

tuelle Niveau dieser theologischen Konzeptionen im Bannkreis des Nationalsozialismus. Nachgegangen wird der Frage, wie „auch sehr kritische Geister in diesen Sog geraten können, und welche Rolle dabei traditionelle religiöse und kirchliche Denkmuster spielen“ (147). Vor dem Hintergrund der Kierkegaard-Rezeption dieser Theologen ist das auf eine erhellende Weise gelungen.

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Samuel Andrew Shearn: *Pastor Tillich: The Justification of the Doubter* (Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs). Oxford 2022. 272 p.

Samuel Andrew Shearn's dissertation, now published, aims to examine „the emergence of the justification of the doubter in [Tillich's] early writings, up to the end of his service as a chaplain in the First World War, with special reference to his early sermons“ (3). The main questions of the book are: „Where did Tillich 'land' theologically after the war? And how did he get there?“ (ibid). As a framework for his analysis of Tillich's early writings, the author uses the idea of the doubter's justification as presented in the 1919 draft, *Justification and Doubt*. Corresponding to the various stages of Tillich's life, the results of the analysis of the sermons, correspondence, and early scholarly works are contrasted with the later version to trace the development of the justification of the doubter. S. notes that by considering the relationship between faith and doubt as „the issue at the heart of this book,“ the question is raised of „what it means to be a Christian in a 'secular' age“ (ibid). He also states that the answers he gives „are not programmatic but historical“ (ibid).

The book is divided into ten chapters. At the beginning of Chapter 1, *Introduction* (1–15), stands a confrontation of Luther's doctrine of justification with the conditions of modernity and the associated „doubt about the truth of the Christian faith or even the reality of God“ (1f.). S. then remarks „Tillich's notion of the justification of the doubter is a pastoral intervention to console the doubter's despair“ (2). In the ensuing discussion of the state of research, S. states, that Tillich's biography plays a crucial role for understanding his early development (cf. 4). Therefore, with the exception of Chapter 10, *Conclusion* (212–222), each chapter begins with a biographical sketch. S.'s study is distinguished by locating „Tillich more clearly within his modern-positive milieu, including the influence of his father, Johannes Tillich“ and by considering the early sermons (9). Presenting Tillich as a pastor alongside his academic career promises a better understanding of the development of his early thought.

In Chapter 2, *Justification and Doubt* (16–30), S. seeks to provide a „snapshot’ of Tillich’s position in 1919 on this theme, of how he landed after the war“ (18). The findings of the study show that Tillich seeks to unify religion and culture through a unifying theological principle. The latter „can only present itself in the tension’ of “ an abstract and a concrete moment (19). Of particular interest is Tillich’s engagement with Karl Heim. S. points out that the problem of Heim’s idea of a concrete absolute is its inherent Christocentrism, which makes a justification of the radical doubter impossible. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that Tillich wants to extend the doctrine of justification from ethical conscience to intellectual conscience. This is to conceive of doubt as a kind of faith: „The good news for the despairing doubter is thus analogous to the good news for the despairing sinner: If the sinner is justified by faith, not by ethical works, then the doubter is justified, not by intellectual works, like the work of proof or the work of trying to believe.“ (30)

Tillich’s years of study are the main subject of Chapter 3, *Defense, Doubt, and Gracelessness* (1904–9) (31–55). Based on autobiographical sources, S. discusses Tillich’s relationship to his father, to liberal theology, to Kähler and his doctrine of justification by faith, to the confessional controversy in the Wingolf fraternity, and lastly, the relation between theology and philosophy. S. points out, that in his autobiography Tillich stages himself as siding „with liberal theology against his father’s confessional heteronomy, and against the dogmatic attempt to ignore historical criticism.“ (35) Further Tillich writes, that he owes his breakthrough concerning the justification of the doubter to the influence of Martin Kähler. Elsewhere, however, he distances himself from Kähler as one of „the conservative mediating theologians“ (37). The next section on Johannes Tillich and the Prussian church paints a vivid picture of Tillich’s family background. Drawing on archival material, S. shows „how heavily his father was embroiled in defending the positive cause“ (39). Then S. corrects Tillich’s autobiographical narrative by consulting archival material, following up on the themes discussed in the examination of autobiographical sources: While Johannes Tillich „was formulating Christological red lines at the Brandenburg Provincial Synod of 1906 [...] to cleanse the church of the liberal scourge“, his son did so „at the 1906 *Chargiertenkonvent*, with the aim of causing the liberals to leave Wingolf“ (43). Based on the correspondence between father and son, it appears that Tillich distanced himself from Kähler, who he refers to in the autobiography „as his most significant teacher“ (51). Thus, in his autobiographical writings, Tillich seems to forget the conservative roots from which he actually came.

Chapter 4, *Overcoming Despair* (*Lichtenrade* 1909) (56–74), focuses on Tillich’s earliest sermons. S. remarks that „from the sermons [we learn] that the heady cocktail of Tillich’s moralistic and self-examining pietistic spirituality, the doubt fostered by his theological and philosophical studies, and the praxis-shock of now embodying

the role of a pastor, drove Tillich [...] to despair as he wrestled for assurance of salvation“ (58). Examination of the early sermons demonstrates how Tillich struggles „to articulate an account of assurance which does not result in endless deferrals between the subject and object of faith“ (62). Worth noting is the excursus on severity and disability in which S. describes how Tillich preaches to „patients at a home for people with mental illnesses“ (62) that „the solitude of the mentally ill is ‘a gift of God’ and a chance for spiritual growth“ (63). S. goes on to discuss two sermon drafts for Sunday, May 31, 1919. The first presents doubt as an obstacle to faith resulting from sin. In the second version, the „apparently inevitable cycle of judgement is interrupted when the voice of the Crucified one removes the demand to do anything or believe anything to be true“ (70). The turn from justification of the sinner to justification of the sinner and the doubter can be seen as a milestone in Tillich’s early development. During his brief time in Lichtenrade, Tillich changed his attitude toward divine pedagogy, emphasizing instead „the dark tragedy“ of the mentally ill (74).

Chapter 5, *Schelling and History (1909–11)* (75–103), is mainly concerned with the questions: „Why on earth did Tillich care about Schelling? What was Schelling doing for Tillich?“ (76) To answer these, it is crucial to understand the theology of Tillich’s teachers Adolf Schlatter and Wilhelm Lütgert. Both take an anthropocentric standpoint and construct a theology of experience from there. What Schelling, Schlatter, Lütgert, and Tillich have in common is that they conceive of the history of revelation as a medium of explication of God (cf. 80f.). Furthermore, in his philosophical doctorate, Tillich develops a doctrine of „redemption from doubt“ insofar „as the sublation of doubt is the *end* of doubt and thought’s rest“ (88), while his theological doctorate bears witness to a Christological turn in which the cross becomes the culmination of sin and grace (cf. 94f.). S. then discusses Tillich’s conception of certainty and the historical Jesus against the background of „Wilhelm Herrmann’s notion of an evangelical image of Jesus“ (97). S. states that Tillich „has moved from the denial of religious certainty through history to the affirmation of knowledge as a self-certainty, which means the autonomy of the subject against all laws“ (98).

Returning to Tillich’s sermons in Chapter 6, *The Prodigal Doubter (Nauen 1911–12)* (104–125), S. demonstrates how Tillich developed a „*law-gospel dialectic*“ (105). Furthermore, it is clear that Tillich takes a Christological approach to the doubter’s assurance of salvation. Worth mentioning is the ambiguity in Tillich’s preaching, which S. makes visible by contrasting a sermon on the prodigal doubter, which includes liberal thoughts, with a sermon on the relationship between orthodoxy and heresy, in which Tillich condemns liberal theologians who „no longer preach Christ crucified“ (114). S. then illuminates Tillich’s image of the age of doubt as a divine pedagogy in which „spiritual pride, and not doubt“, decides who is ‘of the truth’ (121). A sermon from „just after the parliamentary election“ (121) in January 1912 bears witness

to a Tillich who interprets the protest of the Social Democrats „as expression of faith’s protest against enslavement“ and „is comparable to his interpretation of doubt as God’s pedagogy“ (124).

Tillich’s engagement in practical apologetics alongside his pastoral duties is the main topic of Chapter 7, *Convincing the Doubter (Moabit 1912–13)* (126–152). The tasks of apologetics are to guide the doubter „from error towards Christian truth“ (132), to overcome the differences between religion and culture, and to take on „the leading role in cultural life“ (133). In discussion of the works of Benoît Mathot and Stefan Dienstbeck, S. debates possible changes in Tillich’s Heim critique between 1913 and 1919, pulling from the Moabit sermons. S. notes that Tillich shares with Heim a Christological emphasis: „Christ is the solution for the doubter, and Christ is presented to the doubter.“ However, while Heim „works with our deepest need“, Tillich also emphasizes „positive experiences“, „for all experience relates to our eternal unity with God, our nearness to him“ (146). Yet in 1919, Tillich accuses Heim’s theology of being inaccessible for non-Christians. This is not the case in 1913, where Tillich preaches Christ as the answer to doubt: Even if „the answer is only accessible to the faithful“ (147).

The systematic theology of 1913, which centers on „Christology and the cross of Christ as revelation of the absolute grace of God“ (157) is discussed in Chapter 8, *Doubt and System (1913–14)* (153–181). After an overview of the structure of the early systematics, S. delves into apologetics, noting that Tillich aims to „develop a theory of thought as grounded in the concept of truth“ (161). Because „doubt is always also a relation to truth“, it advances to a necessity for faith, insofar as it demonstrates „the inability of reflection to reach the absolute“ (164). Therefore, doubt is justified because it is „both negated and affirmed absolutely and unconditionally“ (170). The consequence is that Christ as historical certainty remains under doubt: „Christ sacrifices his cultural sphere, i.e. his historical recognizability, such that faith in him must entail historical uncertainty“ (172). This leads to a universalization of justification. Finally, S. returns to the question of whether Tillich’s critique of Heim changed between 1913 and 1919 by asking: Is the systematics an ‘intellectual work’? On the one hand, it seems that Tillich „sees Heim’s theology as a genial (but failed) attempt to overcome doubt“ (177) in 1913, just as he did in 1919; on the other hand, it is not clear why „Tillich found his early systematics embarrassing, i.e. an ‘intellectual work’ [...] analogous to ethical works-righteousness“ (181).

Chapter 9, *Tillich at War* (182–211), is divided into two parts: first, Tillich’s sermons addressed to doubting soldiers and second, his correspondence with Hirsch in 1917–18. Tillich’s war sermons were written under special circumstances, as it was part of the soldiers’ service to attend field services. Therefore, Tillich „addresses his

soldiers as men of faith and doubt“ (184). Doubt becomes „a dangerous subject“ because it would be detrimental if the soldiers doubted the „word of God’s wonderful providence leading Germany to victory and a new era of European maturity“ (184). Furthermore, Tillich preaches the justification of the soldiers „by their military service, their sacrifice“ (187f.). „[D]oubt on account of suffering“ becomes the dominating theme in the war sermons (189). In the theological letters of 1917–18, Tillich mentions faith without God for the first time. S. discusses Hirsch’s reservations about Tillich’s concept of God, including „Hirsch’s call to submission instead of egocentricity and Tillich’s principle of autonomous immanence instead of bowing to authority“ (203). The contrast between the „high level of abstraction“ of the correspondence and the pastoral concerns in the war sermons underlines „the impossibility of ever fully capturing Tillich“ (207).

In Chapter 10, *Conclusion* (212–220), S. traces „significant themes across all the chapters, offering an overall characterization of Tillich’s development and discovery of the justification of the doubter“ (212). The themes selected are „the grace of God, faith and reason, rejecting an intellectual work, and doubt as a kind of faith“ (212). S. then discusses the applicability of the justification of the doubter in relation to twenty-first century problems: „First in chastening tendencies of evangelical apologetics (driven by shame) after the end of Christendom, critiquing the fostering of over-confident, muscular Christianity marked by a habit of intellectual or cultural mastery. Second in levelling and overcoming and undermining those performances of religious identity which obscure a shared human predicament.“ (221).

Overall, S. offers a concise study that is exciting to read and insightful into Tillich’s life and thought, finally presenting Tillich’s pastoral beginning against his modern positive background. S. notes that his book is primarily concerned with Tillich’s sermons, which have received no attention in previous research, yet it would have been appreciated if S. did not rely so heavily on the findings of other researchers in the sections on Tillich’s academic works, but instead provided new impulses for the early academic works by drawing on the results of the sermon analysis. But this is not what S. set out to do; rather, the goal was to make Tillich’s pastoral side visible, and he has succeeded admirably. Thus *Pastor Tillich* can be warmly recommended to anyone interested in Tillich’s early development. The work is a milestone in the research not only of Tillich’s early work, but also of his early life.

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