

*On Tillich's Dictum: "The End of Creation Is the Beginning of the Fall"*

Without either denying that there are definite dangers in the view expressed by this dictum or claiming that Tillich himself avoids them, I think it may nevertheless be defended, insofar, at any rate, as creation is, in its own way, a co-operative, social act. All creation is and must be, in some respect, *self-creation*, so that creation by others, even the qualitatively unique case of *all* things being created by God alone, does not and cannot exclude each of these things also, in some way, creating itself. To this extent, any creature of God is *eo ipso* the creature of its own as well as of God's and the antecedent world's creative activity. As Tillich puts it, "being a creature means both to be rooted in the creative ground of the divine life and to actualize one's self through freedom" (*Systematic Theology* 1: 256)..

Among the other implications of this is that God could not—*logically* could not—create a world that did not also involve the self-creation of each of the creatures constituting that world. If a creature actually exists as more than a mere possibility, it does so only in and through the exercise of its own self-creativity as well as through the creativity of others, whether the antecedent world or God. The conclusion is unavoidable, then, that the biblical and orthodox picture of the original creation in paradise can only be the picture of a *possibility*, not of an actuality. It is, indeed, a picture of what, given the being and activity of God, is, in fact, possible and will also become actual, provided only that creaturely, and specifically human or moral, freedom is exercised in accordance with the will of God and not contrary to it.

But, of course, this still does not fully justify Tillich's dictum. Provided what one means by "the fall" is our human exercise of our freedom so as to actualize the possibility of "original *sin*," instead of our other possibility of "original *righteousness*," one cannot say, as Tillich does, that "creaturely freedom is the point at which creation and the fall coincide" (256), if one means thereby that any exercise of "creaturely freedom" is *eo ipso* "the beginning of the fall" as well as "the end of creation." Why not? Well, first of all, because "creaturely

freedom," properly understood, is an indefinitely more general concept than "human freedom," or "moral freedom" more generally, and it is solely the second, much more specific concept that is involved in the notion of "the fall" as clarified above. There may, of course, be an analogy of some kind between the actualization of original sin through the (mis)exercise of human or moral freedom and the consequences of the exercise of creaturely freedom more generally. But more than an analogy there cannot be—and, frankly, it is not at all clear to me whether the conditions necessary to support even an analogy are present. Then, second, even the actualization of the possibility of original sin is an *option* of human or moral freedom and therefore by no means identical with any exercise of such freedom. To be human or moral is not *eo ipso* to be fallen, although it certainly is to be faced with the *optio fundamentalis* of either standing or falling, of either authentic or inauthentic existence. This must be insisted on even if every human or moral being who has ever existed has, in fact, misused her, his, or its freedom in an inauthentic, sinful way. In that event, one could indeed say that human or moral freedom is the point at which the creation and the fall coincide. But that would be a strictly *factual*, or ontic, in no sense a *modal*, or ontological, statement.

Thus there is falsity as well as truth in Tillich's dictum as it stands. Its truth is quite simply that even creation involves the creature as well as the Creator and that the creation of human or moral beings involves the exercise not only of divine freedom but of human or moral freedom as well. For this reason, there is a sense in which Augustine's famous dictum, "*Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis,*" expresses the reverse of what should be said. For "the end of creation," if not its beginning, is *eo ipso* co-operative, social, "synergistic," while consummation, at least, is nothing of the kind—although salvation in the proper sense, as distinct from consummation, certainly is.

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