

# “Essentialization” : A Clue to Paul Tillich’s Inclusivism

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**Abstract:** Tillich’s endeavor edits a refine pattern of openness and closeness, inclusion and recuperation which find several analogical formulations throughout his system. This is a result of his contextual theology perceived as an “answering theology” and combining apologetic, correlations and the Protestant principle. He argues that theology must be in dialogue with the questions implied within the situation wherein it is carried out. But at the same time and in the name of the Protestant Principle gives a primary and normative place to Christianity. The combination results in a situation that questions the veracity of his openness and inclusiveness. How far inclusive is Tillich’s theology and how much respect does his system give to difference and otherness? What is the aim of Tillich’s inclusive endeavor? Is it a persuasive tactic or strategy to lure in adherents of these systemic thoughts and religions to the one and unique response?” What is Tillich’s inclusivism then? This paper argues that the answers to these questions and other similar ambiguities found in Tillich’s inclusivism are provided in the symbolism of his eschatology, his so-called “essentialization.”

**Key Terms:** eschatology, theological methods, essentialization–universal restoration, inclusivism.

*“All things- since they are good by creation – participate in the Divine Life”<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

Openness and inclusiveness are aims of Paul Tillich’s theological thought. This is tantamount to his definition of theology as “apologetic” or “answering theology.”<sup>2</sup> These qualifications emphasize that theology must be contextual and in dialogue with the questions implied within the situation wherein it is carried out. Such an apologetic theology requires an adequate method, which Tillich calls “method of correlation”<sup>3</sup> or “a way of uniting message and situation.”<sup>4</sup> It is so called because it “tries to correlate the questions implied in the situation with the answers implied in the message.”<sup>5</sup>

Practically speaking, the combination of the requirements of an apologetic theology with those of the method of correlation has created a stigma of a particular tension within the thought of Tillich. Tillich is obviously aware of that tension but opts to solve it in accordance to his uncompromised protestant stand. In fact, the questions implied within the situation theology faces are open ended to interpretations. The same would hardly be said of the answers implied by the message. Apparently there could be a plurality of answers enabled by the fact that the message is opened to a symbolic interpretation. In reality, the implied and unambiguous answer is one and normative. The weight of the deconstructionist legacy of his “Protestant principle”<sup>6</sup> leads naturally to this bottom line.

Seen from this perspective, Tillich’s endeavor edits a refine pattern of openness and closeness, inclusion and recuperation which find several analogical formulations

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* Vol. III (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), p 405.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* Vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 6-7. [Henceforth ST I]

<sup>3</sup> ST I, pp. 59-66.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.7

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> The Protestant principle here points to the supremacy of God’s saving act, which is final and situated beyond any human motivated outreach. Tillich writes: “It should be regarded the Protestant principle that, in relation to God, God alone can act and that no human claim, especially no religious claim, no intellectual or moral or devotional “work,” can reunite us with him” See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* Vol. III (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), p224. [Henceforth ST III]

throughout his system. Moreover, the method is tainted with a reductionism that has consequential implications for dialogue. Despite the apparent openness and inclusion, the final and real solution is unmistakably one. All convene in one response, valid because accredited by the requirements of the method of correlation and the scrutiny of the Protestant principle. Once this is noted, the obvious inclusion and openness of the beginning becomes questionable. What is the aim of Tillich’s inclusive endeavor? Is it persuasive tactic or strategy to lure in adherents of these systemic thoughts, religions to the one and unique response?” What is Tillich’s inclusivism then?

There are many paths<sup>7</sup> to answer these questions and that of dialogue with world religions<sup>8</sup> could be considered the most adequate. However, we choose to focus on Tillich’s eschatology because we think his doctrines and beliefs on the last things (death – judgment – salvation – eternal life – eternal damnation, etc.) can reveal the scope of his inclusivism as well as account for the motivations behind his predispositions to engage in dialogue.

This paper is modeled on the interplay of the ambiguities within the method of correlation. In a first moment we focus on the clear and decisive endeavor to a global and all inclusive openness. In a second time, we turn our attention to the impact the Christian domestication or remodeling brings to that openness. The core of this paper is to show how the symbolism of Tillich’s eschatology, especially the so-called “essentialization” solves out those ambiguities.

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<sup>7</sup> One of the most tempting is to set Tillich’s regret and admission of his failure to dialogue with world religions earlier in his theological career and the promise to amend for that failure in his promised but unrealized new *Systematic Theology*. It is easy to read this as the source of Tillich’s inclusive openness. See Paul Tillich, *The Future of Religions* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 91; James Bacik, “ Paul Tillich: Relating Religion and Culture” in *Contemporary Theologians* ( Chicago, Ill: The Thomas More Press, 1989), p. 118. [Henceforth: James Bacik]

<sup>8</sup> This topic became more and more important in Paul Tillich’s thought. The content of the lecture, the last he gave ten days previous to his death is stressing the importance and requirements to engage in a faithful dialogue with the history of the religions. He regrets as wasted the energy and theological endeavor that did not include that field. See Paul Tillich, “The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian” in *The Future of Religions* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 80-94.

## The Method of correlation

Correlation requires that the contents of the Christian faith be formulated as answers to the questions posed by the culture or by the context. In other words, Tillich insists that the theologian must first understand in depth the real concerns of people, concerns which are normally expressed in contextual forms. Second, theology is to present the Christian message as the answer to these existential concerns. In this process, the Protestant principle, - that is a call to vigorously protest against all distortions of the gospel message - needs to be applied. The identification Tillich makes of Jesus Christ as the bearer of the New Being is an illustration of these methodological guidelines. Accordingly, Tillich analyzes the situation of modern man and defines it as a state of alienation, estrangement, ambiguity. Assisted with his "Protestant principle, he further scrutinizes the answers that have been provided to cope with such a situation. His conclusion is that all are defective for being either partial or simply misleading. Only then does he provide the only thought valuable response: the New Being.

## The advantages related to the Application of the Method of Correlation

Correlation as a theological method has led Tillich to engage the world in its existential nature into a serious dialogue. It has enabled him to see through existence, to appreciate the potentials and limitations of humanity (as individual, or as a community). James Bacik notes that "more than any other contemporary theologian, Tillich entered into dialogue with the major spheres of modern culture, such as art, philosophy, science and psychotherapy."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Tillich's analyses are inspired from lived experience. He qualifies his as a life spent on "the boundary between church and society and between religion and culture, experiencing deep within himself the tensions of the age"<sup>10</sup> Since his analyses are rooted in experience, his own and that of other peoples, they are capable

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<sup>9</sup> James Bacik, p. 116.

<sup>10</sup> See Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1966) and James Bacik, p. 116.

of touching the depth of existence in its critical lacking. The knowledge and statements formulated from such an experience are meant to be universal. In fact, as we note universality and inclusiveness openness are fundamental marks of religious statements. He writes: “The universality of a religious statement does not lie in an all- embracing abstraction which would destroy religion as such, but it lies in the depths of every concrete religion. Above all it lies in the openness to spiritual freedom both from one’s own foundation and for one’s own foundation.”<sup>11</sup>

The immediate result of applying the method of correlation is that one attains inclusion and universalism. In the name of correlation, any situation can become a focus for theologizing. The method of correlation unveils the religious dimension hidden within every culture, philosophical and political system etc. Under the scrutiny of the method of correlation, the object of theology cannot be restricted to God or mere spirituality. Every thing humane, every question implied in human experience is made to be part of the concern of theology. Because of this Tillich was able to engage in a fruitful dialogue with all spheres of human knowledge and experience. Moreover, he worked on all embracing definition of religion far beyond the traditional division between sacred and the profane, secular versus holy, etc. Because of the method of correlation, Tillich was able to point at the religious and divine dimension hidden at the bottom line in the most secular action, choice, movement, experience. He writes:

The holy and the secular seem to exclude each other. But again the contrast is ambiguous. The holy embraces itself and the secular, precisely as the divine embraces itself and the demonic. Everything secular is implicitly related to the holy. It can become the bearer of the Holy. The divine can become manifests in it. Nothing is essentially and inescapably secular. Everything has the dimension of the depth, and in the moment in which the third dimension is actualized, holiness appears.<sup>12</sup>

How is this inclusive openness achieved? The several paths and techniques Tillich developed in this regard can be regrouped under two trends: the first consists in

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian” in *The Future of Religions* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 94.

<sup>12</sup> ST I, p. 218.

expanding the content and scope of the categories related to his studies while the second launches criticism on exclusivist and narrow understanding. In relation to the first technique, he classifies humanism, nationalism and socialism as quasi-religions, and argues that all these are expressions of ultimate concern.<sup>13</sup> Tillich's definition of God as what concerns man's ultimately is but an illustration of that inclusion.

Tillich notes that religions are inclined to an exclusivist interpretation of their symbols. Additionally, he calls "demonic" the particularization or objectification of the Ultimate<sup>14</sup> but he points at the same time at this very trend as a factor pulling every religion to transcend itself. The fact is that every religion hopes to provide the 'all embracing symbol in which the faith of men universally will express itself while upholding at the same time 'the conditional and non-ultimate character of its own.'<sup>15</sup> Critical though might his assessment of the claims of religious traditions be; yet, he does not underestimate the significance and importance of particular religions. He acknowledges that each religion has in its depth a clue to the meaning of ultimate reality. Without this particular, there would be no way of understanding the universal or the ultimate. Particular religions, though not embodying the Ultimate Concern, or the fullness of truth, still they are necessary channels of the absolute truth.<sup>16</sup> In order to welcome this tendency, Tillich advocates for the need for greater interpenetration between systematic theology and the history of religions, a fact that might be interpreted as leaning towards pluralism.

Tillich's inclusive openness finds a philosophical explanation in his analysis and conception of existence. In this analysis, he engages a critical dialogue with existential philosophers.<sup>17</sup> In this dialogue, he opposes what can be qualified as "misguided

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p.34

<sup>14</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Future of Religions*, pp. 88-90; *Systematic Theology*, Vol.I, pp. 139-40.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper &Rope, 1957), p.125.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Tillic, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp.34-37

<sup>17</sup> Despite the depreciation of religion, the eschatological debate still remained of a considerable philosophical interest. Because of the method of correlation, Tillich's eschatology can also be considered philosophical. In that case it has to be appreciated against the background of other thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, etc. For more details see: S. Decloux, "L'eschatologie dans la philosophie moderne," *Studia Missinalia* vol. 32 (1983), 231-250.

solution”<sup>18</sup> to the questions implied in existence. He reiterates the estrangement he considers to be constitutive of human existence. He writes: “Existence is estrangement and not reconciliation; it is dehumanization and not the expression of essential humanity. It is the process in which man becomes a thing and ceases to be a person. [...] The existence of the individual is filled with anxiety and threatened by meaninglessness.”<sup>19</sup>

The concern for an inclusive openness in the field of theology developed several concepts: such as “*theonomous*,” the “religion of the heart” or again the understanding of salvation as “being grasped by an ultimate concern” etc. Religion of the heart involves ultimate concern, demands total involvement and wholehearted commitment. As James Bacik notes, these characteristics are similar to those of salvation.<sup>20</sup> As with regard to *theonomous*, James Bacik describes it as the potential within every culture to reveal and manifest the divine presence. He writes: “To say that culture is the form of religion means that all cultural forms reveal the divine presence dwelling in the human spirit. In a *theonomous* culture, the sharp division between the holy and the secular is overcome. Without being swallowed up or losing their independent existence, all secular forms of culture can manifest the Spirit. As Tillich states it ‘the universe is God’s sanctuary. Every work day is a day of the Lord, every supper a Lord’s supper’”<sup>21</sup>

In the light of the above, it is obvious that Tillich wanted his theology to achieve a universal inclusion. His consideration of the human situation within the context of religion is always inclusive. The analysis is critical but not segregating so much that what belongs to humanity – as good or bad – belongs to all. There is no metaphysical ground to play favoritism. “Despite human limitations and sinfulness,” comments James Batik about Tillich theology of grace, “the power of religion can be unleashed for the

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<sup>18</sup> James Bacik with this regards notes the following: “Tillich’s analysis warns us against superficial and misguided solution to a deep cultural problem. We cannot, for example, overcome anxiety and transform our culture by mere conformity to social norms or by a private pursuit of our own good. Compulsive activity, repression of guilt, and denial of death only intensify anxiety. [...] The only real answer is a religious courage which embraces anxiety while accepting the power of God to forgive and save us” See James Bacik, p. 120.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol II (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 25. [Henceforth: ST II]

<sup>20</sup> James Bacik summarizes Tillich’s vision of the “religion of the heart” with the following description: “it is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, of being addressed by an unconditional demand, of being enlightened by an encounter with the the holy”. See James Bacik, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> James Bacik, p. 122.

well-being of the human community.[...] Persons outside the churches can be grasped by ultimate concern and contribute to the project of humanizing culture.”<sup>22</sup>

There cannot be an exhaustive list of examples to illustrate Tillich's endeavor to achieve an all inclusive openness. If despite the one cited here above, one still doubts about this fact; a thousand more might still not have the persuasive effect. This is because of the other facet of the method of correlation. The system which supposedly is all inclusive in intent, while applying the second moment of the method of correlation, becomes a Christian endeavor to provide “Christian” answers to the universal questions implied in the analysis of existence. Hence, Tillich's theology as a correlated investigation involves a continuous interplay of openness and control.

## The Implied answers of the Christian Message

We have noted that the analysis of (human) existence as required by the method of correlation has been all inclusive.<sup>23</sup> In assessing the answers provided to the questions implied in existence, we will note they are all in line with the requirements of the method of correlation and submit to the dictate of the Protestant principle.<sup>24</sup> The nice, all inclusive and well elaborated critical analyses and diagnoses of the human existential conditions find their response in Christianity. Where and when existence is seen as the problem, Christianity (purified) emerges as the most fitting answer; or as offering the best answer. The strategy consists in “Christianizing” secular or philosophical concepts and symbols, in showing how related they are to Christianity and how they find their perfection in adhering to the systemic worldview of Christianity.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> “In using the method of correlation,” writes Tillich, “systemic theology proceeds in the following way: it makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise, and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to these questions.” Paul Tillich ST I, p. 62.

<sup>24</sup> Here the “Protestant principle” needs to be understood as a call for a vigorous protest against all distortions of the gospel message. See James Bacik, p. 117.



## The aim of Tillich’s Christology:

In counterpart to the negative analysis of existence as alienation and estrangement, Tillich presents Christ as the bearer of the new eon;<sup>25</sup> He is the conqueror bringing to end the estrangement, conflicts and self-destruction, existential distortions and ambiguities of life and human’s historical predicament.<sup>26</sup> In Christ, the conflict between the essential unity of God and humanity and human beings existential estrangement is overcome.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, these affirmations are rooted in an adoptionist Christology<sup>28</sup> that stresses the function of the Christ. These could be used to affirm the plural manifestations of the Christ far beyond the circle of the Christian tradition. A functional and adoptionist Christology sets the ground to see in peoples such as Buddha, Confucius, Gandhi, and so forth, particularized or contextual manifestations of the Christ phenomenon. This is not however the case, he prefers a rather abstract Christology that defends the unicity of the Christ, since he is careful and very apologetic while he applies that title to the Nazarene. Tillich’s interpretation does not give space to avatars, or as it is the case with Panikkar, to any “unknown Christ”<sup>29</sup>

## The Necessity of a Savior

Salvation is another symbol interpreted in line with the Protestant principle<sup>30</sup> to

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<sup>25</sup> ST II, p. 118.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, pp. 118-20.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 125

<sup>28</sup> George Tavard and Thomas F. O’Meara criticized Tillich’s Christology as Nestorian and Adoptionist. In response Tillich gave the following admission: “My task to answer these accusations cannot be an attempt to deny them. From the point of view of the accepted dogma they may [*sic*] correct. But, theologically, ideas rejected by the ancient theologians and their successors may contain a truth which must be expressed in contemporaries categories and concepts.” See respectively, in George Tavard, “The Protestant and the Theological System of Paul Tillich” and Thomas F. O’Meara, “Paul Tillich and the Problem of God” and Paul Tillich, “Appreciation and Reply” in Thomas F. O’Meara Ed., *Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought* (New York: Image Book, 1964), pp.126-139; 345-368; p. 378.

<sup>29</sup> Raimon Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Towards an Ecumenical Christophany*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981)

<sup>30</sup> “The Protestant principle” explains, Tillich “is an expression of the conquest of religion by the spiritual presence and consequently an expression of the victory over the ambiguities of

reinforce the Christian claim. Tillich explains that salvation or soteriology always evokes negativities that one is saved from. In terms of eschatology, salvation is being saved from “ultimate negativity” namely “condemnation or eternal death, the loss of inner *telos* of one’s being, the exclusion from the universal unity of the Kingdom of God, and the exclusion from eternal life.”<sup>31</sup> Salvation can also be defined as the healing or reconciliation of that which is estranged, the overcoming of the break between God and humanity, world and humanity, persons and themselves.<sup>32</sup> It can also be understood as “the reclamation of humanity from the old reality and the transference to the New Being.” Moreover, Tillich reiterates that the actualization of these events requires a mediator because existence cannot heal itself from the wounds of its predicaments. “Only a New Being” says Tillich “can produce a new action,”<sup>33</sup> that is, a saving action. Creation and humanity can’t save itself. It needs a mediator and savior. This mediator is called Christ, the bearer of the New Being and the Savior. Christ is therefore necessary for the salvation of humanity and Tillich furthermore judges all human attempts at self-salvation as doomed to failure.<sup>34</sup> One would wonder whether this is not a “no salvation outside Christ theology?”<sup>35</sup>

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religion, its profanation, its denomination. It is Protestant because it protests against the magic-demonic-self-elevation of religion...” ST.III, p. 245.

<sup>31</sup> ST II, p. 165.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid , p. 96

<sup>33</sup> Ibid p. 80

<sup>34</sup> ST II, pp. 80-86.

<sup>35</sup> In answering that question one should be careful in observing the annotations of Tillich functional Christology: it has to be noted that Jesus the Nazarene and the Christ are not automatically interchangeable. Gustave Weigel with this regards comments: “The man Jesus of Nazareth is not the answer. He was a man like all others, with their defects, virtues, shortcomings and aspirations. To declare him to be God is blasphemy and idolatry. However, with him and in him came the revelation of God rendered definitively luminous in the minds of Christ’s disciples who saw in the man Jesus, Jesus as the Christ. It is Jesus as the Christ who definitively reveals God to the world. It is Jesus as the Christ who saves men by showing them man’s true response to God. In Jesus as the Christ, man rises to the God-dimension of reality, and is thus New Being.” Gustave Weigel, “The Theological Significance of Paul Tillich” in *Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought- Afterword by Paul Tillich*, ed. Thomas F. O’Meara and Donald M. Weisser (New York: Image Books, 1969), p. 44.

## Christian Hermeneutical Recuperations

Within the mental progression of Tillich, New Being is a correlated response to the situation of human estrangement. Tillich’s association of this concept with the Christ could be interpreted as Christian “recuperation” of a necessary mitigating factor to the predicament of human situation. Moreover, the “New Being” is not a separate case of recuperation or privatization. For instance his hermeneutics of the Fall is another example. The hermeneutics of sin and fall incorporate insights from his dialogue with existentialists and psychotherapists. Tillich uses the symbol of “estrangement” to reformulate the traditional Christian notion of the Fall and “original sin.” Accordingly, “as a result of the Fall we are estranged from the ground of our being, from other persons, and from ourselves. The term ‘estrangement’ suggests the tragedy of the human predicament; because we are cut off from precisely those realities which alone can bring us integration and fulfillment.”<sup>36</sup> The correlation made between estrangement, fall, sin recuperate the above analyses of existentialist philosophers and psychotherapists and sublimates them within the symbol of the New Being (which as we already know means the Christ). With regard to the result of that dialogue James Bacik makes the following observation: “Individual sins appear not as violations of the law but as ratifications of our estranged condition. Sinful estrangement involves unbelief and pride, in which persons make themselves the center of their world, thereby losing their essential ground in God.”<sup>37</sup>

Other symbols such as Kingdom of God, Spiritual Presence, Eternal life - which Carl J. Armbruster says are to a certain extent interchangeable symbols of the aim of history<sup>38</sup> - all can be used to affirm and consolidate a ‘purified’ Christian position. They all involve a diagnostic of the human existential situation comprising an assessment of the irrelevance and inefficacy of suggested solutions and proposed instead a “Christian” prescription capable of overcoming, integrating or reconciling the connatural angst, anxiety, estrangement, sin, ambiguity, etc. of existence in general, and human existence in particular. These recuperations are justified as outcome of Tillich’s commitment to the

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<sup>36</sup> James Bacik, p. 124.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp.124-25

<sup>38</sup> Carl J. Armbruster, *The Vision of Paul Tillich* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), p. 262.

requirement of “correlation” and “the Protestant principle.”<sup>39</sup> Correlation as method demands a Christian explanation of the Ultimate Concern. This explanation must be derived from the Christian message which includes the Bible, church history, the history of religions and culture (semi religions). The endeavor of explaining the Ultimate Concern requires a norm, which is the “New Being in Jesus as Christ”<sup>40</sup> As in the previous case, it is unwise to claim or attempt an exhaustive list of illustrative cases of recuperation and remodeling thoughts, symbols and analyses in order to affirm and consolidate the *raison d’être* of the Christian answer. Critical though Tillich might sound towards Christianity; still he upholds the idea that this religious tradition better than any other has the answer to the situation of human predicaments. The main reason for that determination is his conviction that Christianity can be self-critical.

What are the real motivations behind conceiving theology as a response to the questions implied in the situation of humanity? Is not his dialogic approach a persuasive tactic consisting in weakening the other by conceding to its basic claims while the other finger pinpoints the limits and inefficiency of these religions in handling the existential breach or estrangement of creation? So, once these limits are acknowledged, there is no logical resistance to concede and abide to the only promising response. Wanderings of these kinds manifest the difficulty to solve the ambiguity emerging from Tillich’s method of correlation. One is left to choose between Tillich’s clear signs or willingness to openness and his tendency to conquer and surrender all to his Christian background. But does not Tillich offer another way?

## The Third Way: Eschatology

The impression one gets in analyzing the tension emerging from the method of correlation is that, Tillich’s system is but than an elaborated self-repeating circle of Christian explanations, a *salus in veritate*. But the question is whether there could be

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<sup>39</sup> The “recuperation” and “privatization” here above mentioned are central to Tillich’s view of the nature and aim of theology. Paul Tillich depicts his thought as an “Apologetic Theology,” which after listening attentively to the questions implied in the temporal situation; responds with the power of the eternal message. ST I, pp. 6-8.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 50

found a pointer that being rooted in the Christian tradition evolves through and far beyond the self-understanding of the Christian tradition. That pointer as we hope will enable an integration that enables the Christian self-understanding to make space for other interpretations. Although the language of this pointer is Christian, it might be less claiming and thus be inclusive and respectful for others. We believe that this pointer is more predominant in Tillich’s eschatology.

According to Tillich questions related to the end of time; that is end of history, the ultimate fate of human kind, including final judgment, eternity as final restoration or final condemnation, death or eternal life, etc. were rarely asked. If at all asked, he notes, they were not seriously answered.<sup>41</sup> The contention is mainly that these answers have not been inclusive. In fact, his observation is that “without the consideration of the end of history and of the universe, even the problem of the eternal destiny of individual cannot be answered.”<sup>42</sup>

Tillich classifies all the responses with regard to the question of end time under two headings. In the first are those who refuse to answer the question mainly on the ground that they lack of evidence and experience that would enable them to talk of it. In the second instead, he puts those who depict eternal life in contraposition to the negativities and limitations of the present world. Eternal life is but a projection or reduplication of life as experienced within history with the exception that positive elements of human experience are overtly exaggerated while the negative are negated. For instance, paradise or eternal life is depicted as the absence of finitude, sickness, wars, hunger, etc. In Tillich’s view either of these responses has limitations which he believes need to be addressed. He thus attempts an answer that makes up for the defects of these responses. The answer is developed from a creative interpretation of the symbol of the Kingdom of God. “Eternal life” he says, “is participation in the divine life.”<sup>43</sup> Together with this creative answer, Paul Tillich expresses this response using a dynamic net of technical but interrelated concepts: “essentialization”

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<sup>41</sup> ST III, p.396.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p.398

## What's essentialization?

Tillich does not claim to have created the term 'essentialization.' He is aware of the meaning other thinkers – Neo Platonic philosophy and Schelling - have given to that concept.<sup>44</sup> However, he is not quiet about the specific meaning he has attached to that concept. He says: "The term 'essentialization' can also mean that the new which has been actualized in time and space adds something to essential being, uniting it with the positive which is created within existence, thus producing the ultimately new, the 'New Being,' not fragmentarily as in temporal life, but wholly as a contribution to the Kingdom of God in its fulfillment."<sup>45</sup> From this precision, we understand that Tillich's essentialization is not identical to the Platonic concept of "being elevated into eternity"<sup>46</sup> where soul's bliss consists in contemplating its essence. Likewise can it be reduced to the Neo-Platonic concept of return to the pre-existent One<sup>47</sup> or to the definition Schelling has made of the term and which sees it as "a return to what a thing essentially is."<sup>48</sup>

Essentialization is participation in Eternal life, a state in which the "essential has conquered existential distortions."<sup>49</sup> In Christian terms, it is participation in God, understood as "ground of being,"<sup>50</sup> or as "the redeemer of old and the ancient of today."<sup>51</sup> Tillich further explains that "participation in the eternal life depends on a creative synthesis of a being's essential nature with what it has made of it in its temporal

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 401

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> For Neo-Platonism, the Ultimate reality is the One, identified with the Good and the highest God. Matter has no independent reality. Likewise, evil has no essential existence. In other words, speaking from an essential perspective; evil is not real. They also upholds that "whatever derives from a higher principle will *resemble* it and will ultimately return to it" See Thomas Mautner ed. *Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy* (England: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 381

<sup>48</sup> ST III, p. 400.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p, 401

<sup>50</sup> ST I, p. 235

<sup>51</sup> Precursor to Tillich's "essentialization" was the conception of God as ground of being or the redeemer of time because in him the three modes of time – past, present, future – congregate. He writes: "'Old' sometimes means that which last through all times, that which is today as it was in the past and as it shall be in the future. There is something that does not age, something that is always old and always new at the same time, because it is eternal. God is sometimes called the "ancient of days" or the Redeemer of old.'" See Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p.177.

existence.”<sup>52</sup> Hence, essentialization is a process that involves not only the restoration of the essence in space and time but also allows the essence to be united with the positive elements produced during its existence. This unity implies an enrichment of the essence and presupposes a judgment. The judgment implied by the process of essentialization consists in purifying or eliminating the negative elements which were produced throughout the process of existence. With regard to essentialization and final judgment, essentialization impels the exposure of what in existence has hindered or hinders the integration with the essence. Judgment means that the negative in sphere of existence “is exposed in its negativity and excluded from eternal memory.”<sup>53</sup> Essentialization culminates in the end of history or Eternal Life in which all being is taken up into the Divine Life.<sup>54</sup>

## Particular marks of Tillich’s Eschatology

There are several remarks to make about Tillich’s eschatology. The first and most noticeable is the free attitude with which he approaches the topic and the elaboration he makes of the questions pending to that field. This attitude is coherent with his criticism against those who refuse to answer the questions of end time. However, he would not be able to approach the topic and elaborate on it in details if he has not previously defined his linguistic genre. Eschatological language uses signs, symbols and metaphors. Henceforth, words such as heaven, hell, purgatory, judgment, eternal life and so forth cannot be reduced to mere concepts, likewise should the eschatological doctrine evolving from this symbolical and metaphorical be reduced to a common logical system. Being a language *suae generis*, eschatological discourses require a different logic, one different

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<sup>52</sup> ST III, p. 401.

<sup>53</sup> Tillich with this regard has the following detailed explanation. He writes: The basic assertion is that the ever present end of history elevates the positive content of history into eternity at the same time that it excludes the negative from participation in it. Therefore nothing which has been created in history is lost, but it is liberated from the negative element with which it is entangled within existence. The positive becomes manifest as unambiguously positive and the negative becomes manifest as unambiguously negative in the elevation of history to eternity. Eternal life, then, includes positive content of history, liberated from its negative distortions and fulfilled in its potentialities.” Ibid., p. 397.

<sup>54</sup> ST III, pp. 356- 64.

from the common Cartesian logics.

Second and most important: Tillich's eschatology is inclusive indeed. The order of existence corresponds to the scope of the essentialized. Put in another way, essentialization concerns and embraces the whole of existence. It is not offered to a few, the good ones, or the chosen race. This is possible because Tillich here goes back to the all inclusiveness of his metaphysical analysis of existence and the predicaments of human condition. Alexander J. McKelway summarizes that analysis in the following terms: "All men are mixtures of good and evil, being and non being. No person is unambiguously good or bad, accepted or rejected."<sup>55</sup> Moreover Armbruster sees the direct implication emerging from that analysis as he notes that the individual is never "essentialized" in isolation. "On the basis of essentialization," he says, "Tillich vigorously denies double predestination and, in fact, tends in the opposite direction toward the 'doctrine of universal essentialization.'"<sup>56</sup> There are many details to be addressed with regard to Tillich's eschatology but in our view, the openness and unconditional inclusiveness essentialization presupposes are of a radical nature and overcome at the same time as integrate all previous Christian recuperations. This can be observed in passages similar to the one below:

The question and the answer are possible only if one understands essentialization or elevation of the positive into Eternal life as a matter of universal participation: in the essence of the least actualized individual, the essences of other individuals and, indirectly; of all beings are present. Whoever condemns anyone to eternal death condemns himself, because his essence and that of the other are cannot be absolutely separated. And he who is estranged from his own essential being and experiences the despair of total rejection must be told that his essence participates in the essence of all those who have reached a high degree of fulfillment and that through this participation his being is eternally affirmed.<sup>57</sup>

On the basis of Tillich's essentialization, salvation can only be thought of as

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<sup>55</sup> Alexander J. McKelway, *The Systematic Theology of Paul Tillich: A Review and Analysis* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964), p. 244.

<sup>56</sup> Carl J. Armbruster, *The Vision of Paul Tillich* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), p.266.

<sup>57</sup> ST III, p.409.



salvation for all. It cannot be conceived as a privilege offered to few ones. “Only universal healing is total healing – salvation beyond ambiguities and fragments.”<sup>58</sup> Likewise, eternal life cannot be conceived in fragmented epochs. In fact, universal nature of the Kingdom of God is among the advantages Tillich claims to achieve through his view of essentialization. He says that it offers a new cadre to value the relation between the individual in unity with all beings; that it adds new content to the understanding of the Spiritual Community. It does set the basis to assert a universal non exclusive participation in the Kingdom of God. Tillich writes: “It [essentialization] gives a basis to view that such groups as nations and churches participate in their essential being in the unity of the of the fulfilled Kingdom of God.”<sup>59</sup>

Third, Eternal Life and Eternal Death are biblical symbols referring to negative judgments against a being in its eternal destiny. Tillich says that these show two completely contradictory ends “presented as real and unavoidable threats peoples must consider.”<sup>60</sup> He notes that these threats have not clear and unambiguous answer. He writes: “Mythologically speaking, no one can affirm hell as his own or any one else’s eternal destiny.”<sup>61</sup> Reincarnation, intermediate state, purgatory have been attempts to extrapolate the sharp contrast of the polarity “Eternal Death – Eternal Life.”

But since essentialization opposes any simplistic response to ultimate question, Tillich rejects all these attempts. He rejects reincarnation,<sup>62</sup> on the ground that it does not answer the question of subjectivity. Likewise he rejects the doctrine of purgatory because of its stress on reparation instead of the original grace.<sup>63</sup> He similarly rejects the explanation of an intermediate state as well as the idea of immortality understood as the continuation of life after death.<sup>64</sup> But what Tillich’s is profoundly opposed to is the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 282

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 409

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 416

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 417

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> ST III, pp. 417-8. Elsewhere Tillich writes the following: “Eternal is not continuation of life after death. Eternal life is beyond past, present and future: we come from it, we live in its presence, we return to it. It is never absent – it is the divine life in which we are rooted and in which we are destined to participate in freedom – for God alone has eternity. [...] We are mortal like every creature, mortal with our whole being – body, and soul – but we are also kept in the eternal life *before* we lived on earth, *while* we are living in time, and *after* our time has come to an end. It is our destiny to participate in freedom in the divine life here and now, in

doctrine of double predestination – heaven for the good and hell for the bad. At this point, the position of Tillich could be compared to the *apokatastasis panton*, a theological concept of the early Fathers<sup>65</sup> of the Church, which speculated on an all embracing final restoration which encompasses the conversion of Satan and the redemption of those who for their evil choices are doomed to hell. In other words, the vision of *apokatastasis panton* does not foresee any logical reason to maintain a hell.

## Is ‘Essentialization’ a Revival of Apokatastasis Panton? <sup>66</sup>

In many ways, Tillich has shown that salvation to be real must be all inclusive. Could that vision be a revival of the old Christian concept *apokatastasis panton*, a position which in present Catholic teaching is only accepted as a positively motivated “possible speculation” <sup>67</sup> not to be erected in a substantiated doctrine? It does away with

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and above time...” Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1963), pp, 1114-15.

<sup>65</sup> *Apokatastasis Panton* is commonly related to Origen. Andrea Andreopoulos, in a recent study on Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor has argued and shown how this was rather a dominant theological trend in the writings of early Fathers. The leading point is rooted on the appreciation the early fathers made of the nature of evil. They did not think it to have a real existence on its own. They classified it as rather “accidental” not “essential.” The accident can affect the essence but it cannot change it radically. It is based on this understanding that the mentioned Church fathers thought of the possibility of a global, all inclusive final restoration. See Andrea Andreopoulos, “Eschatology and Final Restoration (apokatastasis) in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor” *Theandros: Online Journal of Orthodox Christian Theology and Philosophy*, Vol.1 Number 3. Spring 2004.

Retrieve Jan 9. 08. <http://www.theandros.com/restoration.html>

<sup>66</sup> In suggesting a comparison between essentialization and *apokatastasis panton* we are hinting that the idea of a universal restoration has haunted Christian thinkers. The early Church condemned the idea mainly because they interpreted it as a doctrine of predestination that negates the human freedom to choose to be eternally parted from his or her creator. With regard the real interpretation of the condemnation, Avery Dulles and Andreopoulos that it simply means that this view can’t be developed into a doctrine. It can “be at best an interesting and possible speculation, though not a doctrine.” See Andreopoulos, *ibid*. It is thus as an interesting and possible speculation that a milder tradition of silent proponents of *apokatastasis panton*. Mostly these are mystics whose arguments find their counterparts in Protestant theology. The possibility of universal restoration and negation of the possibility of hell are argued upon, not in basis of the human freedom to choose against God. They insisted on the Love of God, that would intrinsically corrupt and distorted were He to allow one of His creatures to be eternally separated from His Abode.

<sup>67</sup> See Andreas Andreopoulos, *ibid*.

all the “ifs” Catholic eschatology set prerequisites for individual and collective salvation.<sup>68</sup> The argument with regard has always been that final restoration does not take seriously the influx of human free will; that is, the capacity endowed to human will to choose ones’ own destruction. In this case, God is obligated to respect the human choice. Interestingly, Tillich who claims to be a follower of St. Augustine in this occasion stands against the Augustinian tradition of double predestination. And the argument is very Augustinian: he points at the seed of eternity within the human heart which despise all darkness will still be longing for integration. All things- since they are good by creation – participate in the Divine Life according to their essence. St. Augustine did put beautifully when he said that God created us for him and that our souls were restless till they repose in Him. He reinforces his rejection using St. Augustine affirmation that “nothing that is can become completely evil” and adds that individual choices are actually influenced by social or structural estranged systems, which condition human freedom. Individual freedom is a conditioned freedom; not an absolute as many want to let it be thought.

Beside personal freedom, sin has been another element to confirm the necessity of hell. In Tillich’s approach to this problem, sin is neither a Christian invention nor has Christianity a monopoly of it. Sin is inherent to human nature. It is alienation, estrangement, universal to the whole of creation. “Sin is a power that controls world and mind, persons and nations.”<sup>69</sup> But it cannot have the last saying because of the seed of eternal presence within existence. Moreover, in the same way that sin is universal, essentialization is also universal. In that way, it can be conquered completely. Tillich writes:

I believe it is possible to conquer the dangers implied in the concentration on sin, if we look at it indirectly, in the light of which enables us to resist it- reunion overcoming estrangement. Sin is our act of turning away from participation in the divine Ground form which we come and to which we go. Sin is the turning towards ourselves, and making of ourselves the center of our world and of ourselves. Sin then is the drive in everyone,

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<sup>68</sup> See the lists of conditions listed by Cardinal Avery Dulles in his article “Who can be saved?” Retrieved Jan.09, 08 [http://firstthings.com/article.php3?id\\_article=6126](http://firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=6126)

<sup>69</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1963), p. 51.

even those who exercise the most self-restraint, to draw as much as possible of the world into oneself. [...] if we look at our estrangement from the point of reunion, we are no longer in danger of brooding over our estrangement.<sup>70</sup>

## Appreciation of Tillich's inclusivism

Tillich's refutations of an eschatological exclusivism are voiced in different ways but remain Christian inclusivism.<sup>71</sup> It is either a Christ centered inclusivism or a God (*Theos*) centered inclusivism. With Christ for center, the refutation consists in generalizing the yearning and hope for salvation as a foundational to every human existence. Tillich often reiterates that despite the fragmentation and estrangement of existence, "there is an eternal presence at the heart of the solitude of human existence".<sup>72</sup> He speaks of saving power as "the power of the Eternal within," or "a power given" to all. It is constitutive part of existence, a gift offered to the whole of existence.<sup>73</sup> Tillich goes a step further identifying Christ, the New Being as the fulfiller of that yearning. We are not losing sight of the delicate distinction Tillich makes between Jesus the Nazarene and Jesus as the Christ or New Being. We are suggesting that the purpose of that distinction is in fact to establish an all encompassing or inclusive Christology. Jesus as Christ and New Being, the Savior towards which all existence aspires materializes that goal. We see in that theological endeavor an unfolding of what we would call Tillich's Christological inclusivism. This consists in a critical appreciation of the Christian

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, pp. 55-56.

<sup>71</sup> As we start this part, we should resist the temptation to read Tillich's thought as a chronological expansion marked with radical moments of conversion. It is true that in the last talk, ten days before his death, regretted that his system has not largely included the history of religions, promising an edition that was inclusive. But this confession could be misleading if understood as a promise to switch from his Christian protestant inclusivist stand to a universally plurastic stand. It will be an extrapolated error leaving out the fact that Tillich's in this self criticism was, as James Bacik notes, turning the "Protestant principle on himself, admitting his own narrowness in failing to dialogue with the world religions earlier in his theological career." See James Bacik, p. 118.

<sup>72</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), pp. 24-25.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), pp.169-86.

tradition – which on the one hand criticizes the narrowness of exclusivist interpretations of Christianity and on the other hand reaffirms the fundamental claims of the same tradition. This approach can be named ‘Christological inclusivism’ because it makes of Jesus as Christ and New Being the converging point of the whole of existence.

Moreover, we note that Tillich has many synonymous for the center of center of convergence defined here above as Christ or New Being. Using the same rationale; that is, the method of correlation and the Protestant principle, we can also say that Tillich’s approach has a “theocratic inclusivism.” Essentialization calls upon many terms and symbols closely related to God and very useful to the theocratic inclusion within the system of Tillich. Theocratic inclusion reinterprets the notion and symbols of the Kingdom of God. Tillich repeatedly affirms that God is the answer to the questions of theology; He (God) is the implied answer to the human awareness of finitude.<sup>74</sup> Tillich also argues that God is man’s ultimate concern.<sup>75</sup> In his eschatology he rephrases the same affirmation showing how participation in Eternal life, which is also called blessedness of Divine life, is the realization of the man’s ultimate concern or end.<sup>76</sup> Salvation is the destruction of death and participation in eternal blessedness of the Divine life.<sup>77</sup> This participation is open to all. “Eternal blessedness” he writes, “is also attributed to those who participate in the Divine Life, not to man only but to everything that is. The symbol of a ‘new heaven and a new earth’ indicates the universality of the blessedness of the fulfilled Kingdom of God.”<sup>78</sup> Just as it was the case with the so-called Christological inclusivism, the theocratic inclusion rejects exclusivist interpretations of God and his Kingdom while abiding and expanding on aspects of its universality. So, in both cases, Tillich is purifying the interpretation of the Christian tradition from the marks of its sectarianism and affirming those of its catholicity.

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<sup>74</sup> ST I, pp. 206-210.

<sup>75</sup> ST I, p. 211.

<sup>76</sup> The term “end” here must be understood in the sense of the annotation Tillich gives; that is, as ceasing to have existence in space and time as well as ‘aim, finality’ ‘telos.’ See Paul Tillich ST III, p. 394.

<sup>77</sup> For Tillich, “Divine life” or “blessedness” is not a state of stable immovable perfection. It is instead eternal conquest of the negative. It is primarily attributed to God and in virtue of participation to the whole of existence. Paul Tillich, ST III, p. 405.

<sup>78</sup> ST III, p.405.

## Conclusive Remarks

The eschatological thought of Paul Tillich addresses questions related to the realization or fulfillment of the individual and/or communal destiny of the human race as well as that of the whole order of existence. It speaks of the fulfillment and/or end of history, the realization of the Kingdom and eternity. Considering seriously the issues of final judgment, it earnestly opposes the possibility of a double predestination; a doctrine that uphold reasons and conditions that would enable an eternal life not participated by all. In the application of the methods of correlation, some steps might be interpreted as supporting those claims. However, with “essentialization” any doubts that Tillich makes exclusive claims whose results would be in support of a selective eschatology needs to be dissipated.

Essentialization is a process that sees the integration and reconciliation of all the predicaments, inconsistencies, polarities, ambiguities, etc. inherent to the fact of existing. By essentialization, estranged humanity and the whole of created experience wholeness, humanity is healed from its painful existential alienation; from its experience of inner fragmentation through time and space. Culture, religions and many other human tentative responses to the ambiguities of existence also find their definitive integration in essentialization. This also means that the symbol of ‘essentialization’ is a pass partout that in Tillich system can be switched with any manifestation or process referring to the realization of the Kingdom of God or eternal life, “participation in the eternal life,” “actualization of the power of being,” “conquering the ambiguities inherent to existence,” “defeating the foolish claim of negativities,” “actualization of Eternal Blessedness.”

The method of correlation requires ‘a question-answer’ pattern. Essentialization transmutes the dialectic implied within this pattern by offering an answer that no longer implied a question. Essentialization is a universal and all inclusive answer through which creation and the whole of existence is led to its end.<sup>79</sup> In its achievement, it reveals the contingencies of all the answers offered by Churches, religions, cultures, philosophies, while enabling Tillich to always maintain and speak from his Christian – Protestant stand point. Finally, because “it is our destiny to participate in freedom in the divine life here and now, in and above time,”<sup>80</sup> we can affirm that we are being all saved.

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<sup>79</sup> End as aim and finality; *finis* and *telos*. ST III, p. 394.

<sup>80</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1963), p. 115.

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## 「本質化」——保羅·田立克包容性的一條線索

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**內容摘要：**田立克的努力建立了一個既開展又內斂、既涵蓋又收合的精細模式。在其理論系統中，此種類比性模式隨處可見。這是他的場合神學之所以被視為「回應神學」並且被視為結合了護教、呼應與抗議原理的原因。他堅持神學必須與涵蓋當地情形的問題對話。但在此同時，由於抗議原理，他給予基督教既是標準又是絕對的地位。這種結合對他所謂的開展與涵蓋造成了真實與否的質疑。田立克神學的包容性究竟有多深遠？其對他者差異性有多麼尊重？對包容性的努力其目標為何？這是否是一種企圖說服他者進入他的系統理論的策略？抑或是企圖讓所有其他系統皈依來自其唯一且標準的答案？他的包容主義究竟是什麼？本文企圖探索上述所提到的各種疑問，這些與田立克包容主義模糊地帶有關的疑問都在其末世論的象徵，也就是在他所謂的「本質化」理論架構中可以得到答案。

**關鍵字：**末世論、神學方法、本質化與普世救恩、包容主義