Theologians Robinson, Tillich To Speak Here

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This spring Rice will become a forum for two of the most widely publicized participants in the current and unprecedented efforts for renewal of the ancient Christian faith, when the Chapel Committee presents addresses by Paul Tillich and J. A. T. Robinson, author of the controversial book "Honest to God."

Mrs. Maynee Meeks, Chapel Librarian, revealed Monday that both men have accepted invitations to participate in this year's Chapel lecture series.

Tillich To Revisit
This will be Tillich's second visit to Rice. In April, 1961, he gave a series of three lectures in Hamman Hall for Religious Emphasis Week. Apparently enjoying his stay here, he has agreed to speak once again, but this time in the Rice Chapel.

The distinguished German theologian came to America in 1933 and later taught at Harvard.

His Systematic Theology is a landmark of twentieth century religious thought, and has virtually altered the entire course of contemporary theological discourse.

Answers Existentialists
Time said recently that Tillich "attempts to find theological answers in the Christian message to the existentialist questions posed by modern philosophy."

The book "Honest to God," written by one of Tillich's most popular popularizers, Bishop Robinson of Woolwich, England, was unfavorably reviewed in the Rice Chapel in 1963 in a series of addresses by a young Anglican seminarian, Ian Hunt. A phenomenal best seller (750,000 volumes) for a work on theology, "Honest to God" is based on many of Tillich's central theses, especially the notion that God is not a supreme being "out there" but is rather the "ground of our being."

Cause Celebre
Such views, when presented by an Anglican prelate, became an immediate cause celebre within and without the Church of England.

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Robinson has been resoundingly condemned and uncritically praised. His statements drew at one time an official rebuke from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In addition, Robinson (who once defended “Lady Chatterly’s Lover” in a censorship trial) has written a more recent work, “Christian Morals Today,” which has been interpreted by many as endorsing a more lenient attitude toward Christian sexual morality.

The Bishop, who will be at Rice on Wednesday, March 31, has generally argued for a drastic reinterpretation of Christian dogma which would imply a radically new and unfamiliar religion.