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Volume 26, Number 1 & 2

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RELIGION & CULTURE

Volume 26, no. 2



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Lynda Clarke, our very supportive department Chair;  
Tina Montandon and Munit Merid, administrators extraordinaire;  
The executive staff of the CRSA, for letting us drop by all their wine  
and cheese events; all of our referees, readers and everyone else who  
gave their time to the publication of this journal.



# RELIGION & CULTURE

*A Canadian Graduate Student Journal*

2016 Volume 26, no. 1 & 2

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The Journal of Religion and Culture is produced  
by the Graduate Students of the Department of Religion at Concordia University.

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ISSN 1198-6395  
Journal of Religion and Culture Volume 26, no. 1 & 2 (2015/2016)

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JRC logo designed: Christopher Burkart  
Book design: Joseph E. Brito  
Front cover artwork: Noémie Jean-Bourgeault  
The type face of this journal is Minion Pro,  
designed by Robert Slimbach,  
issued as a digital Open Type font  
by Adobe Systems, Mountain View California, 2000.

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# The Courage to Be Yourself: *A Que(e)rying of Contemporary Protestant Existentialist Theology*

Jordan Wadden

## *Abstract*

Those who have always had representation have no need of questioning their inclusion within the texts they read. For the marginalised, however, it is much harder to feel a sense of belonging when they are not explicitly recognised in the literature. This discrepancy between representation and the represented creates an alienating effect which can result in serious societal damage. The purpose of this paper is to show how reinterpretation can attempt to salvage such alienating texts. By using Marcella Althaus-Reid's queer theology, and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist hermeneutics, this paper seeks to question the representative status quo. I have set out to rework Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be* as a case study in order to illustrate how the faithful queer can find themselves within such works. This well-known and widely read existentialist theology does not consider the problem of representation. By reading the faithful queer into the text, however, new meaning can be teased out.

Keywords: Paul Tillich; Marcella Althaus-Reid; Elizabeth Schüssler; Queer Theology; Feminist Hermeneutics; Existentialist Theology.

**W**henever one picks up a book on theology, be it ancient or modern, there tends to be a severe lack of representation for many individuals. In protestant traditions, men have received the majority of writers' attention throughout the years, effectively leaving women and other "unpersons" out of the theological discussion. Elite, white, heterosexual, and cisgendered men appear to be the select few destined for salvation, so where is everyone else? This discussion will explore the notion of que(e)rying theology; I use this term as an indicator that the standard approaches will be questioned under a queer lens. There are several inspiring women who have taken feminist hermeneutics—and



indeed queer hermeneutics—upon themselves and who have worked out methods of reinterpretation that will aid in this discussion. I will begin by outlining two such women: Marcella Althaus-Reid with her queering of theology, and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza with her critical feminist hermeneutics. Following this I will demonstrate how a que(e)rying of texts works by performing an exegesis on Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be*.

### ***I. An Outline of Queer Theology***

Althaus-Reid argues that in order to work with a queer theology we must understand the accusations against it. Drawing from her own Argentinean memories and heritage, she explains that the queer theologian is seen as someone who metaphorically represents a dangerous stranger at our gates. She writes that, “[b]y taming the villainous vocation in theology, we have made of poverty and sexuality strangers, evil strangers. What we need to recover [...] is the theologian-villain.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, what we need to work on in the modern era is reclaiming what has been previously delineated as immoral in regards to personhood. The poor and the sexual are seen as transgressive in contemporary thought because they are going against what is meaningful to the moral categories of the body. This charge ends with Althaus-Reid stating that, “the theologian-villain only transgresses because there is a need to recover the possible, since our present theological order has eliminated different forms of existence in its praxis.”<sup>2</sup> We have bottled our being for too long and it is time to let it out.

This freeing notion relates to her experiences in Latin America, where the churches began to give the name ‘libertine’<sup>3</sup> to their fears.<sup>4</sup> This attitude is apparent in other areas of the world as well, where queer faithful endure accusations of sexual deviancy from several religious groups. One that can immediately be called to mind is the Westboro Baptist Church and their love and misuse of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Because of this alienating attitude, Althaus-Reid states that the, “libertine body then creates a process of theological mutations or prostheses simply because it has its own built-in hermeneutics, a sexual hermeneutics.”<sup>5</sup> This new hermeneutics is built from the alien character of “the other”—in this case those who do not fit into the heteronormative conditions of society—and transformed by what they encounter and experience. Althaus-Reid strengthens this idea by stating, “[i]t is only from the body of aliens in the history of theology [...] that hermeneutical avenues bring us new promises to old theological practices.”<sup>6</sup> This reinterpretation of what already exists is

precisely what I intend to do later in this paper when I perform my exegesis of Tillich's *The Courage to Be*.

We should, therefore, seek to understand the method by which hermeneutical analyses can give new life to old texts. Althaus-Reid writes that, “[h]ermeneutically speaking these new beginnings work as some kind of fictional mirrors which function with a logic of permutations.”<sup>7</sup> This logical rearranging seeks to remove the emphasis that is placed upon the male subject and redistribute it to other individuals who are not intrinsically included in the texts. Without making such a movement in theological texts, these individuals can fall into a sense of alienation from their faith. Being able to read oneself into theology can subvert the feeling of alienation and act as an affirmation of personal faith. Althaus-Reid refers to this hermeneutical method as a form of prosthesis, as this method of interpretation reforms what is presently believed to be a functional body of work. On this note she writes that, “[t]heological prostheses are the attempt to recover what has been lost in theological language.”<sup>8</sup> Some may believe that it is almost by design that the obscurities in protestant theology serve to exclude persons who may pose questions to the patriarchal institutions. This is precisely why a hermeneutical model of interpretation is essential for a que(e)rying of these texts; if it cannot stand to theological prostheses, maybe the message itself should be questioned.

A more conservative critic of theology may stop the discussion here and question why a hermeneutical reinterpretation is even necessary to evaluating the queer position in the church. To handle such a concern, Althaus-Reid seeks to come to terms with the nature of salvation and the question of whether it has anything to do with sexuality. She commences by asserting that the “Christian message of salvation is related to the presence of God that we discern in the codes of human relationships.”<sup>9</sup> The most important part of this assertion is that this presence of God is to be found within all of our interactions, not just those within a faith-based setting. This element of God’s presence, if we suppose it to be true, is easily omitted when considering God’s relationship with individuals in everyday life. Althaus-Reid argues that by omitting sexuality from our relationship with God we have estranged ourselves from the divine. With this in mind she claims that, “[t]his defamiliarisation with God accompanies the habit of our souls—that is the souls accustomed to conform to market theologies and their current political and sexual ideologies.”<sup>10</sup> Effectively, her response to the conservative concern would be that ignoring a reinterpretation based

upon sexuality creates a lack in the soul of the faithful which can cause them to, by no other fault, conform to dangerous popular theologies.

These assertions by Althaus-Reid may have elements of truth to them, but what if we are still not convinced that this necessarily should apply to theologians such as Tillich? Why should reinterpretation, as opposed to the development of new theology, even cross our minds? The structure of society can be called upon to pre-emptively address this question. In order to feel complete, most humans seek some sense of belonging.<sup>11</sup> In making an implicit requirement that individuals seek their own theology, separate from that with which their neighbours in the pews associate with, we run the risk of severing the dialogue between these individuals and the majority. This severance would negatively affect the progress of the faith tradition in question as it would nullify any issues or challenges from the queer adherents. Through the process of hermeneutically inserting individuals other than the white, heterosexual, cisgendered male into theology we allow for a more tolerant and accepting community.

There is another woman who makes a similar assertion in regards to individuals who are titled “the other” yet nevertheless desire a biblical life. Fiorenza, in her work *But SHE Said*, works on a feminist reading of the Bible, and her methods arguably apply to anyone who finds themselves outside of the male, cisgendered, heterosexual category that the scriptures were written for. Two of her methods in particular pertain to the discussion at hand: the sociocultural reconstruction, and women as subjects of interpretation. Regarding the former she writes, “a critical feminist historical reconstructive approach challenges dominant scholarship by insisting that history must be written not from the perspective of the ‘historical winners’ but from that of the silenced or marginalized.”<sup>12</sup> By acting in a feminist hermeneutical manner, queer theology can become a voice for the silenced. Individuals can read themselves into the story lines and into the doctrine in order to affirm their place within Christianity. This concept, of making a queer hermeneutical reinterpretation of theology, will constitute the majority of my exegesis of Tillich’s work.

Employing a sociocultural hermeneutics alleviates the facticity we tend to place on history. Fiorenza writes that, “[r]eaders of the Bible are generally not aware that biblical histories are neither reports of events nor transcripts of facts but rather rhetorical constructions that have shaped the information available to them in light of their political interests.”<sup>13</sup> Like

scripture, theological texts also give rhetorical constructs for interpretation based upon sociopolitical interests. In order to adequately interpret the text, then, we must ensure that we understand the specific contexts surrounding the author. There is no question regarding whether or not queer individuals existed when Tillich wrote *The Courage to Be*. As such, interpreting the text without considering the implications it has for these individuals is a great error.

One concern that can arise when discussing such a hermeneutics is in regards to the objectivity of the reconstructed history. Fiorenza anticipated this concern and addressed it by writing that, “[o]ne is still able to disclose and unravel ‘the politics of otherness’ constructed by the androcentric texts because it is produced by a historical reality in which ‘the absent others’ are present and active.”<sup>14</sup> Using the experiences of those “others” in history and reimagining texts through their eyes is a crucial project for those who find themselves outside of the explicitly intended audience of an author. As mentioned above, a good portion of theological texts appear to say that only men are the elected few who will attain salvation. To the modern faithful this should seem, at the very least, mildly dissonant. Hermeneutically inserting those who are not male into texts can act to correct this dissonance.

A queer reading of theology can also model itself off of the second method outlined above by Fiorenza—women as subjects of interpretation—in that it furthers the idea of “reading yourself into” a text. While Fiorenza uses this method explicitly for women, for the purposes of this project I am switching the subject of interpretation to be any unperson who is marginalized. For this reason, and in order to include as many gender identities as possible, any reference to individuals in this paper will be limited to “they/their”, though all quotes will remain in the gendered phrasing of the original author. Reasoning for this lies within Fiorenza’s second method itself; she writes that, “[e]mpirical studies have documented that men and women read so-called generic masculine language (“man”, “he”) differently. Whereas men associate male images with such language, women do not associate any images at all with the androcentric text.”<sup>15</sup> Fiorenza makes reference to the term “unperson” in her writing, which I feel emphasises the “otherness” of any individual who does not fall directly into the reading of the text itself. Because of this, I assert that the type of reinterpretation I have done with Tillich is necessary in order to fully engage with androcentric, heteronormative texts.

Before the exegesis begins, there is one other question that must be addressed: why should queer individuals of faith engage in theology? Althaus-Reid believes that this answer is simple. She writes that we have to walk these paths in order to fully come to terms with the discussion on masculinity, femininity, and the God within these two characteristics.<sup>16</sup> She says that we need to reopen ourselves to the scandal that theology has been avoiding: God among the Queer, and the Queer God within Godself. The scandal, as she describes it, “is that bodies speak, and God speaks through them.”<sup>17</sup> The queer faithful are not individuals outside of God, but rather they are within the corpus of those who can call themselves Christian. Thus, a direct reinterpretation of the standard theology to-date is required to ensure they find a place within the community where they are justified and self-affirmed in who they are.

Protestantism places a high reverence on the individual’s connection with God, as opposed to what some call the purely mechanistic ritual of Catholicism. As Steven Ozment asserts, the lay-people of the Middle Ages saw emerging Protestantism as an escape not from tradition and authority, but from habit. He writes that the individuals of the Middle Ages felt as if “their inner anguish [was] only increased by bare external religious observance.”<sup>18</sup> An obvious question arises from this: why should we care about what the medieval people thought regarding the protestant traditions? I make this connection to the Reformation because for queer individuals there is a feeling akin to their medieval counterparts that may occur whenever they read theology. Just like the medieval people desired an individual relationship with God that allowed for deviation from “bare external religious observance,” so to do the faithful queer who nonetheless must participate in theology that is not written for them. Thus, through the hermeneutic analyses of such texts, these unpersons can find their place in the faith without sacrificing the texts that help explicate their beliefs. With this in mind, I will now turn the attention of the discussion to one such text.

## ***II. The Courage to Be Existentially***

In his work *The Courage to Be*, Tillich outlines two concepts—being and non-being—that are integral to existential experience. He explains that non-being is difficult to define, and because of this it has been highly discussed by many intellectuals in the history of philosophy. Among the many interpretations of the term are those which are inherently religious. Tillich writes that one such religious definition is, “the power of the ‘demonic’

in the human soul and history. In biblical religion these negativities have a decisive place in spite of the doctrine of creation.<sup>19</sup> However, this religious description leaves non-being in a situation where the definition is not entirely satisfying—a large portion of non-being remains concealed when adhering to this kind of negative reading. To adequately represent an existential theology we must seek to remove this negative reading from the definition of non-being. Indeed, Tillich writes that “being ‘embraces’ itself and non-being.”<sup>20</sup> Being makes the assertion that an individual ‘is.’ The faithful adherent ‘is’ a Christian just as much as, say, the sun ‘is’ a source of light. In other words, this being shows itself as a constituent of the individual in question. If we are to recognise non-being as embraced by being, it therefore cannot be ‘demonic’ or otherwise negative, and instead would be more accurately described as something which we are not.

Why does this matter for a discussion on queer theology? As social creatures, humans want to belong to a group in order to feel fulfilled. Societal norms, however, may convince us to avoid our true selves in an attempt to ‘fit in’ with these groups; which, in this context, correlates to the aspect of non-being. The desire to belong, to be(ing), can sometimes draw us to veiling aspects of our being. This itself could be a non-being; however, the act of veiling can be seen as another more powerful method of avoiding the non-being of not belonging to the group. While this is one method of grappling with non-being, it does not mean it is proper. Tillich writes that, “[c]reatively [being] affirms itself, eternally conquering its own non-being. As such it is the pattern of the self-affirmation of every finite being and the source of the courage to be.”<sup>21</sup> If this interpretation is applied to queer theology, then, non-being becomes a matter of affirming the non-normative aspects within the individual and making them part of their being. In other words, only through being themselves can the being of these individuals embrace their own non-being. By veiling their sexuality and showing the world only a non-being, the queer individual works against their own positive, affirming being.

To return to the exegesis of Tillich’s work, the matter at hand shifts to the relationship between anxiety and fear, and how they relate to being and non-being. He makes clear that the recognition of our own most anxiety has become a theme of modern art and literature. This idea coincides with Hegel’s vision of the inward motion of the Spirit. In the Romantic period<sup>22</sup> this becomes what matters to humanity, and thus “makes Humanus its new holy of holies.”<sup>23</sup> Tillich works with this, calling his contemporary time

the “age of anxiety,” by asserting that to understand courage we need to understand anxiety itself. He begins this definition by stating that, “anxiety is the state in which a being is aware of its possible non-being.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, anxiety is both the self-awareness of our finitude as temporal beings, as well as the recognition of our potential to veil our true self from the world. How does this differ from fear? On the surface it may appear that both of these terms are interchangeable, however Tillich makes clear that there is an essential difference between the two. Fear, he writes, is categorized as something which has a discernible object which can be faced by the individual. As it belongs to a subject-object relationship with the fearful, fear can be combated by courage. This is possible because of the participatory connection between the subject, the being, and the fear itself. Anxiety, however, “has no object, or rather, in a paradoxical phrase, its object is the negation of every object.”<sup>25</sup> Tillich further explains this by stating that the only object in an anxious encounter is the threat itself, as the source of the threat is nothingness.

Anxiety, then, relates to the non-being that is experienced by individuals. This non-being is not simply the unknown, but rather, “the unknown of a special type which by its very nature cannot be known, because it is non-being.”<sup>26</sup> While there is a distinction between fear and anxiety, Tillich insists that the two are connected. He writes that, “the sting of fear is anxiety, and anxiety strives toward fear.”<sup>27</sup> To bring more concrete examples into these definitions, we can again look towards the experiences of queer individuals. Fear can be combated by participating in the object which is causing the feeling within the individual. By interacting with religiously inspired homophobic laws or individuals, the faithful queer individual is embracing fear and pushing past it with the ultimate goal of overcoming and changing society. Indeed—regardless of Tillich’s thoughts on the matter as his writings are from a different time—he includes in his work the idea that, “as long as there is an object of fear, love, in the sense of participation, can conquer fear.”<sup>28</sup> Anxiety, on the other hand, by relating itself to the unknowable unknown is more accurately attributed to the non-being which we encounter when attempting to think about the afterness of death.

Following the discussion on the difference between fear and anxiety, Tillich explores the notion that there are three forms of anxiety, all of which are differentiated but interconnected. For the purposes of this project, I will focus on the third form: the anxiety of guilt and condemnation. Regarding



this, Tillich explores the idea that every individual is required to self-affirm in a manner which actualizes their true potential.<sup>29</sup> This, unfortunately, does not come to fruition, as he explains that, “[e]ven in what he considers his best deed, non-being is present and prevents it from being perfect.”<sup>30</sup> This lack of perfection, he continues, strikes the individual as guilt, and they take this call upon themselves in an attempt to transform this anxiety into moral action. The guilty feeling which arises from this anxiety can be compared to the call of “Guilty!” in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Dasein, as Heidegger explains, becomes authentic in part because it recognises its ownmost being-guilty, and by listening to itself in this manner it can address the reality in which it exists.<sup>31</sup> This discussion leads Tillich to consider despair, and how individuals react to it. In the anxiety I have focused on, he writes that, “there is no way of escaping [despair], even by ontic self-negation. Suicide can liberate one from the anxiety of fate and death—as the Stoics know. But it cannot liberate from the anxiety of guilt and condemnation, as the Christians know.”<sup>32</sup> In this state we are aware of our own futility and finitude.

Thus, there exists no escape from despair. Tillich adds to this that, “it is understandable that all human life can be interpreted as a continuous attempt to avoid despair.”<sup>33</sup> This is our attempt to shy away from our finitude as well as from those responsibilities which require our full devotion. However, by using the example of death, Tillich explains that:

We are not always aware of our having to die, but in the light of the experience of our having to die our whole life is experienced differently. In the same way the anxiety which is despair is not always present. But the rare occasions in which it is present determine the interpretation of existence as a whole.<sup>34</sup>

In order to come to terms with the non-being which plagues us with anxiety, we must remain true to our own potentiality for being. In terms of queer theology, then, this amounts to a necessity to be one’s self without conforming to the false guilt placed upon individuals by others. Instead, individuals must take their guilt, their ownmost being, and use it to actualize their potentiality.

A key element in Tillich’s theology is the distinction between pathological anxiety and existential anxiety. He writes that, “anxiety tends to become



fear in order to have an object with which courage can deal,” but also that, “[c]ourage does not remove anxiety. Since anxiety is existential, it cannot be removed.”<sup>35</sup> Instead, he asserts that courage is how an individual can cope with anxiety “in spite of” its very cause, which is non-being. This “in spite of” is key in understanding the differentiation between anxiety, which every Christian must face, and fear, which falls into an inauthentic actuality. Pathological anxiety, Tillich writes, arises from an individual who avoids despair by escaping into neurosis.<sup>36</sup> This escapism becomes an altered state of actuality for the individual. Tillich elaborates on this idea by stating:

Neurosis is the way of avoiding non-being by avoiding being. In the neurotic state self-affirmation is not lacking; it can indeed be very strong and emphasized. But the self which is affirmed is a reduced one. [...] He surrenders something which is less than his essential or potential being. He surrenders a part of his potentialities in order to save what is left.<sup>37</sup>

Tillich continues to say that in some cases neurosis can develop flashes of insight or sparks of creativity, and thus it is not entirely terrible. However, he draws the distinctive line by stating that the neurotic has settled into a limited and unrealistic self-affirmation.<sup>38</sup> In essence, the neurotic is separated from the actualization of their true potentialities.

With these conditions defined, and the truth of courage outlined, what can we say about faith? For Tillich, “[w]here there is faith there is tension between participation and separation, between the faithful one and his ultimate concern.”<sup>39</sup> He continues this thought by asserting that the only way for an individual to be concerned with something is to have an element of participation with it. He says that it is because of this previous experience with the object of concern that any faith in it can exist. While this is emphasized, Tillich also expands on the necessity of separation from the object of concern. He explains that an individual must be separated from that in which they have put their faith because, “[o]therwise he would possess it. It would be a matter of immediate certainty and not of faith. The ‘in-spite-of element’ of faith would be lacking.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, for Tillich, the bipartite elements of faith thus become the certainty of faith and the doubt in faith. The one, however, never contains or eliminates the other; if this were to happen then the individual would enter into a neurosis similar to

the one described above. He affirms that this is necessary, as even courage, “does not need the safety of an unquestionable conviction. It includes the risk without which no creative life is possible.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, to have the courage to be one must be absolutely certain in one’s faith, but be ever open to a range of doubt and questions.

For the faithful queer, this idea seems legitimate. Tillich continues the idea outlined above by stating that courage is the element of faith which is related to the risks of possessing faith—an individual “cannot replace faith by courage, but neither can one describe faith without courage.”<sup>42</sup> The presence of risk and the need for courage becomes apparent when Christianity and queer individuals mix. There is a good proportion of people who will support queer individuals who desire participation in the faith. However, those who are loudest are sometimes those who only wish harm upon unpersons. In these scenarios, the queer faithful embrace the risks of wanting to participate in Christianity, and persevere through the trials given to them. To relate back to Tillich, their faith is coloured by their courage to be.

### ***III. Connections to the Queer Discussion***

To further connect the idea of queer theology to a qu(e)rying of Tillich, the New Testament idea of *agape* must be introduced to the discussion. Tillich writes that those who cry out for justice and scorn the greatly insisted upon biblical love have misunderstood the nature of love itself. To clarify, he writes that:

Love, in the sense of *agape*, contains justice in itself as its unconditional element and as its weapon against its own sentimentalization. It is regrettable that Christianity has often concealed its unwillingness to do justice, or to fight for it, by setting off love against justice, and performing works of love in the sense of “charity” instead of battling for the removal of social injustice.<sup>43</sup>

This misunderstanding, Tillich explains, is the perceived connection with emotion that individuals place on love. He writes that *agape* is the quality within love that allows transcendence of the finitudes experienced in mortality. If we turn to scripture this concept can be observed when Paul speaks about the highest work of the Spirit being love. The passage which

speaks most to this idea is 1 Corinthians 13:13 which reads, “And not faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” Thus *agape* love, for those who call themselves Christian, should be the highest form experienced. However, for many queer Christians, this is not the case. There is a feeling of alienation present that divides the faithful queer’s mind; either they can leave the Church and find this love elsewhere, or they can embrace their non-being and radically veil their true self.

Tillich expands further on the concept of love by outlining that it is more than just *agape*. It has within it, “*epithymia*—the *libido* quality of love, *philia*—the friendship quality of love, and *eros*—the mystical quality of love.”<sup>44</sup> He highlights, however, that these elements are not separated from each other; an individual does not experience pure *eros*, for example, without having some of the other three qualities present. An example which he gives of this is that it was the *agape* in *eros* that prevents our culture from becoming ephemeral. Tillich argues that one quality does stand above the others as, “[d]ecisive in all situations is *agape*, because it is united with justice and transcends the finite limits of human love.”<sup>45</sup> It is this justice which queer theologies seek to read into the scriptures as a validation for existence. The call to love directed by the New Testament is so often ignored, or redirected, by individuals who claim to be fulfilling the work of Christ. However, in doing so, these individuals are polarizing the commanded love and creating a dynamic where the *agape* quality, which should govern over all other qualities, has had its element of justice removed.

*Agape* love should extend past the Christian individual and embrace the others that they will encounter in everyday life. After all, the commandment is to “love your neighbour as yourself.”<sup>46</sup> Tillich makes a reference to this idea as well by stating that:

In the Christian message, love becomes manifest in its universality, and, at the same time, in its concreteness: the “neighbour” is the immediate object of love, and everyone can become “neighbour”. All inequalities between men are overcome insofar as men are potential children of God.<sup>47</sup>

In essence this would mean that no matter what differentiates one individual from another the faithful Christian should seek a common

bond between them. Historical events have shown how this has, at times, been negated or conveniently forgotten; for an example that is still fresh in our collective minds we only need to think of slavery in America. In that time multiple passages from the Bible itself were used to denounce, as well as support, this horrendous treatment of “the others.” In this case, however, a central passage was forgotten. In the Gospel of Matthew there is a section which speaks to the question of which commandments are the greatest. The answer that is given is simple: first, love God with all your heart, and second, love your neighbour as you love yourself.<sup>48</sup> It appears that this passage is again being forgotten, or ignored, despite being taught in Sunday Schools, as there would be no need for the queer faithful to rise against bigotry if this principle was being held.

As I have argued above, the ability, and some would argue the necessity, to read yourself into a text in order to benefit from it can be applied almost anywhere. In Kierkegaard’s *Problema I*, for example, he asks the question, “[h]ow does the single individual assure himself that he is justified?”<sup>49</sup> Indeed, how the faithful queer can be justified in continuing their belief is an enigma for many. There are so many reasons why these individuals should leave religions which have mistreated them, or which have rated them as second class. Even our modern society struggles with granting anyone who is not white, male, cisgendered, heterosexual, and wealthy a first-class citizenship. If we continue reading this section of Kierkegaard, however, the reasoning becomes clearer. He writes, “[a] hero who has become the scandal of his generation, aware that he is a paradox that cannot be understood, cries undaunted to his contemporaries: ‘The future will know I was right!’”<sup>50</sup> These individuals fight because through doing so, and by causing such a commotion, eventually the rest of society will realise their wrong judgments. The future changes because those who are marginalized rise up and show why they deserve better, despite being misunderstood and unrecognized.

I believe that this paradoxical existence in the *Problema I* is the result of an individual’s desire to affirm their being by removing the veil of their non-being, combined with their desire to embrace *agape* love. The faithful queer knows in the deepest parts of their soul that they deserve the love that is commanded in scripture. This individual recognises two things: first, that they must do as commanded and spread love to their neighbour, but second, and arguably more important, that they deserve the same treatment from

their Christian brothers and sisters. The queer Christian has taken notice of the hypocritical nature of their contemporaries and demands recognition. As such, this confrontational individual can engage with Tillich's four aspects of love in their cries for affirmation. In regards to the *epithymia*, the queer individual seeks direct validation for their sexuality. Those who oppose "the gay lifestyle" deny queer individuals the fundamental human need of intimate love by citing supposed biblical oppositions. The faithful queer also seeks the platonic love of their contemporaries that comes from the *philia* aspect of love. This draws upon our nature as a social animal, an aspect of humanity I have previously mentioned. The mystical *eros* is denied from the queer individual when they become the victim of alienation from their congregation. Thus, this individual demands recognition within the Church not as someone of a special status, but as an equal. Finally, as explained above, the queer individual seeks the justice present within the agape element of love.

#### ***IV. Conclusion***

This discussion has served to demonstrate a brief introduction of how a que(e)rying of theology can work. By engaging with methods and theories like those of Althaus-Ried and Fiorenza, we can begin to outline a proper system for tackling androcentric, heteronormative theologies. This was shown through my exegesis of Tillich, wherein I have demonstrated that Tillich's work, despite not having been written for the faithful queer, can have huge impacts on the self-affirmation of these individuals. If all Christians followed the notions highlighted by Tillich as prescribed by the Bible, there would be less conflict between those who find themselves represented and "the others." More exegesises need to be done through the eyes of the marginalized, and the voices of the silenced need to be listened to. If this can be made manifest, society could be much more accepting of "the others."

## **Notes**

1. Marcella Althaus-Reid, "Queering hermeneutics" in *The Queer God* (New York: Routledge, 2003): 23-24.
2. *Ibid.*, 24.
3. Libertine can be defined as a person who does not stick to convention or standard morality and can thus be associated with individuals who live a life of dissolution.
4. Althaus-Reid, *Queering hermeneutics*, 24.
5. *Ibid.*, 30.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 31.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, 40.
10. *Ibid.*
11. This concept of belonging will be revisited in the analysis of Tillich's *The Courage to Be* later in this paper. For now it will suffice to generalise in order capture the idea of the importance of belonging.
12. Elizabeth Shüssler Fiorenza, "Miriam – Leading the Dance: Charting the Field of Feminist Biblical Interpretation" in *But SHE Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992): 33.
13. *Ibid.*, 32.
14. *Ibid.*, 34.
15. *Ibid.*, 36.
16. Althaus-Reid, *Queering hermeneutics*, 33.
17. *Ibid.*, 34.
18. Steven Ozment, "On the Eve of the Reformation" in *The Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of the Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980): 209.
19. Paul Tillich, "Being, Non-Being and Anxiety" in *The Courage To Be* (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd, 1955): 30.
20. *Ibid.*, 32.
21. *Ibid.*
22. According to Hegel, human development as expressed through art can be categorized into three main themes: the Symbolic, or pre-Greek; the Classical, or Greek; and the Romantic, or anything that is post-Greek. Our period of art can be considered to be part of the Romantic by some interpreters, or as a type of post-Romantic by others. For the purpose of my reference in this paper I will be assuming that the Romantic period is our current period.
23. G. W. F. Hegel, "Dissolution of the Romantic Form of Art" in *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2010): 607.
24. Tillich, *Being, Non-Being and Anxiety*, 33.
25. *Ibid.*, 34.
26. *Ibid.*, 35.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*, 34.
29. *Ibid.*, 49.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Martin Heidegger, "Dasein's Attestation of an Authentic Potentiality-For-Being, and Resoluteness" in *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New

- York: Harper Perennial, 2008): 327-328.
32. Tillich, *Being, Non-Being and Anxiety*, 52.
  33. *Ibid.*, 53.
  34. *Ibid.*
  35. Paul Tillich, "Pathological Anxiety, Vitality and Courage" in *The Courage To Be* (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd, 1955): 61.
  36. *Ibid.*, 62.
  37. *Ibid.* (Emphasis original).
  38. *Ibid.*, 64.
  39. Paul Tillich, "The Life of Faith" in *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1957): 99.
  40. *Ibid.*, 100.
  41. *Ibid.*, 101.
  42. *Ibid.*, 103.
  43. Paul Tillich, "The Religious Source of the Moral Demands" in *Morality and Beyond* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1964): 34.
  44. *Ibid.*, 35.
  45. *Ibid.*, 37.
  46. Mark 12:30-31.
  47. Paul Tillich, "Ethics in a Changing World" in *Morality and Beyond* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1964): 90-91.
  48. Matthew 22:36-40.
  49. Søren Kierkegaard, "Problema I" in *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay (Toronto: Penguin Books Ltd, 2005): 72.
  50. *Ibid.*, 73.
  51. For example, the stories of Sodom and Gomorrah can be seen in as justification in almost every anti-queer argument.

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