



Pop-Cultural Approaches to Paul Tillich's Image of God

I. INTRODUCTION INTO TILLICH'S BIOGRAPHY AND THEOLOGY



Paul Tillich

- One of the most important Protestant Theologians and philosophers of religion of the 20th century
- born on August 20, 1886 in Starzeddel / Mark Brandenburg (today Poland)
- Son of the Lutheran pastor Johannes Tillich and his wife Mathilde
- studied theology in Berlin, Tübingen and Halle
- Assistant preacher in Berlin-Moabit
- field preacher during the First World War





Tillich's theology after the First World War

[It] tore open the abyss for me so deeply that it could never close again.
It became clear to me: If there can be a new theology,
then it must do justice to this experience of the abyss of our existence.

(Paul Tillich on his time as a field preacher in the First World War)

- Answers to existential questions about meaning, suffering and death not in the “theological ivory tower”
- His conviction: Whoever speaks of God must take into account the hopes and doubts of believers and unbelievers, must have social and political issues in mind
- Perspectives on the border between the sacred and the profane, between the earthly and the divine



Tillich in the 1920s and 1930s

- From 1924: professor at the universities of Marburg, Dresden, Leipzig
- From 1928: Tillich teaches philosophy and sociology in Frankfurt am Main
- Since the 1920s, he has belonged to the circle of "Religious Socialists" whose commitment to social justice also includes a critical view of church-institutionalized welfare
- 1929: Tillich joins the SPD
- 1933: In his book "Die sozialistische Entscheidung" (The Socialist Decision) he also attacks National Socialism; the book is on the list for the book burnings
- 1933: Tillich is the first non-Jewish university professor to be banned by the Nazis from teaching
- Professor in the USA (1933-1955 New York, 1955-1962 Harvard, 1962-1965 Chicago), but later returns to Germany again and again as a guest lecturer



Tillich and the other religions

I was in Japan, where I spent ten weeks debating with Buddhists. You have to understand that in every current religion there are elements of what is in every other current religion. Therefore, when you talk to a Buddhist, you are always talking to yourself at the same time.

(Paul Tillich)

- Tillich remains a seeker and questioner throughout his life
- Even at an advanced age, he engages in dialogue with representatives of other religions
- October 22, 1965: Tillich dies in Chicago



References

GANN, ANNA, Paul Tillich: „Ich fühle mich zwischen den Welten“ (2015), URL: <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/vor-50-jahren-verstorben-paul-tillich-ich-fuehle-mich-100.html>