The purpose of this article, as its title implies, is to assess the contributions made by Paul Tillich to pastoral care and counseling. At the outset, we must come to terms with a fundamental difficulty. The difficulty is based upon two powerful facts: first, the obvious fact that Tillich has had a profound influence on the field of pastoral care and counseling, however that field may be conceived; second, the somewhat less obvious fact that Tillich's interests in the work of the pastor were decidedly limited. Those who write of Tillich in terms of pastoral theology—so runs my fantasy, at any rate—have an easier time of it, if only because Tillich's interest in pastoral theology outweighed his interest in the operations and settings of pastoral care and counseling.

It may seem odd to think of Paul Tillich as not seriously interested in many aspects of pastoral care and counseling. Was he not a member of the editorial advisory board of this journal? Did he not write extensively about the relationships between theology and psychotherapy? Have not major books in the field of pastoral theology had to pay careful attention to his contributions?

The answer to all these semi-rhetorical questions is, of course, yes. The fact remains that consideration of the minister's work in pastoral care and counseling has largely been a matter of speculation and extrapolation from Tillich, rather than a matter of direct contribution from his writings.

I propose in this article to make three basic points. The first point is that Tillich made a major contribution to pastoral care and counseling by means of his recurring and persistent attention to the pastor's stance and attitude. The second point is that Tillich's ontological concerns (which produced this very attention to stance and attitude) did not lend themselves to a concern for process and work, a concern for which more transactional interests would have served better. The third point is that the second factor limits the first in such a way that there emerges a truncated view of pastoral care and counseling, one in which little attention is paid to the settings and the contracts within which pastoral work is undertaken. The view...
is truncated precisely because attention to settings and contracts is fundamental to an adequate definition of pastoral care.

The Question of Stance and Attitude

Tillich had an almost unbelievably deep concern for words, definitions, and meanings. At a time when he was deeply involved in the preparation of the third volume of his *Systematic Theology*, he taught a four week seminar at the University of Chicago; he called the seminar "Problems of a Philosophy of Life," and it dealt with the same issues which are at stake in the early pages of the third volume of the *Systematic Theology*. He spent fully one-half of the first seminar meeting questioning himself and the class about the shades of difference in meaning among the words *level*, *dimension*, and *stratum*.

That same precision is evident in his reflections on the meaning of the word *mediator*. For Tillich, the stance of the pastor depends on the fact that he is mediator, which for Tillich means not so much that he is a channel or a medium, but rather that he stands in the middle, and is therefore giver and receiver both. Nor is it true that standing in the middle means receiving something from the Spiritual Presence and giving it to someone who needs it. The response of the hearer is a gift to the pastor as much as any insight or message received from the Spiritual Presence or from the Word.¹

The minister is in fact in grave danger whenever he holds a view of himself as one who gives without tempering any such notion with the understanding that he receives: and not that he has received, but that he is receiving. In fact, the constitutive function of a church is that of receiving. . . . He who receives mediates, and, on the other hand, he has received only because the process of mediation is going on continuously. . . . He who preaches preaches to himself as listener, and he who listens is a potential preacher. The identity of reception and mediation excludes the possibility of the establishment of a hierarchical group which mediates while all the others merely receive. [There is such a thing as] the priest who mediates and the laity who respond. But this division is never complete. He who mediates must himself respond, and whoever responds mediates to his mediator.²

The mediator is, to be sure, an actor: one who performs particular actions. But he is in no way more an actor than anyone else. The minister as counselor, then, is exactly where his counselee is, existentially speaking.

This theme expresses itself more often in the form of a sharp denial that the laity or anyone else who might be conceived of as a receiver of help can ever be objectified. A paramount danger in all helping processes is that the helper may come to conceive of himself alone as subject, and of all those who receive his help as object.

This journal once printed an address by Tillich to social workers, in which he said:

> It was always a symbol for me that the patients of the social worker were called cases. I do not know whether a better word can be found, but the word 'case' automatically makes of the individual an example of something general. Who, I ask all of you, wants to be a case, but we are all cases for the doctor, the counselor, the lawyer, and certainly the social worker. . . . The question is whether the caseworker is able to see in his patient not only what is comparable with other cases or identical with what he has experienced in other patients, but that he sees also the incomparable, the unique, rooted in the freedom of the patient.³


² Ibid.

³ Paul Tillich, "The Philosophy of Social