

Author: Thomas A. Barlow, Jr.

Title: THE MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRIT: A CONSTRUCTIVE COMPARISON OF DIVINE GRACE IN THE THEOLOGIES OF PAUL TILLICH AND JOHN WESLEY

Advisor: Dr. Theodore M. Vial, Jr.

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ABSTRACT

This work is a constructive comparison of the ways in which the operations of divine grace resonate in the theologies of John Wesley and Paul Tillich. The primary questions initially motivated this project: First, how does Tillich's concept of theonomy intersect Wesley's conceptions of the activity of grace? Second, how would those intersections serve to provide a renewed (or clarified) understanding of Wesley's framework of grace? How does Tillich's concept of theonomy, and his method of correlation, inform Wesley's understanding of the activity of grace in human culture? How might gleaned from this comparison inform the work of faith communities?

This project examines key conceptual roots of divine grace in the theology of Augustine, with particular attention to the shifts in his understanding of the human need for grace, the locus of the activity of grace, and the resulting effects of grace. We then move to an exploration of various influences on the theological frameworks of both Wesley and Tillich, from childhood, extending through their education, and into their professional lives and ministries. Here, we examine their understanding of the human condition, the effects of divine grace, and their ecclesiologies.

We then examine the resonances between the ways that Wesley and Tillich conceptualize the restorative activity of the divine, along with their emerging openness to pluralism, emphasis on community, and call to justice.

Finally, we consider specific implications for faith communities today—whether formally organized or loosely connected—with particular attention to five key emphases which emerge from our study: the recovery of Tillich’s Protestant principle, restoration of individuals, recovery of the center, recovery of a prophetic voice, and aspects of Tillich’s creative justice which can be lived out in transformative ways.