 1).

For Tillich, reason, or logos, was intimately related to the kairos notion of time.

A term originally found in ancient Greek literature, kairos has been an important concept in

rhetoric, and it became essential to Tillich's theology. Tillich (1968) contrasted kairos with the

concept of chronos, saying that "chronos is clock time, time which is measured, as we have it in

words like 'chronology' and 'chronometer'. Kairos is not the quantitative time of the clock, but

the qualitative time of the occasion, the right time" (1). He further defined kairos as "the

moment rich in content and significance" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). While clock time, or

chronos, repeats itself, "the meaning of time is the kairos, the historical moment" (Tillich 1968,

118). In *A History of Christian Thought*, Tillich (1968) described kairos as "readiness" or "a

special moment of history when everything was ready for it to happen," or "the feeling that the

time was ripe, mature, or prepared…. Kairos is the time which indicates that something has

happened which makes an action possible or impossible" (1). As he further explained, the

consciousness of life was "laden with tensions, with possibilities and impossibilities…. Not

everything is possible at every time, not everything is true at every time, nor is everything

demanded at every moment" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). Rather, Tillich observed that there were

appropriate and inappropriate moments for certain truths, possibilities, demands, and actions. As

applied to reason, appropriate moments existed for objective scientific truths, just as appropriate

moments existed for mystery and existential truths. Indeed, the timely nature of kairos was

"opposed to the thinking in the timeless Logos, which belongs to the methodical main line"

(Tillich 1936). Smith (2002) described Tillich's use of kairos as a complement to logos, saying

that we use reason and information at the "right time," or

> only when it is needed or relevant. It is this aspect of kairos that
> Paul Tillich emphasized in a number of writings aimed at
> recovering the basic idea. Consequently, he contrasted kairos with
> logos where the latter represents truth that is regarded as universal

in import and the former the special occasion in the course of events when such truth must be brought to bear by an individual somewhere and somewhen (53).

Thus, kairos and logos are tied because of the importance of the timeliness of reason.

Throughout history, and in literature, there have been many examples of kairos. For Tillich, the emergence of the ancient prophets and the moment of Christ's appearance were theological kairotic moments. It is the first word we heard from Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, as he preached, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (1:14, *NASB*).[1] The idea of kairos was emphasized again in Ecclesiastes: "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven – A time to give birth and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build up…. A time to be silent and a time to speak" (3: 1-7, *NASB*). Tragic literature is full of kairos, as, for example, Oedipus faced the moment of realization that he brought his curse upon himself. Again, kairos reared its tragic head in *The Bacchae*, when Agave fell out of Dionysus' spell and realized that, in a fit of frenzy, she killed her own son, Pentheus: "O Father, *now* you can see how everything has changed. I am in anguish *now*, tormented, who walked in triumph minutes past, exulting in my kill. And that prize I carried home with such pride was my own curse" (Grene and Lattimore 1959, 215). Tragedy implies the element of an appropriate time for realization of the tragedy as such.

Beyond simply defining kairos as "right-time," Tillich linked kairos with the idea of the eternal or the unconditional. He described kairos as "an outstanding moment in the temporal process, a moment in which the eternal breaks into the temporal, shaking and transforming it and creating a crisis in the depth of human existence" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). According to

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[1] Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible version unless otherwise noted, The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

Tillich's theology, God illuminated for people the kairotic dimension of possibility and the power of action at the right time. As he wrote, "The heroic persons in particular break through the ordinary rules of life. They are armed by God. God calls and forces them, and gives them their hour, and I would say, their kairos. Outside of this kairos they cannot do anything; nobody can apart from the right hour. And in the right hour no one can resist those who then act" (Tillich 1968, 249). For Tillich, the unconditional must point out the potential of the kairotic moment for us.

For Tillich, this notion of kairos and right-timing was directly linked to taking action in the world. As he believed that theology must be experienced within culture, he also acknowledged that right-timing had practical importance. This importance was embedded within the consciousness of history, in the unconditional, and in the kairos of history and culture. Tillich wrote of "a summons to a thinking that is conscious of history, to a consciousness of history whose roots reach down into the depth of the unconditional…whose conceptions are created from the primordial concerns of the human spirit, and whose ethos is an inescapable responsibility for the present moment in history" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*). According to Tillich, the "form of this summons will not be that of a sermon; it will not be propaganda or romanticism or poetry but serious intellectual work, striving for a philosophy of history that is more than a logic of the cultural sciences and yet does not lag behind it in the sharpness and objectivity" (Tillich 1948). He explained his intention to present this "summons to a consciousness of history in the sense of the kairos, a striving for an interpretation of the meaning of history on the basis of the conception of kairos, a demand for a consciousness of the present and for action in the present in the spirit of kairos" (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*)

Not only did Tillich discuss the concept of kairos in his theology, but in his life he also saw the possibility of kairotic time and took action. In this way, Tillich seized the opportune moment and became a prophet for modernity. Tillich attempted to recover the classical idea of kairos and translate it to his 20th century writings and his life (Smith 2002, 55). Smith (2002) interprets Tillich's belief "that a new awareness of the time of crisis and opportunity is the key to the recovery of history as the meaningful development of what matters most in human life" (55). Tillich took this pragmatic approach to kairos, as he explained the steps to awareness of the kairic time, and the action of it in order to recover history. Indeed, Tillich believed that in Germany kairos could be used in confronting National Socialism and the Nazis in Germany. Olson (2013) described how Tillich seized the kairotic moment, as he "secretly delivered radio addresses to the German people" during World War II (375).

Tillich, like others, framed the post-World War I environment of Germany as a situation with potential for "new possibility," a kairotic time (Gordon 2013, 462). After World War I, Tillich saw the kairotic potential of the post-war climate, and began a group called the "Kairos Circle." He described this post-war feeling of kairos and opportunity, as he wrote, "The expectation we had cherished after the First World War that a *kairos*, a "'fulfillment of time,' was at hand, has been twice shaken, first by the victory of fascism and then by the situation after its military defeat" (Tillich 1949). As a response to the kairos of his time, Tillich proposed socialism, specifically religious socialism, as a system embedded in and conscious of its place in history. He argued that

> No system has a better right to raise a protest against the late
> bourgeois materialism that has no consciousness of history than
> does socialism, a movement that is unprecedentedly aware of history.
> The stronger it raises this protest and the more it gives evidence of
> the kairos, the further it gets away from all metaphysical

materialism, and the more clearly it reveals its belief in the creative
power of life (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*).

Gordon (2013) elaborated on Tillich's choice of religious socialism as a "response to his sense of
the kairos in post-World War I Germany…. The new possibility demanded by the situation of
that time was religious socialism, the reinterpretation of socialism in terms of theonomy and the
awareness of the kairos" (462). Although Tillich believed religious socialism was a solution to
this kairotic moment of his era, he

> did not seek to connect socialism to a church, nor did he connect
> Christian religious symbols to specific policies or parties but rather
> sought to grasp and interpret the theonomous or unconditional
> element in the current political situation. Religious socialism
> offered a means of resistance to the destructive tendencies of
> capitalism and nationalism. He did not see religious socialism as a
> viable possibility in America (Gordon 2013, 462).

Therefore, when he fled Germany for the United States, Tillich entered a new phase of his
career, one in which he focused more on his theological system and less on political activism.
As he believed that theology should speak to the culture, he modified his theology to speak
uniquely to American culture.

As he did with his entire theological system, Tillich explained kairos in three different
ways: as it related to Christianity, as it related to the philosophy of history, and as we experience
it pragmatically in the world.

> Kairos in its *unique* and universal sense is, for Christian faith, the
> appearing of Jesus as the Christ. Kairos in its *general* and special
> sense for the philosopher of history is every turning-point in
> history in which the eternal judges and transforms the temporal.
> Kairos in its *special* sense, as decisive for our present situation, is
> the coming of a new theonomy on the soil of a secularized and
> emptied autonomous culture (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*).

Instead of promoting the Christian view as the one, true, absolute, he translated it so that it would
be accessible to and embedded in theology, philosophy, and modern culture. According to

Tillich's student and friend Rollo May, Tillich knew that he spoke specifically to the kairos of

his time. May (1973) recalled this conversation with Tillich;

> Once when I was reassuring him about how he would be read in
> future generations, he shook his head. 'I am determined too much
> by the present *Kairos*,' he said. Determined by the crisis of his
> time! Surely every thinker is thus determined. Everyone speaks
> out of his own time. The real question is, on what level does he
> find his *Kairos*? Does he penetrate to the depth where particular
> time is superseded, that level of the archetypes where the eternal
> myths of history such as Orestes and Oedipus have their existence
> – the depth where the future as well as the past finds its source? I
> believe Paulus [Tillich] does reach such a depth (92).

In his own words, Tillich (1956) hoped that his sermons would "show that the Christian message

– be it expressed in abstract theology or concrete preaching – is relevant for our time if it uses

the language of our time" (preface). As Kinneavy (2002) explained it, for Tillich, the kairotic

method was important because "it brings theory into practice, it asserts the continuing necessity

of free decision, it insists on the value and norm aspects of ideas, it champions a vital and

concerned interest in knowledge… and it provides a better solution to the problem of uniting

idea and historical reality than the solutions of either George Hegel or Karl Marx" (63). Tillich

appreciated the idea of kairos, as it involved putting ideas into action.

In conjunction with his explanation of kairos, Tillich introduced the concept of the

demonic, saying that a confrontation with the demonic offers an opportunity for kairos. He

believed that "When the demonic power is recognized and fought against, there takes place a

breakthrough of the eternal into history.… Kairos means that the eternal can break into the

temporal and that a new beginning can take place" (Tillich 1968, 534). Tillich had certainly

experienced this in Germany, when the demonic events of war had opened up new kairic

possibilities.

Tillich explained the importance of time to existentialism, as he distinguished existentialism and essentialism. While he believed existentialism had a "temporal character," essence did not (Tillich 1959, 99). The defining characteristic of the anxiety of existentialism is that this anxiety stems from the knowledge of the finitude of existence, the possibility of non-being, death. Therefore, existence was closely linked to time and a necessity to seize the kairic moment. As he applied it to existentialism, Tillich resurrected the idea of kairos and introduced it to theology and philosophy. In Tillich's communication theory, the most important aspect of kairos is that one *perceives* a kairic moment of awareness of a new possibility and then *responds* to the kairic moment. Because his communication theory deals with perception and response, it is also, then, an existentialist rhetoric, as it deals with taking symbolic action against a moral dilemma. Tillich's third volume of sermons, *The Eternal Now*, dealt with kairos and the concept that the eternal could break through to the temporal.

Kairos in "Meditation: The Mystery of Time"

Although we can see elements of kairos in many of his sermons, Tillich delivered one sermon he called "Meditation: The Mystery of Time" that focused solely on time and kairos. In this piece, published in *The Shaking of the Foundations*, Tillich (1948) discussed kairos and the existential notions of finiteness, transitoriness, and time, describing it as such: "Time is our destiny. Time is our hope. Time is our despair. And time is the mirror in which we see eternity. Let me point to three of the many mysteries of time: its power to devour everything within its sphere; its power to receive eternity within itself; and its power to drive toward an ultimate end, a new creation" (35). He began the meditation by quoting Augustine and Psalm 90, explaining the difficulty of grasping the meaning of time and transitorinesss. As in other sermons, he translated

the ancient problem into a modern, existential language, as he described time as a common problem of human existence: "everyone, even the most simple mind, apprehends the meaning of time namely, his own temporality. He may not be able to express his knowledge about time, but he is never separated from its mystery…. Time is our destiny. Time is our hope. Time is our despair" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 35). He presented time in an existential light, as

> something tearful…, a riddle which we cannot solve, and the solution of which we could not stand. We come from a past which is no more; we go into a future which is not yet; *ours* is the present. The past is ours only in so far as we have it still present; and the future is ours only in so far as we have it already present. We possess the past by memory, and the future by anticipation. But what is the nature of the present itself?... The present disappears the very instant we try to grasp it. The present cannot be caught; it is always one. So it seems that we have nothing real neither the past nor the future, nor even the present. Therefore, there is a dreaming character about our existence, which the psalmist indicates, and which religious visionaries have described in so many ways (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 35).

As he wrote this, Tillich seized the kairic moment of his time, speaking to his specific audience in an existential way that would rescue religion from irrelevance. As he described the present as our time for possibility and action, his notion of time, presence, and kairos had an eastern quality to it. For example, he wrote, "We come from a past which is no more; we go into a future which is not yet; ours is the present" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 35).

He translated this notion of time and kairos into his era, speaking directly to his culture - "Let us think for a moment of the way in which we are living our lives in our period of history. Have we not lost a real present by always being driven forward, by our constant running, in our indefatigable activism, toward the future? We suppose the future to be better than any present; but there is always another future beyond the next future, again and again without a present, that is to say, without eternity" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 36). As in other sermons, he addressed this

problem with Christianity, giving hope to the existential crisis; "According to the Fourth Gospel eternal life is a *present* gift: he, who listens to Christ, has eternity already. He is no longer subject to the driving of time. In him the now becomes a now eternal" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 36). Ultimately he gave time meaning and provided hope through Christianity, saying, "Time is not meaningless. It has a hidden meaning salvation. It has a hidden goal the Kingdom of God. It brings about a hidden reality the new creation. The infinite significance of every moment of time is this: in it we decide, and are decided about, with respect to our eternal future" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 36). In the meditation he referenced the ancient Greeks, Augustine, Kierkegaard, nodding to the three traditions he commonly referred to in his work: history, theology, and philosophy.

As seen in this sermon and in his other writings, Tillich used the notion of kairos throughout his works, and this awareness of the kairic moment allowed him to employ his logos or reason at the appropriate time in order to effect change. Once he established a rational argument and knows the right time to speak, he needed to determine a language with which to deliver his message.

<center>Language Invention and Reconfiguration</center>

> Man has language that denotes. This is one side of language. The other side is communication, which can be achieved in sounds by animals as well as by men; but denotative language presupposes a power possessed only by man among the beings we know. This power is the power of abstraction, the power to create universals in terms of language (Tillich 1967)

In addition to reason and right-time, language invention played an important role in the Tillich's communication theory. Tillich (1959) discussed language and its formation by culture, saying that, "every language, including that of the Bible, is the result of innumerable acts of

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cultural creativity…. Language is the expression of man's freedom from the given situation and its concrete demands. It gives him universals in whose power he can create worlds above the given world of technical civilization and spiritual content" (47). Through language we can release ourselves from the present and create futures of hope and the higher ideals of religion. Through language we can employ our ecstatic reason and experience mystery, or something beyond technical reason and objective science. For Tillich, the two components of human communication included a set of abstract linguistic signs and the biological ability to communicate vocally. In his analysis of language, Tillich (1959) argued that "words do not communicate to us any more what they originally did and what they were invented to communicate" (53). Thus, he believed that the language and symbols used in religious writing were embedded in the time period's culture, and had lost their effect. This language needed to be updated for the modern era. For this reason, Tillich created a new vocabulary to be used in the realm of theology, translating old religious symbols into the modern language.

As he distinguished between signs and symbols, Tillich (1959) claimed that a symbol could not be replaced, as it "opens up reality and it opens up the soul" (57). While he believed signs were "consciously invented and removed," symbols were born "out of the womb which is usually called today the 'group unconscious' or 'collective unconscious'" (Tillich 1959, 58). Symbols can only become symbols "if the unconscious of a group says 'yes' to it" (Tillich 1959, 58). Similarly, as symbols lose meaning to the group, they die. According to Tillich (1959), this is how polytheistic gods died; "the situation in which they were born, has changed or does not exist anymore, and so the symbols died" (58). In order to rescue Christianity from the same fate of irrelevance, Tillich needed to fit the Christian symbols into the culture of modernity. In his belief, myths and religions used symbols and "material from our ordinary experience. It puts the

stories of the gods into the framework of time and space although it belongs to the nature of the ultimate to be beyond time and space" (Tillich 1957 *Dynamics*). In order to remain relevant, Christian myths needed "demythologization" (Tillich 1957 *Dynamics*). That is to say, culture should recognize and value myths as symbolic myths. They should not be treated as factual truths, nor should they be rejected completely. Rather, they should be valued for their symbolic, subjective truths. Tillich observed the loss of meaning of traditional Christian symbols, and wanted to reestablish them once again for culture. Indeed, he took this task of "demythologization" seriously in his sermons and speeches.

According to Tillich (1959), "every act of man's spiritual life is carried by language, spoken or silent. For language is the basic cultural creation" (42). Created by culture, and a creator of culture, language is the creator of religion, and an essential part of spiritual life. Thus, Tillich (1959) explained that religious language was not a "sacred language which has fallen from a supranatural heaven and been put between the covers of a book," but a "human language, based on man's encounter with reality, changing through the millennia, used for the needs of daily life, for expression and communication, for literature and poetry, and used also for the expression and communication of our ultimate concern. In each of these cases the language is different" (47). As such, religion should use the language of culture. Because he believed that human language use changed depending on our ultimate concern, Tillich argued that "there are levels of reality of great difference, and that these different levels demand different approaches and different languages; not everything in reality can be grasped by the language which is most adequate for mathematical sciences" (Tillich 1959, 54). Clearly, theology needed a new approach and a new language that could adequately convey its symbols to the 20th century mind.

As Tillich searched for this new theological language in existentialism, he invented new terms and theological vocabulary. He described religion as "being ultimately concerned about that which is and should be our ultimate concern," faith as "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern," and God as "the name for the content of the concern. Such a concept of religion has little in common with the description of religion as the belief in the existence of a highest being called God" (Tillich 1959, 40). Thus, this sort of existential approach points to a God who does not exist as a being, but who *is* being-itself. Because it is impossible to communicate with "ultimate being," "in our relationship to this ultimate we symbolize and must symbolize" (Tillich 1959, 62). Tillich (1959) explained that bestowing on God human qualities such as love, mercy, power, and omniscience, led "to an infinite amount of absurdities," which was "one of the reasons for the destruction of religion through the wrong communicative interpretation of it" (62). He hoped to repair all of these wrong interpretations of religion through his own language use. For this reason Tillich redefined concepts such as religion, faith, and God, linking terms with deep existential moods commonly felt by people of his era. In the final chapter of his *Theology of Culture*, Tillich (1959) posed this question: "How shall the message… be focused for the people of our time? ...*How* can the Gospel be communicated? …How do we make the message heard and seen, and then either rejected or accepted? The question *cannot* be: How do we communicate the Gospel so that others will accept it?" (201). This was Tillich's central question throughout his work: how to communicate Christianity to the modern rational mind. He answered that religion should be communicated "as a message of man understanding his own predicament. What we must do, and can do successfully, is to show the structures of anxiety, of conflicts, of guilt" (Tillich 1959, 203). Tillich believed it was necessary to combine the vocabularies and the concepts of philosophy and religion in order to

create new, relevant symbols for Christianity in the 20th century. As he created these new

symbols, he knew that the new "must break the power of the old, not only in reality, but also in

our memory; and one is not possible without the other" (Tillich 1948, 184). Only when old

symbols break from their meanings can new symbols and meanings form. For Tillich, the old

religious symbols should be reinterpreted and reinvigorated. Like Burke, he believed that the

archetypes remained, but they must be renamed and used in a narrative relevant to the time and

culture.

Language Invention in "You Are Accepted"

Although Tillich employed new vocabulary and symbols throughout his sermons and his

other works, the sermon "You Are Accepted" from *The Shaking of the Foundations* provides an

excellent example of his existential language. In this sermon Tillich elaborated on his new

existential definitions for traditional religious terms. He also explained why new vocabulary

creation was important. The sermon dealt with such existential concepts as the "struggle

between separation and reunion, between sin and grace, in our relation to others, in our relation

to ourselves, and in our relation to the Ground and aim of our being" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*,

156). Tillich (1948 *Shaking*) described the strangeness of the words "sin" and "grace" because

"they are so well-known" (153). Over time, these traditional religious words have become

buzzwords, losing their true importance and meaning. These and other traditional religious

words have "received distorting connotations, and have lost so much of their genuine power that

we must seriously ask ourselves whether we should use them at all, or whether we should discard

them as useless tools" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 153). Tillich observed the need to rediscover the

importance of these words. Burke described a similar phenomenon, calling it the dead metaphor.

In attempting to revitalize the Christian vocabulary, Tillich explained that

> if our souls respond to the description that I intend to give, words like 'sin' and 'separation', 'grace' and 'reunion', may have a new meaning for us. But the words themselves are not important. It is the response of the deepest levels of our being that is important. If such a response were to occur among us this moment, we could say that we have known grace (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 156).

Tillich emphasized that, as the words lost importance, he wanted to reestablish their meanings

within the context of modernity, inspiring an awakening. This is what Burke and other literary

critics have termed an epiphany, or a breaking through of the infinite into the mundane.

However, it proved difficult to create this epiphany and revive these dead metaphors. Within the

sermon, Tillich described the

> mysterious fact about the great words of our religious tradition: they cannot be replaced. All attempts to make substitutions, including those I have tried myself, have failed to convey the reality that was to be expressed; they have led to shallow and impotent talk. There are no substitutes for words like 'sin' and 'grace'. But there is a way of rediscovering their meaning, the same way that leads us down into the depth of our human existence (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 154).

He realized that words and symbols could not simply be substituted, but must be translated,

rediscovered, or reinterpreted in light of the culture surrounding them. For Tillich, this

rediscovery was closely tied to the existential experience. Tillich (1948 *Shaking*) updated the

meaning of vocabulary as he suggested "another word… not as a substitute for the word 'sin,'

but as a useful clue in the interpretation of the word 'sin'" (154). Instead of redefining it or

replacing it, he reinterpreted the word so that the modern mind could grasp it. For example,

Tillich borrowed the definition of sin as "separation" from Isaiah: "but your iniquities have made

a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He

does not hear" (59:2). Tillich emphasized the concept of "separation" as something that every

human has experienced. As Tillich explained it, the separation of sin entailed three things:

"separation among individual lives, separation of a man from himself, and separation of all men

from the Ground of Being [or God]" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 155). Truly an existential concept,

this is the "fate of every life," and all people experience this tripartite separation. As he

reinterpreted the word sin, Tillich explained it so that the modern person could understand it as

an existential alienation, felt by all. It occurs in all people, everywhere, in every age. As he

often did, Tillich borrowed this concept from Scripture, making it concrete and meaningful to the

modern era. In this state of separation, humans

> not only suffer with all other creatures… but also know *why* we
> suffer. We know that we are estranged from something to which
> we really belong, and with which we *should* be united. We know
> that the fate of separation is not merely a natural event like a flash
> of sudden lightning, but that it is an experience in which we
> actively participate, in which our whole personality is involved,
> and that, as fate, it is also guilt. Separation which is fate *and* guilt
> constitutes the meaning of the word "sin". It is *this* which is the
> state of our entire existence, from its very beginning to its very
> end. Such separation is prepared in the mother's womb, and before
> that time, in every preceding generation. It is manifest in the
> special actions of our conscious life. It reaches beyond our graves
> into all the succeeding generations. It is our existence itself.
> *Existence is separation!* (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 155).

He redefined "sin" existentially, calling it the "state of separation" and "guilt," with which every

human could identify. A feeling of estrangement is another concept central to existentialism. He

called human existence separation, because humans constantly feel alone as they separate from

others. He described the timelessness of this feeling, felt in all ages and "all preceding

generations." At this existential climax, Tillich inserted Christianity in the form of grace to

intervene, rescue the sinner, and heal the separation. He refuted the traditional Christian notion

of grace, that he defined as "the willingness of a divine king and father to forgive over and again

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the foolishness and weakness of his subjects and children" or a "magic power in the dark places

of the soul" or the "benevolence that we may find beside the cruelty and destructiveness in life"

or "the gifts that one has received from nature or society" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 155-6).

Instead, he called for a rejection of this former concept of grace, offering a re-conception of it, in

which:

> something is overcome [and] grace occurs in spite of separation
> and estrangement…. Grace is the *re*union of life with life, the
> *re*conciliation of the self with itself. Grace is the acceptance of
> that which is rejected. Grace transforms fate into a meaningful
> destiny; it changes guilt into confidence and courage. There is
> something triumphant in the word grace: in spite of the abounding
> of sin grace abounds much more (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 156).

This grace occurs in the kairic moment, and Tillich posited it as something that could save man

from existential suffering of sin and separation. In grace, the "something" to overcome includes

existential feelings of loneliness, separation, guilt, fate, rejection, and alienation. Grace replaces

these feelings with meaningful destiny, confidence, and courage. Grace becomes the victor over

sin and existential separation; it is "triumphant" despite the abundance of sin.

In addition to the reinterpretation of traditional religious concepts, Tillich also relied on

an existential vocabulary as part of his method of correlation. This included prominent

existential terms and concepts, such as loneliness, solitude, freedom, finitude, anxiety, and

absurdity. Once again, "You are Accepted" serves as an example of this existential language

use. In this sermon he perfectly described the existential crisis that affects us all:

> Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness. It
> strikes us when we walk through the dark valley of a meaningless
> and empty life. It strikes us when we feel that our separation is
> deeper than usual…. It strikes us when our disgust for our own
> being, our indifference, our weakness, our hostility, and our lack of
> direction and composure have become intolerable to us. It strikes
> us when, year after year, the longed-for perfection of life does not
> appear, when the old compulsions reign within us as they have for

decades, when despair destroys all joy and courage (Tillich 1948
Shaking, 162).

In this beautiful passage, Tillich described how the nature of grace could "strike." By

juxtaposing images of existential suffering and images of the saving grace of God, Tillich ended

the sermon, giving his audience hope in Christianity. How poetically he described the dismal

feelings that all humans must experience. As he does in most sermons, Tillich set up the

problem from a scriptural foundation, and translated this problem of sin and separation into the

realm of modern existentialism. Having established the problem in modernity, he applied the

Christian solution. For example, to the above problem he provided the following solution:

> Sometimes at that moment a wave of light breaks into our
> darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: "You are
> accepted. *You are accepted,* accepted by that which is greater than
> you, and the name of which you do not know. Do not ask for the
> name now; perhaps you will find it later. Do not try to do anything
> now; perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for anything; do
> not perform anything; do not intend anything. *Simply accept the
> fact that you are accepted*!" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 162).

Grace and Christian acceptance provide hope for relief from this existential crisis.

Another existential term that Tillich incorporated was the concept of the abyss, or the

feeling of standing at the edge of a great void; a nothingness. May explained Tillich's preference

for existential terms such as "abyss,"[2] saying, "Paulus' love of the abyss was connected with his

choice of living always 'on the boundary'" (May 1973, 72). Indeed, Tillich described himself as

living on the boundaries in several ways, including physically as a German thinker in America

and professionally on the boundary between philosophy and theology. In one of his more

existential passages, Tillich referred to the abyss, saying,

> We cannot escape, however. If that something is the Ground of
> our being, we are bound to it for all eternity, just as we are bound

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[2] The concept of the abyss was initially developed by Böhme.

> to ourselves and to all other life. We always remain in the power of that from which we are estranged. That fact brings us to the ultimate depth of sin: separated and yet bound, estranged and yet belonging, destroyed and yet preserved, the state which is called despair. Despair means that there is no escape. Despair is "the sickness unto death." But the terrible thing about the sickness of despair is that we cannot be released, not even through open or hidden suicide. For we all know that we are bound eternally and inescapably to the Ground of our being. The abyss of separation is not always visible. But it has become more visible to our generation than to the preceding generations, because of our feeling of meaninglessness, emptiness, doubt, and cynicism -- all expressions of despair, of our separation from the roots and the meaning of our life. Sin in its most profound sense, sin, as despair, abounds amongst us (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*)

In this passage, his use of the phrases "we cannot escape" and "despair means that there is no escape" indicated an existential hopelessness, as humans could not escape this situation. Additionally, Tillich referred to Kierkegaard's concept of "sickness unto death" and the idea that humans are, as Heidegger said, thrown into the world. Like Tillich, Kierkegaard advocated Christianity as the answer to this existential crisis. Although impossible to liberate the self from this existential burden, Tillich described this desire, saying,

> If one were to hurl away his self in complete self-surrender, he would become a nothing, without form or strength, a self without self, merely an object of contempt and abuse. …Today we can confirm what Immanuel Kant, the prophet of human reason and dignity, was honest enough to say: there is something in the misfortune of our best friends which does not displease us (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 157).

This hurling away of the self and the concept of nothingness are existential concepts. He continued translating his message to the current generation, as he described the situation "today," and quoted Kant, tying his message to the rational aspect of modernity.

Language Use in "Loneliness and Solitude"

Another sermon that focused on existential themes and language was from *The New Being*, called "Loneliness and Solitude." The title of this sermon, alone, expressed an existential attitude from the beginning, and, as in all sermons, Tillich related these existential moods to Christian Scripture. He described, in existential vocabulary, the problem of the loneliness and isolation of man, as he said, "Man is alone because he is man! In some way every creature is alone. In majestic isolation every star travels through the darkness of endless space" (Tillich 1956, 15). Therefore, he believed this loneliness was inherent in humans. He continued, describing how all humans felt this existential loneliness:

> All of them are alone! Being alive means being in a body – a body separated from all other bodies. And being separated means being alone. This is true of every creature, and it is more true of man than of any other creature. He is not only alone; he also *knows* that he is alone. Aware of what he is, he asks the question of his aloneness. He asks why he is alone, and how he can triumph over his being alone. For this aloneness he cannot endure. Neither can he escape. It is his destiny to be alone and to be aware of it (Tillich 1956, 15-6).

He described the aloneness in terms of an ancient story from Scripture, the story of Adam and Eve, using existential terms, such as guilt, shame, and loneliness. If we can neither endure nor escape the aloneness, what are we to do? How does Tillich confront this problem? Like he often did, he answered the existential problem with Christianity. As in other sermons, he demonstrated how this concept could be seen in Scripture, describing the use of loneliness in Psalms and the Gospel of Matthew. He expanded the concept from Scripture, making it relevant to modern people. For example, he said, "We know the many faces that loneliness can have. We have all experienced some of them. Most widespread is our loneliness after those who helped us to forget that we are alone have left us, either through separation or death" (Tillich

1956, 18). He translated these concepts out of Scripture and into a modern phenomenological experience.

Implying that finding community and solidarity could remedy loneliness, Tillich indicated that separation and death caused loneliness. However, Tillich did not believe that being in community could entirely remove the "ultimate isolation," as he described that he "never felt so lonely as in that particular hour when I was surrounded by people but suddenly realized my ultimate isolation. I became silent and retired from the group in order to be alone with my loneliness" (Tillich 1956, 18-9). According to Tillich (1956), loneliness occurred because, "in spite of their effort to love and be loved, their love is rejected. This loneliness is often self-created" (20). The rejection of love would lead to loneliness, resulting in the end of the "community of love" (Tillich 1956, 20). To overcome this loneliness, one must be creative, and he claimed that "he who can endure the loneliness of disappointed love without bitterness experiences the depth of man's predicament radically and creatively" (Tillich 1956, 20). Again, as he described the ability to "endure the loneliness of disappointed love without bitterness," Tillich showcased his poetic existentialism within the sermon as he discussed nuances in definitions of loneliness and solitude. Two forms of loneliness that can never be "covered or escaped" include guilt and death, and he described that "no communication with others can remove [the loneliness of having to die]" (Tillich 1956, 21). In this statement he implied that communication with others *can* remove some types of loneliness.

Tillich (1956) called attention to the kairos of his situation as he explained loneliness and "man's general predicament, but also, and emphatically, our time. Today, more intensely than in preceding periods, man is so lonely that he cannot bear solitude" (22). He described loneliness as a problem of the time, as a time of a possibility and an opportunity to take action. Moreover,

loneliness was a problem of communication; "it is a symptom of our disease that teachers and parents and the managers of public communication do everything possible to deprive us of the external conditions for solitude" (Tillich 1956, 22). Thus, as he saw it, the problem of Tillich's era was not extreme loneliness, but a lack of solitude. Tillich (1956) directly spoke about language, saying that "our language has wisely sensed these two sides of man's being alone. It has created the word 'loneliness' to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word 'solitude' to express the glory of being alone" (18). He pointed out the importance of observing the nuances in vocabulary as he said, "Although, in daily life, we do not always distinguish these words, we should do so consistently and thus deepen our understanding of our human predicament" (Tillich 1956, 18). Hence, for Tillich, through the use of clear and specific communication, we can understand this human predicament. By understanding the predicament, we can transform loneliness into solitude so that it becomes bearable, productive, and creative. Prayer, as conversation with God, provides one example of escape from loneliness. He addressed the question, "how can communion grow out of solitude?", by saying,

> We have seen that we can never reach the innermost center of another being. We are always alone, each for himself. But we can reach it in a movement that rises first to God and then returns from Him to the other self. In this way man's aloneness is not removed, but taken into the community with that in which the centers of all beings rest, and so into community with all of them. Even love is reborn in solitude. For only in solitude are those who are alone able to reach those from whom they are separated. Only the presence of the eternal can break through the walls that isolate the temporal from the temporal. One hour of solitude may bring us closer to those we love than many hours of communication (Tillich 1956, 24).

As he expressed the idea of "the eternal breaking through the temporal" Tillich referred to the idea of the kairic moment. Tillich's solution to aloneness is to enter into communion with God,

and thus, with others; through love, solitude, and the presence of the eternal, we can break through the loneliness of human existence.

By writing and delivering sermons in terms of the language of existentialism, Tillich effectively defended Christianity, and brought a new clarity and relevance to religion. He expertly showed how God, through grace, has the power to save humanity from its existence, and thus from its pain, restlessness, emptiness, meaninglessness, separation, despair, darkness, self-disgust, and imperfection. According to Tillich, this grace, as a "wave of light," falls upon our existential "darkness." Tillich described a "gulf of estrangement" that is similar to the concept of the abyss. Grace creates a bridge over this gulf, allowing for human interaction and destroying existential alienation. By changing the way we talk about religion, and relating it to culture, we can reunite with the ground of Being. In communication with others, this grace appears as "reunion of life with life" and "understanding each other's words. We understand not merely the literal meaning of the words, but also that which lies behind them, even when they are harsh or angry. For even then there is a longing to break through the walls of separation" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 162). Tillich beautifully spoke to the existential condition of all humans. His sermons served to provide hope without using traditional religious terms, and without demanding a certain behavior or requiring belief in doctrine. He addressed the problem of his time in existential, and not religious terms, and he wanted to heal the loneliness and estrangement and separation that he witnessed as a modern cultural problem. However, instead of faith and ritual, he focused on acceptance, and his belief that when we feel accepted by the Ground of Being, we accept others, and we accept ourselves. Although Tillich believed he would be relevant only in his era, I believe he would be increasingly relevant as technology and culture have made humans even more estranged and alone.

Prophetic Voice

> The turning point in the struggle between space and time in history
> is the prophetic message (Tillich 1959, 35).

In Tillich's sermons, logos, kairos, and language combined to form an overarching prophetic style. The prophetic voice must be reasoned through the use of logos, creating a rational argument, and the possibility of the kairic moment must be acknowledged. When the moment is determined, appropriate language must be applied, invented, or rediscovered. Only then can we hear the prophetic voice. The style of this prophetic voice is the result of the logos, kairos, and language invention, when applied to a message. Tillich (1951) explained that "Prophets speak in terms which express the 'depth of reason' and its ecstatic experience" (143). Thus, ecstatic reason was an important component in prophetic style. In addition, the prophetic voice must take kairos into consideration, as it must see the opportunity for potential, and the right time for action. Smith (2002) demonstrated the element of kairic time as employed by the prophetic voice: "these times were opportunities for transformation and reformation, a return from waywardness to truth and righteousness" (55). Tillich (1987 *Boundaries*) even described prophetism as "consciousness of kairos" and said that the "sacramental and the critical attitudes are united in the consciousness of the Kairos, in the spirit of prophetism" (57). He described the relationship between kairic time and the prophet as one who observes and speaks in the right moment. Indeed, using this definition, Tillich was a true prophet of his era.

In the traditional sense of the prophetic voice, Old Testament prophets predicted the future, warned of future catastrophe, attempted to bring about social change, and had ties to the divine. Prophets such as Elijah, Amos, and Jeremiah usually spoke in a disruptive voice that challenged or criticized their audiences and their cultures. Additionally, the success of the prophetic voice was highly dependent on the concept of kairos, or "right timing" (Sipiora and

Baumlin 2002, 1). Besides for Tillich, several prophetic voices have surfaced in the modern era, including Karl Marx, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Since the ancient times, speaking in this prophetic voice has been a risk. As Martin Luther King, Jr. challenged American civilization, speaking out against racism, materialism, and militarism, he risked his life for his prophetic vision, which he described in his "I Have a Dream" speech. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was killed for his criticisms, and Paul Tillich was exiled to America for challenging the German Nazi Party. Karl Marx demonstrated the prophetic voice as he seized the kairic moment to caution against modernity's dependence on rationality and loss of enchantment. In a similar way, Tillich's prophetic voice appeared as he used the kairic moment to speak about the problems of his era, to defend Christianity, to challenge the people of his era, to urge a connection with the divine, and to translate religious concepts and symbols for modern culture. Like Marx, he believed that a new prophetic voice was born out of the beginnings of industrial society, as man turned away from nature and toward machines. Industrial society, reason, and scientific obsession created the necessity for this type of prophetic voice. Tillich (1959) described how "the birth of man out of nature and against nature corresponds the birth of prophetism out of paganism and against paganism" (35). According to Marx, modern reason caused negative social changes, as science, progress, tools, and capitalism caused estrangement from the self, the other, the species, God, nature, and the process and products of labor. Furthermore, for Marx, "the more man subjugated nature by his labor and the more the miracles of the gods were rendered superfluous by the miracles of industry, the more man were to renounce the joy of production and the enjoyment of the product to please these powers" (Marx 1844). Tillich's work often points to Marx's prophetic voice, as he appreciated Marx's

humanism, realism, passion, and pragmatism. Indeed, Marx's lyrical prophetic voice is seen in

statements such as

> All freed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and
> venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed
> ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid
> melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last
> compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and
> his relations with his kind (Marx

Marxian statements such as these echo Tillich's existential ideas and prophetic style. In a 1963

lecture at the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, Tillich referred to Marx as the most

successful theologian since the reformation, saying,

> What I will do now is perhaps surprising to you. I want to give
> you here the theology of the most successful of all theologians
> since the Reformation, namely, Karl Marx. I will consider him as
> a theologian. And I will show you that without doing this, it is
> impossible to understand the history of the twentieth century and
> large sections of the late nineteenth century (Stenger and Stone
> 2002, 162).

Indeed, Marx's prophetic voice was influential on Tillich's theology and his style.

Stenger and Stone (2002) highlighted the "connections between prophetic religion and

social criticism… best seen in Tillich's major work on social theory, *The Socialist Decision*"

(56). Tillich (1948 *Protestant*) pointed to the "striking structural analogy between the prophetic

and the Marxian interpretation of history," as he said that

> both prophetism and Marxism regard the fight between good and
> evil forces as the main content of history..., attack the existing order
> of society…, challenge concrete forms of injustice…, believe that
> the transition from the present stage of history into the stage of
> fulfillment will occur in a catastrophe or in a series of catastrophic
> events…, believe that certain minority groups within a selected
> nation or class are the real bearers of the historical destiny, that
> through their action the meaning of history is carried into reality.

Marx, speaking in modernity, continued a step beyond the ancient prophets, adding that

man is also estranged from the process and product of his work. Tillich agreed with this

and added that man is estranged from what he calls "the ground of being," or the

ultimate. For Tillich, religion should retain the Marxist "critical-prophetic motif," but

also should preserve "the possibilities of mysticism and a certain inward existence

distinct from social contradictions," and he emphasized the need for a "return of the

prophetic elements to their religious roots" (Stenger and Stone 2002, 159).

    As Tillich played the role of prophetic critic for the modern Church, he asserted the

importance of the prophetic style in religion. He believed that the Church had a prophetic role as

"the guardian who reveals dynamic structures in society and undercuts their demonic power by

revealing them, even within the Church itself" (Tillich 1959, 50). For Tillich, a prophetic voice

should judge the culture, including religion, and it should call attention to both the potential and

the demonic possibilities (Tillich 1959, 50). Moreover, the prophetic voice was "directed against

[the prophet's] own nation" or culture, and it should include hope in the form of "the promise of

God" (Tillich 1967, 486). At times, Tillich's prophetic voice cautioned his own culture, but

always ended with hope in the promise of God. This prophetic voice affected Tillich's

homiletics and communication theory as it provided Tillich with style, and combined reason,

timing, and vocabulary into a purposeful communicative act, an act that served a prophetic

function. The prophetic voice allows us to communicate critically, in the moment, with a new

language based in reason, to overcome the anxiety of existence. All that remains is to heal the

anxiety of separation and loneliness through a focus on the community.

Prophetic Voice in "Do Not Be Conformed"

Among Tillich's sermons, the ones found in *The Eternal Now* collection provide the best examples of his prophetic voice, namely the third section, in which Tillich offered critique and guidance for the future. For example, some of the titles include "Be Strong," "In Thinking Be Mature," and "In Everything Give Thanks." The prophetic voice incorporates the elements of logos in its reasoning, kairos in that it seizes the moment as it incorporates the invention of new terms in a call to action, while providing guidance for the future. The best example of this is the sermon "Do Not Be Conformed," in which Tillich advised that a warning against conformity is "significant for all periods of history" but "urgently needed in our period" (Tillich 1963, 135). He continued to say that "instead of being conformed to this eon [St. Paul] wants us to be transformed by the coming eon, the state of renewal of our world and of ourselves. Not conformity, but transformation" (135). He spoke of the transformation that takes place in the kairic moment, in the context of the "many revolutionary transformations" of his period (Tillich 1963, 135). Tillich described the transformations and revolutions of his time, and he offered a clear critique of society and a caution to not conform to the era. Surprisingly, he even advised against conforming to religions, saying, "conformity seems to be the case… through the later years of one's life when religious propagandists use the fear of the approaching end to preach new forms of old religious conformism" (Tillich 1963, 136). The sermon served as a reminder to be thought-ful, instead of conforming to society, religion, the self, or the ideals of the age. Although speaking to his time and culture, Tillich's admonition still rings true, that the current period should be mindful of conformity, as consumer culture becomes more of a problem.

As a mouthpiece for the divine, Tillich brought the scriptural call into the modern era, translating and interpreting the prophetic message to the people. Tillich (1963) related his own call against conformity to St. Paul's advice to not be conformed in Scripture:

> He challenges you and me, whether we are caught by this civilization or not. We may be conformist not only if we agree but also if we disagree, and we may be non-conformist, not only if we disagree but also if we agree. They are words of warning for those of us who believe that their revolutionary thrust liberates us from the danger of conformism. For it does not. The revolutionary gang can be as conformist as the conservative group (136-7).

Like a prophet, Tillich included himself in the community, and spoke as one of the members as he translated the scripture to modernity and pointed out the flaws and the dangers of conformism in his era. He cautioned that the true danger was conforming to the self instead of "transforming oneself by a renewal of the spirit" and he focused on this concept of self-development, a modern take on the scripture (Tillich 1963, 137).

As he translated the Scripture to his culture in this sermon, he said, "It is one of the most dangerous misunderstandings of the Christian message to deny this world and its created glory, and to direct our eyes to a superworld, unrelated to the original creation" (Tillich 1963, 138). Presumably, he was responding to the belief held by Marx and Nietzsche that humans created religion and the afterlife to make life more bearable. Like a prophet, he included a call to action in the sermon:

> Most people try to avoid the risk by being conformed to the state of things into which they have been thrown by destiny. But those who have transformed our world risked wrong decisions. And the greater men they were, the more conscious were they of the risk…. For when they refused to be conformed to their families and traditions, they were not instead conformed to themselves, but were renewed in their own being and could thus renew other beings. Every Christian must be strong enough to risk non-conformity (Tillich 1963, 140).

Tillich ended with a powerful prophetic summons: "He who risks and fails can be forgiven. He who never risks and never fails is a failure in his whole being. He is not forgiven because he does not feel that he needs forgiveness. Therefore, dare to be not conformed to this eon, but transform it courageously first in yourselves, then in your world – in the spirit and the power of love" (Tillich 1963, 144).

In addition to this sermon, Tillich's prophetic voice is seen in "The Shaking of the Foundations" as he employed an Old Testament prophetic style cautioning against false prophets, technology, and science. Beginning with quotes from Jeremiah and Isaiah describing chaos, desolation, and ruin, Tillich related this to the destruction of World Wars I and II. As the Hebrew prophets called attention to the doom of their times, so Tillich used his prophetic voice to call attention to the existential wasteland of his time and the kairic moment of possibility that this wasteland provided. He cautioned that "Man is not God; and whenever he has claimed to be like God, he has been rebuked and brought to self-destruction and despair. When he has rested complacently on his cultural creativity or on his technical progress, on his political institutions or on his religious systems, he has been thrown into disintegration and chaos" (Tillich 1948 *Shaking*, 6).

Community and Love

> I have given no definition of love. This is impossible, because there is no higher principle by which it could be defined. It is life itself in its actual unity. The forms and structures in which love embodies itself are the forms and structures in which love overcomes its self-destructive forces (Tillich 1948 *Protestant*).

Once the categories of logos, kairos, vocabulary invention, and prophetic style have been established, the final element is delivery to an audience and the creation of a community of love. As the speaker uses appropriate reason, right timing, innovative vocabulary, and an updated

prophetic style, this community of love comes together and can overcome the loneliness and separation of existence. For Tillich, speaking out of and to the Protestant tradition, the word or the sermon has been the center of the church and the service. The community should come together around the word and focus on being in community. Ultimately, Tillich believed that humans could relieve their sense of estrangement and solitude through finding wholeness in community, a community built through love and relationships with others. Tillich (1952) believed that "as long as there is an *object* of fear, love in the sense of participation can conquer fear" (36). He did not believe that love could overcome the anxiety of being, but that love and community could ease the loneliness and solitude that are symptoms of this anxiety, thus providing people with "the courage to be."

Tillich described four qualities of love: eros, libido, philia, and agape, justifying the importance to community of all four forms. He explained eros as mystical love, libido as sexual love, philia as friendship love, and agape as selfless love in the form of justice or good works (Tillich 1963, 39-42). Although distinct, the four kinds of love were similar in that they urged "toward the reunion of the separated" (Tillich 1963, 40). For Tillich, only through these types of love could one combat the loneliness and anxiety of being. This could be what drove Tillich to his often-discussed erotic relationships with women. In a letter to one woman, Tillich wrote, "'you have come as near to the centre of my aloneness as it is perhaps humanly possible" (May 1973, 32-3). Through all of these types of love, people can penetrate this center of aloneness. Tillich said that "love is stronger than death," meaning that through love, people could overcome the anxiety of being, the fear of death, the abyss of solitude. He described love as "creative" and "unconditional," saying, "there is nothing above love. It enters every concrete situation and works for the reunion of the separated in a unique way" (Tillich 1959, 145).

In *The Courage to Be*, Tillich described two ways to lessen the anxiety of existence –

having the courage to be in community or a system, or having the courage to be a self. These

solutions involved two types of love: love of self and love of other. According to Tillich (1959),

one must feel accepted first, "then you can accept yourself, and that means, you can be healed.

Illness, in the largest sense of body, soul, and spirit, is estrangement" (Tillich 1959, 211). As he

described illness as "estrangement," he called sin "separation from the Ground of Being." For

Tillich, love of God led to love of self and others, and could heal separation. Tillich (1959)

determined three categories of self-love: self-acceptance, selfishness, and self-affirmation, all

positive except selfishness (144). Without self-love, Tillich believed one could not experience

justice toward self or others. For Tillich (1959), love became a way to transcend estrangement,

as "love is the ground, the power, and the aim of justice" (144). Hence, love had both a political

and moral component. It is what justice should be grounded in, it gives justice its authority, and

the result of justice should be love. As May (1973) explained, Tillich

> believed that every encounter with a new person is anxiety-creating. Anxiety is present in every authentic encounter, that is, one in which people let themselves genuinely meet. This anxiety is the dread of freedom… You don't know what is ahead or what demands the encounter may make upon you, or the possibilities in this new relationship. You know you must risk something in order to go through with it, but you don't know how much. Also the pleasures, delights, and joys it can give you are still unknown. The meeting may jar you off your present course. It may bring a new expansion in your life or it may push you toward curtailment and psychological slavery. We instinctively know this in the faster heartbeat and tremors we feel at moments of meeting a new person. We are only aware that something will be given to us and something demanded (29).

In order to overcome the anxiety of meeting others, we must love them, and join in community

with them. This is very much like the communication theory of Uncertainty Reduction, which

states that interpersonal interactions make people feel uncertainty, which causes anxiety, and that

people attempt to reduce this uncertainty in relationships through further interpersonal communication (Berger and Calabrese 1975). Tillich overcomes this by creating a community through his sermons. Similarly, Tillich believed that in order to confront the solitude of existence, humans should facilitate relationships between themselves. He believed that love and participation in community were vital to human communication.

Tillich (1959) explained that humans, as "existential thinkers," could realize existence and reality through personal experience (89). As such "existential thinkers," humans display qualities of "interest, passion, indirect communication" (Tillich 1959, 91). He agreed with Feuerbach that this passion is intimately tied to love, and quotes Feuerbach saying, "Love is passion, and only passion is the mark of Existence" (Tillich 1959, 89-90). As Tillich (1959) described it, "The passionately living man knows the true nature of man and life" (90). One who loves and lives passionately gains knowledge of self, others, and existence. Gilkey (1990) interpreted Tillich's thought, "When… persons are to be known, the participatory side of the cognitive relation becomes utterly necessary; love is a requirement for true understanding. For this reason, certain kinds of knowing can transform and even heal" (37). Love is important as people gain knowledge of others and participate in community. By forming connections and communities, humans can combat the solitude and loneliness of the human condition. Tillich (1959) observed that people "usually live in the common experiences of daily life, covering over with talk and action their real inner personal experience. But conscience, guilt, having to die, come home to the individual only in his inner loneliness" (103). Often, Tillich believed, talk was used to cover more everyday topics, but that humans should use communication to discuss more existential issues, such as loneliness, despair, and the human condition, thus breaking down loneliness and the walls of anxiety. Listening and communicating could foster community and

reduce existential anxiety, and Tillich once said that "The first duty of love is to listen." Tillich (1959) described how the modern loss of community "provoked the flight from the objective world. Only in that world... is genuine community between man and man possible. If this common world has disappeared or grown intolerable, the individual turns to his lonely inner experience, where he is forced to spin out dreams which isolate him still further from this world" (104-5). Through love and community, people can leave this lonely inner experience, and end their isolation from the world.

According to Newport (1984), "Joy for [Tillich] was being with people," and he greatly valued a sense of community and connecting with people (200). In order to create a community out of his audiences, Tillich used several tactics. One technique he used was to speak in the third person plural. Instead of speaking in the second person and telling the audience what to do, he included himself with them in solidarity. For example, "are they not also the questions that *we* ask – we, who call ourselves Christians, or at least who desire to be what the Christian message wills us to be?" (Tillich 1963, 47). By using this language and style, Tillich attempted to make his audience more receptive to his message, and more open to forming a genuine community.

The sermon was an excellent vehicle to discuss existential concerns, as it provided a dramatic form. Frequently, existential philosophy is expounded through literature, such as plays and novels, including Sartre's play "No Exit," his novel *Nausea*, and the fiction of Camus. As Tillich wrote in his *Systematic Theology* (1957), "the most striking existentialist analyses have been made by novelists, poets, and painters" (26). The form of the sermon has a similar poetic, artistic, and dramatic quality and can inspire pathos and action in the audience.

By using the form of the sermon, Tillich was able to spread his ideas among a greater audience. In Protestantism, the sermon has traditionally played an important role, and Tillich

used this forum to express his theology and create a community in the audience. Tillich (1951)

referred to the preaching of the church as "the Word," and he wrote that

> the Word depends not only on the meaning of the words of preaching alone but also on the power with which they are spoken. And it depends not only on the understanding of the listener alone, but also on his existential reception of the content. Nor does the Word depend on the preacher or listener alone, but on both in correlation. These four factors and their interdependence constitute the 'constellation' in which human words may become the Word, divine self-manifestation. They may and they may not become the Word (159).

The form of the sermon allowed Tillich to use his delivery to amplify his message and to

commune with the audience. Indeed, he enjoyed public speaking as a form of communicating

with people and fostering community. As Finstuen (2009) relayed, "Tillich's zeal for public

speaking meant that laypeople had ample opportunity to hear him in person. Most of these

events took place on college campuses… and Tillich became a revered figure among

undergraduates at schools large and small…" (180). Newport (1984) described Tillich's

sermonic style as "very appealing to intellectuals – both theologians and laymen" because of his

use of language (45). Gilkey (1990) described Tillich's speaking style, writing,

> what was rare about Tillich's public speech – his addresses and especially his sermons – was his ability to communicate with his whole audience on the deepest existential level as well as on the intellectual, conceptual level. He understood and could speak to the hidden but menacing lostness, alienation, loneliness, unacceptability, helplessness, and terror among his hearers as well as provide categories for comprehending these frightening depths and open up ways to conquer their terror. Not all of his audience could understand the grandeur of his philosophical and theological vision; but few of them failed to hear and respond to his at-oneness with them in his angst and yet in his courage and faith. I remember a woman saying in amazement after hearing [him]: "I did not understand a word of what that man said, but he was speaking directly to me every moment of the lecture" (198)

Tillich's audience felt his presence, and felt "at-one" with him, in solidarity and community. Indeed, Tillich enjoyed the interactive quality of the sermon. The fact that he valued these public speaking interactions, demonstrated his commitment to creating a community of love and closing the gap between religion and culture.

Community and Love in "Love is Stronger than Death"

The sermon that best demonstrates Tillich's use of community and love is "Love is Stronger than Death" from the collection *New Being*. In this sermon, he combined reason, right-timing, existential vocabulary, and a prophetic style into a message designed to create a community of love and overcome the loneliness of existence. This sermon incorporated all of these elements into an existential message, updating Christianity into this modern language. He began by bringing the scripture into his era, saying, "In our time, as in every age, we need to see something which is stronger than death. Death has become powerful in our time…. That is to say that the End, the finite, and the limitations and decay of our being have become visible" (Tilllich 1956, 170). He used existential terms, such as finite, anxiety, decay, abyss, exile and nothingness, as for example in, "We forgot that we are finite, and we forgot the abyss of nothingness surrounding us" (Tillich 1956, 170) and "We have become a generation of the End and those of us who have been refugees and exiles should not forget this when we have found a new beginning here or in another land" (Tillich 1956, 172). He pointed out the existential problem in his time, incorporating kairos and new language. He turned to logos as he discussed the modern tendency to master everything, including death, with science and reason. For example, "All generations of men had labored so that we, the generation of fulfillment, might tread death under our feet" (Tillich 1963, 170).

In order to inspire community among his audience, he said, "For love is stronger than death. Every death means parting, separation, isolation, opposition and not participation. Love overcomes separation and creates participation in which there is more than that which the individuals involved can bring to it" (Tillich 1963, 173). According to Tillich, love was stronger than death because "it creates something new out of the destruction caused by death…. It is at work where the power of death is strongest, in war and persecution and homelessness and hunger and physical death itself" (Tillich 1963, 174). Tillich believed that he could use logic at the right time, a new vocabulary, and a prophetic style to create a community of love that would help to combat the anxiety and loneliness of existence.

CONCLUSION

If Tillich had written his own communication theory, he would have begun with his notion of theology of culture, and the importance of culture to the rhetorical situation. He would have emphasized the importance of logos, kairos, language use, prophetic voice, and community as elements that work together to help overcome existential anguish and loneliness caused by culture. Throughout his sermons, Tillich used each of these elements to defend Christianity and make it relevant to his culture. In order to speak to his culture and his time, Tillich used logos and placed importance on logical reasoning. However, he made a distinction between technical reason and ecstatic reason, and he did not privilege reason over mythos and mystery. This logos must be employed at the right moment, observing the kairos, which is seeing a moment of potential and taking action. Moreover, Tillich believed in the importance of establishing new terms or reviving old terms in his theology, and he imbued his theology with many philosophical and existential concepts. Once the language was established, he had to determine the style, often relying on a type of prophetic style. However, he updated his prophetic style from a traditional ancient style to a more modern prophetic style, cautioning people, and providing them with insight into the divine in modernity. Finally, Tillich combined all of these elements, emphasizing his will to create a community of love that would combat existential anxiety and loneliness. At least, in his collections of sermons, this is what we see of Tillich's communication as an apologist and an existential theologian.

A true prophet of the 20th century, Tillich's communication theory and his existential perspective seen in his sermons are rooted in his time and his rhetorical situation. Drawing on the work of Lloyd Bitzer, I interpret Tillich's rhetorical situation as being composed of his exigencies, rooted both in the personal and historical; his resources and constraints, in the form

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of influences and limitations; and his audience, which provided him with an arena for his ideas. Tillich's communication theology has implications for many, including those who preach, teach, or develop communities of love and participation.

Although Tillich believed that he was determined by his time, and thus, only relevant to his era, May (1973) suggested otherwise:

> [Tillich] will be temporarily eclipsed, so long as we are in this anxious, alienated age where every man, woman, and child prizes security above all, whether by science or by technical reason or by religious dogma. After that, however, Tillich will be rediscovered and revalued as the thinker who does authentically speak to human beings and their condition (92).

Indeed, Tillich is still of interest to people of this era who feel the pain and separation of modernity, and long for a return to a better understanding of the mystery of existence and the role of the sacred in that mystery.

Studying Tillich's sermons is beneficial as an inquiry into modern apologetics and rhetoric. From Tillich we learn that apologetics should take the culture into consideration because, to defend religion, religion must understand and transcend culture. Religion is not isolated, but is an organic and dynamic part of culture, and must be treated as such. This holds additional importance to the study of rhetoric as it examines sermons as an important tool in apologetics, and as an example of a rhetorical event that is born out of, and may transcend, a specific era, culture, and rhetorical situation.

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