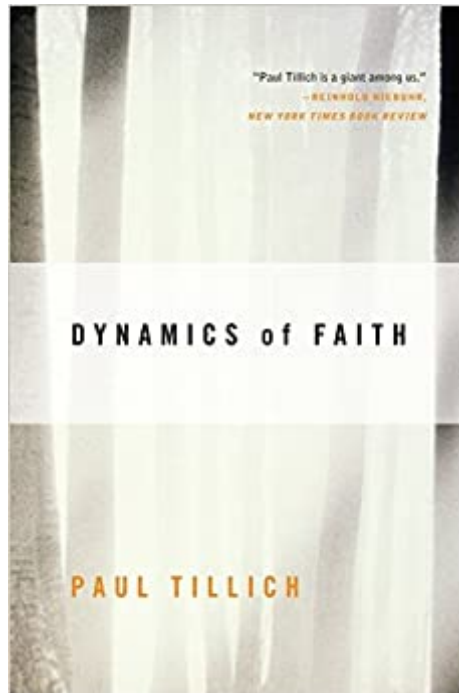




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# Dynamics Of Faith (Perennial Classics)



## Synopsis

One of the greatest books ever written on the subject, *Dynamics of Faith* is a primer in the philosophy of religion. Paul Tillich, a leading theologian of the twentieth century, explores the idea of faith in all its dimensions, while defining the concept in the process. This graceful and accessible volume contains a new introduction by Marion Pauck, Tillich's biographer.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This graceful and digestible volume was called 'a little classic' by the New York Times Book Review. In it, one of the best known theologians, Tillich, explores the idea of faith in all its dimensions, defining the subject in the process. As Reinhold Niebuhr wrote in the New York Times Book Review, 'Paul Tillich is a giant among us.' 'A little classic . . . His analyses of the purely intellectual, emotional and volitional interpretations of the dynamics of faith are superbly subtle in distinguishing what is true from what is false in each position . . . Again reveals the astounding virtuosity of the man and the thinker.' ---Reinhold Niebuhr 'Tillich remains one of the very few of the very great theologians of our time. *Dynamics of Faith* is a good introduction for those who would like to get acquainted with him, an important clarification of his thought for those who have struggled through his earlier books and an important essay in its own right.' ---Albert C. Outler

Paul Tillich (1886-1965), one of the great theologians of the twentieth century, taught at Union Theological Seminary, New York, and then at the University of Chicago and Harvard University.

Paul Tillich defines faith as being in a state of ultimate concern or loving something with all our mind, body and spirit. Examples of an object of our ultimate concern include money, success, God, and our nation. The object of our ultimate concern becomes our god. If we put our faith in something other than the ultimate, then that faith can be destructive. Therefore, there is always a risk in faith and this risk causes doubt. This doubt is overcome by courage which is one aspect of faith. Faith involves the whole personality: our intellect, our will, and our emotions. Faith must be distinguished from belief although belief is an aspect of faith. Therefore arguments for a belief or even a will to have a belief can not produce faith alone. The emotional aspect of faith is the feeling of unconditional dependence but again faith can not be limited to an emotional feeling. We can only express the object of our ultimate concern symbolically as the object itself is beyond our grasp. Here Tillich makes the distinction between a sign and a symbol. While both point to some reality beyond themselves a sign does so only by convention while a symbol participates in that reality to which it points. Symbols reveal a reality that can not be understood without them and also reveal a before hidden, corresponding area of our soul. Works of art can act as symbols in these ways. Symbols can not be invented but come to have a life of their own. Faith goes beyond belief in a story/myth to acceptance of the ultimate concern to which the story symbolically points. Accepting the story literally destroys its symbolic meaning and makes it unable to point us to the ultimate. The literal interpretation of the story comes from belief in a god confined to space and time and makes the symbol an idol. Tillich next discusses two types of faith; ontological faith and moral faith. Ontological faith is the faith of being. It is the experience of the ultimate. Moral faith is the faith to be what the ultimate intended us to be. There is a constant tension between these two forms of faith. Faith and reason are thought to be in conflict with each other only by those who misunderstand the true meaning of faith. Reason is what makes us human and any "faith" that tries to destroy reason is dehumanizing. Faith is built on reason for it takes reason to distinguish our ultimate concern from our other concerns. Tillich defines reason as the "meaningful structure of the mind and reality." Although faith is based on reason it is not confined to reason but reaches out to that which is beyond the grasp of reason, for our reason is finite. Faith is the ultimate fulfillment of reason. Science deals with the physical universe and faith deals with our ultimate concern which is beyond the physical universe. Conflicts occur when science tries to deal with issues beyond the physical universe or faith tries to deal with issues of the physical universe. The relationship between faith and philosophy, in the traditional sense, is more complicated because they both deal with ultimate reality but faith uses symbols and philosophy uses concepts. The reason for the different tools is the fact

that the philosophy remains distinct from the ultimate reality/concern. In the symbol of God are the concepts of life, being, spirit, and love. In the symbol of the fall is the concept of man's estrangement from his essential nature. The truthfulness of our faith can be looked at subjectively and objectively. Our faith is subjectively true if it is what we are really ultimately concerned about and it is objectively true if it is what is really the ultimate. There can be no faith without the participation of that which is ultimate. If there is no revelation of the ultimate, then man can not have faith in this ultimate. Faith, as our ultimate concern, integrates all other aspects of our life. Love is an inseparable aspect of faith. True love contains both eros and agape. Action is the expression of love. Not only does faith exist in community but there can be no community of any kind without a shared faith. One faith can only be attacked by another faith.

Fine edition of a classic text.

a well done book

If you are a Kindle user, have no concerns about purchasing the Kindle edition of this classic work on faith by Paul Tillich. The Kindle formatting is perfect and comes with an active table of contents. It was a nice replacement for my original paperback copy which I bought years and years ago and which is now falling apart (literally) at the seams. "Faith is the state of ultimate concern."

Together with "Courage to be", great introduction to Tillich's thought. Would strongly encourage people seeking to refresh the intellectual angles of their faith to read it. Tillich should be taught since high school. Relevant, tolerant, precise, profound, human.

What is so valuable about this book is its power to clarify and organize the various issues surrounding the spiritual experience. Here are some of Tillich's ideas: Faith as Ultimate Concern. Faith is the centered movement of the whole personality toward our ultimate concern, which is God. That concern alone gives life ultimate meaning and significance. God. God is not a being, acting in time and space, dwelling in a special place, affecting the course of events and being affected by them like any other being in the universe. Such literalism deprives God of ultimacy. It draws him down to the level of the finite and conditional. There are two elements in the notion of God: 1. Our personal experience of the holy, an awareness of the presence of the divine. 2. The acceptance of the symbols. All the qualities we attribute to God--such as power, love, justice--are symbols taken

from our daily experience, and are not information about what God did or will do. If faith calls God "almighty," it uses the human experience of power in order to symbolize the content of its infinite concern, but it does not describe a highest being who can do as he pleases. God is a symbol of God. Discussions about the existence or nonexistence of God are meaningless. The right question is which of the innumerable symbols of faith are most adequate to the meaning of faith, or which symbols of ultimacy express the ultimate without idolatrous elements.

**Symbols.** The holy can never be experienced or expressed directly but can only be experienced and expressed symbolically, through words, rituals, and objects. The symbol is not holy itself, but it points to the holy. Symbols cannot be invented; they grow out of the individual or collective unconscious and cannot function without being accepted by the unconscious dimension of our being. They grow when the situation is ripe for them, and they die when the situation changes.

**Myths.** Myths are symbols of faith combined in stories about divine-human encounters. The fundamental creation of every religious community is a myth that functions as the symbolic expression of ultimate concern. Myth cannot be replaced by philosophy or by an independent code of morals. It keeps faith alive.

**Atheism.** Atheism can only mean the attempt to remove any ultimate concern--to remain unconcerned about the meaning of one's existence. Indifference toward the ultimate question is the only imaginable form of atheism. Perhaps no one can be an atheist.

**Idolatrous Faith.** Making a nation or success one's ultimate concern is idolatry, as is making Jesus or the God of the Old Testament an ultimate concern. Idolatry elevates finite realities to the rank of ultimacy.

**Risk, Doubt, Courage.** There is always a risk that what one has considered a matter of ultimate concern will prove to be a matter of preliminary and transitory concern. If one becomes aware that one has devoted one's life to an idolatrous concern, the meaning of one's life breaks down; the reaction is despair. We always risk making this mistake. A consequence of the risk of faith is doubt. To affirm our faith in spite of our doubt requires courage.

**Community.** Only as a member of a community of faith (even if in isolation or expulsion) can man actualize his faith. The community creates the language of symbol and myth, which cannot be fully understood outside of the community. Without symbol and myth, there is no act of faith, no religious experience.

**Creeds.** Every community of faith tries to formulate the content of its faith in a creed. The purpose of the creed is to protect members of the community from idolatrous concern, which destroys the center of the personality. However, a community's creed must never exclude the presence of doubt. The community of faith that demands unquestioning surrender to its creed as formulated by the religious authorities has become static. The fight against the idolatrous implication of this kind of static faith was waged first by Protestantism and then, when Protestantism itself became static, by the Enlightenment.

**Protestant Principle.** No creedal expression of the ultimate

concern of the community--whether in liturgy, doctrine, or ethical precept--is ultimate. Rather, its function is to point to the ultimate which is beyond all of them. No church or person is infallible. No church has the right to put itself in the place of the ultimate. Its truth is judged by the ultimate. No truth or faith can be rejected, no matter what form it may appear in the history of faith, and no truth of faith is ultimate except the one that no man possesses it. This is the "Protestant principle."

**What Faith Is Not.** Faith is not intellectual; it is not belief; and it is not a matter of will. Faith has no connection with theoretical knowledge, whether it is a knowledge on the basis of immediate, prescientific or scientific evidence, or whether it is on the basis of trust in authorities who themselves are dependent on direct or indirect evidence. Faith is not belief, which is knowledge with a low degree of probability. Faith is not a matter of will. No arguments for belief, no command to believe, and no will to believe can create faith.

**Types of Faith.** Every faith is either an ontological or moral type of faith. The ontological type of faith is concerned with the sense of the presence of the holy here and now. There are three types of ontological faith: sacramental faith, mystical faith, and humanism. Moral types of faith are characterized the idea of the law. Again there are three types of moral faith: Juristic (developed in Talmudic Judaism and Islam), conventional (most prominent in Confucianist China), and ethical (represented by the Jewish prophets). As Protestantism developed, it became more and more a representative of the moral type of ultimate concern. In this way it lost many of the ritual traditions of the Catholic churches, as well as a full understanding of the presence of the holy in sacramental and mystical experiences.

**Reason.** There can be no conflict between reason and faith as ultimate concern. Reason conflicts with faith only when the faith is idolatrous.

**Scientific Truth.** Scientific truth and the truth of faith belong to different dimensions of meaning. Science has no right and no power to interfere with faith. Nor can theologians use the latest physical or biological or psychological discoveries to confirm faith.

**Historical Truth.** Faith cannot be shaken or confirmed by historical research. Whether Moses actually existed or whether the New Testament miracle stories actually happened or whether the presently used edition of the Koran is identical with the original text are questions of historical truth, not of the truth of faith.

**Philosophical Truth.** Philosophical truth consists in true concepts concerning the ultimate; the truth of faith consists in true symbols concerning the ultimate.

**Conventional Faith.** Many people have a conventional faith, a traditional attitude without tensions. Their faith is dead. They have no doubt and need no courage to practice this faith. But their faith can come alive again through contact with religious symbols.

**Integration of the Personality.** The integration of the personality can be brought about only by faith. The life of faith can be the way of discipline which regulates the daily life; it can be the way of meditation and contemplation; or it can be the way of concentration on ordinary work,

on a special aim or on another human being. Faith, Love, and Action. Faith implies love, which is the desire to be reunited with the divine. The immediate expression of love is action. Faith implies love and is the expression of love in action. While it is true that no human action can produce reunion with God, there is no faith without love and no love without works. Religious Tolerance. All religions try to express the same ultimate concern; they conflict only about the proper expression of this ultimate concern. Most communities of faith are tolerant of each other. Some important exceptions, however, are the Roman Church's assertion that it alone possesses the truth and Protestant fundamentalism's disdain of all other forms of Christianity and religion.

There have been a few books in my life that have had a profound effect on me. The Dynamics of Faith by Paul Tillich is one of them. In this book Tillich makes the distinction between faith and belief. Faith is something we all have and can't really explain or describe. Belief is not faith; belief is supposed to lead us to, or aid and abet, faith. Belief is what we argue about: angels, resurrection, prayer wheels spinning in the wind, virgin birth, and all the rest of that largely nonsensical stuff that survive as relics of the primitive beginnings of most religions. Great read. Most thought-provoking. Joseph Cowley

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