

**THE DIALECTICAL CHRISTOLOGY
OF PAUL TILLICH**

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Introduction

“Jesus is the Christ.” This is the central statement of Christianity. It expresses the final revelation of God, the universal healing of estrangement, and the power for the human spirit to move toward self-transcendence according to Paul Tillich. It is the goal of this paper to express how Tillich understands and expresses “Jesus is the Christ” in his *Systematic Theology*. This paper asks what Tillich means by the Christian confession. Who is Jesus? Who, or what, is the Christ? Who is *Jesus the Christ*? How is Jesus as the Christ related to God? How is Jesus as the Christ the mediator and savior of creation? Most importantly, this paper asks how Tillich structures his christology so that the one phrase – “Jesus is the Christ” – pivotally serves as the final and unsurpassable answer to the questions implied in existence.

Tillich’s christology is neither a simple nor subordinate element of his system. It is the center temporally, philosophically, and personally of every answer he derives from within the theological circle. The answer to every question implied in existence grasps us in the New Being, which is revealed without distortion in the central manifestation of Jesus as the Christ. As the central manifestation, Jesus as the Christ is, therefore, the criterion against which all other manifestations must be tested and held accountable. The New Being as manifested by the divine Spirit is the complete reunification of the poles of finite existence. In the New Being, that which is separated and only exists in tension within finitude is brought together in mutual completion (i.e., individualization and participation, freedom and destiny, and form and dynamics). This is the founding idea upon which all elements of Tillich’s system are built. The movement from existence as estranged (the symbol of the “Fall”) to the ultimate reunification of the estranged being in the grasping power of the New Being (salvation) determines the system. Tillich’s theology is correspondingly both undeniably Christo-centric and soteriological. Nothing is above, outside, or beyond consideration of and relationship with the central event of Jesus as the Christ. As follows, understanding the depth and coherence of Tillich’s christology is essential to understanding the

complexity and fullness of his system.

The second volume of the *Systematic Theology* is dedicated to directly addressing the questions raised in the experience of existence as fallen and saved, and works to answer through a christological response. In doing so, it presents Christ as that which is the completed and perfect unification of the elements of being; it presents Christ as that which is the structure of Being-Itself. Christ is Logos. Jesus as the Christ is the man who, through his individualism, sacrificed his particularity and in doing so participates fully and universally in the Christ. His active being as the Christ grasped the disciples into the reality of the New Being originally and continues to grasp people throughout the years. It is in the response to the experience of the New Being – in the recognition of the saving power of Jesus as the Christ first by the disciples and later by all Christians – that this event became and remains the central revelation of the manifestation of the New Being upon which all else is based.

The third volume modulates how Tillich's understanding of Jesus as the Christ is expressed. Rather than focusing on the eternal and universal presence of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ (Christ as Logos), the third volume responds to the dynamic activity of the Spirit in the particularity of the grasping of Jesus as the Christ. Rather than christology as Logos, the emphasis here is christology as Spirit. In history, the Spirit enters into, fulfills, and transcends the human spirit and its functions of self-creativity, self-integration and self-transcendence. It is in this movement that the saving power of the New Being known in Jesus as the Christ is fragmentarily fully present now and will be, in the eschaton, fully and eternally universal.

The complexity of Tillich's christology has led to a long history of scholarly disagreement. As A. T. Mollegan remarks, "he seems neo-orthodox to liberal theologians, liberal to the neo-orthodox, modernist to the fundamentalist, indiscriminately Biblical to the modernist, historicist to the idealistic philosopher, and idealistic to the historicist."¹ How can this be? It seems shocking that interpreters of the same system arrive at conclusions so radically divergent; yet, when confronted with Tillich's own words, the diversity of interpretations seems natural. For instance, Tillich is explicit in claiming the historicity of the event and person of Jesus as the Christ as a fundamental requirement of Christian faith.

However, he also posits that there is no need for a guarantee that historical research will conclude his actuality. Should science determine that the existence of the person Jesus of Nazareth was either false or very unlikely, faith would not falter.² These are not mutually contradictory statements. Rather, as will be shown in the final essay, they represent the two sides of the christological dialectic. Tillich's structures his christology to dialectically embrace both the Logos and Spirit. It is the position of this paper that in doing so, he is uniquely able to present a christology that is concretely particular in its dynamic engagement in the salvation of creation.

It is indicative of Tillich's systematic brilliance that his complexity is not dismissed as incoherency. Even as critics question the ambiguity and insufficient determinacy in his theology from a wide range of perspectives, they recognize his essential contribution to Christian systematic theology. This paper offers an interpretation of Tillich's christology that embraces the diversity of his arguments by positing that Tillich's christology is difficult because it refuses to staidly limit either the revelation of God as Being-Itself or the impact of Jesus the Christ as perfectly realized agapic love to a static concept. Rather, he works within the dynamic tension of dialectic. Tillich's christology challenges given theological and philosophical structures even as it seemingly offers evidence in support of the same structures. This is intentional; it is the structure of his christology as a dialectic of Logos and Spirit. In Jesus as the Christ, the Divine Life appears as a living reality. Christology must be dialectical in order to express the saving power of Jesus as the Christ.

This paper is organized in four essays. The first and second develop systematically an argument for reading Tillich's christology in his *Systematic Theology* as either Logos-oriented or Spirit-oriented. The third essay continues with a brief critique of the sufficiency of either of these positions. In conclusion, the fourth essay suggests an alternative possibility of understanding Tillich's christology as a dialectic of Logos and Spirit. The questions of this paper are intentionally limited to engage only within the context of what Tillich presents in the three volumes of his *Systematic Theology*. While several other of his works add significant perspective and nuance to the development of his christological thought throughout his career and would offer fascinating opportunities for the expansion of this project, this

paper is only concerned with the internal coherency of what Tillich created as his system.³ This choice was made in respect to length of this project and the belief that a system should be both independent and harmonious with itself. Additionally, because of the choice to engage christology from a position internal to Tillich's system, this paper does not raise challenges to his philosophical use of ontology or the concepts and categories he uses in structuring this position. Finally, the arguments in the following essays are developed directly from a close reading of the *Systematic Theology* and copiously cited accordingly. Accordingly, dialogue between the arguments of the paper and secondary sources is limited and primarily contained to the endnotes.⁴

An Argument for Logos Christology

This essay posits a Logos christology as a fair representation of the center of Tillich's theological system. The phrase "Logos christology" is used to indicate a theological perspective that emphasizes the incarnation of the divine Logos in the life of Jesus of Nazareth as determinative of his being the Christ. When christology is read this way, the existential importance of the incarnation to the individual experience of being in relationship with that which is the ground of our being (God) is maximized. Tillich's christology as logos-oriented is nicely summarized by McKelway: "Jesus is the Christ because his contemporaries recognized in him the manifestation of the divine Logos, the eternal principle of God's self-revelation called the New Being. The Logos or New Being transcends the event of Jesus, the Christ, although it is manifest in him."¹

While the divine truth that Jesus is the Christ runs counter to our estranged self-understanding and expectation (and is therefore a paradox), what it means to say "Jesus the Christ" is approachable with and through rational speech, thought, and process. Jesus is the Christ who saves because Jesus the Christ is the divine Logos fully apparent in the human logos. This is the meaning of the Johannine phrase, the "Logos became flesh;"² in the life of the person Jesus of Nazareth the divine Life manifested without distortion. This should not be understood superstitiously as a metamorphosis of the divine into the human, but the unambiguous participation of the divine according to and in fulfillment of the structures of existence. The principle of God's self-communicating manifestation, the divine Logos, participated universally and fully in historical existence.

Tillich's *Systematic Theology* begins with methodological considerations that define and frame his theological enterprise. According to Tillich, the theologian's task is to "look where that which concerns him ultimately is manifest... The source of his knowledge is not the universal *logos* but the [divine] Logos 'who became flesh,' that is, the *logos* manifesting itself in a particular historical event."³ Writing in and for a context experienced primarily in terms of "disruption, conflict, self-destruction,

meaninglessness, and despair,”⁴ Tillich claims the question of theology as “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.”⁵ He terms this reality the “New Being” in Jesus as the Christ made present through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is this reality, the New Being in Jesus the Christ, that is the norm for theology. Jesus the Christ is the determinative criterion for the use of the sources of theology – scripture, church history, and the history of religion and culture.⁶

Because Tillich works within the “method of correlation,”⁷ he organizes the *Systematic Theology* to first develop the questions implied in experience and then to search for and explicate theological answers. This essay will function the same way. The divine Logos revealed as Jesus as the Christ will be approached as it answers the estrangement of existence. Jesus the Christ is the final and determinative answer to the existential predicament because Jesus the Christ is the reunification of that which is estranged from itself. The New Being in Jesus as the Christ is the perfectly transparent union of the structure of Being-Itself with being. He is the appearance of the essential as fully existing. The New Being is the coordination of the divine Logos with the finite logos, and the perfect actualization of the structure of Being-Itself. Jesus as the Christ answers estrangement because Jesus the Christ is Essential God-Personhood.⁸ It is in Tillich’s understanding of the New Being manifest in Jesus the Christ as the central and normative revelation, that his christology as a Logos christology is most clearly seen.

Jesus as the Christ

“The event on which Christianity is based has two sides: the fact which is called ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ and the reception of those who received him as the Christ.”⁹ The concrete, particular, and factual Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ because he reveals the divine Logos within him with perfect transparency. More simply stated, Jesus is the Christ because his being is the New Being without distortion. “It is his being that makes him the Christ because his being is the quality of the New Being beyond the split of essential and existential being.”¹⁰ This union is possible only because the human

“*logos* is analogous to the divine *logos*, so that the divine *logos* can appear in man without destroying the humanity of man.” That this happens in a person and not some other creature is because: “Man is the image of God in that in which he differs from all other creatures, namely his rational structure.”¹¹ The appearance of the divine Logos in a person is the fulfillment of the human logos, not the establishment of something over and against the structure of human’s being. Reason (in the sense of ontological reason as opposed to a limited concept of technical reason) is the logos which essentially is divine and which actualizes in human existence only within finite limitations of estrangement. In Jesus as the Christ, the essential reality of Being-Itself as the divine Logos enters fully and without distortion into existence and conquers estrangement through the reunion of the ontological structure.

Reason, Tillich posits, has two primary conceptual forms: ontological reason and technical reason. The first concept, ontological reason, “is the structure of the mind which enables the mind to grasp and to transform reality.... Its cognitive nature is one element in addition to others; it is cognitive and aesthetic, theoretical and practical, detached and passionate, subjective and objective.”¹² Ontological reason is the ability of a person to participate in reality through all methods of understanding and transforming the world. Ontological reason is the receiving and transforming structure of being; it is logos. It is only through reason as logos that a self is able to be centered and the world is able to be a centered whole. “Without reason, without the *logos* of being, being would be chaos, that is, it would not be being but only the possibility of it (*me on*).”¹³ Because God is Being-Itself, the power-to-be, the logos structure of creation directly corresponds to the divine Logos. “The denial of reason in the classical sense is antihuman because it is antidivine.”¹⁴

Tillich carefully distinguishes this first understanding of ontological reason (logos) from the second concept, technical reason. Technical reason is simply and only the “capacity for ‘reasoning’.”¹⁵ If technical reason separates from ontological reason, the concept of reason is confined to only cognitive elements; it no longer is able to express the fullness of human reception and action in the world. When this happens, the person is dehumanized, meanings are lost, and structures of life are determined from somewhere else and, therefore, unapproachable. Rather than allowing for this separation, it is

important that theology ontologically engages. Theology must use its facilities of technical reason (including the ongoing refinement of its logic and methodologies) but only within the whole of ontological reason. “Technical reason is an instrument”¹⁶ that must always be employed in an intimate relationship with ontological reason.

Because all existence participates in the ambiguities of finitude, actualized reason as a human capacity is ambiguous. Simply because it exists, human ontological reason is, in religious words, “blind.”¹⁷ While ontological reason – in its *essence* – is identical with the universal structure of Being-Itself, it also – in being *actualized* – participates in the existential separation from Being-Itself.¹⁸ It always appears existentially with ambiguity. Human reason participates in the transition from essence to existence and the resulting estrangement. However great the potential of fully integrated ontological reason, it never actualizes separately from the ambiguities of life. The fulfillment of human reason requires the saving unification offered in the New Being; participation in the New Being is the answer to the human quest for meaning.¹⁹ This gives rise to the question of incarnation. How is it that the essential structure of Being-Itself becomes fully actualized in the existence of Jesus of Nazareth? What does it mean to say that the divine Logos is in Jesus without restriction?²⁰

Tillich stresses that this should not be taken to mean that God became person. It is nonsense to suggest that God, Being-Itself, changes from ultimate reality to a contingent form of Jesus Christ.²¹ God is always and everywhere God – namely, the power-to-be. The word “incarnation” is dangerous because it often suggests that God self-manifests as something distinguishably different from Godself in Jesus of Nazareth. This is not the case. Rather, the term “incarnation” indicates the historical actualization and participation of the power to be in a particular person. This is what is meant by the phrase “Logos became flesh.” The structure of the divine, the structure of Being-Itself, presents itself without restriction or ambiguity in actual, finite, and historical human life because essentially human ontological reason, logos, is analogous to the divine Logos. This is the center of the Christian message; historically it is only in Jesus the Christ that the human logos and divine Logos are inseparably united. For the rest of us, the actualization of our reason is estranged.

Reason participates in the polar conflicts inherent to finitude including the tension between autonomy and heteronomy, and relativism and absolutism.²² The polarity of autonomy and heteronomy is used by Tillich to understand the tension between the structure and depth of experienced being. In actualizing, human ontological reason manifests what precedes it as it enters into the fullness of reality, Being-Itself, the ground of reality. This is reason's depth; its inexhaustible quality as human logos to point toward the nature of Being-Itself or love-itself. Reason's ability to do so is its created nature as logos; its own structure.²³ According to the polar relationship of structure and depth, reason actualizes with both the static independence of its own structure and the dynamic transcendence comprising its depth. Because, however, the possibilities actualize into existence within the static structure of finite being, there is always some element of perversion. This is the tension between depth and structure. "In every rational act three elements inhere: the static element of reason [structure], the dynamic element of reason [depth], and the existential distortion of them both."²⁴ Transcendence of reason's own limitations only becomes possible by participation in the New Being through the grasping presence of the divine power-to-be.

At times, when the depth of reason is emphasized at the expense of its structure, a situation arises in which an authority claims reason over and against its actualized structure. This is the situation of heteronomy. "The basis of a genuine heteronomy is the claim to speak in the name of the ground of being and therefore in an unconditional and ultimate way."²⁵ Conversely, an autonomous situation is the tendency of reason to ignore its depth in order to affirm and actualize itself according to its essential structure without allowing the self-world situation to influence or condition its functioning.²⁶ This can be seen in the tendency of liberal theology to promote scientific "reasoned" understanding at the cost of acknowledging the depth of religious experience. A theonomous situation occurs only when both the depth and structure of reason are unified so as to be fully present. "[Theonomy] means autonomous reason united with its own depth... the quest for a reunion of what is always split in time and space arises *out* of reason and not in opposition to reason."²⁷ The perfect reunification of depth and structure cannot happen under the conditions of existence because of estrangement. Complete theonomy is only

found in the grasping presence of the New Being revealed in Jesus as the Christ. In Tillich's terms, the quest for this presence is the quest for revelation.²⁸ The quest for revelation finds its answer in Jesus as the Christ, the person in whom the structure and depth were fully realized, who reveals the true and final theonomous situation, the *Kairos*, and who, therefore, is effective without restriction.

Similarly, the polarity of relativism and absolutism manifests within the tension between the static and dynamic elements of reason. When the static element is unduly emphasized either an absolutism of tradition or an absolutism of revolution arises. Both types claim the final priority, or absolutism, of a particular static structure – maybe based in accepted morals, political forms, philosophy, or, alternatively, a utopian ideal. Conversely, when an emphasis on dynamism is given preference over the static elements of reason, either a positivistic or cynical relativism arises. Positivistic relativism accepts a given without an expected relationship to an absolute. For instance, truth might be understood as relevant within only a particular group or context. Every group and context can (and do) pragmatically form guiding truths which are merely given and not eternal. Cynical relativism works negatively to use “reason only for the sake of denying reason.”²⁹ Often arising from disillusionment of revolutionary ideals, this form of relativism disdains any type of rational structure.

Only an answer that is at the same time perfectly concretely-particular and perfectly universal is able to harmonize the tension between the static and dynamic experienced in the polarity of relativism and absolutism.³⁰ This answer is, according to Tillich, found in the central revelation of Jesus as the Christ who in his particular historical person and life manifests the universal structure of Being-Itself. Jesus of Nazareth sacrificed himself for the universal truth of the Christ, and this made him the Christ. Inseparably, however, Jesus is known to be the Christ because the universal is revealed in and through his particular conditioned existence. One could not be without the other. Full participation in the universal requires the full individualization of the particular. Jesus is the Christ because Jesus is both completely concrete and universal, sacrificing his static form but in doing so becoming transparent to his true, universal form. Through his ultimate self-sacrifice, Jesus is the determinative revelation of the divine Logos.³¹ Jesus is the Christ because in him the ontological structure is reunited without

estrangement even under the conditions of finite existence. Jesus is the Christ because in him the divine Logos, the essential structure of being, is fully present.

This exploration of reason and its ambiguity has assumed the fundamental relationship of self and world. This relationship of self and world has correspondingly assumed an actual reality of “being.”³² Because a person can transcend what is given, she is aware of the possibility of nonbeing.³³ This awareness gives rise to the “shock of nonbeing.” It is here, in the experience of the “shock of nonbeing” that a person experiences the ontological questions. “Why is there something; why not nothing?”³⁴ The only answer to this question is God. Only God, because God is Being-Itself, is able to withstand the abyss of this question of non-being. This organizes the ontological concepts that characterize Tillich’s use of ontology: First is Being-Itself – the power to be – God. This is followed by the fundamental relationship between self and world which structures all being. The third level is the dual experience of essential and existential being. Fourth are the forms of thought and being – the categories of finite existence.³⁵

Theology is engaged in the study of Being-Itself; it is an ontological endeavor in the purest sense but not the study of ontological structures themselves that characterizes philosophy. Rather, theology studies the theological significance of these structures as revealing Being-Itself. This is only possible because there are concepts that transcend the merely ontic.³⁶ It is essential to recognize, however, that the concepts used by philosophy and theology that enable ontology are truly and simply “concepts” (and not, for instance, eternal truth) that can (and must) change if and when the structure of experience changes. They are *a priori* in the sense that they determine the nature of experience. These concepts are known, however, from critical examination of experience.³⁷ Theology’s task is to use the *a priori* concepts that form the structure of experience for people “in present experience and historical memory.” Anything that goes beyond this immediacy is no longer true anthropology.³⁸

If the concepts that ground the language of theology are temporally determined and ambiguous, as Tillich posits here, a claim that Jesus is the Christ and that this claim is the central revelation of the Christian message must itself be understood so that the universal and particular are held together in a

unified but dynamic way. The concepts that enable this to make sense must be allowed to change without losing recognition of eternal, universal, and final message of Jesus as the Christ. This is a surprising strength of Tillich's christology as a Logos-christology. Because in Jesus of Nazareth, the divine Logos fulfills the human logos, through its actualized participation in historical reality, the christological assertion that Jesus is the Christ throughout history and into the future, refuses an absolutizing of finite reason's conceptualizations. Only in Jesus as the Christ is the structure of Being-Itself self-communicated as unambiguously manifest, but always with a reception that is ambiguous. Theology's concepts, as a formulation of finite existence, cannot themselves be unambiguously or univocally communicative of Being-Itself.³⁹ Faithful theology is grasped by Spirit to participate in the fullness of the reality of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. This is why Jesus as the Christ is the final criterion of theology. Any theology that communicates God's Word must participate in and be accountable to the reality that is Jesus the Christ because only in Jesus the Christ is the finite estrangement of reason overcome to reveal the ground of our being through the self-communication of the Logos. Because of this, Jesus the Christ must always be at the center of theology as the central and final revelation of the form, meaning and structure of reality. Our concepts that define this reality must never be confused with that toward which they point.

Jesus the Christ as Savior

All that exists participates in both being and nonbeing. In coming into existence, a potential being transitions, without exhausting its possibilities, into the actual. While purely a potential being, she is part of relative non-being, the *me on*, with only a latent power to be.⁴⁰ In actualizing, the power to be manifests her into realized existence. This actualization is the transition from essential potential to existential reality, from unexhausted potentiality into a determined particularity that is both finite and discordant. The discordant separation between essential being and actualized existence is termed by Tillich as the universal experience of estrangement.⁴¹ That which is finite always actualizes with an

ambiguous combination of essential and existential elements.⁴² A person's estrangement from Being-Itself, from God, is her sin and, as the Christian message proclaims, no person can escape from estrangement, or be forgiven her sins, by her own power. "No act within the context of existential estrangement can overcome existential estrangement."⁴³ It is only in the grasping presence of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ that a salvific answer is found. "A person, in relation to God, cannot do anything without God. We must receive in order to act. New being precedes new acting."⁴⁴ Jesus as the Christ is the new reality that offers a reunification and reconciliation of estranged elements, in contrast to the old reality of estrangement between person and God.⁴⁵

The transition from essence to existence that characterizes all finite being, for Tillich, is understood through the symbolism of "the Fall."⁴⁶ Simply stated, "it is finite freedom which makes possible the transition from essence to existence,"⁴⁷ Mythologically speaking, the story of the Fall is the story of transitioning from a state of dreaming innocence⁴⁸ to the state of an aroused freedom for actualization. In choosing to actualize, a person turns away from her dreaming innocence and in doing so transitions into existence and guilt.⁴⁹ "The transition from essence to existence is the original fact... It is that which gives validity to every fact."⁵⁰ The freedom to actualize, by definition, entails that a person is able to contradict even her essential nature, but only within the context of her relationship with destiny. Since freedom and destiny mutually condition each other, destiny both limits the freedom of the individual for self-contradiction while also positing participation in the universal transition from essence to existence. Therefore, "there is no individual fall."⁵¹ The finite freedom to turn away from Being-Itself is always framed by the universal and comprehensive nature of destiny. This is the basic nature of humanity's fall into a state of estrangement with estrangement being the universal sin.

It is foolish to look for a point at which humanity became evil because there is no time or space that is beyond or outside the experience of choosing to self-actualize.⁵² The categories of existence are only within existence. Because the choice for self-actualization is one made in finite freedom and as a result of universal destiny, the resulting estrangement of existence is both a situation of personal responsibility and universal tragedy. When the word "sin" is used in relationship to estrangement, the

personal element of responsibility for “turning away from that to which one belongs” is emphasized while the term “estrangement” highlights the universal guilt of all that exists.⁵³ Never, however should the two be understood separately from each other. Sin, as an individual act, is intimately and inseparably related to estrangement as universal destiny.⁵⁴

Traditionally theology categorizes sin into three types: unbelief, hubris, and concupiscence. Unbelief, simply stated, is the turning away from God in order to turn toward the self and the world. This causes the loss of the essential unity of a self with her ground of being (God) and her world. It does not mean a loss or denial of the ground of being. It is the separation and disunity of a person’s will with God’s will. Unbelief is the placement of the center of a self outside the divine center.⁵⁵ Hubris differs from unbelief in that it is the claiming of the self’s center as the center of that person and her world. It is the self-elevation of what is finitely human into the sphere of the divine; it is a tragedy of greatness. The third option, concupiscence, is different from unbelief and hubris in that it is not simply the turning away from the divine. Concupiscence is desire to pull all that is into the finite sphere of the self. The unlimited desire for knowledge, sex and power are symptoms of the concupiscence but are not, of themselves, concupiscence.⁵⁶ Each of the experiences of estrangement, in its self-contradictory nature, pulls apart the whole. They are elements of the “structure of destruction” that characterizes existential experience as estranged.⁵⁷ “Sin is evil because of its self-destructive consequences.”⁵⁸

Jesus is the Christ “because his being has the quality of the New Being beyond the split of essential and existential being.”⁵⁹ The New Being is the historical actualization of the divine Logos in a particular person; the divine Logos is fully realized within the human logos of Jesus of Nazareth. It could have only happened in a person because it is only in person that “the potentialities of being are completely actual.... Only a person has an unlimited power of self-transcendence, and for just this reason he has the complete structure, the structure of rationality.”⁶⁰ In Jesus as the Christ, that which is estranged in the structure of actualized existence is reconciled into the structure of Being-Itself. There is never a separation between the person Jesus and God; he is not estranged. Jesus as the Christ participates completely in existence, including suffering all the temptations of finitude but without

estrangement, without falling into a position of unbelief, hubris and concupiscence.

Jesus is the Christ because at all points during actualized existence he remains essentially unified with God. In and through this unity, Jesus the Christ is victorious over all of the temptations of finitude.⁶¹ The symbols of the cross and the resurrection are “symbols of the divine paradox of the appearance of the eternal God-man unity within existential estrangement” and of he who is the New Being as “victorious over the existential estrangement to which he has subjected himself.”⁶² Jesus the Christ is the savior because – and only because – in and through a particular personal life, the conditions of estrangement were overcome by the essential unity of divine Logos with human logos.⁶³ “Out of his unity with God he has the unity with those who are separated from him and from one another by finite self-relatedness and existential self-seclusion.”⁶⁴ This is the basis of ongoing experiences of God’s saving grace, the manifestation of the power to be to overcome estrangement and offer reconciliation from within existence.

An Argument for Spirit Christology

“The divine Spirit was present in Jesus as the Christ without distortion. In him the New Being appeared as the criterion of all Spiritual experiences in past and future. Though subject to individual and social conditions his human spirit was entirely grasped by the Spiritual Presence; his spirit was ‘possessed’ by the divine Spirit, or, to use another figure, ‘God was in him.’ This makes him the Christ, the decisive embodiment of the New Being for historical mankind.”¹

When Nels F. S. Ferré suggested to Tillich that his theology would be better developed within the category of spirit rather than being, Tillich agreed. Further, Tillich stated that he had already begun the process of illuminating his theology from this vantage within the third volume of his *Systematics*. To truly maximize the positive in his *Systematics*, Ferré posits, one should “accept spirit as the most inclusive category, with power for focused self-reality, spirit being thus an entity but with power to penetrate all finite events.”² It is the personal Spirit that gives a “view of God as Infinite-finite” not a philosophical construct of being as substance. And it is this God “of personal Spirit who is love” who is truly infinite and creatively oriented toward the good of creation because meaning is only given substance in faith and faith is purely within the loving domain of the Spirit.³ Many scholars do read Tillich’s *Systematics* as presenting a Spirit christology. This essay endeavors to present an argument for an understanding of Tillich’s christology primarily through and in relationship with the theological category of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the Christ because in him, without ambiguity, the Spirit manifests the decisive appearance of the New Being. This central embodiment of the New Being, through the grasping power of the Spirit, serves as the final criterion and center of history. In Jesus of Nazareth, God as Spirit conquers the estrangement of finitude from within existence through a historical participation in life. Because it is the Spiritual Presence in Jesus that makes him the Christ, the continuity between the decisive appearance of the New Being and the appearance of New Being throughout history is ensured. All experiences of the Spirit manifesting the divine self – that is itself – are experiences of the same self-manifestation that occurred decisively and salvifically in Jesus as the Christ;⁴ therefore, all appearances of

the New Being are subject to the criterion of Jesus as the Christ.⁵ Jesus is the Christ because God as Spirit made her determinative appearance for the fulfillment of the human spirit in him. The fact that this appearance is witnessed is a further work of the Spirit. The New Being in Jesus the Christ is recognized through the power of the Spirit because: “Only Spirit can discern Spirit.”⁶ Tillich asserts that “the event upon which Christianity is based has two sides: the fact which is called “Jesus of Nazareth” and the reception of this fact by those who received him as the Christ.”⁷ The fact is the Spirit’s creation of the New Being in Jesus of Nazareth and the reception of this fact is the creative activity of the divine Spirit to grasp the human spirit so that the New Being is recognized in Jesus as the Christ. “Through the Spirit the divine fullness is posited in the divine life as something definite, and at the same time it is reunited in the divine ground.”⁸

Tillich defines spirit as the *telos* of life – life’s aim and directedness toward its fruition and fulfillment.⁹ There is no separation in the ontological structures within spirit; spirit unifies the power of self-transcendence and freedom with the deep meaning of reality in all of its structures and forms. God’s life is Spirit because “God as living is God fulfilled in himself and therefore spirit. God is spirit.”¹⁰ This has profound christological implications and forms the basis for Tillich’s understanding of the healing salvation found in Jesus as the Christ today. It is this dynamic aim that is Tillich’s primary concern. The Spirit’s creation of the New Being, revealed in Jesus as the Christ, at the center of the Christian message, is continuing to grasp and shape humanity towards its fulfillment and aim, its *telos*. This essay therefore supports the thesis that Tillich offers a truly dynamic Spirit-christology.

Jesus as the Christ

Person, and only person (to our knowledge), lives within the dimension of the spirit. The dimension of the spirit is where transcendence becomes possible through self-awareness of the processes of life. In order to outline Tillich’s argument for Spirit christology, it is essential to understand his definition of spirit – both as a human and divine reality. Therefore, this essay begins with definitional

statements of the terms “life,” “dimension,” and “spirit.”

“Life” is the “actuality of being.”¹¹ In actualizing, a being transitions from essential potentiality into existence and necessarily participates in all that is finitude including estrangement. Life includes the potential or the power to become and, in enacting this power to become, life takes on existential reality that moves the potential into a particular form.¹² Because life is a mixture of essential and existential, a philosophical exploration of life requires both an essentialist and an existentialist viewpoint. The essentialist approach elaborates the “*multi-dimensional unity of life.*” The existentialist approach elaborates the ever-present ambiguities that characterize finite existence and which can only find satisfactory answer in the creation of the New Being by the Spiritual Presence. Tillich’s doctrine of the *multi-dimensional unity of life* speaks to the essential unity of the infinite diversity in life. Even as elements pull against each other and dimensions are characteristically unique in actualized experience, there is an essential harmony and unity to all that is.¹³

The quest for this unity is the quest for the New Being, which is present only where the Spirit is present and which is decisively revealed in the event Jesus as the Christ. Tillich terms this quest as the quest for unambiguous life¹⁴ and recognizes that it is fulfilled only in an anticipatory and fragmentary way.¹⁵ Two things are true: God never leaves humanity alone and the New Being is always present in history because the Spirit is continuously active throughout creation. But final fulfillment of a complete realization of unambiguous life is purely an eschatological proposal. “There is always the state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence, followed by the profanization and demonization of the process of reception and actualization and by the prophetic protest and renewal.”¹⁶ Only in Jesus the Christ was the Spirit present without distortion, possessing his human spirit and raising him into the fulfillment of a unified essential and existential reality. This is what it means to say Jesus is the Christ because in him is the New Being. Jesus the Christ is the center of history because he is the full presence of the Spirit from whose power all fragmentary experiences of the Spirit draw and to which they point as their final criterion in being received and actualized with ambiguity in finite experience.

The reconciliation and unification of the multidimensional unity of life with existential reality

occurs through the Spirit's grasping and shaping of the human spirit in the realms of religion, morality and culture. The Spirit works through the human dimension of the spirit to prepare and enact existential encounter with the New Being in Jesus the Christ.¹⁷ Tillich promotes the use of the term "dimension" over the term "level" as a descriptive metaphor for the diversity of life because dimensions, unlike levels, express uniting ideas without hierarchical necessities. Whereas "levels" indicate a certain mutual-exclusion where one level is differentiated as uniquely existing outside other levels, dimensions "cross without disturbing each other; there is no conflict between dimensions."¹⁸ Each dimension is uniquely characterized by how the universal categories of time, space, causality and substance are expressed under its predominance. Historical time is phenomenologically different from psychological time and inorganic causality is different from organic causality. Importantly, however, dimensions do not exclude one another. Rather, a more complex dimension, such as the organic dimension, includes all the dimensions that condition its actualization. For instance, the dimension of the inorganic is always an element within the organic realm. Further, because of the essential multi-dimensional unity of life, it also true to say that the organic is present within the inorganic as potentiality; essentially as matter of potential, the more complex dimensions are present in the dimensions that condition them.¹⁹

The dimension of the spirit is unique to humanity because only humans have a developed capacity for self-awareness. The dimension of the spirit actualizes the personal-communal within the psychological realm.²⁰ This allows for a self to transcend itself through deliberating and then deciding to actualize certain potentialities.²¹ Spirit therefore includes what is commonly understood through terms such as "soul," "mind," and "reason." The dimension of the spirit is a dimension of awareness, intentionality, structure, form, *eros*, passion and imagination.²²

The human spirit is the human capacity for growth and self-transcendence through self-awareness, deliberation, and decision in the realms of morality, religion, and culture. To transcend itself through deliberation and decision, a centered-self moves outside of itself in such a way that allows for the maintenance of its self-identity even as it changes (self-alteration). In moving back into its center and completing the motion, the self returns as different but it has not lost either its identity or its center.²³

This circular movement is the self-integration of life. A centered-self also moves beyond an existing individual center to that which is beyond its immediate circle. The circle is expanded; the center is enlarged; identity is maintained. This is the function of self-creation, the movement of the spirit ever forward beyond itself in the horizontal direction. The movement of actualization finally pushes beyond the limitations of finitude toward its depth of meaning. The centered-self strives to transcend its finite form; in other words, the centered-self actualizes with a self-transcendence in the vertical direction.²⁴ These three functions of life under the dimension of the spirit – self-integration, self-creation, and self-transcendence – all remain dependent on the polarities of life and the basic structure of the self-world relationship.²⁵

Because all that exists participates in estrangement, the functions of life, as expected, manifest with ambiguity. There is always the possibility, threat and reality of self-disintegration (in tension with self-integration), self-destruction (in tension with self-creation), and the profanization of life (in tension with self-transcendence). Each of these dynamic ambiguities of the spirit in existence manifest within the ambiguities of the polarities of life. Self-integration is the state of balance between self-identity and self-alteration and it rests in the polarity of individualization and participation. If one side of the polarity gains emphasis to the detriment of the other, a self disintegrates itself through the power of the spirit. Self-creation, as a process of growth, exists only through the polarity of dynamics and form. All that comes into being, must come into being within a form even if that form is simply relative. Otherwise, the chaos of no-longer-formed but also not-yet-formed gains predominance within the polarity. This results in self-destruction.²⁶ Growth exists in ambiguity with decay, self-creativity with self-destruction. The ontological polarity of freedom and destiny characterize the movement of self-transcendence. “Life in degrees, is free from itself, from a total bondage to its own finitude. It is striving in the vertical direction toward ultimate and infinite being.”²⁷ This is the greatness of life, its sublimity. This greatness however is always mixed with the smallness of life.²⁸ Under the dimension of the spirit, the ambiguous nature of the self-transcendence of life leads to the polarity of the great and the tragic.²⁹ Simply stated, “the very nature of creation as an act of the spirit implies this duality: creating means transcending the

given in the horizontal direction without a priori limits, and it means bringing something into a definite, concrete existence.”³⁰

The basic nature of the human spirit is the drive for self-transcendence toward the unconditional, but because of the ambiguities of existence, the human spirit cannot reach what it is striving for – namely, “unambiguous morality and an unambiguous culture reunited with an unambiguous religion.”³¹ Tillich offers that the solution to this finitely impossible quest is only found in “the experience of revelation and salvation; they constitute religion above religion, although they become religion when they are received.”³² The divine Spirit, is simply stated, “God present.”³³ God, Being-Itself, is in all dimensions of human life and therefore inclusive of all dimensions of the universe. The presence of the power to be, the Spiritual Presence, is correspondingly the presence of unambiguous life in all dimensions.³⁴ The divine Spirit is the dynamic power that overcomes existential ambiguity and fulfills – even if fragmentarily – the human spirit’s drive toward its depth through self-integration, self-creativity, and self-transcendence without falling prey to the self-disintegration, self-destruction, or profanization that characterizes finite spirit. This is the fulfillment of the human spirit by being driven beyond its own limitations by the divine Spirit; the human spirit remains the human spirit even as it is grasped by Spiritual Presence and ecstatically transformed and saved in the revelation of unambiguous life.³⁵ The divine Spirit is not known outside the human spirit because the divine Spirit is itself, analogously, essential and unambiguous life or the perfect unification of the what is estranged in the human spirit. The experience of revelation and salvation – the experience of the presence of the divine Spirit fulfilling the spirit’s transcendence – is always found in the existential encounter with the New Being in Jesus the Christ because he alone manifests without distortion the unified essential that is the divine Spirit within the actual that is the human spirit.

The historical dimension, as the final and overarching dimension of life, presumes the circular, horizontal and vertical creative movements through self-aware decision and deliberation under dimension of the spirit. The dimension of history further includes the quality of moving toward the spirit’s ultimate fulfillment, or telos, through its creative acts under the predominant impact of time.

Each particular creative act is joined with all others as a series defined by an irreversible after-each-other-ness. The historical dimension shifts the focus from the relative fulfillment of individual creative acts to the process of ultimate and universal fulfillment of all dimensions in time.³⁶

All causality rests in the participation of a substance out of which it grows and which forms the resulting consequences. Under the historical dimension the substance out of which causality grows is the “historical situation,” that is the culture or unifying elements “out of which historical causality drives toward the new.”³⁷ The aim of history is “a centeredness of all history-bearing groups and their individual members in an unambiguous harmony of power and justice... the creation of a new, unambiguous state of things... [and] the universal, unambiguous fulfillment of the potentiality of being.”³⁸ The historical situation involves the complexity of all the dimensions of life including their ambiguities.³⁹ The quest for unambiguous life within the historical dimension, therefore, is a quest for a situation that realizes without distortion the multidimensional unity of life. This is the quest for the “Kingdom of God”⁴⁰ which has been historically revealed without distortion only in the event, Jesus as the Christ.

The symbol the “Kingdom of God” has a double meaning. It indicates both a real participation in the dynamics of history and the eternally and universally present answer to the ambiguities of existence.⁴¹ The Kingdom of God is the fulfillment of every dimension of life. In Jesus the Christ both sides to the meaning of this symbol are given meaning. Every individual is conditioned by the situation of the history-bearing group to which he belongs. Because history is the all-embracing dimension, these conditions are physical, social and spiritual; they are the conditioning elements of the individual’s destiny.⁴² This is true of Jesus the Christ, as well. But within his participation in history – which included all of its conditions – Jesus was grasped by the Spirit and the universal fulfillment of life and its meaning occurred. Jesus as the Christ is the center of history because in him the “questions implied in historical time and in the ambiguities of historical dynamics have been answered.”⁴³ The Spirit brings history to its aim in Jesus the Christ and in doing so manifests the Kingdom of God.⁴⁴ “The appearance of Jesus as the Christ is the historical event in which history becomes aware of itself and its meaning.”⁴⁵

Jesus the Christ as Savior

The salvation that occurs in the appearance of Jesus the Christ is the center of the healing activity of the New Being created by the Spiritual Presence throughout history. Just as Jesus the Christ is the center of history because he is the final revelation of the New Being, he is also the center of salvation history. This is because “where there is revelation, there is salvation. Revelation is not information about divine things, it is the ecstatic manifestation of the Ground of Being in events, persons, and things.”⁴⁶ The New Being in Jesus the Christ, as the overcoming of the estrangement of existence through divine participation in existence, heals the rupture between the ground of being and that which is. Human participation in this New Being is participation in the healing and salvation that Jesus the Christ offers as a creation of the divine Spirit.⁴⁷ These statements of soteriology are fundamental to the christological project because “christology is a function of soteriology.”⁴⁸ Jesus is the Christ because he brings the New Being who is the universal power of healing in the world.⁴⁹

The only way to participate in the New Being is through the grasp of the Spirit. God’s presence in finite existence is grace; it cannot be attained, or contained, but it is an ongoing reality experienced through the creative power of the Spiritual Presence. The Spirit pulls the individual into an encounter with the New Being in Jesus the Christ and in doing so heals that which is torn asunder in the estrangement. This is the power of the Spirit to drive the human spirit beyond itself. The Spirit’s grasping of the human spirit and the human spirit’s response to this grasp are faith and love, respectively. While faith is the receptive element and love is the responsive element, both are always and only creations of the Spirit and both are present whenever one is present.

The formal definition of “faith” is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern. Accordingly, every person has faith, because every person has an ultimate concern. The material definition of “faith,” rendering it particularly Christian, is that faith is the “state of being grasped by the New Being as it is manifest in Jesus as the Christ.”⁵⁰ All forms of faith are directed toward the universal manifestation of the New Being in Jesus the Christ. Faith is neither a belief nor an acceptance of

authority's valuation; faith does not stand in place of evidence. The obedience that faith enjoins is to *participate* in the divine Spirit that is grasping us. We accept the Spirit's transformative power to unite that which is estranged in our life "in spite of the infinite gap between the divine Spirit and the human spirit."⁵¹

Whereas faith is the state of being grasped in the power of the Spirit, "love is the state of being taken by the Spiritual Presence into the transcendent unity of unambiguous life."⁵² Love is a creating, unifying and transcending drive toward the reunion of separated elements of life. The Spiritual Presence, and only the Spiritual Presence, creates *agape* – unambiguous love. Love participates in the beloved, changing the lover and the loved into the fullness of their totality. *Agape* has the structure of the New Being in that unambiguous love accepts the beloved without restriction even in spite of an estranged and demonized state and then expects the re-establishment of holiness, greatness and dignity in its acceptance. *Agape* is a symbolic and essential characteristic of the divine life revealed primarily in Jesus as the Christ.

The Cross and Resurrection of the Christ offer insight into the New Being in Jesus the Christ as faith and love. These are the two primary symbols of the Christian understanding; the Cross represents the ultimate subjection and surrender of the one in whom the New Being is manifest without distortion "to the ultimate consequence of existence, namely, death under the conditions of estrangement."⁵³ Correspondingly, the Resurrection of the Christ points to "the victory of the Christ over the ultimate consequence of the existential estrangement to which he subjected himself."⁵⁴ Both of these can be claimed as inseparable, factual and symbolic through – and only through – faith.⁵⁵ In the symbol of the Cross, the *agape* and faith of the Christ is brightly illuminated. Jesus as the Christ sacrifices his finite self out of love for the world. This is the work of the Spirit whose grasp does not cease even in the midst of struggle, exhaustion, and despair.⁵⁶ The very nature of Jesus as the Christ whose being is the New Being is that of *agape* and faith. The faith and love of Jesus the Christ, which enable him to give himself fully to the world through self-sacrifice, form the center of the New Being in him.⁵⁷ The divine Spirit is unambiguously present within him.

The victory of the New Being over the powers of existence includes victory over temporal transitoriness. The death of the person in whom the New Being was manifest, consigning him to the past – into relative nonbeing, the *me on* – is shown to be conquered in the resurrection. “He [Jesus the Christ] is present wherever the New Being is present. Death was not able to push him into the past.”⁵⁸ The historical spirit of an individual person was “raised above transitoriness into the eternal presence of God as Spirit.”⁵⁹ This is not a change in Jesus as the Christ at the time of his death and resurrection but the continuing fullness of the New Being in him. Even under the condition of death, the divine Spirit is fully his human spirit without distortion. “He ‘is the Spirit’ and we ‘know him now’ only because he is the Spirit.”⁶⁰

A Critique of Both Positions

Most developed statements of christology include elements of both a Spirit and a Logos centered understanding. This is a natural consequence of the immanent Trinity. However drawn, the three persons of the one God, while differentiated and distinct, manifest within the fullness of the one Absolute, which is fully the three without separation. Therefore, any examination of the second person, the Christ, must at once reveal his unique and differentiated importance within the context of his inclusiveness of the unambiguous singularity of God. Theologians have accomplished this in a wide variety of ways. The New Testament, itself, offers differing options for understanding the relationship of Jesus as the Christ within the Trinitarian God.

One view emphasizes Christ as the particular person of Jesus in whom the Spirit manifests and empowers the decisive self-revelation of God. This interpretation which is prevalent in the synoptic gospels pays particular attention to the Spirit's descent and anointing of Jesus at the time of his baptism. Alternatively, it is possible to understand the Christ primarily in and through the Johannine phrase "the Word became Flesh." Becoming theologically dominant with the council of Nicaea this interpretation emphasizes the differentiated particularity of Jesus Christ as the Word of God, God's Logos. The Logos is God's communicated and understandable self-revelation of Godself as a saving God in and for humanity. Jesus is the Christ because in him God's Reality is understandably, fully, and without distortion present within human experience and history.

Neither of these interpretations is typically shaped in such a way as to be exclusive of the other. Some element of the objective presence of God known in the Logos remains in most Spirit christologies and the essential dynamism of the outpouring Spirit manifests through elaboration of the Trinitarian relationship in most Logos christologies. Rather, different theologians give christological priority to one of the elements while the other is made secondary, although not necessarily less important. This prioritization, however, has dramatic consequences to the understanding of both the being of Christ and

the saving work of Christ.

When the Logos is given a place of prominence, a concrete understanding of the eternal God as a God of love who in her very nature is disclosed to be actively salvific is emphasized. When this position is taken, however, a risk of understanding the self-disclosure of God in a static or exclusive way is accrued. Feminist theologians, post-modern theologians, and others often object to this type of understanding for very real and necessary reasons. Because Logos christology often emphasizes the transcendence of God, or God's overarching power incarnated concretely and approachably in the man Jesus of Nazareth, it requires a bold statement of faith. It can be viewed as metaphysical dreaming and naive speculation to claim that – even when grasped by Jesus as the Christ – one can state with any comprehensiveness, or objectivity what it is that is revealed by God as God even by means of analogy.

Alternatively, when the Spirit is given a place of prominence, God is revealed as dynamically, actively, and immediately saving throughout history in the outpouring of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Christ because in Jesus of Nazareth, the Spirit manifested in history without ambiguity in such a way as to interrupt and conquer the sins of humanity. The risk to this emphasis is that the particularity and objective quality of the historically actual and only unambiguous self-disclosure of God is lost for the always and everywhere quality of the Spirit. Spirit christologies importantly recognize the ongoing presence of the Christ in the world, but also often leave the door open for relativism and subjective indeterminacy. Could it be that Jesus of Nazareth is understood to be the Christ only because of an adoption by the Spirit and therefore only centers Christianity for so long as he is a useful tool of the divine Spirit?

The first essay of this paper offered an argument for reading Tillich's christology as a Logos christology. In Jesus as the Christ the essential structure of Being-Itself appeared under the conditions of existence without falling prey to estrangement. In realizing Being-Itself in a being, the destructive splitting of the estranged elements of existence is overcome. The structure of Being-Itself, God, is made present in humanity through her Word as the divine Logos. Because the divine Logos corresponds to the human logos, Jesus as the Christ is the appearance of Essential God-Personhood, the New Being, the

saved Being. The union of the divine Logos and the human logos in Jesus the Christ, as the perfect unification of the elements of being with Being-Itself, reconciles actualized and, therefore, estranged beings into the essential ontological nature of undisrupted and eternal unification. Jesus is the Christ because of the complete appearance, or incarnation, of the divine Logos in history as the perfection of human life.

While understanding Tillich's christology this way clearly posits a concrete understanding of what Jesus the Christ is as the answer to the human predicament, it leaves open a number of essential questions. Should a philosophical construct be held theologically relevant that reconciles what is thought to be Jesus the Christ *because* of what the philosopher thinks needs to be in Jesus in order to answer the human situation? Doesn't this confuse a particular person or community's desires and limited knowledge of what is with the Divine and the meaning offered by the Divine? Isn't this confusing the purpose of theology and actually falling prey to the threat of idolatrous tendencies in human thought that claims our finite and ambiguous desire for meaning as its own answer? McKelway, a student of Karl Barth, gives an example of this type of critique. He argues that Tillich's logo-centrism does not give adequate emphasis on the revelatory nature of Jesus as the Christ. Jesus Christ reveals the interruption of God into existence and, therefore, requires revelation to understand. Tillich, he suggests, takes too much from human experience in order to posit this ambiguous understanding into an essentialized Jesus Christ with the claim of ultimate meaning and understanding. If Jesus Christ is nothing other than a projection of our estranged humanity, then there is no reason why this projection cannot or will not be found in places other than Jesus as the Christ. Making God the fulfillment of the structure of human life is fundamentally counter to the Christian claim.¹ In the words of Osborne, "the description of Essential Manhood is basically that of the finite, the created, the human. It is not an explanation of the divine Logos... To be sure, there is an openness for the divine Logos, but the emphasis falls strictly on the created finite side."²

Interpreting Tillich's christology through the lens of the Logos is not adequate because it does not take seriously his assertion that the event upon which Christianity is based has two sides: the fact

which is called “Jesus of Nazareth” and the reception of this fact by those who received him as the Christ.”³ Rather, this interpretation falls prey to Tillich’s own challenge to hold in tense unity the polarities of the ontological structure of being. It overemphasizes the divine self of Jesus as the Christ in the self-world relationship and therefore cannot effectively reconcile the dynamic presence of the New Being in history. It is the dynamism of the New Being that interrupts our estrangement – something that nothing finite can accomplish – and claims us into the reality that is the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. The factual element of “Jesus of Nazareth” is emphasized to the point that the question of his reception as the Christ is unanswerable. “How can we reach this ‘heaven’; how can we know about the *logos*-structure of being, about the essential nature of man and his world?”⁴ These questions that Tillich himself raises are left unanswered.

The second essay offered an opposing view. It read Tillich’s christology as developed primarily through the category of the Spirit. The Spirit’s creation of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ fulfills the dynamics of life and history. It is this Spiritual creation that forms the center of history, revelation, and salvation. In Jesus as the Christ existence is healed and estrangement is overcome. The experience of this healing occurs in the revelation of Godself as the power for being. Salvation is known where the New Being in Jesus as the Christ is revealed. To be grasped by the Spiritual Presence is experienced as faith; to respond to this grasp of the Spirit is agapic love. The New Being in Jesus as the Christ, as a person who was grasped without distortion and without end by the divine Spirit, is truly the perfect faith and love illuminated in the ultimate self-sacrifice of the cross.

As with the interpretation of Tillich’s christology as a Logos christology, a primarily Spirit-driven understanding is not adequate. It overemphasizes the world element of the self-world polarity. While the question of the grasping appearance of and reconciliation in the New Being fully present in Jesus as the Christ in history is dynamically answered, the factual element of what this grasping and reconciliation consists of is left unanswered. A representative sample of this type of critique is made by Cushman: “Tillich’s doctrine of ‘the Christian event’ is, if not an ontological, at the least a methodological, docetism. The reason is simple: under his guidance we have been finally deprived of the *particular*, even

assuredly of the name 'Jesus,' and we have been offered in its place 'the power of the New Being'... Tillich, for all his efforts, has been able to show us only 'the Christ,' the universal, ..."⁵ Or, alternatively, in the words of Bryant: "In his key christological statement, namely that the normative revelation of God is that of "essential manhood" in Jesus as the Christ, Tillich fails to argue convincingly how such an abstract concept could or did constitute a particular historical revelation of God, or how it did unite with a particular person Jesus of Nazareth."⁶

It is difficult to read Tillich's christology as a coherent or sufficient statement of Jesus as the Christ through a primary lens of either the Spirit or the Logos. The history of interpretation is peppered with astonishment at the defensible diversity of opinion of Tillich's system. Thatcher's list is a prime example: "Some critics believe him to be orthodox in his Christology, others that he is Nestorian, Sabellian and Monarchianistic, Adoptionistic, Docetic, Dionysiac, and Gnostic!"⁷ The dialectical tension of the whole belies any attempt to interpret his christology through a forced preference for one of the traditional elements. Whichever one takes as the primary point for interpretation, Tillich seems to offer both evidence and counterevidence. His concern, the final essay of the paper will argue, is to hold in tension the ambiguities of finitude when speaking of the infinite. Finite speech cannot approach Being-Itself directly because it only thinks of itself, the world, and the encounter with the New Being within the splitting and partiality of estrangement. Christology, in speaking of the divine as a human endeavor, must theologically and structurally hold its elements in tension, uniting the poles of the ontological structure through its dialectical movement.

An Argument for a Dialectical Christology of Logos and Spirit

Rather than emphasizing either the Logos or the Spirit elements in Jesus the Christ as the answer to the questions of estranged existence, this final essay proposes a dialect of Logos and Spirit; in doing so, this essay works to take seriously both the factual and dynamic sides of the Christological event. The question is no longer viewed as an either/or; it is a situation of the both/and. This type of dialectic is consistent with how Tillich structures the whole of his *Systematic Theology*. Jesus is the Christ in actualizing the complete and unambiguous divine Logos in historical reality. As the full presence of the structure of Being-Itself, the divine Logos is itself manifest as the creative power of the Holy Spirit – although only within a finite understanding of perfectly unified polarity. Similarly, the New Being, made present through the activity of the divine Spirit throughout history, is the divine self-revelation of the structure of Being-Itself, the divine Logos, factually, concretely, and formally appearing in Jesus of Nazareth. As Tillich states, the being and the work of the Christ are essentially and inseparably one,¹ although only approachable by finite perspective through the polar relationship of form and dynamism that structures all being. Jesus is the Christ, the center of all Christianity, because in Jesus as the Christ is the perfect reunion of is and becoming, of now and not yet, of form and dynamics, of individualization and participation, of freedom and destiny, of divine Logos and divine Spirit. Practically, theology can, and possibly must, approach this through a dialectic of Logos and Spirit, holding the undeniably differentiated and yet ultimately unified elements revealed in Jesus the Christ as fully the one Christological answer.²

The term 'dialectic' should be briefly defined before proceeding with this christological argument. Dialectics are the fundamental structure of Tillich's thought. He believes that the dialectics of the logical, ontological, historical and religious levels all are mutually interrelated. The religious level – the level predominantly relevant to the thesis of this paper – deals primarily with "the identities and contrasts both within man and between man and the infinite, the ground and abyss of his existence."³

Whereas for Hegel, the dialectics of history will ultimately resolve into a final synthesis, Tillich holds that for every synthesis there is a diastasis. It will never be the case that something is actualized in history that is an unbroken complete synthesis. Rather “the ultimate synthesis occurs only beyond history.”⁴ Another way to say this is that it occurs only through the salvation, or healing, of the existential situation offered in the New Being. This is the foundation of the underlying dialectic between the finite and infinite. A dialectic is the expression of the relationship between ideas and existence. A dialectic is “a principle for showing the implications”⁵ of that which theology already has by being grasped by the power of the Spirit and by being ultimately concerned.⁶

This essay will proceed by building on the arguments developed in the first two essays as mutually interrelated and completing positions. Its purpose is not to suggest that Tillich’s position is historically to promote a christological dialectic of Logos and Spirit. Rather, this essay suggests that Tillich’s *Systematic Theology* is structurally dependent on this dialectic and therefore requires an interpretative approach that allows for this tension in order to fully appreciate the strength of his christology as the center of his theology. This essay further argues that this christological dialectic of Logos and Spirit forms a powerful tool that is needed by theology in order to take seriously the plurality and need for immanent interruption and dynamism within the contemporary situation without losing its center and form. In order to accomplish this, this essay will address the following questions in turn: 1) What is the relationship of the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth to the symbol of the Christ? 2) How is it revealed in Jesus as the Christ that the essential ontological structure of polar relationships is actualized without estrangement in fully human historical existence?

Historic and Symbolic Reality

The statement, “Jesus is the Christ,” points to the two elements of the Christological confession. First is a concrete reality – Jesus of Nazareth – whose person is particular. He is not imaginative, parabolic, or simply a symbolic tool; Jesus has a concrete body, history and life. In other

words, the man Jesus of Nazareth really exists. Remarkably, and against any human expectation, this man's actual life is joined totally with the Divine Life, and in this joining, the structure of human existence is fulfilled by the structure of Being-Itself. Second, this person is received as the Christ. Even as he suffers death by crucifixion, Jesus is recognized by those whom he encounters as being anointed by God. He is recognized as being the bearer of the New Being. His nature as the Christ transcends the limitations of his finitude to reconcile the estranged elements of existence. The term "Christ" or "Messiah" is a symbol whose rich historical meaning extends long before the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth. The term indicates the presence of the universal fullness of reality in an actualized human life; it indicates a historical person upon whom the Spirit has descended and through whom the Spirit transforms historical reality.⁷ "Christ" indicates recognition of the presence and transforming activity of the Holy Spirit in historical existence.⁸

The statement, "Jesus is the Christ" tells of an event that goes against everything that is to be expected: reality is transformed and healed in a single, concrete person because in him the structure of Being-Itself appears without distortion and participates fully in existence. Alternatively, from the other direction, the Spirit's ongoing presence appears concretely and unambiguously in a historical life-moment and in doing so fulfills the human spirit's quest for self-transcendence. This is the only paradox of Christianity: God fully participates in existence in and through the real human life of Jesus of Nazareth, and is consequently victorious over estrangement. Tillich is explicit in promoting both the factual and symbolic truth of the statement "Jesus is the Christ." There is truly a person "Jesus" who was and is the Christ and who sacrificed himself without losing himself in order to become the completely transparent symbol of the ground of his being, Being-Itself.

Tillich states: "Only if the existence is conquered in *one* point – a personal life, representing existence as a whole – is it conquered in principle, which means 'in beginning and in power.' This is the reason that Christian theology must insist on the actual fact to which the name Jesus of Nazareth refers."⁹ He further states: "If the factual elements in the Christian event were denied, the foundation of Christianity would be denied."¹⁰ It is indispensable to the Christian understanding that, in an

objective and literal sense, in an ordinary person known as Jesus of Nazareth, God's reality was present without distortion or partiality.¹¹ It is in the historically actual union of divine and human that estrangement is conquered and the destructive nature of existence is healed. The "concreteness and incomparable uniqueness of the 'real' picture" of Jesus as the Christ is why Christianity offers the final and universal answer to predicament of estranged existence.¹²

That an actual person lived during the years 1-30 in whom the divine Reality was present is a fact that Tillich simply holds without qualification. God's reality was fully manifest in a historical life, in such a way that the divine and human union was existentially recognizable by faith. The structure of Being-Itself appeared in a being. This person, however, is not available to historical critical investigation, as the failure of the search for the historical Jesus has shown. Rather, historical scholarship has shown "that there is no picture behind the biblical one which could be made scientifically probable."¹³ Tillich adamantly claims the historical objectivity of the event upon which Christianity is based while insisting that this person is probably not scientifically obtainable. Further, he insists that not only is indeterminacy in the results of historical research irrelevant to faith, but that should historical research show that it is highly unlikely that a person Jesus of Nazareth lived, faith – and its necessary historical object of Jesus as the Christ – would continue. The complexity of this position, if it is not written off as a self-contradictory attempt to try to have it both ways, gives insight into his christology as dialectical. Faith, a product of the Spirit, guarantees its object, the appearance of the New Being in Jesus the Christ as the fulfillment of the human logos through the unrestricted participation of the divine Logos.¹⁴

The insufficiency of historical methodologies for guaranteeing the person Jesus of Nazareth does not refuse the factual element of the Christian event. In Tillich's words, "methodological skepticism about the work of historical research does not deny this element."¹⁵ The biblical account is the witness of Jesus the Christ by those who received the man as the Christ.¹⁶ It tells through estranged human language of the particular instance when the universal, which encompasses and fulfills all spaces and times, appeared. Those around him were claimed by his particular-Universality, his finite-Infinity. The name Jesus of Nazareth may or may not be historically accurate in an objective sense, but the

photographic reality of the historical person in whom the Spiritual Presence was fully present is undeniable to any person grasped by the reality of Jesus as the Christ. Both the historicity and the symbolic participation in Ultimate Reality of the Bible's interpretative attempts to communicate the inseparably joined elements of Jesus and his reception as the universal New Being is confirmed and created each time it is read in the power of the Spiritual Presence. The factual element is itself guaranteed by faith, but faith would not be possible without the historical occurrence of the New Being.¹⁷

This same tension between objective reality and subjective reception presents itself in understanding what makes the Christ. The activity of the Spirit guarantees that the structure of Being-Itself fulfills being because the Spirit is Being-Itself and thus enacts the fulfillment, but it is also true to say that the Spirit is the active drive inherent to Being-Itself revealed in the determinative communication of the Logos' fulfillment of the human logos in Jesus the Christ. Which takes priority? It is the position of this essay that to say "Jesus is the Christ" within Tillich's system requires the dialectical tension of Spirit and Logos as finite symbols of the unified infinite New Being. Finite language can only point to the infinite through participation in its truth and the dialectic is the linguistic tool of choice for attempting to do so; dialectics are "a principle for showing the implications"¹⁸ of that which theology already has by being grasped by the power of the Spirit and by being ultimately concerned.

The joining of divine and human in Jesus of Nazareth is the essential structure of Being-Itself, the divine Logos, joining with the structure of actualized and existing being, the human logos. Jesus the Christ is Essential God-Personhood. He is the person in whom "the universal principle of divine self-manifestation is, in its essential character, qualitatively present in an individual human being...."¹⁹ Tillich states without qualification that to participate in the universal Logos, to experience salvation, requires participation in the Logos appearing in Jesus the Christ. It cannot simply be, however, that the objective reality of the divine Logos fully present with the human logos in Jesus of Nazareth sufficiently understands the Christological assertion of Jesus as the Christ. Something that makes him the Christ transcends the temporal and spatial limitations of our experience of the New Being in him. Past,

present and future are united in the experience of Jesus as the Christ. He is the center of history because he is the event toward which both the past and future run. Through his full participation in the power of the Spirit, Jesus continues to be received as the Christ. Jesus the Christ is immediately present and effective; he is the determinative saving presence both before and after the centered event of the man Jesus of Nazareth in history. "Before Jesus the Christ" more accurately means before existential encounter with the New Being in him. The New Being in Jesus the Christ is the same New Being with which people continue to have an existential encounter.²⁰ The symbol of the Christ unites the horizontal element of historical expectation with the vertical element of universal significance.²¹

These two Christological elements of fact and reception do not oppose each other. Rather, they stand in mutual fulfillment. To hold one without the other as its completion causes theology to slip into distortion. If the presence of the New Being as a Spiritual creation is separated conceptually from the self-manifestation of Being-Itself, or the divine Logos, in a particular historical moment, it cannot offer itself as the true mediator because it no longer represents the meeting of infinite and finite, but rather the appearance of the infinite over and against the finite.²² The Logos is christologically essential.²³ However, the recognition that Jesus is the Christ is a claim that in the one person Jesus of Nazareth, God self-reveals God-self as fully realized and fulfills the human spirit through the Spirit. The Logos' revelation that God is Spirit is recognized only under the impact of the Spirit. Jesus is the Christ because in him the divine Logos fulfills the human logos to reveal God as Spirit fully manifesting the New Being within him. These are dialectical and inseparable understandings.

The unrestricted freedom and presence of the divine Spirit for empowering recognition of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ ensures that the limited existence of Jesus of Nazareth in whom the Logos was fully manifest is not confused with the divine Life itself. The Logos, as the revelation of the structure of Being-Itself in human life, gives objective and real content to the grasping presence of the Spirit throughout time and space. Simply stated, neither Logos nor Spirit is whole without unification with the other. Thus christology, as an estranged finite endeavor, must protect the tensive unity of its parts in speaking of the ultimate synthesis of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. Only the object of its

discourse offers an unambiguous answer.

The Ontological Structure of the Christological Dialectic

The christological dialectic is able to speak of Jesus as the Christ as the final answer to the questions of existence deeply and with clarity. In understanding the questions of the Christ dialectically, the structure of christology acknowledges its own participation in the structures of finitude while pointing beyond itself to that which it speaks of and in which it participates – the New Being in Jesus the Christ. The ontological structure of finitude is one of polarity; existence is characterized by the changing emergence and submergence of elements of life over and against one another even as, essentially, the structure of being requires their unification for fulfillment. This is the basic definition of estrangement: a state of separation between that which should be unified but which in actualization is not.

Fundamentally, according to Tillich, the polarities of life push and pull against each other as the self-world relationship is lived out.

As a product of finite life, it is natural that his christology is structurally dependent on the polarity of these tensive relationships. Both the full humanity of Jesus who is the Christ and the finitude from which theology develops require that christology should be approached in a manner equivalent to the rest of the system, namely, through dialectic. It is primarily through a dialectical approach that the polar elements of the ontological structure are conceptually held together, even as they split in experienced estrangement. For the same reasons, the dialectic is the most powerful method to speak of Jesus as the Christ. It allows the ultimate mystery of Being-Itself revealed and experienced in the New Being of Jesus the Christ to become approachable without falsely claiming completion or submitting to the idolatrous tendency of confusing the conditioned for the unconditioned.

Tillich presents three polarities as fundamental to the ontological structure: individuality and universality, dynamics and form, and freedom and destiny.²⁴ Each of these pairs is held in tension so as to describe reality in a way that refuses generalization into “highest generic concepts.”²⁵ Rather, each

polarity self-corrects the tendency to universalize what is only partial. The polarities contain the subject-object struggle as they conceptually structure the self-world relationships through their highly dialectical formulas.²⁶ Simply stated, “each pole is meaningful only in so far as it refers by implication to the opposite pole.”²⁷ Whether or not it succeeds, the dialectic of the polarities strives to point to a situation of unified mutual fulfillment transcending estrangement.

The first ontological polarity is individualization and participation. Essentially, a being is a particular reality; it is itself; it is individualized. To be completely itself means that it participates without restriction in the collective whole of reality. Put differently, essentially a being participates in the fullness of reality, which entails that it has formed in itself a center that is uniquely its own. The full individualization of a self is required for full participation and vice versa; a self that fully participates in her universe is also a self that is fully individualized. As Tillich states, “Without individualization nothing would exist to be related. Without participation the category of relation would have no basis in reality.”²⁸ Only in Jesus as the Christ, the bearer of unambiguous agapic love, is this unification realized. That it could happen in Jesus as the Christ is because a human self is unique to the rest of creation; a person “participates in the universe through the rational structure of mind and reality.”²⁹ The human self has a logos which is analogous to the divine Logos. The self can be destroyed, but as a centered whole, it cannot be split. This, according to Tillich, is a basic ontological quality of every being.³⁰

Within existence, a finite self is never fully centered and therefore never fully individualized. Rather, there are instances of greater and lesser individualization and correspondingly situations of greater and lesser participation. This is fundamental to the basic ambiguity of finite life. The state of estrangement separates a individual person from participation in her world; individualization and participation pull apart from each other. This results in an objectification of the self as an object with and under other objects. When subjectivity and objectivity separate, the person is left alone, individualized but without participation, lonely and vulnerable to being submerged in a collective.³¹

Christology, in respect to the polarity of individualization and participation, must effectively express the New Being in Jesus the Christ in terms of both his total individualization and his total

participation. It is a simplistic misunderstanding to categorize his total individualization as the human quality of Jesus the Christ and his participation as the divine in him. This splits the christological assertion apart. Rather, the christological assertion of individualization is that Jesus the Christ is absolutely centered in his perfect unity of divine and human as the New Being; the christological assertion of participation is that this centered unity of divine and human embraces, impacts, and is receptive to all of creation. Jesus the Christ participates fully as a completely realized individual union of divine and human. No finite conceptual tool is in itself singularly sufficient for this task of christology.³² A dialectic of Logos and Spirit is required.

A particular strength of a christology focused through the Logos is the ability to concretely claim what is the centered uniqueness of the particular union of divine and human in Jesus the Christ. The first essay of this paper argued that Tillich answers this question philosophically through a reinterpretation of the Johannine frame, “the Word became flesh.” While he explicitly cautions against the misunderstanding the word ‘became’ to mean anything other than the universal appearance of the divine, Tillich recognizes that this Biblical phrase inescapably points to the one time that Being-Itself entered history and engaged in being in such a way as to fulfill it unambiguously and completely; the structure of Being-Itself, in this sense, “became” the human structure in the life of Jesus the Christ. This understanding emphasizes the pole of individualization over participation and must be held dialectically related to the second essay’s argument for the New Being in Jesus as the Christ as a participatory reality throughout history and space. In Tillich’s words: “Spirit-christology acknowledges that the divine Spirit which made Jesus into the Christ is creatively present in the whole history of revelation and salvation before and after his appearance.”³³ “The Spirit who created the Christ within Jesus is the same Spirit who prepared and continues to prepare mankind for the encounter with the New Being in him.”³⁴ It is through understanding the New Being as Spirit, that the polar element of participation is fulfilled. Structuring christology dialectically as Logos and Spirit gives depth and substance to the dialectic of individualization and participation in the person Jesus the Christ.

The second ontological polarity is dynamics and form. Form is what makes a being what it is;

form is the particular logic of being that allows reason to grasp and shape it. Further, it is a form that essentially determines what something is that determines its true content.³⁵ While things, materials, and events are transformed by the grasping and shaping of human reason to have a form and/or content that is distinguishable from the material naturally formed, form should not be separated from content. Rather, one must ask whether a new form created has or does not have a relevantly true substance. Meaningful and genuine forms are those that are immediately expressive of the current existential situation. Meaningful forms exist only in harmonious relationship with dynamics that drive life forward.³⁶ Dynamics refers to the potentiality of being, the *me on*, the movement into form of what is not currently actualized and only might exist.³⁷ But because nothing exists without form, the motion of life processes relating form and dynamics is highly dialectical. Under the dimension of the spirit, the polarity of dynamics and form is termed vitality and intentionality. Vitality is the unlimited, transcendent power of a person to create worlds beyond the given world without any *a priori* limitation. Only humanity is capable of doing so because only humanity has intentionality. Intentionality is “the rational structure of subjective reason actualized in life processes.”³⁸ Intentionality is the form element of the polar relationship that conditions, directs and forms a person’s creative vitality. “In this context ‘intention’ does not mean the will to act for a purpose; it means living in tension with (and toward) something objectively valid.”³⁹ Dynamics and form indicate the nature of life as both a situation of being and of becoming.

As with all of finite existence, an actualized person lives within this polar relationship ambiguously. Dynamics and form move against each other in the state of estrangement. When they do so, dangerous consequences arise. When the dynamic element of life separates from form, a person drives towards a self-transcendence that has no content or aim other than dynamics itself. It is not possible to create something that has meaningful content without a form; to attempt to do so is destructive. Alternatively, if form separates from dynamics, equally destructive consequences result. Form without dynamics can be nothing more than a rigid and empty external shell. A form only has substance when it has dynamically relevant meaning. The oscillating polarity of form and dynamics is

practically witnessed in the movement between a chaotic dynamism and staid law-driven formalism that characterize experience.⁴⁰ Dynamics and form require each other for substance and meaning, but in estranged existence and to their own detriment, one side of the polarity usually gains prominence.

The oscillation between form and dynamics is evidenced by theology's back and forth movement between a preference for a Logos or Spirit driven christology. Only in the New Being in Jesus the Christ is form perfectly aligned with dynamism, and just as with the polarity of individualization and participation, christology must strive from an ambiguous finite perspective to indicate the ultimate unification of the structure of being in the New Being. One way of saying this is that the form of the New Being is itself the diversity and movement of life throughout the multi-dimensional structure and, therefore, the form of the New Being is itself truly dynamic. Alternatively, one could more simply say that the New Being participates dynamically, in an unlimited number of ways, throughout history in a single universal form. Tillich posits the term "eternal God-manhood" or "eternal God-man-unity" to indicate this dialectic in the nature of the New Being.⁴¹

As a human endeavor in response to the grasping reality of the New Being, christology always runs the risk of falling to one side or the other of the form-dynamism polarity. When christology gains an empty formalism, it speaks words consonant with the New Being but without meaning. The idea of the Christ becomes limited, partial, anachronistic or inconsistent with the experience of the Spiritual Presence. In this situation, the symbol of the Christ loses its universality. This constant threat is a reason why so many theological voices working for liberation or pluralism refuse Logos christologies. Instead, many of these voices prefer Spirit driven understandings of Jesus the Christ that emphasize the dynamic activity of God in Christ. In order for Jesus the Christ to heal the brokenness of the world, he needs the dynamism of the Holy Spirit to interrupt and destroy the idolatry of raising particular forms to the level of the absolute and universal. Alternatively, when christology loses the element of formalism it speak of nothing more than one in a series of chaotic and relativistic moments of a fragmentary encounter with the universal New Being. Without form, christology loses its ability to speak meaningfully of the revelation of the one infinite God who grasps us through her perfect love and in

doing so heals all of existence. The New Being interrupts the world's brokenness to offer universal healing, but the transformation enacted is indeterminate and limited to its particular manifestation. Jesus the Christ loses his place as the determinative center of history, revelation and salvation. He is no longer understood to be revelatory in a final and determinative way; rather, he is simply one instance, albeit an unambiguous and complete instance, of what happens throughout creation. The christological understanding loses the element of individualization of the Logos to the universal participation of the Spirit and, thus, recognition of the final revelation of the power-to-be.

It is only through a dialectic of Logos and Spirit that christology does not fall prey to either of these dangers. The Spirit-driven pole dynamically pushes Logos christology beyond its finite limitations while the formalism of the Logos pole gives a definite and communicable shape to the universally but fragmentarily experienced Spirit. Tillich is very careful to maintain the relationship between form and dynamism when speaking from either a more Spirit or more Logos centered perspective. This was evidenced in the first essay in Tillich's caution that concepts used by finite reason to understand what it is to say the Logos appeared in the human logos are themselves subject to the correcting and healing of the New Being which is their object. Theology's concepts, as a formulation of finite existence, cannot be unambiguously or univocally communicative of Being-Itself, they participate in the dynamism of life.⁴² Faithful theology is grasped by Spirit to participate in the fullness of the reality of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. Conversely, Tillich is equally explicit that form is an absolute need of theology. "He who sacrifices the Logos principle sacrifices the idea of a living God, and he who rejects the application of this principle to Jesus as the Christ rejects his character as the Christ."⁴³ Logos and Spirit – christologically – need each other. Speaking directly of Jesus as the Christ, but also with relevance to the question of the christological endeavor, Tillich states: "Life in unity with God, like all life, is determined by the polarity of dynamics and form, and as such is never without the risk implied in the tensions between dynamics and form."⁴⁴

The third ontological polarity is freedom and destiny. This polarity is witnessed in the dialectical experience of a person's responsibility for the shape of her existence even as her life and decisions are

conditioned by the world. Her freedom is the freedom for responsibility; her destiny is the concrete basis of what makes her decisions hers. Together, the polarity of freedom and destiny is “the structural element which makes existence possible because it transcends the essential necessity of being without destroying it.”⁴⁵ To be free, in the sense of a person’s freedom, is to be a responsible, deliberate, and decision-making self.⁴⁶ Freedom is the choosing of particular possibilities over and against others through a process of deliberation that engages all of a centered being. The centered-self who acts in freedom is, therefore, fully responsible for her actions. Destiny is not deterministic or external. It is simply (and radically) the totality “out of which our decisions arise.”⁴⁷ Destiny is the comprehensive basis of a self as given, formed by nature, history and herself.⁴⁸ Therefore, destiny is the foundation for freedom, and, likewise, a person’s freedom shapes her destiny.

As with all the polar elements of the ontological structure, an actualized being experiences freedom and destiny in an ambiguous and tense relationship. An estranged, finite freedom separates from the foundation laid by destiny. Rather than freely choosing for the ground of being, finite freedom becomes willful, indefinite and arbitrary; it loses its center. Destiny without freedom becomes nothing more or less than mechanical necessity. Destiny seems to be a contingent and controlling force from either the outside and/or from internal compulsions. This is the situation when a person claims herself as the center of the universe and it is a characteristic reality of estranged existence.⁴⁹

Tillich explores deeply the relationship between the life of Jesus as the Christ and the polarity of freedom and destiny. In Jesus the Christ, as the New Being, freedom and destiny are perfectly united in mutual fulfillment. His life was lived through his free self-determination; although, as with every other person, these actions were a consequence of his destiny formed by the conditioning circumstances of his life. While it is unique to him that God participates directly in existence through human life, Jesus as the Christ “is not an isolated life, and the New Being, which is the quality of his own being, is not restricted to his being. This refers to the community out of which he comes and to the preparatory manifestations of the New Being within it; it refers to the community which he creates and to the received manifestations of the New Being in it.”⁵⁰ The enacted freedom of Jesus the Christ to sacrifice

himself is the fulfillment of his destiny; from the other direction, the conditioning destiny of Jesus the Christ, gave him the freedom to fulfill himself as the New Being through his free choice for self-sacrifice. “Freedom without destiny is mere contingency, and destiny without freedom is mere necessity. But human freedom and, consequently, the freedom of Jesus as the Christ are united with destiny and therefore are neither contingency nor necessity.”⁵¹

It is the final contention of this paper that christology must recognize its own dependency on the estrangement of the polarity of freedom and destiny in striving to speak of the only point of unambiguous reconciled unification in the New Being. This is best accomplished through the dialectic of Logos and Spirit. In his opening words Tillich points to this struggle within theology: “A theological system is supposed to satisfy two basic needs: the statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation.”⁵² The same holds true for the christology internal to the broader theological system. It strives to point to the eternal truth revealed in the New Being in Jesus the Christ in relationship with its conditioning situation. The language of christology must work to unite the poles of freedom and destiny even in how it speaks of the Christ.

Every understanding of the statement “Jesus is the Christ” arises from conditioning elements of destiny. The eternal revelation in Jesus the Christ as the center of history is itself an important part of destiny. Destiny is inclusive of both the continuity with the universal New Being and the community and situation from which it is spoken. The pole of freedom is christology’s ability to choose through in the Spiritual Presence to speak in words that are both true to the central revelation of the New Being and that are meaningful within its context. Spirit centered christology protects the freedom to change. When christological change is freely enacted in harmony with the conditioning elements of the contextual situation, destiny, and freedom are united. However, within a constant danger lurks that either a contingent freedom for change or necessitating context will gain the upper hand. Freedom for change is only meaningful when it unites with the necessity of the conditioning elements. Conversely, a Logos driven christology tends to protect against an untethered freedom that is nothing more than contingency through its emphasis on its universal and eternal ground and purpose. It places emphasis on

a kerygmatic continuity with the central revelation as eternally relevant. Tillich, by combining Spirit and Logos in a dialectical relationship, creates a christology willing to freely sacrifice itself to more transparently point to its eternal object but only as empowered by the conditioning destiny of the determinative appearance of the New Being in Jesus the Christ and the structure of the divine Logos fulfilling the human logos. It is through dialectic that finite activity can strive to unite its estranged elements in order to effectively point toward the eternal.

This paper has argued for understanding Tillich's christology dialectically through the concepts of the Logos and Spirit. The thesis has been that it is through this dynamic interpretive approach that the fullness and cohesiveness of Tillich's christology gains meaning and power. The whole of the *Systematic Theology* is ultimately centered in the Christ. Jesus as the Christ is the determinative criterion of every other element. Therefore, how one interprets Tillich's use of the phrase "Jesus is the Christ" determines how one interprets Tillich's theology as a whole. Because Tillich deeply understood the theological importance of both dynamism and particular concreteness in speaking of eternal truth within and for a particular situation, his christology dynamically flexes and evolves beyond itself even as it insists on the concrete, historical, and universal validity of its object – the appearance of the New Being in Jesus the Christ as the center of Christianity. Tillich builds a christological structure with two centers; one center develops primarily through the category of the Logos and the other through the category of the Spirit. The first essay worked to establish Tillich's theological argument for a christology of Logos; the second essay developed his argument for a christology of Spirit. The third essay attempted to very briefly indicate some of the critiques that hold neither centered reading of Tillich's christology sufficient. The final essay posited an alternative dialectical interpretation that takes seriously and harmonizes the arguments for a Spirit and a Logos christology in the *Systematic Theology*. It has worked through the question of Jesus the Christ's historic and symbolic reality and in pursuit of Tillich's ontological structure to show that these arguments are not in opposition, but do confront each other with necessary

dialectical tension. In the words of John Dillenberger, “What one recognized in Tillich is wisdom, the wisdom which sees through, which does not always have to be right, and which in this freedom is always more nearly right. For Tillich, everything which he touched was really of one piece, without being doctrinaire or losing its dynamics... Therefore there was for him no final point of security, but only a stance of faith which was related to, and expressed itself through, man’s careful analysis and explication of the understanding of himself and his world.”⁵³

Notes

All references to the *Systematic Theology (ST)* are cited in the following full format: *ST* volume-number : page-number.

Introduction

¹ A.T. Mollegan, “Christology and Biblical Criticism in Tillich” in *The Theology of Paul Tillich* edited by Charles W. Kegley, (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1982), p. 267.

² “Because his writings showed two faces, Tillich could state in his *Systematic Theology* both that the incarnation (or Jesus as the historic enactment of the incarnation) is indispensable to the Christian faith and also that incarnation, historically and factually speaking, is blasphemy and nonsense; or even, as he blandly told the Japanese Buddhists, that it was a matter of indifference to him as a Christian theologian whether Jesus ever lived.” Nels F. S. Ferré, “Tillich and the Nature of Transcendence” in *Paul Tillich: Retrospect and Future* by Nels F. S. Ferré, Charles Hartshorne, John Dillenberger, James C. Livingston, and Joseph Haroutunian, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 7.

³ Paul Tillich, “A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation” in *Church Quarterly Review*. 298 (1949): 133-148.

⁴ Although the positions in this paper were developed through the experience of reading a number of secondary sources interpreting Tillich’s theology, this paper is not a written response to previously developed arguments. An understanding of Tillich’s christology as dialectic needs to engage directly with the range of existing interpretations, but to do so out of the scope of this paper as an initial constructive argument.

An Argument for Logos Christology

¹ Alexander J. McKelway, *The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich*, (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), p. 177.

² “A modifying interpretation of the term “Incarnation” would have to follow the Johannine statement that the “Logos became flesh.” “Logos” is the principle of the divine self-manifestation in God as well as in the universe, in nature as well as in history. “Flesh” does not mean a material substance but stands for historical existence. And “became” points to the paradox of God participating in that which did not receive him and in that which is estranged from him.” *ST* 2:95.

³ *ST* 1:23.

⁴ *ST* 1:49.

⁵ *ST* 1:49.

⁶ *ST* 1:34-40. Notably, experience is not a source for theology in Tillich’s system. Rather, “experience is the medium through which the sources ‘speak to us.’” *ST* 1:40.

⁷ *ST* 1:59-65.

⁸ “The assertion that Jesus as the Christ is the personal unity of a divine and human nature must be replaced by the assertion that in Jesus as the Christ the eternal unity of God and person has become historical reality. In his being, the New Being is real, and the New Being is the re-established unity between God and person.” *ST* 2:148.

⁹ *ST* 2:97.

¹⁰ *ST* 2:120.

¹¹ *ST* 1:259.

¹² *ST* 1:72.

¹³ *ST* 1:72.

¹⁴ *ST* 1:72.

¹⁵ *ST* 1:73.

¹⁶ *ST* 1:74.

¹⁷ *ST* 1:75.

¹⁸ Within the definition of ontological reason as *logos*, Tillich explores the relationship between objective reason as “the *logos* structure of the grasped-and-shaped world” and subjective reason as “the *logos* structure of the grasping-and-shaping-self.” (*ST* 1:75) For Tillich, this relationship is one of inseparable and organic interdependence. The words ‘grasping’ and ‘shaping’ form the essential center to the inseparable and yet tensive relationship between the subjective and objective qualities of reason. “The mind receives [grasps] and reacts [shapes].” (*ST* 1:76) The *logos* structure of reality as a whole encompasses both the subjective and objective within their mutual correspondence. This entails that the *logos* is both static and dynamic; it includes both what is and what might be, the actual and the possibility. “The new and old in history and nature are bound together in an overwhelming rational unity which is static and dynamic at the same time.” (*ST* 1:79) *ST* 1:75-79.

¹⁹ Nels Ferré, “Tillich and the Nature of Transcendence”, in *Paul Tillich: Retrospect and Future* edited by Nels Ferré, Charles Hartshorne, John Dillenger, James C. Livingston, and Joseph Haroutunian. (New York: Abingdom Press, 1966), p. 14.

²⁰ *ST* 2:112.

²¹ *ST* 2:94. See also John Heywood Thomas. *Tillich*. (New York: Continuum, 2000), p. 109.

²² *ST* 1:81. Tillich additionally frames the ambiguous existence of reason with a third polarity of formalism and emotionalism. I offer that the first two polarities are straight-forwardly decisive in understanding the answer of the New Being as Logos. This basic formula of the New Being as the reunification of these two polarities forms the foundation of understanding Tillich’s christology as a *logos* christology.

²³ *ST* 1:80.

²⁴ *ST* 1:78.

²⁵ *ST* 1:84.

²⁶ “It resists the danger of being conditioned by the situation of self and world in existence. It considers the conditions as the material which reason has to grasp and to shape according to its structural laws. Therefore, autonomous reason tries to keep itself free from ‘ungrasped impressions’ and ‘unshaped strivings’...” *ST* 1:84.

²⁷ *ST* 1:85.

²⁸ *ST* 1:85.

²⁹ *ST* 1:88.

³⁰ *ST* 1:89.

³¹ “The question of the final revelation is the question of a medium of revelation which overcomes its own finite conditions by sacrificing them, and itself with them... He becomes completely transparent to the mystery he reveals.” *ST* 1:133. Dwyer draws out the importance of this statement as follows: “Final revelation is rather the answer to our most basic human need: the need to escape from our situation of estrangement, of alienation, of separation from others... Only the presence of the living God in our midst, in an alienated world, and with us in our alienation, can penetrate this darkness, can bring our estrangement to an end, and give us the reconciliation, reunion, creativity, meaning and hope we need. And this is precisely what revelation is and does...” John C.

Dwyer, "The Implications of Tillich's Theology of the Cross for Catholic Theology" in *Paul Tillich: A New Catholic Assessment* edited by Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parrella. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994) p. 76.

³² ST 1:163.

³³ ST 1:186.

³⁴ ST 1:163.

³⁵ This is a philosophical cornerstone for Tillich's whole project. He posits the four levels of ontological concepts as: "1) the basic ontological structure which is the implicit condition of the ontological question; 2) the elements which constitute the ontological structure; 3) the characteristics of being which are conditions of existence; and 4) the categories of being and knowing." In Jesus as the Christ the structure of Being-Itself – that which precedes being – manifests in existing life. Jesus as the Christ is the eternal structure of Being-Itself – the divine Logos – incarnated human and truly existing. In the use of his ontology, Tillich emphasizes the eternal divine presence made known in Jesus of Nazareth. ST 1:164.

³⁶ "Systematic theology cannot, and should not, enter into the ontological discussion as such. Yet it can and must consider these central concepts from the point of view of their theological significance... the arena of ontological discussion is not the theological arena, although the theologian must be familiar in it." ST 1:164.

³⁷ ST 1:166.

³⁸ ST 1:167.

³⁹ Tillich is clear about the frailty of human concepts for expressing the new reality that is Jesus as the Christ. For instance, in discussing the history of christological language, and, in particular, the use of terms such as 'logos', he states: "It is unfair to criticize the Church Fathers for their use of Greek concepts. There were no other available conceptual expressions of man's cognitive encounter with his world.... The christological dogma saved the church, but with very inadequate conceptual tools. The inadequacy of the tools is due partly to the inadequacy of every human concept for expressing the message of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ.... The christological dogma uses Greek concepts, which had already undergone a Hellenizing transformation in the Hellenistic period, as in the concept of Logos. This process continued, and to it was added the Christianization of concepts.... Theology must be free from and for the concepts it uses. It must be free from a confusion of its conceptual form with its substance, and it must be free to express this substance with every tool which proves to be more adequate than those given by the ecclesiastical tradition." ST 2:139-142.

⁴⁰ "Existing can mean standing out of absolute non-being, while remaining in it; it can mean finitude, the unity of being and non-being. And existing can mean standing out of relative non-being, while remaining in it; it can mean actuality, the unity of actual being and the resistance against it. But whether we use the one or the other meaning of non-being, existence means standing out of non-being." ST 2:21.

⁴¹ "Estrangement points to the basic characteristic of man's predicament. Man as he exists is not what he essentially is and ought to be. He is estranged from his true being. The profundity of the term 'estrangement' lies in the implication that one belongs essentially to that from which one is estranged.... Man's hostility to God proves indisputably that he belongs to him." ST 2:45.

⁴² ST 2:28.

⁴³ ST 2:78.

⁴⁴ ST 2:79.

⁴⁵ ST 2:27.

⁴⁶ "The story of Genesis, chapters 1-3, if taken as a myth, can guide our description of the transition from essential to existential being. It is the profoundest and richest expression of man's awareness of his existential estrangement and provides the scheme in which the transition from essence to existence can be treated." ST 2:31.

⁴⁷ ST 2:31.

⁴⁸ Tillich defines "dreaming innocence" as the state of essential being which "has potentiality, not actuality," having "no place, it is *ou topos* (utopia)" and having "no time; it precedes temporality, and it is suprahistorical." Dreaming innocence is both real and not real – anticipating the actual but not actual. It is a state without responsibility, experience, or moral guilt. "It designates the state before actuality, existence, and history." ST 2:34.

⁴⁹ ST 2:35-36.

⁵⁰ ST 2:36.

⁵¹ ST 2:32.

⁵² “‘Adam before the fall’ and ‘nature before the curse’ are states of potentiality. They are not actual states. The actual state is that existence in which man finds himself along with the whole universe, and there is no time in which this was otherwise. The notion of a moment *in* time in which man and nature were changed from good to evil is absurd, and it has no foundation in experience or revelation.” ST 2:41.

⁵³ ST 2:46.

⁵⁴ “Sin is a universal fact before it becomes an individual act, or more precisely, sin as an individual act actualizes the universal fact of estrangement. As an individual act, sin is a matter of freedom, responsibility and personal guilt. But this freedom is imbedded in the universal destiny of estrangement in such a way that in every free act the destiny of estrangement is involved and, vice versa, that the destiny of estrangement is actualized by all free acts. Therefore, it is impossible to separate sin as fact from sin as act.” ST 2:55.

⁵⁵ ST 2:48.

⁵⁶ ST 2:53.

⁵⁷ ST 2:60.

⁵⁸ ST 2:61.

⁵⁹ ST 2:121.

⁶⁰ ST 2:120.

⁶¹ ST 2:127.

⁶² ST 2:159.

⁶³ As Dwyer puts it: “Tillich’s appropriation and adaptation of the classical “Logos” christology demonstrates the real power of participation. The Logos, the divine principle of self-manifestation (or God himself, as one who, from all eternity, intends to reveal himself exhaustively in a human being), ‘reveals the mystery and reunites the estranged by appearing as a historical reality in a personal life.’ (ST 2:112)” Dwyer, p. 88n17.

⁶⁴ ST 2:134.

An Argument for Spirit Christology

¹ ST 3:144.

² Ferré, “Tillich and the Nature of Transcendence”, p. 16-17.

³ Ibid. p. 17

⁴ “God in his self-manifestation, wherever this occurs, is the same God who is decisively and ultimately manifest in the Christ. Therefore, his manifestations anywhere before or after Christ must be consonant with the encounter of the center of history.” ST 3:147.

⁵ “Every new manifestation of the Spiritual Presence stands under the criterion of his manifestation in Jesus as the Christ.” ST 3:148.

⁶ ST 3:150.

⁷ ST 2:97.

⁸ ST 1:251.

⁹ “Telos stands for an inner, essential, necessary aim, for that in which a being fulfills its own nature.” ST 1:249.

¹⁰ ST 1:249.

¹¹ ST 3:11.

¹² “We use the word ‘life’ in this sense of a ‘mixture’ of essential and existential elements.” ST 3:12.

¹³ ST 3:12.

¹⁴ ST 3:12.

¹⁵ ST 3:140.

¹⁶ ST 3:148.

¹⁷ “The Spirit who created the Christ within Jesus is the same Spirit who prepared and continues to prepare mankind for the encounter with the New Being in him.” ST 3:147-148.

¹⁸ ST 3:15.

¹⁹ ST 3:18.

²⁰ ST 3:21.

²¹ ST 3:27.

²² ST 3:24.

²³ ST 3:30.

²⁴ Tillich suggests the phrase “driving toward the sublime.” ST 3:31.

²⁵ “The basic structure of self-identity and self-alteration is effective in each and each is dependent on the basic polarities of being: self-integration on the polarity of the individualization and participation, self-creation on the polarity of dynamics and form, self-transcendence on the polarity of freedom and destiny. And the structure of self-identity and self-alteration is rooted in the basic ontological self-world correlation.” ST 3:32.

²⁶ “Destruction can then be described as the prevalence of the elements of chaos over against the pole of form in the dynamics of life. But there is no pure destruction in any life process. The merely negative has no being. In every process of life structures of creation are mixed with powers of destruction in such a way that they cannot be unambiguously separated.” ST 3:51.

²⁷ ST 3:86.

²⁸ ST 3:91.

²⁹ ST 3:92-93.

³⁰ ST 3:317.

³¹ ST 3:109.

³² ST 3:109.

³³ ST 3:107.

³⁴ ST 3:108.

³⁵ ST 3:112.

³⁶ ST 3:318-319. “Therefore man’s historical consciousness has always looked ahead beyond any particular new to the absolutely new, symbolically expressed as “New Creation.” ST 3:326.

³⁷ ST 3:325.

³⁸ ST 3:332.

³⁹ “Historical causality is the embracing form of causality because of the fact that in all historical events all dimensions of life are actively participant. It is dependent on the freedom of creative causality, but it is equally dependent on the inorganic and organic developments which have made historical man possible and which remain as the frame or substructure of his whole history.” ST 3:324.

⁴⁰ ST 3:326.

⁴¹ ST 3:357.

⁴² ST 3:347.

⁴³ ST 3:367.

⁴⁴ “The only historical event in which the universal center of the history of revelation and salvation can be seen – not only for daring faith but also for a rational interpretation of this faith – is the event on which Christianity is based. This event is not only the center of the history of the manifestation of the Kingdom of God; it is also the only event in which the historical dimension is fully and universally affirmed.” ST 3:368.

⁴⁵ ST 3:369.

⁴⁶ ST 2:166.

⁴⁷ ST 2:168.

⁴⁸ ST 2:150.

⁴⁹ “The New Being in the Christ transcends every relativity in its quality and power of healing. It is just this that makes him the Christ. Therefore, wherever there is saving power in mankind, it must be judged by the saving power in Jesus as the Christ.” ST 2:168.

⁵⁰ ST 3:131.

⁵¹ ST 3:133.

⁵² ST 3:134.

⁵³ ST 2:155.

⁵⁴ ST 2:155.

⁵⁵ “It is the certainty of one’s own victory over the death of existential estrangement which creates the certainty of the Resurrection of the Christ as an event and symbol; but it is not historical conviction or the acceptance of biblical authority which creates this certainty.” ST 2:155.

⁵⁶ ST 3:146.

⁵⁷ ST 3:145.

⁵⁸ ST 2:157.

⁵⁹ ST 2:157. J. Heywood Thomas offers a clear and precise exploration of the ambiguity of historical concreteness in Tillich’s interpretation of the resurrection that Thomas argues leaves unclear whether Tillich believes “anything *actually happened*.” (121) He raises this challenge while recognizing the importance of historical fact to Tillich’s christology. “To say that this discussion shows how little concern in the end Tillich had for historicity is to miss the point. That he was reluctant to *identify* the Resurrection with any historical event... is certain... The real issue for him was the matter of what the Resurrection secured for mankind...” Thomas, 120-121.

⁶⁰ ST 2:157.

A Critique of Both Positions

¹ “This problem and danger, to put the matter simply is the lack of a consistent focus on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. In the doctrines of man and Christ which we have reviewed, there is the danger that man will be seen apart from who he is revealed to be in Christ and that God’s revelation and salvation will be found in some other way or at some other place than in Jesus Christ.” Alexander J. McKelway, *The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich*. (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), p. 177.

² Kenan B. Osborne, *New Being: A Study on the Relationship Between Conditioned and Unconditioned Being according to Paul Tillich*. (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p. 176.

³ ST 2:97.

⁴ ST 3:29.

⁵ Robert E. Cushman, “The Christology of Paul Tillich” in *The Heritage of Christian Thought: Essays in Honor of Robert Lowry Calhoun* edited by Robert E. Cushman and Egil Grislis. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965) p. 178.

An Argument for a Dialectic of Logos and Spirit

⁶ Robert H. Bryant, “An Evaluation of the Christological Dimensions of Tillich’s Theology of Culture” in *Kairos and Logos: Studies in the Roots and Implications of Tillich’s Theology* edited by John J. Carey. (Cambridge: The North American Paul Tillich Society, 1978), p. 297.

⁷ Adrian Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 148

¹ “Traditional theology distinguished between the person and the work of Christ... This scheme was abandoned in the concept of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ and its universal significance. It was a rather unsatisfactory and theologically dangerous scheme.” ST 2:168.

² Langdon Gilkey, *Gilkey on Tillich*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990) p. 153. Even as he strongly argues for a Spirit christology, Langdon Gilkey gives a nod to Tillich's insistence on both sides of the biblical portrayal – the synoptic emphasis on the Spirit and the Johannine emphasis on the Logos – as essential to Christological understanding: "It is also evident that Tillich has sought to rescue the religious validity and power of the whole New Testament, including the Johannine and Pauline writings; for it has been this total picture that has communicated the New Being (ST II:117)."

³ James Luther Adams, "Tillich's Interpretation of History", in *The Theology of Paul Tillich* edited by Charles W. Kegley, (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1982), p. 297.

⁴ Ibid. p. 300.

⁵ Ibid, p. 301.

⁶ For a more detailed discussion of Tillich and dialectic in relationship to Hegelian dialectics see Adams, "Tillich's Interpretation of History", 296-302; Bruce J. R. Cameron, "Hegelian Christology of Tillich" in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 29:1 (1976) 27-48; and Kenan B. Osborne, *New Being: A Study on the Relationship Between Conditioned and Unconditioned Being according to Paul Tillich*, (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), pgs. 76-82 and 158-164. Osborne argues that Tillich does not engage in the Hegelian idea of an ever-completing movement to dialectic. In fact, Tillich criticizes this element in Hegel because it does not take seriously the separation between existence and essence due to the fall that is irreconcilable without the intervention and action of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ. "It is as precisely Hegel's mistake to make existence dialectically deducible from essence, and it was against this point, as has been stated, that all existentialists revolted... For Hegel, there is no real Fall; there is only a distance between the actual and the ideal, which optimistically is ever decreasing." (Osborne, 80) However, it is dialectic that Tillich believes enables speech about the infinite from the perspective of the finite and this is because of the dialectical relationship [the root dialectic] between the infinite and finite. (Osborne, 81-82) Conversely, Cameron finds and supports a similarity between Tillich and Hegel, particularly as he reads Tillich's christology as pursuing the realization of the ideal Idea. "Is not the Incarnation for Tillich, as for Hegel, the realization of the Idea of essential God-man unity not as the objective-historical Jesus, but in human mind, spirit or consciousness?" (Cameron, 37)

⁷ "The Messiah does not save individuals in a path leading out of historical existence; he is to transform historical existence." ST 2:88.

⁸ "Christianity is what it is through the affirmation that Jesus of Nazareth, who has been called "the Christ," is actually the Christ, namely, he who brings the new state of things, the New Being." ST 2:97.

⁹ ST 2:98.

¹⁰ ST 2:107.

¹¹ "Is it true to say, as have many critics, that Tillich has subsumed the object of faith (the "biblical" picture of Christ") entirely within the dimension of believing reception? Has, then faith become its own object and has christology been transformed into a pneumatology or ecclesiology? Tillich has been interpreted as holding this view, but, although some of his statements can be so construed, such a view is clearly foreign to Tillich's christological intention. Tillich's doctrine requires that the new being be concretely embodied in a personal, historical existence." James A. Livingston, "Tillich's Christology and Historical Research" in *Paul Tillich: Retrospect and Future*, p. 45.

¹² ST 2:151.

¹³ ST 2:102.

¹⁴ While Thomas recognizes that "his [Tillich's] concern was to hold in balance the two sides of christology, the historical and the transcendent," he continues by saying that Tillich's attempt to do so failed because he did not adequately state what guarantees the validity of the historical." (Thomas, p. 115) I offer, however, that Tillich's position is very clear in its dialectic and rests in a literal interpretation of his words. The historicity of the man Jesus is guaranteed precisely in and through the Spirit's grasp (faith) of those who receive him as such (as Tillich states). This is not a circular refusal of historicity; to recognize the appearance of the Spirit is to have an encounter with the Logos manifest in Jesus. Even if science shows that a human life named Jesus of Nazareth did not exist, the historical actuality of Jesus as the Christ is verified in its presence and impact throughout the history of the Church. The scientific pursuit as a guarantee of faith is a confusion of categories because religious history itself is a fulfillment of the spirit by the divine Spirit as revealed in the Biblical portrayal. The truth of science and

the truth of faith cannot refute each other because they belong to different dimensions of meaning. (See William L. Rowe, *Religious Symbols and God: A Philosophical Study of Tillich's Theology*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 207-211) Rowe continues to posit that Tillich does not concern his reliance on the actuality of the Christ with science because he holds the extreme view that "Faith... cannot be upset by historical skepticism concerning Jesus, because faith in Christ does not imply or require the truth of any factual claims about the life, character and activities of the historical Jesus." (Rowe, p. 213) I disagree with this. Rather, history centered in Jesus as the Christ is reliant on the factual life and character of the person known as Jesus, but this person becomes historically real (and correspondingly discernable) by the Spirit.

¹⁵ ST 2:107.

¹⁶ "Without this reception the Christ would not have been the Christ, namely, the manifestation of the New Being in time and space. If Jesus had not impressed himself as the Christ on his disciples and through them upon all following generations, the man who is called Jesus of Nazareth would perhaps be remembered as a historically and religiously important person." ST 2:99.

¹⁷ "...faith, through its own power, can overrule skeptical possibilities within historical criticism. It can, it is maintained, guarantee the existence of Jesus of Nazareth and at least the essentials of the biblical picture.... Faith itself is the immediate (not mediated by conclusions) evidence of the New Being within and under the conditions of existence." ST 2:114.

¹⁸ Adams, "Tillich's Interpretation of History", p. 301.

¹⁹ ST 2:112.

²⁰ "Spirit-christology acknowledges that the divine Spirit which made Jesus into the Christ is creatively present in the whole history of revelation and salvation before and after his appearance. The event 'Jesus as the Christ' is unique but not isolated..." ST 3:147.

²¹ ST 2:88-89.

²² "'Mediating' in Christianity means bridging the infinite gap between the infinite and the finite, between the unconditional and the conditioned. But the function of mediating is more than merely making the ultimate concrete. Mediation is reunion." ST 2:93.

²³ "He who sacrifices the Logos principle sacrifices the idea of a living God, and he who rejects the application of this principle to Jesus as the Christ rejects his character as the Christ." ST 3:288.

²⁴ ST 1:165.

²⁵ ST 1:165.

²⁶ "The truth of all ontological concepts is their power of expressing that which makes the subject-object structure possible. They constitute this structure; they are not controlled by it." ST 1:169. "The interdependence of ego-self and world is the basic ontological structure and implies all the others. Both sides of the polarity are lost if either side is lost. The self without a world is empty; the world without a self is dead." ST 1:171.

²⁷ ST 1:165.

²⁸ ST 1:177.

²⁹ ST 1:176.

³⁰ ST 1:174-175.

³¹ ST 2:65-66.

³² ST 2:140.

³³ ST 3:147.

³⁴ ST 3:114.

³⁵ "Form should not be contrasted with content. The form which makes a thing what it is, is its content, its *essentia*, its definite power of being. The form of a tree is what makes it a tree, what gives it the general character of treehood as well as the special and unique form of an individual tree." ST 1:178.

³⁶ ST 1:178-179.

³⁷ Tillich addresses the mystery of nonbeing primarily from within the Greek philosophical concepts of *me on* and *ouk on*. *Me on* is the potentiality of being that is not existing but not pure nonbeing. This is carefully distinguished from *ouk on*, which refers to that which is pure nonbeing. *Ouk on*, for example, is the nothingness,

the nihil, out of which God creates while *me on* is nonbeing which is inherently participated in by finitude. *Ouk on* is nondialectical; *me on* is dialectical. *Me on* is the passing out of or potentially coming into form; it is the not yet or no more of being. *Me on*, therefore, refers to that which does not currently have being but can or will. “Unless man participates in nonbeing, no negative judgments are possible; in fact, no judgments of any kind are possible... There can be no world unless there is a dialectical participation of nonbeing in being.” *ST 1:187*.

³⁸ *ST 1:180*.

³⁹ *ST 1:180*.

⁴⁰ *ST 2:64*.

⁴¹ “We replace the inadequate concept “divine nature” by concepts “eternal God-man-unity” or “Eternal God-Manhood.” Such concepts replace a static essence by a dynamic relation.” *ST 2:148*.

⁴² *ST 2:139-142*.

⁴³ *ST 3:288*.

⁴⁴ *ST 2:129*.

⁴⁵ *ST 1:182*.

⁴⁶ “One can say that nature is finite necessity, God is infinite freedom, man is finite freedom.” *ST 2:31*.

⁴⁷ *ST 1:184*.

⁴⁸ *ST 1:185*.

⁴⁹ *ST 2:62-64*.

⁵⁰ *ST 2:135*.

⁵¹ *ST 2:130*.

⁵² *ST 1:3*.

⁵³ John Dillenberger, “Paul Tillich: Theologian of Culture” in *Paul Tillich: Retrospect and Future* by Nels F.S. Ferré, Charles Hartshorne, John Dillenberger, James C. Livingston, and Joseph Haroutunian, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 39-40.

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