

# THE ASBURY *Theological* JOURNAL

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*The Asbury Journal*

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THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL provides a scholarly forum for thorough discussion of issues relevant to Christian thought and faith, and to the nature and mission of the church. *The Journal* addresses those concerns and ideas across the curriculum which interface with Christian thought, life and ministry.

The primary resource for contributions to *The Journal* is the Asbury Seminary faculty who engage in dialogue with both the roots of our religious heritage and contemporary thought. Scholars from other academic disciplines and various backgrounds are invited to submit articles for publication.

The positions espoused in articles in *The Journal* do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or of Asbury Theological Seminary.

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# Editorial Note

The articles in this issue of the *Asbury Theological Journal* focus on the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, who is perhaps the foremost systematic theologian in the final quarter of the twentieth century. Born in 1928 in Stettin (then Germany, now Poland), he studied philosophy and theology at the Universities of Berlin, Göttingen, Basel and Heidelberg. Pannenberg received his doctor of theology degree from Heidelberg in 1953, completing his *Habilitation* for systematic theology in 1955. He has served as *Privatdozent* at Heidelberg, and as professor of systematic theology at Wuppertal, at the University of Mainz and, since 1967, at the University of Munich, where he is director of the Institute of Ecumenical Theology.

Professor Pannenberg has written or edited more than thirty books and scores of articles, some of which have profoundly influenced the direction of twentieth-century theology. He has recently completed the first two volumes in a projected three-volume systematic theology, and is currently at work on the final installment of that project.

This *Asbury Theological Journal* contains two papers given by Professor Pannenberg for the 1991 Theta Spring Phi Lecture Series at Asbury Theological Seminary. "The Church Today" offers both a critique of the Church's present functioning in Western culture and a program whereby the Church can meet the ecumenical and spiritual challenges which it currently faces. "The Christian Vision of God: The New Discussion on the Trinitarian Doctrine" explores how recent debate on the Trinity addresses and, in some cases, clarifies long-standing problems associated with this doctrine. In addition to the formal presentation of papers, the Theta Phi Series included opportunities for dialogue with Professor Pannenberg. (See "Theta Phi Panel Discussion" and "Theta Phi Talkback Session.")

This issue concludes with two articles examining Pannenberg's significance for contemporary theology. In "Above, Within or Ahead Of? Pannenberg's Eschatologicalism as a Replacement for Supernaturalism," Professor Laurence Wood of Asbury Theological Seminary considers the "eschatological model" which Pannenberg adopts as a framework for his theology over against the "supernatural model" generally employed by modern theologians. In "Wolfhart Pannenberg: Reason, Hope and Transcendence," Professor Stanley Grenz of Carey/Regent College (Vancouver, British Columbia) presents an overview of Pannenberg's life and thought and describes briefly some salient features in the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg.

It is hoped that the articles in this issue of the *Asbury Theological Journal* will encourage careful attention to the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg among North American Christians, and especially among those who consider themselves within the Evangelical tradition.

DAVID R. BAUER  
Associate Professor of Biblical Studies  
Asbury Theological Seminary





# The Church Today

WOLFHART PANNENBERG

In its early days, this century was celebrated by Christians in Europe and in America with great anticipation. Especially, the politically dominating role of Europe in the world was expected to help the Christian missionary efforts in completing the process of Christianization on a global scale. In looking back from the end of the century Christians should not dismiss such expectation too easily as triumphalism. Otherwise, the missionary zeal of the apostle Paul might perhaps be labelled triumphalistic, too. But certainly those high expectations among Christians did not take seriously enough the forces of secularism, and in particular of secular nationalism, which soon would hurl Europe into the abyss of World War I that was to destroy its dominating political control of their ancient settlements in Asia Minor. That attitude continued after World War II in the Cyprus affair and still contributes to bitterness between Eastern and Western Christians. This is but one example of how alienated Western power politics has become from any responsibility concerning the situation of Christianity and of Christians around the world. Certainly, the period of decolonization helped the Christian churches in the Third World to obtain or reaffirm their independence, and Christian missions in those cultures were not without their successes in the second half of this century, especially in Africa and in some regions of Eastern Asia. But, at the same time, a remarkable renaissance of non-Christian religions, especially the World religions, has taken place, and particularly the Islamic resurgence and missionary movement has become a close competitor of Christianity in its missionary efforts. Thus the situation of Christianity with relation to other World religions is significantly different now than it was at the turn of the century.

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*Wolfgang Pannenberg is professor of systematic theology at the University of Munich. This material was presented at Asbury Theological Seminary during the annual Theta Phi lectures (Spring 1991).*

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At the same time, the powers of secularization in their alliance with economic affluence in the West made dramatic progress, even in the course of the last decades, in alienating the mind of the people, especially in the European nations, from the Christian origins of their cultural traditions. The Christian churches are rapidly becoming a minority in regions where they had their strongest roots in former centuries. In this situation, the most serious problem is that, to a large extent, the churches continue to adapt to the mentality of the secular culture in their preaching and teaching, in the life of their congregations and occasionally even in their liturgical life. The strategy of adaptation to the secularist world is followed as if in this way the churches would get attention and even a public hearing for the gospel and for their religious teaching. The contrary is true. Adaptation to the secular mentality is usually taken as indicating the weakness of the religious agencies, and in fact there is quite often a loss of confidence on the part of the churches and their ministers behind their craving for relevance to the secular world. This may very well be the main reason why mainline churches decline and conservative churches grow. Evangelicals and fundamentalists deliver the religious message more unabashedly as a challenge to the secular mentality and lifestyle. Unfortunately, a loss of openness to the human situation and to the unprejudiced search for truth is often the price paid for conservative growth. But there can be little doubt that, ironically, "relevance" in religious matters seems to be bound up in the secular world with the nerve to challenge the principles of secularism that are generally taken for granted in modern Western societies. If religion comprises much of what human life in these societies is lacking, which seems to be indicated by widespread feelings of dissatisfaction and indeterminate longings, then a religious message has to challenge the spirit of secularism rather than adapt to it.

Secularism can be opposed in different ways. Sometimes, such opposition erupts in irrational reactions to the system of secular society, but it can also become articulate in the form of considered criticism. It can occur in the form of fundamentalism that forecloses the minds of people against all critical probing of their own set of beliefs. But it can also display a more open, rational attitude in relation to the roots of modernity as well as to the content of the Christian tradition itself and even of the biblical writings.

A rational attitude always involves critical reflection, but such critical reflection should be applied not only to the content of the cultural tradition, but equally to its modern critics. If done in such a spirit, a critical reassessment of the biblical tradition as well as of the tradition of Christian doctrine need not be done under the spell of secular modernism. It may be done for the sake of the Christian message itself, in the service of a faithful reconstruction of its content together with a radical critique of basic assumptions of modern secular society and culture. It is this kind of critical rationality that continues the alliance of faith and reason which has been a distinctive mark in the history of Christian culture, notwithstanding occasional criticism of the abuse of reason and of the ways it sometimes lends itself to



abuse. The alliance of faith with reason began in the second century, if not earlier, on the assumption that there can be only one truth for all human persons as there is only one God, the creator of all, who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, and only one world of creation that is shared by all human beings and saved by Jesus Christ. The early alliance of faith with reason lies at the roots of the dynamics of universal mission in early Christianity, and the confidence that each particular truth must finally be consonant with the one God and with His revelation continues to be a condition of the formative and transforming power of the Christian faith in the totality of our personal, social and cultural life.

The fact that the formative and transforming power of the Christian faith has been fading in recent Christian history may be largely due to the common assumption that reason and faith belong to different realms or represent different layers of the human reality, if they are not regarded as conflicting forces. While modern secular culture struggled for the emancipation of reason from faith, modern Christian theologians often found it convenient to make their peace with the separation of faith and reason. But it was not only the fault of modern Christian theology and subjectivistic piety that the rift between faith and reason deepened and broadened. The origin of that rift goes back to the breakup of the Western church in the sixteenth century in consequence of what I consider the failure of the Reformation movement. The continuing conflict between confessional churches and their theologies was not easily reconcilable to the assumption of a basic consonance of faith with reason, since rational truth can be only one, while Christianity presented itself to the emerging modern world in a disrupted state of conflicting alternatives. When the zeal of their antagonism waned, it could seem plausible that the one truth might be in neither of those confessional alternatives. Thus, the history of Christian division and of confessional warfare in early modern history may be at the root not only of the rise of a secular culture that increasingly emancipated itself from its religious past, but also of the dissolution of the old alliance between faith and reason and of the resulting loss of the transforming power of the Christian faith in shaping our individual, social and cultural life.

I hope that by now it is evident that I am talking about the Church today. The trend toward adapting the content of the Christian tradition to secular standards looks like a substitute for the lost consonance of faith and reason. But adaptation to secular standards is a poor and dangerous substitute, because it works only one way: by purging the contents of the Christian tradition of everything in tension with secular principles, while depriving thereby the Christian message of its challenging and transforming power. By contrast, reason in alliance with faith can serve not only to reassess critically the content of the tradition, but also to reconstruct its interpretation of reality at large in such a way as to produce viable alternatives to the secular interpretation of reality. Faith in alliance with reason can challenge even the principles of modern secular culture without violating or dis-

missing whatever truth they may contain.

The first thing the churches need, then, is confidence in the message they have to convey in distinction from the agenda of the world. It is the message of the kingdom of God as the indispensable condition of a meaningful human life in its social setting as well as in our individual way of life. The kingdom of God is not something that we could bring about by our human efforts, nor is it identical with the existence of the Church, but it stands as the criterion of our individual life, of our society and also of the Church itself which is called to exist as the sign of the kingdom. It is the content of our eschatological hope that is expected to transform our perishable lives into participation in God's eternal glory through the power of His spirit in the resurrection of the dead. And the pledge of this hope is the crucified and risen Christ. In communion with Him we shall overcome the shortcomings of this provisional form of existence and participate in the new life that has entered this world in His resurrection.

The Church is called to exist as sign and instrument of that eschatological hope. How this constitutes the nature of the Church was admirably described in the first chapter of the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the Church. This description of the nature of the Church was adopted in 1968 by the World Council of Churches, though without the notion of "instrument" and by emphasizing exclusively the function of the Church as "sign" of the kingdom. What the Church is called to signify by its existence as sign was expressed by the council in terms of unity with God and communion among human beings. In combining these two dimensions of unity, the council interpreted the Christian hope for the kingdom of God which means that people enjoy communion with God and thereby also a truly human communion among themselves. Of these, unity with God occupies the first place in our human destiny. Communion with our fellow men and women comes as a consequence of our common destiny to communion with God. During the years after the Second Vatican Council this emphasis has often been changed as if the unity of humankind were the aim in its own right regardless of what the basis of such unity might be. It was the time of what was called "secular ecumenism." The Church could then be taken as an agency that should serve the unity among human beings in terms of political or social peace. But the Vatican Council rightly emphasized the unity with God as basis of the communion among human persons. Only in this way is the social predicament of human existence part of the Christian vision and hope. In this way it also becomes manifest in the life of the Church in distinction from secular forms of community. For the Church is essentially a communion of those who share the same faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and are united in Him through the one baptism and through His eucharist.

It is precisely in its form as a liturgical, worshiping community, then, that the Church exists as a sign of the ultimate destiny of every human being and of humanity at large, because that ultimate destiny of all human

beings is to be united to God and thereby—thereby!—among themselves. Human beings can associate in many ways. Even a gang of criminals is a society of some form. But it is certainly not the kingdom of God. In the kingdom of God human beings will be united by their communion with the one God, and the Church in its liturgical life exists as the image of destiny.

There is an important consequence from this basic structure of the nature of the Church: The historical churches live up to their nature and destiny as sign of the kingdom to the degree they incorporate in their existence the paradigm of their liturgical life as worshiping congregations—unity among the members on the basis of their unity with God in one faith, one baptism, one eucharist. If the regional and worldwide associations of Christians were structured according to that paradigm, they would exist as communions of communions, communions of local congregations that are gathered around the celebration of the liturgy. To some degree the churches, as they exist today, actually manifest that basic structure, but only to a degree; they are too easily mistaken for regional or even worldwide institutions like other social institutions, with a bureaucratic structure and discipline of their own. Furthermore, the separate existence of church organizations, even on a world level, gives the picture of a plurality of religious parties, sometimes in conflict and certainly presenting themselves as competing parties rather than a worldwide communion of local communions united through one faith and eucharistic fellowship as testimony to the human destiny of communion through unity with the one God.

The so-called *communio-ecclesiology* that has been developed in recent decades primarily by the efforts of orthodox and Roman Catholic theologians offers a model for reinterpreting and restructuring the life of the churches that should be basically acceptable to all confessional traditions. It corresponds to the emphasis in the Protestant churches upon the local congregations “where the pure gospel is preached and the sacraments are celebrated according to their institution,” to quote from the description of the Church in the Augsburg Confession of 1530. Thus, in principle, the *communio-ecclesiology* provides a common basis for an ecumenical doctrine of the Church. There are, of course, a number of problems that have to be solved on the way toward an ecumenical consensus on the nature of the Church. I shall confine myself to just two of these problems.

The first problem concerns the term “local church” as referring to the basic units of ecclesial life. The term “local church” seems to indicate the locality of the worshiping congregation, so that the worldwide Church could exist as a communion of local congregations. But in Roman Catholic ecclesiology the term “local church” means the dioceses of an episcopal see, and while in the ancient Church such a diocese was in fact a rather small geographical unit organized around a center of worship, later on dioceses tended to become larger and today usually represent regional rather than local church organizations. These regional organizations owe their unity to the jurisdiction of one bishop rather than to the unity of one place of wor-

ship. This issue is related to the image of the bishop as presiding at the celebration of the eucharist, where the communion among the members of the congregation through their communion in the one body of Christ is celebrated and enacted. Usually it is the priest, not the bishop, who is in fact presiding at the eucharistic celebration in a local liturgy, and this raises the question of how the ministries of priest or presbyter and bishop are related to each other. It is an issue of great ecumenical importance. If the episcopal dignity is rooted in presiding at the eucharistic celebration, it would be appropriate and would clarify the *communio*-structure of the church to emphasize the episcopal character of the ministry of the presbyter, wherever the bishop is not present. If, on the other hand, the episcopal ministry is conceived in terms of supervision of local churches, it must have its criterion in the eucharistic unity as it is celebrated locally.

The need for clarifying the concept of the *local* church is closely connected with the problem of hierarchical authorities in the church's life. This is the second problem that is to be addressed here. There certainly must exist some form of supervision of the local congregations in order to preserve their unity with each other in the one faith of the church, but also within each congregation the mutual communion of the members and their minister in that one faith. This need for supervision once exercised by the apostles themselves explains the emergence of hierarchical forms of ministry in the church, a ministry exercised by the migrating prophets of early Christianity, later on in the transformation of episcopacy into an office of regional authority, and furthermore in the formation of the metropolitan and patriarchal authorities.

However, the emergence of hierarchical forms of ministry does not have its only justification in the need for supervision of local congregations in order to preserve them in the unity of the one faith. In addition, the hierarchical minister fulfills a representative function: He represents to the people the unity of the apostolic faith; and in relation to others, especially to other local or regional churches, he represents the church of the particular region of his assignment. But, unfortunately, hierarchical authority entails the tendency toward developing forms of government that are not consonant with the nature of the Church according to Jesus' own word: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (Matt 20:25f.). In the history of the Church, the behavior of its hierarchs was not always distinguishable from that of the rulers of the Gentiles. Each person who carries such an authority should at least be aware of the temptation of exercising power to the effect of molding the church according to his or her own ideas. To avoid this, it is not enough to call oneself a servant. In the history of the Church, the most important remedy in assisting the hierarchical authorities against the temptation of perverse exercise of power has been the development of conciliar structures on all levels of the church's life. Though this is not a perfectly safe remedy, it is

actually the only one, and it is necessary to reemphasize the accountability of hierarchical authorities to conciliar institutions on all levels of the church's life. This may help to make hierarchical ministries more representative of the constituency that is represented by the minister. The representative function of the Christian minister, of course, is twofold. He not only represents the constituency of a local or regional or even worldwide church, but also, and more importantly, the apostolic gospel and thus the authority of Jesus Christ Himself. The two aspects of representation do not always coincide, and that poses the most difficult problem in the exercise of authority within the Christian Church. The minister must not be content to represent the mind of his constituency, he sometimes has to oppose their opinions and moods for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But even in situations like that the minister should not enforce his judgment upon the constituency, but simply give testimony to the word of God as he perceives it in contrast to his people.

One of the functions of representative institutions of the Church is that of authoritative teaching. It belongs to the ministry on all its hierarchical levels as well as to the conciliar bodies of the Church. Such teaching is authoritative in that it is representative in both ways, in representing the authority of Christ on the one hand, but also the communion of the Church on some level, be it the local parish, the dioceses, the Christians of a province or nation, or finally the worldwide community of Christians. Authoritative teaching always represents the authority of Christ in concrete ways and therefore in a particular historical situation where the one body of Christ becomes manifest as represented by the teaching authority of the Church. Except on the local level, such teaching authority is little developed in most Protestant churches, although at the time of the Reformation certain approaches were made in the direction of that end. In the long run, however, most Protestant churches did not succeed in developing procedures and institutions necessary to secure within their confessional families a sufficient consensus on the continuation of representative teaching. Therefore, some Protestant churches, especially the Lutheran churches, have become quite traditionalist in elevating the authority of their confessional writings from the sixteenth century while showing themselves unable to adapt such teaching, representative of their confessional family, to changed circumstances and to scriptural insights of a later time. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, was considerably more successful in securing the continuing exercise of authoritative teaching, but with a rather rigid conception of authority. If the teaching of the Church is authoritative in being representative, it is always related to processes of reception in the Christian community. The claim to being representative is not sufficient in and of itself. The community of Christians addressed by the exercise of teaching authority will receive or not receive the teaching in the light of their faith in Jesus Christ and of the witness of the Scriptures to God's revelation in Christ. In the course of such a process of reception it will turn out in what sense the teaching so re-



ceived has in fact been representative. Furthermore, such teaching is always related to historical conditions of language and thought. They function as limitations of its form of expression. Thus the teaching may be representative of the church at a particular moment in history, but perhaps not of the entire church and not in such a way that it retains its importance in later periods of Church history. It may not be final in the form by which it expresses the intended truth. Thus, the teaching will be authoritative to the degree it actually turns out to be representative of the Christian community as well as of the word of God. But it is not exempt from critical examination by comparison with the gospel of Jesus Christ as witnessed by the apostolic Scriptures. On the other hand, the teaching on behalf of the church on different levels of representative Christian ministry or council need not claim exemption from critical examination, as if in such a case it lost its authority. If its authority is based on its representative character, then there is a sufficient claim to authority connected with any teaching in the ecclesial community. Since the function of such teaching is to witness to the content of the revelation of God in Christ, its purpose can never be destroyed by subsequent examination and discussion in the light of the Scriptures, even if it may turn out that the form of the teaching has to be modified as a result of such examination. The continuing exercise of authoritative teaching is necessary in the Church in order to express on a representative level the one faith of the Church and thereby preserve the unity of the Church (the sense of being united by faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ). Therefore, it should be possible to reach agreement on this difficult issue ecumenically along the suggested lines. The more an undue rigidity of claims to incorrigible teaching authority can be avoided, the more a growing consensus on this issue can be expected. Historically, cases of undue rigidity in enforcing decisions of teaching authority sometimes entered a fatal combination with an abuse of ecclesial ministry under the impact of the arrogance of power. Therefore, the ecumenical discussion of this subject is particularly sensitive. But there is no reason why solutions should be impossible, since the community of Christians on all levels of its life needs the unifying effect of some continuing exercise of representative teaching authority.

The representative function of the ministry, but also of conciliar events, is of particular importance in the life of the Church, since the Church itself exists as a sign, i.e., an anticipatory representation of the destiny of all humankind. In its eucharistic liturgy, the Church represents in each local situation the ultimate destiny of humankind to communion with God and among human beings themselves. The Church is an instrument for salvation of individuals precisely by fulfilling this function as sign to all humanity. It must not allow the clarity of its nature as sign to be blurred or tarnished, and that clarity depends on its communion—in so many places—with the one Lord, and on its expression in the communion among the members of the Church, in the situation of a local congregation as well as in the solidarity of all the Christians in all places and through the centuries.

In historical actuality, however, the clarity of the sign is broken. It is marred wherever congregations and their members let themselves be seduced by the spirit of secularism so that the difference of the new life in Christ from the lifestyle of the secular world is no longer discernible. The clarity of the sign that the Church is called to be is stained particularly by the misbehavior of its ministers, since they represent the Church. Finally, and most painfully, the sign is broken by the divisions of the Church. Since in the contemporary situation of Christianity the churches are separated, in each particular church the fullness of the nature of the Church is impaired.

In the past, each of the separate churches declared itself to be the only true Church, and precisely from that pretension the conflict resulted that marred the credibility of each one of them. The situation has become even more difficult in the contemporary scene, since Christians of different confessional traditions recognize each other as Christians, even officially, but still remain separate and even continue the old condemnations that the churches threw at each other's faces when they separated. In the contemporary scene these separations are no longer plausible. This is rightly felt by most Christians across all confessional barriers. In this situation the continuing division of the churches destroys their credibility as sign of God's kingdom in a reconciled world. Each church's credibility is affected by this situation, and particularly so if it affirms itself to be the only true Church. Certainly each of the churches should try to be true to its vocation by the Lord, but this can never mean to be the only true Church, since He is the Lord of all who confess to His name, and communion among Christians and among their churches is mandatory as a consequence and as evidence of their communion with the one Lord. Thus, to be true to the nature of the Church, is irreconcilable to the claim of any particular church to be the only true Church. It is certainly correct that ecclesial communion presupposes unity of faith in dedication to one and the same Lord. But that need not mean complete unanimity in the understanding and interpretation of that one faith. There will always remain differences in our understanding of the faith, since—as the apostle assures us—our knowledge is imperfect and will remain so until the second coming of our Lord. Ecclesial communion requires the mutual trust that it is the same Lord whom we confess. Therefore, we confess our faith together. But even the common confession of our faith will always be connected with different interpretations. This need not impair ecclesial communion, but it is an inescapable element of our human and historical situation of plurality not only in our existence, but also in our understanding. Unity is necessary, since it is the one Lord who unites us. But as long as dedication to the one Lord is mutually recognizable, communion is mandatory, and it is an indispensable requirement of being the Church.

Therefore, in the present situation, the ecumenical issue is of paramount importance in the life of the churches. The recovering and resumption of ecclesial communion on the basis of the one faith in one and the same Lord is

the fundamental requirement for restoring the worldwide credibility of the Christian Church as sign of the kingdom in faithful obedience to her Lord. The different confessional traditions may continue to enrich the historical self-consciousness of all Christians. They may continue as resources for reformulating the faith of the Church, which has to be done again and again. But the different confessional traditions must no longer separate Christians from each other who recognize each other as Christians. With remarkable success, the ecumenical movement of this century specified and broadened the necessary basis for such mutual recognition, especially in the Lima document on baptism, eucharist and ministry and in the more recent common explication of the apostolic faith as summarized in the symbol of Nicea. If the leading authorities of the churches are duly aware of the fact that complete unanimity in these matters is neither possible, nor needed as a precondition of ecclesial community, and if they remember the mandatory character of communion between churches as resulting from the mandate of our Lord himself, they should now decide to enter into negotiations about the concrete conditions of resuming ecclesial communion. Since these conditions will be slightly different between different church bodies, it will be necessary to spell out their details in bilateral negotiations. What is most important in this process, however, and will determine decisions about what is necessary and sufficient, is the spirit of urgency that arises from the awareness that in our contemporary situation no church can be true to the mandate of the Lord and to its own nature as sign of His kingdom, unless it meets the ecumenical challenge.



# Theta Phi Panel Discussion with Wolfhart Pannenberg

**Moderator:**

Dr. Laurence W. Wood

Frank Paul Morris Professor of Systematic Theology  
Asbury Theological Seminary

**Panel Members:**

Dr. Lawson Stone

Associate Professor of Old Testament  
Asbury Theological Seminary

Dr. Michael Peterson

Professor of Philosophy  
Asbury College

Mr. Neil Anderson

senior student, president of Theta Phi  
Asbury Theological Seminary

**Wood:** We welcome Professor Pannenberg to our noon luncheon and panel discussion. We also welcome our panelists, and this overflow crowd of students and faculty. I believe you will find this discussion to be intellectually and spiritually rewarding.

Our procedure will be to allow each panelist to address a question to Professor Pannenberg, and he will respond to each question in the order in which it is given.

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*During his presentation of the annual Theta Phi lectures at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wolfhart Pannenberg responded to these questions posed by a distinguished panel. Dr. Pannenberg is professor of systematic theology at the University of Munich.*

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**Stone:** I have two questions regarding Professor Pannenberg's development of the doctrine of the Trinity. These questions derive specifically from the suggestion that we should not regard the unity of God as a person or a subject but rather in terms of Spirit, understood under the metaphor of a field of power. First of all, in the Old Testament Yahweh is clearly presented as one, a unity, and yet clearly as a personal subject, an agent. How do you understand the Old Testament presentation of Yahweh's personal agency in the light of your suggestions about the unity of God? And, second, the Old Testament presents Yahweh as a sovereign person over against the widespread belief in ancient religions in an impersonal field of power beyond the gods from which the world and the gods emerge. How would you respond to the fear that your metaphor of a field of power, of spirit, is possibly a revival of an ancient pagan concept which the Bible is opposed to?

**Pannenberg:** Well thank you for your provocative question. I'm sorry that I didn't present my lecture on the Trinity before you had a chance to ask that question.

The answer to your first question is that the Yahweh of the Old Testament is, of course, the Father of whom Jesus Christ spoke in His message. Thus, the first person of the Trinity is identical with the God of the New Testament although the way of addressing the God of the New Testament in the language of *Abba* is a little different from the Old Testament usage of addressing God. Although God is sometimes referred to as Father—be it of the king, be it of the people of Israel—still the nuances of Jesus talking about the God of the Old Testament, the God of Jewish faith, in terms of Father are different from what is the general basis of the Jewish tradition in talking about God. It is the same God. And it's really important that the Father whom Jesus Christ talked about and addressed as God is the God of the Old Testament. But we also think that only in the way Jesus talked about God is the God of the Old Testament revealed in His true reality. So, in some way, we do not yet find the ultimate character of the God of Jewish faith in the Old Testament. I think this must be the test of faith. Otherwise Jesus would be just one in the number of prophets of Israel among others. It is this eschatological claim to ultimacy which also means that the way that the one God was experienced and addressed *before* was not yet coming to us in ultimate form of understanding of whom the people of the old covenant were talking about. Thus, the Father of Jesus Christ is identical with Yahweh.

But now the difference, and I will come back to this in my lecture: the way the God of the Old Testament is revealed as Father by Jesus Christ is inseparable from this form of manifestation so that this form of manifestation belongs to the Eternal Being of the God of the Old Testament as He is addressed as Father by Jesus. And thus what I think has not been achieved in the tradition of Jewish interpretation based on the Old Testament preceding Jesus Christ, and maybe after the history of Jesus Christ, is to express the identity of the transcendent reality of God, the God of Israel, with His mani-

festation—with the ultimate form of this manifestation. That is what the doctrine of the Trinity does.

Then the question arises as to what is the unifying issue that binds together the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the concreteness of the divine reality in its manifestation which is not different from the eternal being of God. And then one can say, "Well, God is love. God is Spirit." Both answers come from the Johannine writings. Perhaps one can also say God is His Kingdom. The Kingdom of God and God Himself are not to be separated and I will say tomorrow something about how Father, Son and Spirit are united in relation to the issue of the Kingdom of God. When we speak of God as spirit, of course, then the question comes up as to what is meant by the term spirit. And I would call upon your competence as an Old Testament scholar when I say that *spirit* is not *mind* in the Old Testament. *Ruach* is not mind. *Ruach* is wind. *Ruach* is breath, but it is not mind. Now the same connotations are present in the origins of the Greek word, *pneuma*. I will not address this tomorrow so I may say it right away. The word *pneuma* and the history of *pneuma* is the basis of the field concept of modern physics. This has been asserted by Max Jammer, who is the leading authority in the study of the key concepts of the natural sciences in the history. He has studied the concept of space and Albert Einstein wrote a famous preface to that book on the history of the concept of space by Max Jammer. He has also studied the concept of mass in physics and also the concept of field, and produced some evidence, that the *pneuma* theory of especially Stoic philosophy was the immediate predecessor of the field theories of modern physics. Therefore, I happen to think that the field concept stands closer to the biblical term *pneuma* than the concept "mind" does. It was only the Platonist Origen who succeeded to identify definitively mind and spirit. And we should be open to revise our understanding a little bit.

Of course, to say that God is spirit is not all that can be said about God. In the first place God is Yahweh, or God is the Father—and the divine Spirit is concrete only in the person of the Father or in the way the Spirit is going out from the Father. Then of course a Christian peculiarity, again, is that in relation to the Son, the Spirit is manifest as a distinct person of its own, which we don't find in the Old Testament, but it is part of our Christian faith.

So, my answer to the main point that you made is that the divine reality which has the character of a field rather than of an anthropomorphic kind of mind, is concrete only in the persons—first of all the Father, the God of the Old Testament, but inseparably connected with the Son and the Spirit.

**Peterson:** Professor Pannenberg, as one who is interested in the philosophical problem of evil, I'd like to know your thoughts along those lines for theology. As you undoubtedly know, there are many who believe the problem of evil is the central problem for Christian theology. I'm thinking of my question particularly in terms of your emphasis that theology should not be

detached from history, and I wonder if that emphasis doesn't make it particularly important for Christian theology to engage actual historical evils, such as the horrors of the holocaust. Would you care to comment?

**Pannenberg:** Well, that's not the easiest question. You could have held back a little bit in the polite American way before challenging me to the bottom of my Christian faith in this way!

I would like to say first that the reality of evil is certainly the most serious argument against the existence of God in this world. It is not the most serious *intellectual* argument, but it is the most serious argument in terms of the evidence of feeling and experience. Intellectually, it is not very conclusive. But on the more basic emotional level, it is the major evidence against the existence of God. And so it will continue until the last day. We learn from the Bible that this is so. Thus, this issue will be definitively solved, not by our theoretical arguments, but only by the action of God Himself in the future of His Kingdom. We must, of course, say more than this, because we live in this world and, as Christians, we also have to struggle with this issue in our present lives.

Now, if you believe in God, the problem of evil—the reality of evil—does not put you to shambles. It is not the believer who is afraid of the problem but it is the unbeliever who thinks he cannot believe because of it. The moment you believe, the situation is quite different. If you read the book of Job, which is, of course, a book on this theodicy question in the Bible, Job never comes to the point of doubting the existence of God, does he? He complains about the situation. He charges Yahweh with treating him unjustly. But he never doubts the existence of God. And in the end of the book of Job it is the glory of God's work as the creator in nature which eventually makes Job aware that, after all, he is but a finite being left to death and who is he to ask questions like that of God? That's the attitude of the believer, even in view of his or her own suffering. Thus the situation of the believer is quite different when considering the question of theodicy than the situation of the non-believer.

To the non-believer, it may be the main obstacle to embracing faith in God. But on the other hand, to believe in God is the way to deal with this situation. There is no other way to deal with it.

You mentioned the Holocaust. Now I don't know whether you know Theodore W. Adorno, who was an atheist. (A Jew can never be an atheist, really. And if a Jew is an atheist, this is a way of keeping the second commandment!) I've never met a Jew who, deep down in his heart, is an atheist. And certainly Adorno was not. But he said after Auschwitz one can no longer talk about God. I always felt that you can say that only if you are in a position of watching a tragedy in theater. You cannot say that, if you think of yourself in the place of those who had to go into the gas ovens, because those who had to walk that way had their only hope in singing psalms. You perhaps know about that. The only power to deal with experiences like that

is not in simply observing them in others, but if one has to go through them oneself. Therefore, I don't think it is a very convincing argument really. The moment you believe in God you get hold of the *only* power that enables you to face experiences of terror like that. You get deprived of the best ally we have in fighting the power of evil when you let go of the faith of God.

Well, the question remains, how is it reconcilable with the power and goodness of God that He created the world such as we experience it? And then, in addressing this rather limited question within the broad range of the question you posed to me, considerations gain the force that have been raised in this history of dealing with the problem of theodicy, and especially in its classical Leibnizian form. Because Leibnitz not only argued that evil was admitted because of freedom—of having freedom—but he argues that evil is bound up with the very existence of independent, finite reality. If one wants to have independent, finite reality, one cannot at the same time avoid evil in all its forms. One has to have the patience—and a Creator, if you allow me to say so, may have the patience—to deal with His creation, seeing, watching it being tempted by evil, without, however, being finally overwhelmed by it. Augustine once said a very beautiful word about this issue, different from Clement of Alexandria whom he otherwise often followed. Clement said evil comes from the free will of the creature, so God is not responsible for the evil in this world. Augustine was too intelligent a man to be content with this kind of answer because, after all, God had created that creature that is going to bring about evil, moral evil, by the abuse of its free will. And so Augustine said that even in creating Adam, God knew very well that this Adam would abuse the freedom he had been given. But God knew even more than that: He also knew that Jesus Christ would come and save Adam from the consequence of death that would result from his sin. And I think this is a very beautiful word because it entails, on the one hand, God the creator bought the independent existence of creatures at the price of admitting evil in His creation. But on the other hand, He also had in view what His aim for His creation is: the rescue of the creation by the death and resurrection of His Son and by the final eschatological overcoming of evil.

**Anderson:** Professor Pannenberg, your criticism of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is well known. For those who may not be familiar with it, I'll briefly summarize. You consider the Virgin Birth to be an atheological legend (based on historical critical concerns, I believe) and you think that the doctrine was only later conceived by the early church to support the idea of incarnation, unaware of the contradiction inherent in that—that the Virgin Birth says that Jesus is God's Son from His beginning and the Incarnation refers to His preexistence. You believe that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth has been mistakenly accorded the same status as the Resurrection in support of the idea of incarnation. Also, interestingly, you level a criticism against those who use the doctrine to promote piety, particularly with regard to Mary. I think that may have something to do with your criticism of Karl

Barth, perhaps—Mariolatry in Protestantism. In spite of these criticisms, you wrote in the *Apostle's Creed* and *Jesus—God and Man*, that Christians should retain the creedal affirmation in the *Apostle's Creed*—not affirming the historicity of the Virgin Birth but affirming the motivation that went into the formulation of the Creed.

Based on this, I have three related questions. Why would it not be possible to affirm the historicity of the virginal conception of Jesus based upon the historicity of the Resurrection as that event casts light backward upon the events of Jesus' life? Second, could we say, without resorting to pietistic solutions, that in terms of salvation history, the virginal conception was not comprehensible as an historical occurrence until after Pentecost? And third, how do you respond to Oscar Cullmann's criticism that you have not taken sufficient notice of the events and their Spirit-directed interpretations by later believers?

**Pannenberg:** Well, you reported correctly on my position concerning the issue of the Virgin Birth and I think it is, indeed, a historical question—as, of course, the question of the Resurrection is. You cannot settle, however, the historicity of the Virgin Birth by referring to the historicity of the Resurrection. These are two different events, and you cannot solve questions of historicity in general by affirming the historicity of just one event. Of course, in terms of miracles, the Resurrection of Jesus is by far the more mysterious miracle than the Virgin Birth. So some people have asked me why I accept the greater miracle and not the lesser one. Well, in the case of the Virgin Birth, even current biological ideas need not be challenged, certainly not in the same way as in the case of the Resurrection. But my criticism of the historicity of the Virgin Birth is not based on a disbelief in miracles. I think that reality as such is miraculous. And I don't agree with David Hume that the mere fact that something is unusual—even if it is uniquely unusual—is sufficient reason to reject a claim to historicity. There have to be *other* reasons. If it could be shown that the traditions of the early Christians were late legends as a whole, I think it would be very difficult to go on with the Christian faith. But this is not the case so far—so far, we have to say. We should not make infallible judgments, even in this central part of our faith. This is precisely the point where faith involves a risk. We are not safe as Christians at this point. We are not safe. But we may leave it to God to take care of the truth of His gospel. We certainly cannot protect the gospel and the truth of the gospel.

That's my criticism of fundamentalism, of those who want to draw a fence around the Scriptures in order to defend them from the application of critical reflection. This is an indication of too little faith. Too little faith in God. If His revelation is true, He will take care of that Himself. Not we.

Then, of course, I may turn out to be wrong in my historical judgment on the story of the Virgin Birth. But given the situation and the arguments as they stand, given the nature of the text that we have, I cannot escape a criti-



cal judgment here. This may tell you that I don't postulate the inerrancy of every word in Scripture just on principle. We couldn't do that unless this is a kind of works righteousness, I think. We shouldn't do that. We should leave it to God. In this case, there are legendary elements in the Scriptures. And, of course, it is clear *why* this is so. Most professional exegetes would concur with the conclusion that the message of the angel in Luke is in fact an answer to the question of why this man is called Son of God. And the answer in the message of the angel is that He is called the Son of God because he is to be born by the virgin from the Holy Spirit. It is at this point where the original version of the legend and belief in the preexistent Son of God is not reconcilable. When we ask, "What's the basis of confessing Jesus to be the Son of God?" we have a number of different answers in the early Christian writings. We have the answer in the very old text, quoted by Paul in the opening sentences of the letter to Romans, that Jesus is the Son of God on the basis of his Resurrection. We have the answer in the baptism story of Jesus where the voice from heaven declared effectively this man to be the Son of God with the adoption formula (if it is an adoption formula) of Psalm 2:7. We have the Virgin Birth story in but two of the New Testament writings, while the idea of preexistence is much more widespread generally in the New Testament. (And preexistence is actually the basis of the trinitarian doctrine. I'm going to say something on that tomorrow.) If one realizes this situation, one also has to realize one cannot have everything at the same time. We can affirm all these different witnesses by understanding how they are related to each other in the process of giving reasons for the faith in Jesus Christ being the Son of God; but we cannot conceptually merge what Luke and Matthew say on the basis of that predication of Jesus as the Son of God, with what Romans 1 says on it, or with the idea of preexistence. The Church's later doctrine of the Incarnation has been a combination of the Virgin Birth with the idea of preexistence and precisely in this form of combination the doctrine of incarnation is not completely biblical.

You will find the new version of my Christological argument in the second volume of my systematic theology, where I argue that the notion of the incarnation relates not primarily to the birth of Jesus, but to His whole historical existence. In the main texts about incarnation—Romans 8 (God sent His son into the flesh) and Galatians 4 (God sent His son to be born by a woman and put under the law) and explicitly in John 1—we don't have this idea related primarily to the event of birth. So, I call upon you to be more biblical!

**Anderson:** Your criticisms are very strong. They are difficult to address. Still, in terms of salvation history, we can think of events which occur in history that are not comprehensible historically, but are still events in history. Then, as Cullmann points out in his book *Salvation in History*, the Holy Spirit later on may direct believers into greater understanding of those events.

**Pannenberg:** I didn't answer that part of your question, I admit. Well, what do we really comprehend of history? It is different from case to case, but usually not very much. And certainly even though we affirm the historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus we don't comprehend very much of what actually happened. We comprehend best that which is reported to be historical and isn't. That's what we comprehend best. And so we comprehend comparatively better the legendary character of the Virgin Birth than those events that really happened in history because reality is not exhausted by our understanding. Our understanding is very provisional.

Now you say, with Cullmann, the real understanding may have come afterward—after Pentecost. Well, there are some obvious questions, including whether Mary had forgotten about what happened to her until after Pentecost. But I'll not be addressing this question now. It is true that in the course of our history we usually understand differently later what had occurred to us earlier. And the difference may be more or less incisive. Sometimes the difference can be very incisive so that we understand in a completely different way what happened to us earlier than we did then. Sometimes the difference is simply that we come to see our earlier experiences in a broader horizon. But, in any event, the actuality of the events is already presupposed in that process of hermeneutical change of meaning. Thus, one cannot argue from later experiences to the historicity of earlier events. That is not sound historical argument in any case of historical judgment, and thus we have to accept it in the case of biblical information also.

**Wood:** I'd like to ask one question. You have particularly criticized your teacher, Karl Barth, for trying to establish the truth of faith from the standpoint of *faith* and not critical historical reason. And yet you say that the Resurrection of Jesus as an event in history is discernible only to believers. Is there any difference between you and your teacher?

**Pannenberg:** I have to tell you I like that question because most of the time I am taken as somebody who has completely forgotten about his teacher or, worse, who is so dependent upon that teacher that he has to follow him blindly for most of life. That is not my relationship with Karl Barth. I owe him a great deal of gratitude in the formation of my own theological thought—and continuously so. But I'm not completely identical with Karl Barth.

I was especially impressed by Barth's emphasis on the sovereignty of God which was, of course, his Calvinist heritage to a large extent. But I drew different conclusions than Karl Barth did. I concluded that if God is sovereign as the Almighty Creator of everything, there should be no animal, no human being, and certainly not human nature, there should be no stone on this earth that could be adequately understood without this God. In other words, we don't need some prior decision of faith, we only need to remove our prejudices and look on reality as it presents itself. If God exists, that will



be enough. Therefore, I follow another theological method than Karl Barth followed. If we establish a prejudice of Christian faith and then go on to rationalize that prejudice, we act in a manner unworthy of the God we believe. If we really believe in God, we may ask for His truth in the reality of the history that we believe is the history of His manifesting Himself. We should remove every prejudgment in the judgment of faith.

This also applies to the Christian Easter tradition. I don't believe because of the faith of the apostles. I should say belief in God is not solely dependent on our judgment of the factuality of the Easter story. It is a more complex matter. But I believe in the Resurrection of Jesus because I am convinced that all of the criticism against the historicity of this tradition does not succeed. It is true that the Resurrection has been attested to only by those who became believers. Being a Jew, you cannot at the same time affirm the Resurrection of Jesus and continue to be an unbeliever. It is an immediate consequence: If Jesus had been raised by the God of Israel, belief is the immediate consequence. And that is the reason why we have only believers attesting to the Resurrection of Jesus. The story is true, and is reported; rather than the story being a product of the individual faith of those who reported that story. To get this backward is to pervert the Christian message. Because then we could invent other stories. We could invent a story that would be more appropriate for our time. We could invent another God with female rather than male features, and so on. Thus, faith should be considered as a consequence, a result, of God's action and not to be the precondition that we have to embrace first in order to be able to see the content.



# The Christian Vision of God: The New Discussion on the Trinitarian Doctrine

BY WOLFHART PANNENBERG

One of the most significant decisions in accounting for the content of the Christian faith is about the appropriate place of the trinitarian doctrine: Is this doctrine at the basis of the Christian understanding of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, or is it rather to be considered a later product of doctrinal development in the climate of Hellenistic thought in the ancient church, while Jesus knew only of one God, the Father? There are important arguments in favor of the second position, which has been embraced in modern liberal theology. The first serious doubts about the trinitarian doctrine of the church, after the Arian controversy of the fourth century, had arisen with antitrinitarians in the sixteenth century on the basis of their reading of the gospels where they found nothing on the Trinity. Although there was an increasing tendency in the early Christian writings to speak of Jesus in the closest connection with God, the argument for the trinitarian doctrine has to be based mainly on the implications of the biblical witness about Jesus Christ and of the story of Jesus Himself. The two strongest points counting in favor of the liberal position are, first, that the God whose imminent kingdom Jesus proclaimed was obviously the God of Jewish faith, who can be only one, and furthermore that Jesus did not claim anything like a divine status for Himself, but rather submitted to the Father as every creature should do. If there is any sound argument in defense of the trinitarian doctrine of the church, it has to do justice to and even incorporate both of these points.

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*Wolfgang Pannenberg is professor of systematic theology at the University of Munich. This material was presented at Asbury Theological Seminary during the annual Theta Phi lectures (Spring 1991) and is being jointly published by Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio.*

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Nevertheless, I think that the trinitarian conception of God has a good claim to be considered the specifically Christian idea of God. It is not a doctrine of only secondary importance in addition to some other basic concept of the one God: If the issue is considered in terms like that, the case for trinitarian theology is lost. It can be defended only on the condition that there is no other appropriate conception of the God of Christian faith than the Trinity. In that case we cannot have first a doctrine on the one God and afterwards, in terms of some additional supernatural mystery, the trinitarian doctrine. Rather, if the trinitarian doctrine is sound, Christian monotheism can only mean that the three persons of the Trinity are not three gods, but one God only. Everything that is said in Christian theology on the one God has to be predicated, then, on the three persons of the Trinity in their communion.

If a case can be made for trinitarian theology, the decisive argument must be that the trinitarian doctrine simply states explicitly what is implicit already in God's revelation in Jesus Christ and basically in Jesus' historical relationship to the Father whom He proclaimed to be the one God. If Jesus' relationship to the Father could be adequately described and accounted for in terms other than those of trinitarian doctrine, the case for that doctrine would be lost. It can only be defended if the trinitarian concept of God can be shown to be the only adequate and fully explicit expression of the reality of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

This is precisely the line of reasoning, or at least the underlying assumption, in the exciting renaissance of trinitarian doctrine in contemporary theological discussion. In a certain sense this renewal of trinitarian theology started with Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, and it was soon joined by a number of Catholic theologians, especially by Karl Rahner. It has been further developed by Jürgen Moltmann and Eberhard Jüngel in Germany and by Robert Jenson in America. It has been in the center of my own project of developing a systematic presentation of the Christian doctrine.

At the same time, by coincidence, there emerged in British theology a tendency or even a trend to dismantle the christological and trinitarian dogma of the ancient church. This trend is represented by Geoffrey Lampe's criticism of the ancient Logos-Christology in his influential book on *God as Spirit* (1976), and especially by the volume *The Myth of God Incarnate*, edited by John Hick in 1977. While Anglican theology traditionally held the doctrines of the ancient church in particularly high esteem, these doctrines have now come under attack. The arguments used in that attack remind a German observer time and again of the discussions in Germany a century ago, at the time of Adolf v. Harnack. Anyone familiar with the work of Harnack will recognize his view of a Hellenization of the Christian faith in the development of trinitarian doctrine and already in the identification of the concept of a preexistent Logos with the person of Jesus Christ. In the overall picture there is not so much new in the arguments of the critics in the recent British discussion except perhaps the notion of myth that did not play a ma-

jor role at the time of Harnack, but entered the scene later on in the history-of-religion school, culminating in Bultmann. It is used, however, in a very vague form by those who consider incarnational language as mythical. This contention is basically meant to qualify such language as metaphorical rather than literal. But, in a technical sense, the idea of incarnation is not a metaphor. It is not an expression that was transferred to religion from some other usage.

The new discussion of trinitarian doctrine moves on a different level of thought and argument than that addressed by the recent critics of the Logos Christology and of incarnational language. The earlier restatements of the trinitarian doctrine were based on the idea of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. This is especially the case with Karl Barth who argued that God in His eternal being must be conceived to be the same as He is in His historical revelation, since otherwise His revelation in Jesus Christ would not reveal Him like He is. The consideration that the content of God's revelation in history and His eternal being must not be separated, returned in Karl Rahner's famous statement that the economic Trinity and the eternal or immanent Trinity are identical, which is to say that like God revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so He is to be understood in His eternal life. Rahner's particular concern was that the act of incarnation cannot be considered to be something accidental in relation to the eternal life of God.

In the task of accounting for the biblical basis of a trinitarian concept of God, an idea was taken over and expanded that was first developed in the post-Bultmannian discussion with reference to the development of early Christian Christology. Bultmann himself remarked as early as 1929 that the historical Jesus, though He did not claim any of the christological titles later on ascribed to Him, nevertheless in His call for eschatological decision implied a Christology. Thus, after Bultmann, the history of early Christian Christology could be presented as making explicit what had been claimed by Jesus Himself implicitly. It was no longer of primary importance, then, what the historical origin of the different titles and ideas was, which the early Christians in the light of their Easter faith now ascribed to Jesus. Rather, the decisive issue was whether the content of those titles and ideas, as they were accommodated to Christian usage, corresponds to the claims implicit in Jesus' teaching and history. This approach is methodologically superior to the kind of argument that has been used in modern liberal theology and by the British critics of the myth of God incarnate to the effect that the christological language used by Paul or John does not occur in the message of Jesus. Today everybody knows that Jesus did not speak of Himself as divine Logos or as preexistent son of God. But the real question is whether there is a correspondence between such language and the implications of Jesus' message and activity. In order to answer questions like that one has to reconstruct first the framework of Jesus' message and activity and then to argue on that basis.

If evaluated in such a perspective, the idea of preexistent sonship and its

attribution to Jesus seems to correspond to the eschatological claim, which was implicit in Jesus' teaching and was understood among the early Christians as being confirmed by God Himself in raising Jesus from the dead. The future of the Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed was said by Himself to become a present reality already in His activity and in the faith of those who received His message. This presence of the future Kingdom of God in Jesus forms the basis of all later Christian language about the incarnation of God in His person. It was said to be the incarnation of the "son" of God, however, corresponding to the subordination of Jesus Himself to the God whom He called the Father. It is not certain whether the historical Jesus used the word "son" with reference to Himself in His subordination to the heavenly Father as well as in His intimate relationship with Him. But even if the word "son" was used first by the early Christians in speaking of Jesus, it serves as an exact expression of how Jesus related to the Father. And since the identity of God as Father, in the specific sense that word assumed in Jesus' language, is only revealed through Jesus, because it is reflected in the way He acted as son, the consequence is that the precise meaning of the name "Father" in Christian language about God and in addressing God depends on its relationship to Jesus. If Jesus' language about God has eschatological validity, the very identity of God's being the heavenly Father is inseparable from His relationship to Jesus as His son. This, however, entails that the relationship to the son belongs to the eternal being of God as Father, and consequently the Son Himself is to be understood as eternal as well. But Jesus as a human being was not eternal. He had been born like all of us in a particular moment of time. So, in some way, the Son as eternal correlate of God the Father precedes Jesus' human existence. Hence, Jesus' identity as son of His heavenly Father is to be accounted for in terms of the manifestation of the eternal Son in His human life. And the definitive character of that manifestation, corresponding to the eschatological claim of Jesus, leads to its expression in terms of the affirmation that the eternal Son of God had become incarnate in the human life of this particular man.

The idea of preexistence of the Son of the eternal Father is crucial in the process of explication of the meaning inherent in Jesus' historical teaching and activity, if the trinitarian doctrine is to be considered the final result of that process of explication. Without the preexistent Son who became incarnate in Jesus there would be no trinitarian concept of God. Therefore, the idea of preexistence is the connecting link in the process of explication from the historical Jesus to the doctrine of the Trinity. It is, of course, an idea that had its prehistory in Judaism, before it was applied to Jesus. Especially wisdom had been conceived as an entity that was in God's presence already when He created the world, and this preexistent wisdom was sometimes identified with the Torah and sometimes interpreted by the Greek idea of Logos, which also corresponded to the Word of creation. But this background of conceptions of preexistent entities is of only secondary importance in explaining the Christian belief in a preexistent son of God who be-

came incarnate in Jesus. The background of Jewish ideas about a preexistent wisdom explains some of the language that has been used in early Christianity to express the belief in a preexistent Son of God who became incarnate. It does not explain the rise of that belief itself. The emergence of that belief, however, can be accounted for as a consequence of the inseparability of Jesus' teaching about God the Father from His own person in His way of relating to that God. It is finally the eschatological consciousness of Jesus that in His proclamation and activity the eschatological future of the Kingdom of God becomes a present reality, which underlies the inseparability of His way of talking about God as heavenly Father from its relationship to His own person: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt 11:27). As this relationship transcends the limits of time, it also precedes the time of Jesus' life and ministry.

The idea of preexistence, as such, does not entail the full divinity of the preexistent entity. Therefore, it is understandable that it took the church three centuries of theological discussion before the council of Nicea could assert the identity of the Son's divine nature with that of the Father. But implicitly that idea had been around all the time in the affirmation of the inseparable relationship of the Son to the Father as well as of the Father to the Son. The Spirit was always included in that relationship, since, according to the New Testament witnesses, the Spirit was given to the Son without measure and was the medium of the Son's communion with the Father. Thus the Spirit is inseparable from the eternal communion of Father and Son, though the personal distinction of the Spirit in relation to Father and Son came to unambiguous expression in what the Gospel of John said about the Spirit as Paraclete and as glorifying the Son and the Father in the hearts of the faithful.

In this sense, then, the doctrine of the Trinity is indeed the explicit articulation of what was implicit already in Jesus' relationship to the Father and His behaving as Son of this Father in the history of His earthly mission. If the historical relationship of Jesus to the Father in fact provides the basis of the trinitarian concept of God, however, the traditional form of trinitarian doctrine in Christian theology has to be reinterpreted and modified in many details. I shall confine myself to just five points of necessary change in the traditional form of the doctrine.

The first point is a negative one. The Trinity cannot be deduced from a general concept of God as spirit or love. Both these descriptions of the essence of God come from the Johannine writings, and they have been used particularly in the Christian West as starting points in deriving a threefold differentiation within the one God. Especially the concept of spirit—taken in the sense of mind—served that purpose from Anselm to Thomas Aquinas and others, and all the way down to Hegel and even to Karl Barth's doctrine on the Trinity: If the mind is considered as self-conscious, it is its own object and thus distinguished from itself while at the same time knowing its iden-



tity with itself. Augustine used this structure of the human mind as illustrating the trinitarian dogma, but Anselm took it to prove the trinitarian dogma by deriving it from the idea of God as spirit or mind, and, notwithstanding certain reservations, Thomas Aquinas followed and refined this procedure. But there is a basic deficiency in this approach, because it presupposes the essence of God to exist as a unified subject, while the three persons of the Trinity tend to be just modes or aspects in the unfolding of this one subjectivity. On the other hand, if they were taken as persons in the strict sense, there seems to be a fourth personal subject, namely the one God as such. In either case the argument ends up in conflict with the affirmation in the trinitarian dogma of one God in three persons. Eastern Orthodox theologians have rightly criticized the Christian West at this point for treating the one essence of God as somehow prior to the three persons.

Trinitarian theology should rather start with the three persons—Father, Son and Spirit—as they are manifest in the story of Jesus and witnessed to in the biblical writings. There the Father is presented to be God in the emphatic sense and primordially, while Son and Spirit derive their share in His Godhead from Him, because they are inseparably united to Him. In this sense the Father, according to the biblical witness, is the source of the divinity of Spirit and Son. But this must not be taken in the sense of a causal dependence of Son and Spirit on the Father as being brought forth by Him. Such an interpretation was suggested by the Platonic philosophy which influenced the Eastern Fathers, but it tended to subordinate ontologically the Son and the Spirit to the Father who would then be the only true God, while Son and Spirit were not God in the full sense of the word, but only in some derivative way. This was the issue of the Arian controversy in the fourth century.

Contrary to Arius, the churches at Nicea and Constantinople affirmed that the Son and the Spirit are of the same nature (*homoousios*) as the Father is. But as long as Son and Spirit were conceived primarily in causal terms as being brought forth by the Father, a tendency towards ontological subordinations continued, because, according to the then prevailing metaphysical conception of cause and effect, the cause is always of superior ontological dignity than the effect. The remedy is provided by Athanasius's thesis that the Father was never without the Son, because "father" is a relative term that makes no sense except in relation to the person whose father He is. Thus, in some way the identity of being Father depends on the Son, and vice versa.

This leads to the second point I want to emphasize: the mutual character of the personal relations in the Trinity. In the tradition, the dependence of the Father's identity on the Son (and on the Spirit) has been conceived in terms of only a logical dependence inherent in the personal names, especially of Father and Son, while not so clearly in the case of the Spirit. It was not really conceived of as a mutuality of actual relations. Rather, on the ontological level, there was the assumption of causal dependence in but one



direction, from the Father to the Son and to the Spirit. This came to expression in the fact that the personal relations within the Trinity were conceived of only in terms of relations of origin, the Son as generated by the Father, the Spirit as proceeding from the Father. The doctrine expressed the important idea that the identity of the persons was constituted by their relations, but in the light of the biblical witnesses those relations have to be conceived of in a richer way and, most importantly, in terms of concrete mutuality. They must not be reduced to relations of origin. When it is said that the Father has begotten the Son (Luke 3:22, with the word of Ps 2:7 at Jesus' baptism) or that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of the Father (John 1:14), such statements do not belong to a different ontological level than that the Son is beloved by the Father or that the Father has given Him "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:18), or that the Son honors the Father and obeys His mission. The traditional doctrine assumed that the words about the origin of the Son as begotten by the Father refer to the immanent and eternal life of the Trinity, while those other words belong to the divine economy of sending the Son into the world or were taken to refer to the relationship of Jesus to the Father according to Jesus' human nature. But no such distinction is warranted by the biblical reports. The words about the Son as being begotten by the Father have their place in the reports about the baptism of Jesus or are connected with His resurrection (Acts 13:33) and thus belong in the context of the divine economy of the Son's mission in the world, just as much as all the other words about the Son's relation to the Father do. The same is true of the Spirit: When the Spirit is said to "proceed" from the Father (John 15:26), this is to be taken to be always the case in distinction from His being sent to the faithful through the Son. But it does not refer to the immanent life of the Trinity in distinction from everything else that is said about the Spirit, especially that the Spirit glorifies the Son (John 16:14) and in Him the Father. By the way, this action of glorifying the Son and the Father provides the clearest indication of the Spirit's personal distinction from and over against the Son and the Father.

Thus, the trinitarian relations must not be reduced to relations of origin, but include the concrete mutuality of interpersonal relationship. It is precisely in terms of this concrete mutuality that the identity of the trinitarian persons is constituted by their relations to each other. These relations are eternal because the Father, in His eternal identity, is no other than He is revealed to be in His relationship with Jesus Christ by the glorifying work of the Spirit.

This leads to my third point of modification of the traditional doctrine: Regarding the begetting and sending of the Son by the Father, the mutuality in the trinitarian relations consists in the corresponding self-differentiation of the Son from the Father. This self-differentiation on the part of the Son is crucial in the argument for a trinitarian conception of the one God of Jewish faith on the basis of the historical proclamation, activity and history of Jesus. As Jesus called His audience to be first concerned for the imminent King-

dom of God, to love and honor God beyond everything else, in the same way He submitted Himself to the Father in obedience unto death concerning the mission He had received from Him. Contrary to the suspicion of those who rejected Him, He did not arrogate divine authority to Himself, but let the Father be the one who alone is good (Matt 19:17). Precisely in His obedience, in submitting Himself to the Father like every creature is required to do, but usually fails to do, Jesus demonstrated Himself to be the son of this eternal Father, and because of this obedience He was confirmed to be the Son by the Father Himself in raising Him from the dead. Jesus corresponded to the Fatherhood of God precisely by distinguishing Himself from God, which meant to subordinate Himself to God, and in doing so He was and is in communion with the Father, in contrast to the first Adam who wanted to be like God and thereby separated Himself from God. Jesus is one with God precisely in distinguishing Himself from God and in subordinating Himself to Him. This self-subordination is sharply to be contrasted to the ontological subordinationism that was discussed in the early church on the basis of the superiority ascribed to the cause in comparison to its effects. In the case of Jesus, there is no ontological inferiority, but self-subordination, which is a condition of being of the same essence of the Father. Jesus is one with God precisely in distinguishing Himself from God. By submitting Himself to the Father He is the eternal Son of the Father, the eternal correlate of His Fatherhood without which the Father could not be father. Hence, the self-distinction of Jesus from God the Father is inseparable from His eternal unity with Him, and consequently, there is personal distinction within the eternal unity of God. The same form of personal distinction can then be discovered in the sending and "begetting" of the Son by the Father and in the way the Spirit does not talk of Himself, but glorifies the Son and the Father in the Son.

This leads to the fourth modification of traditional trinitarian doctrine: The traditional doctrine, especially in the East, emphasized the monarchy of the Father as the source of all divinity. But in terms of the restriction of trinitarian language to the relations of origin this meant only that the Father differs from Son and Spirit in having no origin, but has His divine nature by Himself. On the basis of the mutuality of personal relationship, however, as it is evident in the New Testament witness, the monarchy of the Father is conditioned by the obedience of the Son and by the glorifying work of the Spirit. Through the proclamation and activity of Jesus, the Kingdom of the Father becomes a present reality with those who believe. Thus the Father entrusted His Kingdom to the Son, and the Son returns it to the Father, which happens and is continued and completed through the work of the Spirit. When Paul said that in the end the Son will return the Kingdom to the Father (1 Cor 15:28), then this will be the completion of what He has been doing all the time in fulfilling His mission, and therefore it does not contradict what the symbol of Nicea affirms with Luke 1:33, that His Kingdom will have no end. There is no competition between the Kingdom of the

Son and that of the Father, because the Kingdom of the Son consists of ushering in the Kingdom of the Father so that He be acclaimed by all to be the one God.

The one Kingdom of God corresponds to what the doctrine of the church talks about in terms of the one divine essence of the three persons. And here there is the fifth modification of the traditional form of the doctrine in light of the biblical witness to the revelation of God in Christ: Son and Spirit share in the divine essence of the Father not just by being begotten and by proceeding from the Father, but by contributing to the Kingdom of the Father that is entrusted to the Son and returned to the Father by Himself through the Holy Spirit. It is in this concrete dynamics of *perichoresis* that the three persons share the same Kingdom and the same essence which nevertheless remains to be primarily the Kingdom and divine nature of the Father. Thus the one divine being becomes manifest in the three persons, but in different ways, the Kingdom and the divine essence being always primarily the Father's, but effective through the Son and the Spirit. Athanasius's insight that the Fatherhood of God is conditioned by the Son (and by the Spirit) takes on a very concrete meaning. At the same time, it becomes evident that the trinitarian doctrine of the church does not necessarily stand in conflict with Jewish monotheism, which after all had been the faith of Jesus Himself.

In conclusion, this leads to some remarks on the impact of the trinitarian doctrine on the concept of the one God as such. In the doctrine on the Trinity, the unity of the one God is conceived in terms of a differentiated unity. This enables the Christian teaching to do justice to the unity of transcendence and immanence with regard to God's relation to the world of His creation. God could not be conceived as truly infinite in distinction from His finite creatures, if He only were transcendent. In that case He would be limited by His being separate from the world, and precisely by its distinction from God the world would then become constitutive of the very identity of His being God. Rather, the infinity of God has to be conceived in terms of being transcendent as well as immanent in the reality of the world—transcendent in terms of existing in the person of the transcendent Father and creator of the world, but immanent and present within it through His Son and Spirit. The issue of transcendence and immanence had a prelude in pre-Christian Jewish thought, in terms of speculations about God's presence in the world of His creation through His name and glory as well as through His wisdom enshrined in the Torah. The Christian trinitarian doctrine can be considered as determining the question of how these forms of God's presence in the world are related to His transcendent existence. The answer is that they cannot be different from God Himself, if the unity of the one God is to be preserved.

A second remark concerns the personal and impersonal elements or aspects in our human conceptions of God. This issue is of particular importance in the Christian dialogue with the Eastern religions, especially Bud-

dhism. The great Buddhist philosopher Nishitani Keiji from Kyoto charged Christian theology with overemphasizing the personal aspect of the divine reality while underestimating its impersonal aspect. While Keiji admitted that the divine mystery does have a personal aspect, he was concerned that the neglect of its impersonal aspect would dissolve the mystery into anthropomorphism. Now the trinitarian concept of God does in fact include an impersonal element. That is the divine essence as such. This one divine essence that makes for the unity of God is not personal by itself, but personal only as it becomes manifested in each of the three persons. Correspondingly, each of the personal manifestations is characterized by a movement beyond itself, and this is constitutive of the personal mystery in each of them.

Thus the trinitarian doctrine functions as a key to a profound conception of the life of the one God and enables the Christian to cope confidently with other conceptions of the divine reality.

Is the trinitarian concept of God, then, of only intellectual importance in the performance of Christian teaching? Or does it also have an impact on our spiritual life? Can one pray to the trinitarian God? Occasionally, this is done in Christian worship, as there are prayers that specifically address the Son or the Spirit. But most of Christian prayers are directed to the Father, albeit through the Son and the Spirit. This is understood by many Christians as evidence for the Father alone being God in the most emphatic sense, and the consequence is that they think they don't have much use for the Trinity. But, in fact, it is not so self-evident to address God as our Father. According to Paul, it is only because of our baptism that we are entitled to address God like Jesus did as our Father, because we are united to Jesus Christ and therefore put in the place of the Son in His relationship with the Father. It is the Spirit of Christ received in baptism who encourages us to relate to the Father in such a way (Rom 8:15). Thus, in addressing God as Father we participate in the trinitarian communion of the Son with the Father through the Spirit. We not only address God, but we are lifted up into the eternal life of the trinitarian God and surrounded by Him on all sides. Taking our trinitarian faith seriously does not require spectacularly new forms of Christian piety, but deepens our awareness of what we actually do in Christian worship. When we realize its profound depth, we will no longer feel much impulse to look for alternative forms of spirituality, but may become aware that we are already granted access to a profound, mystical experience that bears comparison with every alternative.

# Theta Phi Talkback Session with Wolfhart Pannenberg

**Question One:** I understand you to be saying that the oneness of God is "impersonal" and that this oneness is the basis of defining the coming kingdom of God, whereas the "personal" character of God is the three persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) whose history is to be actualized in the world in relationship with the history of finite persons. If I heard you correctly in this regard, does this help to explain that difficult statement in your book, *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (p. 56), where you say, "In a restricted but important sense, God does not yet exist"?

**Pannenberg:** Well, of course this was sort of a daring statement. At the time when America was moved by that fad of death of God theologians, some of them thought, after all, I might be one of them. Of course, the process theologians also thought that I might be one of them because obviously I was thinking that God was not yet quite complete. But this was not what I wanted to say actually. I wanted to express that in the present situation of the world the issue whether God exists is debated. And there are serious reasons for this—especially the reasons of the presence of evil in the world, but also others—serious reasons that speak against the affirmation of the reality of God in the experience of the world we live in. And we have to know as Christians that this is not just a theoretical matter. This situation that the reality of God is debated and debatable in this world will go on to the end of time. It will be solved only in the eschatological completion of the second coming in the ultimate arrival of the kingdom of God in its fullness. We can-

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*During his presentation of the annual Theta Phi lectures at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wolfhart Pannenberg responded to these questions posed by listeners. Dr. Pannenberg is professor of systematic theology at the University of Munich.*

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not separate the eternal reality of God and the status of the reality of God in our world. Because if there is a Creator of the world and the world is not dependent on Him, that is contradictory. If there is one God who created the world then nothing can be completely independent from that God, even the very independence of creatures, as such, has to be dependent on that God. And we are not now experiencing this in an unequivocal way. Only by anticipation we do. Thus the kingdom of God has not yet fully arrived and thus the being of God has not yet fully arrived. Of course God could have not created a world. But if He created a world, and since He did, the divine identity of God, the existence of God, is inseparable from His kingdom in His creation. And therefore questions of the reality of God in our present world also include that only in the end will we know that God has been God all along the way and we can confess to this only by anticipating the eschatological completion of the kingdom of God in this world. And that is to say, by faith.

**Question Two:** I came here this morning to ask you a question about Christology from below in relationship to Barthian Christology from above—but I'm impressed to ask you a personal question. Please share with us a bit of your personal spiritual travel and what you consider to be the hallmark of your life of faith in relationship with God.

**Pannenberg:** I could talk about that at length and I have to be very brief now. I may refer you to the volume on my theology that has been edited by Carl Braaten and Philip Clayton. I wrote a biographical introduction there where I refer in some way to what you ask for.

I was raised as an atheist in the time of nihilism during the years of the Nazi regime. I was nourished on Nietzsche's philosophy. But shortly before the end of the war, shortly before we had to become refugees from Eastern Germany when the Russian Army was moving swiftly into East Germany, I had an experience. It was January of 1945, and I took the long way home from my piano lessons to the place where we were living. The sun was setting and, though I had experienced many sunsets before, there was a moment when there was no difference between myself and the light surrounding me. This is not easy to describe. It may be the kind of experience that young people at the age of sixteen have otherwise (I don't claim uniqueness to that experience), but it made me think. It opened me to the mystery of reality. And I experienced this as a kind of vocational call. I didn't know what I was called to at that time, but I started to concern myself increasingly with philosophy and searching for answers. This is also why, later on, I came to be interested in Christianity—largely in order to find out what finally it was all about, because I had learned from Nietzsche that Christianity is to be charged with everything that went wrong in history. This was how I decided to start studying theology in addition to philosophy. For a long time I



wasn't sure whether I would finally end up in philosophy or theology. But then the sheer profundity of the content of Christian doctrine kept me aboard. So I didn't make a decision of faith in some way, although I had an experience of vocation. Later on I came to think that it was not accidental that it happened on the sixth of January—the feast of Epiphany. And I came to understand the vocation as the vocation to witness to the glory of Jesus Christ. And that's what my theology is all about.

**Question Three:** My question deals within the context of your lecture on the Trinity. I'm interested in hearing you explain to me your concept of God as person.

**Pannenberg:** The main point is God is not one person. The most widespread heresy in modern Christian thought is that God is one person, one personal God. That language is at least very misleading, because God is one personal God only in terms of existing as three persons. And there is no one personal God besides the three persons of Father, Son and Spirit. Those who start with the idea of one personal God and consider Father, Son and Spirit as aspects of that one personal God consistently end up in modalism. And Barth quite frankly said so. There has been a tendency to modalism because one wanted to derive the three-foldness of God from the concept of one God who was conceived of as mind—and mind is easily understood as personal. But that is contrary to the trinitarian dogma. According to the trinitarian dogma, the God we believe in is one God in three persons—the one God being complete only as Father, Son and Spirit (the Father through Son and Spirit as I tried to indicate in the end of my lecture). But this is the way God is completely personal. Not just by being one personal God out there somewhere. That is an anthropomorphic idea of God and it rightly fell to the attacks of atheism.

**Question Four:** Professor Pannenberg, the Trinity has always been a difficult doctrine for me and your lecture was really helpful although I'm still rather confused. Coming from a Hebrew Christian perspective, it is especially difficult for me to explore these concepts with other Jewish people who do not accept Christ simply because they cannot accept the Trinity. You said the trinitarian doctrine includes an element which is impersonal. Is this what you mean by the impact of the trinitarian doctrine on the concept of God as one? "The impersonal element," the kingdom "transcending each of the persons in the Trinity" and also the use of the kingdom and the "divine essence" are very abstract concepts for me. Could you clarify this?

**Pannenberg:** Well, when I speak of an impersonal aspect in the life of the trinitarian God, you must not understand that as if that was some reality in itself to be set apart or even prior to the personal aspect. But the one God is concrete only as Father, as Son, as Spirit. That is, the one God is concrete

only in the *personal* reality of Father, Son and Spirit. But precisely in that personal reality (and it belongs to the personal reality as we conceive it on the basis of the Christian tradition even in application to the human person), there is something transcending the person, each individual person, that is constitutive of personality itself. This aspect of transcending the individual person is at the same time what makes for the communion of the three persons of Father, Son and Spirit.

And now coming back to the start of the question. In talking to informed Jews, I would always start with the God of Jesus. The God of Jesus is the God of Israel. And it is the God of Israel whom Jesus addressed by the name Father. And so the God of Israel was understood in a somewhat different way than perhaps ordinarily in Jewish tradition. There is something specific in Jesus talking about and addressing the God of Israel as *Abba*. We need to refer to Jesus to explain what this way of addressing God implies. Thus, addressing God as *Abba* is inseparable from the one who addressed God that way. Therefore, the one who addressed God that way is inseparable from the very eternal identity of the Jewish God, the Father of Jesus. And further, the way Jesus addressed God is not to be understood other than through the medium of the Spirit of God—and that according to Jewish tradition. It's not an exception, not in every respect an exception, in Jewish tradition that the person who is close to God received the Spirit of God in order to enable that person to be close to God. So the communion of Jesus as the Son with the Father is always already involving the Spirit. But the Spirit becomes manifest as a third entity only after the death and resurrection of Jesus, after his ascension, by glorifying Jesus as Son in the hearts of the faithful. It's not only we as human beings who are recognizing Jesus to be the Son of God. It is something that elevates us beyond our finite reality in the act of glorifying Jesus to be the Son of the Father and glorifying the Father as having sent His son into the flesh in order to save the world through the person of Jesus. And that's the work of the Spirit, not just of ourselves. And this is the point where the Spirit becomes manifest as an entity of its own. But it is always related to the Father as the one God. Thus we can have the Jewish God as the one Jesus addressed as Father, not in separation from the one who addresses God in this ultimate way. And this is what the doctrine of the Trinity is all about. This had a prehistory in Jewish thought. You could tell your Jewish friends this. Because the more the one God of Jewish faith became transcendent during the time after the exile, the more important became those realities that were believed to represent that transcendent God within the people of Israel. That is to say within this world. And that is the "name" dwelling in the temple, the "glory" dwelling in the temple but leaving the temple before the destruction of Jerusalem according to Ezekiel, that is the presence of God was leaving the temple to destruction. The temple couldn't be destroyed as long as the glory of God was residing in it. Therefore, according to Ezekiel it was leaving before the temple could be destroyed by the Babylonians. So the glory. Then later on the Shekinah was



thought to represent the transcendent God in this world.

Now the question how do these modes of representing the transcendent God in this world relate to the identity of the transcendent God Himself? Is it that transcendent God that is also present in His name, in His glory, in His wisdom, and so on? Or is it something inferior to the transcendent God? If it would be the latter then it is no longer God who is present. And I think this issue, which is an issue of Jewish faith itself, has been resolved in some definitive way in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. But it is an issue, a concern that must be a concern of Jewish faith itself and was in fact always a concern of Jewish faith itself. How is the transcendent God in His utter transcendence from this world nevertheless present? What are the forms of His presence in this world? But then the core point is: the forms of His presence couldn't be the form of His presence in reality if they were not identical with His divine essence. So in some way the doctrine of the Trinity is implicit already in the history of Jewish thought.

**Question:** Let me follow up on just one particular thing. You said that in addressing God as *Abba*, Jesus is identifying Himself, but not identifying Himself as God.

**Pannenberg:** That Jesus is not identifying Himself with God is precisely the condition of being one with the Father.

**Question:** I don't understand that. It seems so paradoxical.

**Pannenberg:** Yes, it is somewhat paradoxical. But of course being one with the Father is based upon the inseparability of Jesus as the place of addressing God as *Abba* from the definition of what that term actually means. The inseparability of the identity of that address from the person of Jesus is the basis for affirming the unity of Jesus with the Eternal God, the inseparability from the affirmation of God the Father. Now a condition for that is that Jesus did not identify Himself with the Father. Because if He had identified Himself with God, that would have amounted to the utmost degree of idolatry. He would have been rightly put to death by his Jewish opponents. The utmost degree of idolatry is self-idolization. And we learn especially in the Gospel of John that Jesus was understood to identify Himself with God in allocating to Himself an authority that could be only God's. And therefore this was the basic ambiguity surrounding the earthly ministry of Jesus. And only in the solving of that ambiguity could Jesus be confessed as being confirmed by the Father over against accusations to that point. And that is the precondition of His being in communion with the Father, of His being one with the Father.



# Above, Within or Ahead Of? Pannenberg's Eschatologicalism as a Replacement for Supernaturalism

LAURENCE W. WOOD

Supernaturalism became the philosophical assumption of Christian theology during the thirteenth century A.D. The term *supernatural* was specifically developed and widely used by Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics as a technical term to describe God as eternally, self-subsistent and hence different in essence from the created, natural order. The term lost its technical meaning as it was more generally used outside the classroom and it eventually became more popularly understood to designate something as beyond the normal.<sup>1</sup> Because of this secondary meaning, some prefer to use the term *supra*-natural instead of *super*-natural since *supra* more precisely conveys the original, technical meaning of "above."<sup>2</sup>

The Latin term *supernaturalis* first appeared in the ninth century. John Scotus Erigena used it in his translation of the works of pseudo-Dionysius from Greek into Latin. He coined this Latin term as a translation for the Greek adjective *huperphues*. The prefix *huper* (beyond) was used in inference to *phusis* (the nature or essence of reality) to denote something as transcending the ordinary, visible world.<sup>3</sup> Thomas Aquinas featured this term prominently and is largely responsible for its widespread technical use in Christian theology.<sup>4</sup>

If Augustine is credited with providing the standardization of the various Christian doctrines for Western Christianity in the fourth century A.D.,<sup>5</sup>

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Aquinas in the thirteenth century A.D. is credited with providing a Christian metaphysical framework for these doctrines.<sup>6</sup> This distinction between the various doctrines of Christian faith on the one hand, and a systematic worldview on the other hand, is important to keep in mind because the two are not necessarily connected. As Etienne Gilson points out, Thomas Aquinas never intended to alter the essentials of Christian theology itself as interpreted by Augustine, but he did intend to change the "bad" philosophy of Augustine into a "true" philosophy consistent with Augustine's own theology. In fact, Gilson shows that for Aquinas "it is not even necessary for theology to resort to philosophy, but, if it does, the philosophy it uses should be the true philosophy."<sup>7</sup>

Aquinas accepted Augustinian theology, but he disagreed with its largely Platonic trappings. Consequently, he adapted Augustinian theology to an Aristotelian ontology.<sup>8</sup> The distinction between the natural and the supernatural worlds became the fundamental categories for describing the relation of God and the world. The purpose of this supernaturalism was to provide a more philosophically reasoned worldview in which all the doctrines of the Christian faith could be housed and thus they would have an intellectual unity supporting them.

The term *supernatural* is not found in the Septuagint, nor in the New Testament, nor in the early Church Fathers.<sup>9</sup> Yet the term is standard currency in Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant theology. Even those theologies which reject supernaturalism depend upon its terminology for expressing its alternative forms of Christian naturalism. For example, Paul Tillich's theology was devoted to providing "ecstatic naturalism" as an alternative to the supernaturalism of Protestant Orthodoxy.<sup>10</sup> In his last public lecture in Chicago, Tillich admitted that his own apologetic theology was too heavily dominated by his attempt to provide an alternative theology to supernaturalism.<sup>11</sup> It could be argued that all modern and contemporary theological movements are unintelligible without the supernaturalism which they attempt to refute or embrace.<sup>12</sup>

## THE FAILURE OF SUPERNATURALISM

The question is whether or not *supernaturalism* should now be abandoned in spite of its venerable history. Until recently, the two basic models for defining God's whereabouts have been "above" or "within." The "above" model led to supranaturalistic deism and finally to a secularistic naturalism which dropped "the aboveness" of God and spiritual realities altogether since the world "below" was allegedly adequate within itself. The supernatural hypothesis was declared irrelevant for modern thought.

Paul Tillich's critique largely focused on the artificiality of, as well as the logical incoherence, of two separate realms. To postulate the idea of a God above the world who *interferes* with, and breaks into, the lower realm below would involve the demonic destruction of the created order itself.<sup>13</sup> His alternative proposal was a naturalism in which God is located "within" the

world as the ground of being.

The "within" model leads inevitably to pantheistic mysticism in which the distinction between God and the world is blurred. Since Schleiermacher, all forms of modern theology which reject supernaturalism in favor of naturalism have been hard-pressed to defend themselves against the charge of blurring the difference between God and creation.

Barth attempted to rehabilitate supernaturalism, but his tendency was to make God "permanently transcending time,"<sup>14</sup> and hence rationally inaccessible. The further dilemma of Barth's supernaturalism was its excessive revelationism, and consequently the relation of reason and faith was seriously damaged. In effect, Barth conceded the point of the atheistic critique (expressed by Feuerbach and Nietzsche) which had declared the world devoid of any rational justification for belief in God. Pannenberg asks:

But is Feuerbach really overcome in this way? Is it not instead merely a case of withdrawing from controversy with Feuerbach and his disciples if theology, unperturbed, begins to speak about God as if nothing had happened; without establishing any basis, or offering any justification for this concept except by referring to the fact that Christian preaching about God actually goes on? Is that not senseless renunciation of all critical discussion, and thus an act of spiritual capitulation to Feuerbach?<sup>15</sup>

Pannenberg recognizes the value of taking seriously the critique of modern atheism. Barth's approach of pursuing theology "from above" is like "a blind alley" and endangers "the truth of the Christian faith itself and its speech about God."<sup>16</sup> What is now needed is "a philosophical anthropology worked out within the framework of a general ontology" in order to address the legitimate concerns of secularistic naturalism.<sup>17</sup>

An Anglo-Catholic theologian/philosopher who impressively attempted to rehabilitate supernaturalism is E. L. Mascall. His brilliant exposition of the classical doctrine of God is found in *He Who Is*. Yet Mascall admits that the tendency of the supernatural/natural distinction is to make the two realms only artificially related. He specifically recognizes that "imagery of levels...is quite inadequate, for it fails to do justice to the intimacy of the relation" between the supernatural and natural. He especially criticizes the Catholic textbooks for fostering this misunderstanding.<sup>18</sup>

With the help of all the intricacies and sophistication of modern symbolic logic, many contemporary analytical philosophers in the Anglo-American tradition have impressively attempted to resolve the ambiguities and alleged contradictions of the traditional, supernatural view of a personal God.<sup>19</sup> However, whether or not the logical tools of analytical philosophy can repair the damage done by the atheistic critique is problematic. It may be that the atheistic critique too *simplistically* dismisses and distorts a supernatural view of God, but the *complicated* arguments of modern logic used to

defend supernaturalism may indirectly serve to reinforce the atheistic charge that belief in a personal God is only contrived.

The supernatural/natural ontology is a hierarchical/monarchical/feudalistic model. Even before Thomas Aquinas featured supernaturalism, classical theology tended toward Monarchianism in spite of its rejection of this heresy.<sup>20</sup> For example, Augustine clearly articulated the three persons of God, but for all practical purposes he (as well as the Western Church in general, as opposed to the Eastern Orthodox tradition) tended toward Monarchianism because his primary interest was the unity of God rather than the three divine persons.<sup>21</sup>

With the subsequent development of a supernatural ontology in Latin Scholasticism, the oneness of God became even more specifically interpreted in a hierarchical/monarchical/feudalistic manner. For God's oneness as a feudalistic lord over His subjects was featured rather than the Three Persons. Yet, even so, theology in the Middle Ages did not define God as a person. That would have been considered what we call today a Unitarian heresy.<sup>22</sup>

Yet this monarchical tendency to exclude the trinitarian persons resulted in the heretical, modern redefinition of God as a Person rather than three Persons. Tillich points out that this happened "only in the nineteenth century" with Kant's deistic supernaturalism.<sup>23</sup> In this respect, Pannenberg points out that in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant's redefinition of person as an independent being with a radically individualized *self-consciousness* became determinative for the modern understanding of person. This absolute understanding of person is anticipated in the fourth century A.D. in Boethius's definition of person as rational individuality, but with Kant the ideas of self-consciousness and autonomy became the constitutive element in the meaning of person.<sup>24</sup>

The pre-modern view, on the other hand, assumed that the decisive component of person was one's capacity to experience community and to develop intimate relationships with others. This relational understanding of person was decisive for the theological development of a Christian understanding of God as three Persons in the fourth and fifth centuries.

As a result of the absolutizing of individual self-consciousness as the meaning of person in the modern world, Tillich says that "ordinary theism has made God a heavenly, completely perfect person who resides above the world and mankind." Tillich agrees with "the protest of atheism against such a highest person."<sup>25</sup>

Pannenberg has traced the development and rise of the modern understanding of personhood from the christological and trinitarian doctrines of the third and fourth centuries to its culmination in Hegel's philosophy.<sup>26</sup> Of course, the ultimate source lies in the history of ancient Israel where God discloses Himself to Abraham as the personal Lord of history.<sup>27</sup> The Old Testament idea of God's spiritual transcendence and difference from nature was a necessary prerequisite for the development of the understanding of



human self-transcendence associated with the meaning of personhood in the modern world, as secularist philosophers and psychologists generally recognize.<sup>28</sup>

Pannenberg has shown how modern atheism in the nineteenth century developed as the logical conclusion of Kant's definition of personhood as absolute subjectivity. In this respect, Kant, not Descartes, was the father of modern subjectivity. For Kant was the first thinker to make individual *self-consciousness* not only the basis of our certainty of knowledge (as Descartes had done), but also the actual creator and source of the world which we know.<sup>29</sup> Kant's deistic supernaturalism allowed for both God and humans to be autonomous persons and creators. Instead of a relational understanding of persons as classically expressed in the doctrine of the Trinity, Kant introduced a new element into the concept of personhood which made self-consciousness the absolute basis of reality itself. The consequence was that the practical Monarchianism of Western theology became actual Monarchianism in the deistic supernaturalism of Kant's concept of God. God was now defined as an infinite Person.

Hegel continued and deepened this new idea of God as the Supreme Person, and he more specifically replaced the classical terminology of one divine substance with one divine subject.<sup>30</sup> God is the Absolute Subject, but whereas Kant deistically polarized God and the world, Hegel attempted to reconcile God and the world through his philosophy of history. Unlike Kant, Hegel would not accept the idea of a lifeless Supreme Being who dwells outside the sphere of the world. For Hegel, those modern theologians who accused Spinoza of atheism because he did not believe in a Supreme Being had embraced a worse kind of atheism because they affirmed the existence of the Supreme Being but denied that human beings could really know Him. Hegel rejected Spinoza's pantheism also, and he did so precisely because Spinoza's concept of the divine substance did not include the idea of God as "the absolute Person...which constitutes the content of religious consciousness in Christianity," as Hegel pointedly says.<sup>31</sup> Hegel's emphasis, then, was that God is a personal Subject, not an impersonal Substance.

Hegel also sought to include the Trinity within his doctrine of God's personality. So Hegel combined the absolute and the relational understanding of personhood. This culmination of the modern development of personhood in Hegel's philosophy is a legitimate extension of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity,<sup>32</sup> but its primary application to the unity of God instead of His Trinity is where the difficulty lies.<sup>33</sup>

Moltmann has shown that Barth's concept of God as the divine Subject, as opposed to Tertullian's definition of God as divine Substance, is largely borrowed from Hegel's modern redefinition of God as Absolute Personality.<sup>34</sup> Pannenberg has also shown that Barth's idea of God's revelation as a *self-revelation* is borrowed from Hegel's philosophy of religion where this idea first appeared.<sup>35</sup> Previously, revelation had been largely defined tradi-

tionally as propositions and information contained in the Bible.

Though an abstract monotheism which culminates in the idea of God as a personal Subject can be traced back to the monarchical tendencies of Western theology, deistic supranaturalism was the penultimate culmination of this trend, with modern atheism as the final product. Barth's theology restored an emphasis upon the doctrine of the Trinity, but he so strongly emphasized the oneness of God's being that his otherwise proper restoration of the Trinity to its rightful place in theology was undermined. This can be seen in the way that Barth preferred to speak of God's oneness as a Person and to downgrade the Trinity impersonally as modes of being. Moltmann calls Barth's abstract monotheism "a late triumph for the Sabellian modalism, which the early church condemned."<sup>36</sup>

To summarize, classical theology since Tertullian had defined God's unity as a substance, not as a person. The concept of person was reserved for the three persons of God. Yet, the subsequent development of Western theology tended, for all practical purposes, to treat the oneness of God concretely as "person" instead of the Trinity as persons. With the rise of Kant's rationalistic philosophy of religion, God was specifically defined as a supermundane Person. How to reconstruct this supernaturalistic, monarchical interpretation has been the preoccupation of modern theology from Schleiermacher to Barth.

#### MODERN ATHEISM AS THE LEFT-OVER REMAINS OF SUPERNATURALISM

The atheistic critique by the left-wing Hegelian, Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), focuses upon the arbitrariness of a God who alone possesses all the qualities which humans desire but are destined to do without. Beginning with Kant's and Hegel's new definition of personhood as the creative, autonomous self, Feuerbach's projection theory explained that human beings created God in their own image rather than God creating human beings in His own image. He especially attacked Lutheranism because it pits God as "the highest being" against the natural world as if God dwells above us in a supernatural world with an air of superiority, while human beings are totally bereft of any goodness or worth. Supposedly our only hope for a meaningful life comes as a gift when this angry God is appeased. This condescending attitude of a supernatural God whose superiority places Him above us destroys the foundation of human happiness, according to Feuerbach.<sup>37</sup>

Previous to Feuerbach, modern atheism was merely an unproven assertion which grew out of the development of modern natural science and its mechanistic picture of the world, as seen in eighteenth-century France. For example, Laplace developed a mechanistic system of finite causes which were said to be self-sufficient. The mechanistic worldview of classical physics discarded the idea of a creator and, as such, the supernatural world was eliminated. Now, with Feuerbach's critique, modern atheism was provided

with its rationale.<sup>38</sup>

A further critique of secularistic naturalism, first advanced by Fichte (1762-1814) and subsequently reinforced by Feuerbach, was that the idea of a God above the world means God is simply another Person who co-exists alongside (or above) us.<sup>39</sup> If God is a Person who co-exists with us, then He is necessarily finite, which is a contradiction to the doctrine of divine perfection—for personhood means having a specific self-consciousness, and whatever is *specifically present* is necessarily finite and limited.

A further criticism proposed by secularistic naturalism is that the idea of a supernatural Person who co-exists above us in another world would mean the elimination of human freedom. If God is the present reality and meaning of our world, then we are not free to decide what we will make of our lives. If God's being is the goal of human destiny and He is *totally present* in this moment as the one who co-exists above us, then there is no room for human action based on free choice, since God is totally present as the one who has already actualized all potentiality of being.<sup>40</sup> In order for human freedom to exist, the future must be a decisive component of reality, but the supernaturalistic model makes the "present" the essence of reality, and God is thus defined as the Timeless, Eternal Now.

Pannenberg takes seriously the critique of modern atheism. He believes it would be "premature" simply to dismiss modern atheism as "hatred of God."<sup>41</sup> Its criticisms are acute and must be addressed thoughtfully. In fact, Pannenberg is in agreement with the substantive arguments of secularistic naturalism. He admits, "A being presently at hand, and equipped with omnipotence, would destroy such freedom by virtue of his overpowering might."<sup>42</sup>

The way out of modern atheism is not "to retreat into a supranaturalistic wildlife sanctuary,"<sup>43</sup> as Barthian theology does with its divorce between faith and reason. Pannenberg sees Barth's theological subjectivism to be a surrender to the nihilism of Nietzsche (1844-1900).

Modern atheism must be understood as the outcome of the rise of human subjectivity as the criterion of truth, as developed in the philosophy of Descartes (1596-1650).<sup>44</sup> Finally, the atheistic outcome is due to the idea of a supernaturalistic Absolute Subject (Person) who coexists "above" us. The atheistic critique of Fichte, Feuerbach and Nietzsche is based on this concept of a supramundane Person.<sup>45</sup>

Secularistic naturalism refuted the idea of this supernaturalistic Subject (a divine Person) and replaced it with the autonomous subject (a human being). Not God but humans choose what is the truth! This atheistic self-affirmation is the inevitable consequence of a metaphysic of the will which Barth's subjectivism presupposes.<sup>46</sup>

Actually, it is not the subjectivism of Descartes' rationalism and Locke's empiricism, or the deistic supernaturalism of Kant, which can be blamed for the rise of modern atheism. The seeds were sown in Medieval scholastic theology with the development of a contrived compartmentalization of God

above the world who superimposed His will upon the world below. Pannenberg writes: "It is just supranaturalistic thought which turns out in the last analysis to have already presupposed Nietzsche's grounding of the truth upon the will."<sup>47</sup>

"The only way to overcome" modern atheism, Pannenberg observes, "is by means of a more radical inquiry into being."<sup>48</sup> "For theology, this means that its concept of God must be thought out in connection with the philosophical question about being if it is to be a match for the atheism of Nietzsche."<sup>49</sup>

### THE IMPASSE OF THE GREEK AND BIBLICAL IDEAS OF TRUTH

Pannenberg shows that classical theology defined God's being primarily in terms of one who is eternally present at hand, a self-contained Being alongside other beings.<sup>50</sup> This concept of a transcendent Being was developed from Greek philosophy with its emphasis that true being is hidden behind the flux of sense-appearances. For the Greeks, true being is that which has no beginning and no end and is not affected by the flux of time and history. This unchanging truth of true being is not subject to the contingent events of sense-appearances, and thus true being guarantees the unity of truth and the dependability of the world.<sup>51</sup> True being is thus timeless and without a history, according to Greek thought.

Pannenberg points out that it is understandable that Christian theology combined the *true being* of Greek thought with the God of the Bible. God is absolutely unchanging and reliable because He is the all-embracing truth. Yet there are significant differences between the Greek philosophy of true being and the biblical view of God.

First of all, the "Greek dualism between true being and changing sense-appearances is superseded in the biblical understanding of truth. Here, true being is thought of not as timeless but instead as historical, and it proves its stability through a history whose future is always open." God is known as the all-embracing truth because of the "trustful self-surrender of faith" to God who has disclosed Himself in the contingent events of history.<sup>52</sup>

Another distinction in the biblical view is that God is personal, in contrast to the Greek idea of true being which is an abstract principle. Further, the Greek understanding assumes that truth is universally accessible to reason, whereas in the Hebrew understanding the unity and dependability of truth is experienced as one trusts in God's faithfulness as He has revealed Himself in the contingent events of their history.

It was not until modern times that the impasse between the Greek concept of truth as timelessness and the biblical understanding of truth as historic was recognized as a serious problem.<sup>53</sup> The rise of historical thinking in the modern world is the outgrowth of the growing consciousness of the tension between these two understandings. Pannenberg has shown how the idea of truth in the West started with the Greek concept of the timelessness of truth which is fully and universally accessible to human reason. Accord-

ingly, cultural and historical differences are presumably irrelevant to the makeup of truth. With the rise of the modern historical consciousness (which is itself the outgrowth of a biblical understanding of reality), the Greek concept of a timeless truth existing independently in its own right was called into question and refuted by secularistic thought.

The irony is that the penetrating critique developed by modern, atheistic secularism is largely indebted to the biblical understanding of reality as history instead of the Greek understanding of truth as a rational penetration into the nature of true being. For example, modern atheism called into question the reality of a supramundane Being who lives in a timeless realm of perfection on the grounds that truth-claims are made from the standpoint of our historically-conditioned situation. One is not able to simply leap out of this world rationalistically or through suprahistoric revelation and make truth-claims which are not historically and culturally conditioned. Truth is not a matter of timeless, static propositions.

Equally ironic is that the idea of a supramundane Being who stands above or behind the world as the eternally present reality is derived from the Greek idea of true being and timelessness rather than from the biblical understanding of God as the Lord of history and the power of the unbounded future, whereas the atheistic insight that all truth is historically conditioned and contingent is ultimately derived from a biblical understanding of God who made Himself known through the contingent events of history.

Both the Greek and Hebrew ideas of truth have determined the understanding of truth in the West until the present day.<sup>54</sup> For the Greeks, truth is something that lies under or behind things and is discovered by rational probing into their interior depths. For the Hebrews, Hans von Soden has shown that "reality is regarded as history" and "truth is that which will show itself in the future."<sup>55</sup> Ernst Cassirer has also demonstrated that the rise of the modern historical consciousness is the product of Christian faith itself.<sup>56</sup> The irony is that secularistic naturalism has used the biblical insight concerning the historicity of truth to criticize and refute the Greek-inspired doctrine of supernaturalism.

Pannenberg points out that the Greek understanding prevailed until the modern world, and since the Romantic movement and the rise of the modern historical consciousness the biblical understanding of truth as history has been featured. It is no longer possible "rationally to separate the truth from its historically diverse forms."<sup>57</sup> Reason and history together form the essence of truth. So the dilemma of the Greek and biblical understanding of truth has been highlighted in the modern world with the consequence that the biblical perspective has become more determinative than in the pre-modern world. What is true emerges out of our personal and social relationships and is thus conditioned through the events of our history.

This personal/relational aspect of truth as conditioned by history was exaggerated in the subjectivism of Nietzsche, but it demonstrates that the



biblical motif of history and its emphasis on the personal character of reality has prevailed in the modern world.<sup>58</sup> This shows that modern atheism has used the insights of the biblical understanding of the decisiveness of historically conditioned events as a basis for critiquing and refuting classical theology's Greek-derived view of God as a supramundane Being.

Pannenberg has shown that the significance of Hegel's philosophy was his penetrating insight into the historical development of truth and reality itself. Hegel's philosophy was developed largely as a refutation of Kant's deistic supernaturalism.<sup>59</sup> It brought into focus a consciousness of the historical development of truth and of the relativity and contingency of history. His philosophy of history marked the culmination of the historical movement in the modern world.<sup>60</sup> Hegel showed that truth is not something which is a finished product existing behind or within the world, but rather truth is history, a process. Only at the *end* of history does the unity and wholeness of truth become known.<sup>61</sup> His point is that the meaning of each event is determined, not by the present or past, but by its future.<sup>62</sup>

The shocking thing about Hegel's philosophy was not pantheism. Pannenberg, like many other Hegelian interpreters, believes Hegel affirmed the personality of God. Rather, the staggering idea in Hegel was that he defined the end of history with his own present situation! Hegel had no open future. His eschatology was "radically contemporized."<sup>63</sup>

Pannenberg's admiration for Hegel lay in his understanding of the historical character of all truth as defined by the future instead of the present or past. Pannenberg finds it regrettable that no one since Hegel has posed the question of the unity of truth "with a comparable depth."<sup>64</sup> Yet modern thinking is determined by the consciousness of the historical conditioning of all truth—a consciousness which stems from a biblical understanding of truth and reality. However, the search for the unity of truth has largely been given up by contemporary philosophers since it is apparent that its unity could only be seen from the standpoint of the future, and since no one has this eschatological perspective, any talk about the unity seems superficial.

## BEYOND THE IMPASSE

Pannenberg's theological efforts have been devoted to the development of a theology of history which uses Jesus' eschatological message of the future of God's reign as a basis for showing how the unity of truth can be affirmed and known. He believes the biblical-Christian understanding of truth provides the solution to the problem raised by the Greeks concerning the unity of truth. Unlike classical theology which defined God's true being according to the Greek notion of the timeless *present*, Pannenberg draws from the biblical tradition as the basis for defining God as the power of the unbounded *future*.

Pannenberg develops the eschatological message of Jesus to show how the Greek idea of truth as true being—which is characterized by unity and unchangeableness—and the biblical understanding of truth as historical—



which is characterized by the contingency of events and the openness of the future—become one.<sup>65</sup>

What has now emerged in recent theological reflection is Pannenberg's new model for perceiving the relation of God and the world. Instead of God being "above," or "within" the world, God stands "ahead of" us as the power of the unbounded future. God's specific transcendent being and otherness from the world is still affirmed, but His "space" is not *above* us, or *within* us, but *in front of* us. He is the attracting, magnetic power of the unbounded future who shapes our present. The being of God is not *above* us as an object which we could bypass or overlook; He is not the inner essence of all beings as if He were the background *within* nature. The mode of God's being is the unbounded future. The "above" and the "within" model is flawed because it pictures God's space as timeless. The "ahead of" model is able to do justice both to the specificity of a particular, independent Being who is other than this finite world and at the same it is able to picture God's space as the unbounded future for whom time is real.

The idea of history as the sphere of development—along with the understanding of the progressive revelation—of God's self in the contingency of events, stands in contradiction to the timelessness of the supernaturalistic and the pantheistic models. Pannenberg writes: "The idea of the future as a mode of God's being is still undeveloped in theology despite the intimate connection between God and the coming reign of God in the eschatological message of Jesus."<sup>66</sup>

Pannenberg has now developed such a model. Pannenberg proposes this eschatological worldview as a replacement for supernaturalism. It is not an alternative to supernaturalism in the sense that most forms of naturalism are attempts to reconstruct Christian theology according to a non-miraculous interpretation which eliminates the activity of a personal God in history. Rather, Pannenberg's eschatologicalism is an entirely different model from the supernatural/natural dichotomy.

Pannenberg has explained that his "approach to the ontological question takes into account the concerns of supernaturalism (in contrast to a self-sufficient secularist concept of nature), while not yielding to the temptation of dualism that is not very well reconcilable to the biblical faith in creation."<sup>67</sup>

Pannenberg thus proposes a new way of thinking about the relation between God and the world, while maintaining the essential distinction between an infinite personal Being and the created world. Indeed Pannenberg says that any use of the word God which eliminates the idea of a personal reality independent from the created world is meaningless.<sup>68</sup>

Pantheism dissolves divine personality into a timeless space as an impersonal power "within." Supernaturalism elevates God into a space far "above" the finite world and depersonalizes the world by alienating human beings from their true essence; it suggests that this world is devoid of God because God is "above" us. Hence we dwell alone—except as God superim-

poses Himself from above and enters into relationship with us. Because of the unnaturalness of God's presence in the world "below" which this model entails, the relationship which He develops with us in this god-forsaken world seems forced and unnatural as well. Consequently, the biblical doctrine of the divine condescension degenerates into a feeling that God takes a condescending attitude toward us, just as the biblical understanding of God's transcendence (as the Lord of history) takes on the non-biblical idea of a spatial separation of God from us as if He coexists above us. Biblically speaking, our aloneness is not due to God's spatial transcendence over us, but to the brokenness of our relationship with God as reflected in our disobedience (Genesis 3). It is sin which separates us from a proper relationship to God, not God's cosmologically superior location.

An eschatological perspective locates God "ahead of" us, leading us to our true destiny. Pannenberg writes: "Man participates in God not by flight from the world but by active transformation of the world which is the expression of the divine love, the power of the future over the present by which it is transformed in the direction of the glory of God."<sup>69</sup> God is really present in our world because He relates to us through His Son Jesus whose Spirit indwells us. God is not an absentee landlord who has abandoned us. Eschatologicalism avoids the schizophrenic split of two worlds to which supernaturalism easily succumbed, while at the same time it avoids the flat and impersonal (autistic) one-storied world of naturalism. An eschatological perspective rejects the idea of different stories or separate realms of being, and it further rejects a naturalistic assumption of one static realm.

The eschatological model also avoids the charge that human freedom cannot be affirmed simultaneously with belief in a personal God, for God is not totally present at hand in a timeless realm. Such a timeless, supramundane Being necessarily excludes the idea of temporal development and stands in contradiction to the biblical view of God as the Lord of history. The biblical understanding leaves the future open for us as an opportunity to participate in the history of God's coming kingdom. Without an open future where reality is not yet decided and formed, there can be no freedom. But if God is "ahead of" us as the unlimited future, this means time is real for God as well as for finite persons.

The eschatological model also avoids the condescending attitude of the monarchical/supernatural model in which human beings feel the *ultimate put-down* (notice the double meaning of this term) of reality, as if human beings are totally depraved and worthless because of their finite humanity. It was this perception which led to Nietzsche's ethical refutation of God—that such a dehumanizing God ought to be killed. Contemporary theologians, such as Paul Tillich, Thomas Altizer and John Cobb have embraced Nietzsche concerning the death of a supernatural/monarchical God.<sup>70</sup> Yet their alternative to the supernaturalism which they reject is a naturalism which obscures God's relation with His creation.

This atheistic criticism is effectively met in Pannenberg's eschatological-

ism with its proposal for a new paradigm concerning God's being which at the same time preserves the concerns of supernaturalism. Pannenberg's emphasis is on the trinitarian persons who are *presently* inviting us to share in the fellowship of the *coming* kingdom of God. God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is actively involved in this temporal process. *For this world is God's world*, not something inherently alien to His true being, and history is the field of His action.<sup>71</sup> This means God endures the pain of our world and through His sufferings we are being reconciled and restored to Himself. This is to say, God comes to our situation and gets involved with us in order to establish a relationship with us. For it is God's very Self which saves us. As Pannenberg puts it, "The salvation that God promises is himself."<sup>72</sup> This emphasis that God reveals *Himself*, not merely useful information about Himself, is the significant contribution of Karl Barth to modern/contemporary theology as Pannenberg has often acknowledged.<sup>73</sup> It is knowledge of God Himself, of being personally acquainted with God in Jesus through the indwelling Spirit, which restores to us our sense of human dignity and feeling of personal worth.

However, Barth's emphasis on God's Self-disclosure is weakened by the notion of a supranatural Being who stands over against this godless world. For Barth, this finite, natural world is so different from God that not even human language is fit to speak of God's reality. Barth says God has to "commandeer" human speech to say what it is totally unprepared and inadequate to say.<sup>74</sup> Hence Barth's theology makes excessive use of paradoxical language, divorces reason and faith, and labels any type of analogy between God and the world as unchristian.<sup>75</sup>

The doctrine of the Trinity as formulated in classical theology really supports the view that God's being is to be defined in terms of futurity rather than in terms of a supramundane Being. For the historical, progressive revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit points us to the *future* of God who is already enabling us to participate in His coming Kingdom. This unbounded future is the place where history will finally become one with the essence of God—not pantheistically, but in the sense that God's kingdom will be complete. The Book of Revelation described this future event as a perfect relationship with God whose immediate presence makes everything whole, and God is described in historical terms as "the alpha and the omega," "the beginning and the end" (Revelation 20-22). Pannenberg thus links the Greek idea of true being, not with "a mere beyond contrasting with man's present," but with "the pure futurity of God."<sup>76</sup>

In developing his eschatologicalism, Pannenberg is integrating the Greek emphasis on truth as a *rational* understanding of *true being* with the biblical emphasis on truth as a *relational* understanding of reality as *history*. Unlike the classical Christian tradition which allowed the Greek understanding to dominate theological thinking about God's being, Pannenberg wants to reassert the priority of the biblical understanding and, more importantly, Jesus' own teaching as the basis for thinking about God's being. Pan-

nenberg's use of the Greek understanding of truth can be seen in the way that he seeks rationally to give Jesus' teaching an ontological structure, but the substance of that ontological structure is the biblical understanding of reality as history.

## AN ESCHATOLOGICAL DOCTRINE OF CREATION

Pannenberg's eschatological ontology is exegetically based in Jesus' message on the imminent Kingdom of God. He takes seriously the well-known tension between the "already" and "not yet" aspects of the Kingdom of God. Pannenberg sees this tension to mean both future and present are "inextricably interwoven."<sup>77</sup> God's Kingdom is not merely some future cosmic event while human beings simply wait and endure for its arrival. Rather, the present is pregnant with meaning because God, who is the power of the future, extends His rule in the present. This means the present is the effect of the future. God, as the power of the future, has acted decisively in His Son whose message, life and destiny have eschatological significance for all people.

This presupposition of the coming Kingdom for theological reflection holds in utter seriousness the cosmic and historical implications of Jesus' eschatological message. This eschatological future cannot be simply narrowed down existentially to mean that one should appropriate the possibilities of human existence, as Bultmann does. Nor must it be reduced to the idea of a mere ethical attainment on the part of human beings as though they could bring about the Kingdom of God on earth by the means of their own initiative, as classical liberal theology maintained.<sup>78</sup> Jesus' teaching on the imminent kingdom of God means "this future is expected to come in a marvelous way from God himself; it is not simply the development of human history or the achievement of God-fearing men," Pannenberg insists.<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, the uniqueness of Jesus' eschatological message consisted not in His mere preaching concerning the coming of God's Kingdom on earth, but rather that the presence of this coming Kingdom was now already happening in His person, thus showing that the present is to be seen in the light of the future and that Jesus Himself as God's Son is the pre-actualization of the future.

This brings us to Pannenberg's idea of an eschatological doctrine of creation.<sup>80</sup> The ontological implication of Jesus' eschatological message suggests a reversal in the traditional understanding of the time sequence. Creation does not simply stand at the opposite pole of eschatology within the time spectrum. Rather, theology should speak of a "creative *eschaton*,"<sup>81</sup> thereby showing that the temporal beginnings of the history of the world eventuate from the future and that God as the power of the future is creatively directing the course of history toward the ultimate inauguration of His Kingdom.

This means creation should not be seen from the perspective of a mere primordial beginning. Both creation and eschatology are "partners in the

formation of reality."<sup>82</sup> This means the future provides the basis for interpreting the meaning of every event in the present. "At present a being is 'something,' a unity in itself, only by anticipation of its unifying future. The future interprets the present and the past; all other interpretations are helpful only to the degree that they anticipate the future."<sup>83</sup>

This eschatological understanding is the "resounding motif of Jesus' message."<sup>84</sup> To speak of the *Kingdom of God* is to speak of the *rule of God*. To speak of the rule of God is to speak of the *being of God*, since His rule cannot be thought of apart from His existence. To speak of the being of God in connection with the rule of God is to speak of the *power of God*, for it is through the power of His being that He rules. And, since Jesus' eschatological message proclaimed both the "already" and the "not yet" aspects of the Kingdom of God, it can be said "in a restricted but important sense, God does not yet exist. Since his rule and his being are inseparable, God's being is still in the process of coming to be."<sup>85</sup> In this way, Pannenberg is showing that the oneness of God's being is linked primarily with the coming Kingdom of God in history, while the three persons of the Trinity are the concrete realities of the one God (as opposed to the abstract oneness of God). History is in process of moving toward its goal in the *being of God* (that is, we will be incorporated into the life and being of God), but of course we will not become pantheistically one with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this way, Pannenberg points out that it is in the eschaton that God's rule shall be universally established at which time it can be said that the goal of history will be attained, thus showing the end of history will be one with the essence of God.

To speak of the eschatological future of the kingdom of God is not to eliminate the reality of God's presence and rule in the present. Present eschatological existence is available to human beings because the eschatological future has proleptically occurred in Jesus of Nazareth, whose redemptive life effected our reconciliation with God. Or, to put it otherwise, salvation is available to us today because the future of God's Kingdom in which God reigns supremely and universally has been unveiled in Jesus' eschatological message and person, and those who accept His message of forgiveness also accept Him. It is through His cross and resurrection that Jesus' person and message are seen to be interrelated. Thus, those who believe in Jesus already participate in the coming Kingdom of God.<sup>86</sup>

To speak of the coming Kingdom of God is not to degrade the past. For God as the power of the future rules the past as well as the present. This means to speak of God as the power of the future is to speak of His eternity. To be sure, eternity is not a timeless reality. It is not the unchanging, primordial and eternal present of Platonic philosophy. Neither is God "the concept of a timeless ground of being in the depths of reality, in the background of the realm of being."<sup>87</sup> Rather, time is implicit in the very essence of God.<sup>88</sup> This means that only in the actualization of the future—i.e., in the eschaton when God's Kingdom shall become a concrete and universal reality—will



history be one with the essence of God. Only then will God's self revelation be direct, for both His will and purpose will be communicated in an unbroken and direct manner. In philosophical terms, this means subject and object will be identical, that what-is will be fully revealed in what-appears, that the one who communicates and what is communicated will be identical.

In contrast to Whitehead, who posits the idea of a development in God because of His involvement in time, Pannenberg sees the futurity of God's Kingdom to mean that what truth is in the present will be decided from the standpoint of the future. But this does not mean that God undergoes a development in His essence. Rather, when the goal of history has been accomplished, it will be seen that what is true then was true throughout the movement of time.<sup>89</sup>

Pannenberg is not suggesting that God merely relates Himself to finite human beings as the power of the future, but that God is in Himself the power of the future. This means God is pure freedom.<sup>90</sup> However, without the concept of the future there can be no concept of freedom or personhood. In this respect, only if human beings have a future do they have freedom. Openness to the future is a fundamental feature of freedom and individuality. This means we are free to the extent that we can transcend ourselves and thus transform and go beyond the present. In contrast to us, God is pure freedom because there is no future beyond Him. He is the unbounded future.

This idea of the personality and freedom of God is distinguished from Paul Tillich's belief that God is not a being or a person but Being itself, the Ground of Being and "the ground of everything personal."<sup>91</sup> However, Pannenberg points out that unless God is thought of as an independent Being with personality, the concept of God is meaningless.<sup>92</sup> Pannenberg shows that God is the power of Being because He is the power of the future and thus pure freedom. "Being is itself to be thought of from the side of the future, instead of as the abstract, most universal something in the background of all beings."<sup>93</sup> Since God (as Being) is the power of the future, this suggests His eternity.

In this respect, Pannenberg calls for a revision of the Greek idea of eternity (as the eternal present). Since God exists as the final future, then the idea of eternity may be defined as "the totally comprehensive present."<sup>94</sup> In this way, the concept of eternity includes the element of change and time instead of static permanence and timelessness.

From our finite perspective it can be said that "the *eschaton* is eternity in the fullest sense."<sup>95</sup> Eternity refers to the existence (or Being) of God. And since in the *eschaton* it is the essence of God to exist, the past, present and future are merged into one. This means the *eschaton* is the arrival of the Kingdom of God. To be sure, God's existence has been from eternity and He has always remained the same because in His pure freedom He exists as the final future. But for finite man, God's essence does not yet fully exist. It is only in the *eschaton* that God's essence will be directly seen to exist.



By emphasizing the futurity of the Kingdom of God which will disclose the essence of God, it should be reiterated that this does not devalue the present. Nor does it adopt any form of theological agnosticism. To be sure, our knowledge of God's revelation can be ascertained historically as it is reported in the biblical tradition, and thus our relationship to God through Jesus of Nazareth is no pious self-delusion. But, our objective knowledge (insight) of God's self-revelation is only indirect and partial, and can only be direct and complete in the eschaton. On the other hand, our experience of God through faith in Jesus is direct and immediate, for fellowship with Jesus "really mediates and assures salvation," Pannenberg writes.<sup>96</sup>

He further writes: "He who believes in Jesus has salvation in Jesus whom he trusts, without regard to the question how it stands with his historical and theological knowledge of Jesus," though of course one must at least presuppose the message of Jesus is true.<sup>97</sup>

The distinction between God's indirect and direct self-revelation (or stated otherwise, the distinction between the "already" and the "not yet" of the kingdom of God) can be further illustrated in the philosophical distinction of appearance and reality. The unity and difference between appearance and reality has been a subject of considerable debate in the history of philosophy. Without developing all the problems and issues connected with this debate in this article, it is evident that Pannenberg's epistemology is a realism (as opposed to idealism and positivism) because he defines appearance as a truthful disclosure of what is real. What-appears is what-is, though at the same time it must be said that what-is is not exhausted in what-appears. Reality appears in more than one event, and yet reality is more than its appearances. This does not suggest that appearance is mere semblance. Rather, what-is really appears. Pannenberg writes: "Connected with the possibility of manifold appearance of one and the same *eidos* is the fact that it exhausts itself in none of its appearances. There always remain other ways in which 'the same' *eidos* could appear."<sup>98</sup>

Insofar as the kingdom of God is concerned, it has already *appeared* in the ministry of Jesus. In His person, the coming Kingdom of God has already commenced in the world, though at the same time the *present* appearance of the reality of the Kingdom of God does not exhaust its futurity. This is to say, the *reality* of the kingdom of God has already made its *appearance*, even though this appearance is to be differentiated from its reality. Only in the eschaton will the *reality* of the kingdom of God be identical with its *appearance*.

This distinction between the *present* appearance and the *future* reality of the Kingdom of God corresponds to the distinction between God as Father and Jesus as Son. That the Kingdom of God has appeared means that the reign of God was begun on earth in the person of Jesus. This means "that God himself had uniquely and definitely appeared in Jesus without the difference between Jesus and God himself being thereby dissolved."<sup>99</sup> Thus, the arrival of the *future* reality of the Kingdom of God in the *present* means

that God joined Himself to the finite by making His *appearance* in Jesus, though without restricting the *reality* of Himself to His *appearance* in Jesus. Pannenberg writes: "The distinctive characteristic of the message of Jesus is that the future of the rule of God is not separated from the present as still outstanding, but that precisely as the future it becomes the power that determines the present and thus comes to appearance in the present."<sup>100</sup> Stated philosophically, this means *appearance* is the partial arrival of the *future*.<sup>101</sup>

It is this combined unity and difference in appearance and reality that places the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation at variance with the ancient oriental religions in which any certain form of the deity's appearance was inconsequential because its appearance constituted no essential unity with the god. Because of this separation of appearance and reality, the mythical god could "appear" in as many forms as it wished, for its appearance was nonessential to its being. Likewise, in Platonic philosophy appearance was nonessential to true being. Such is not the case with the idea of the Incarnation. The appearance of God in Jesus of Nazareth means His *essential* unity with God, thus suggesting that appearance and essential presence coincide. This inseparable interaction between appearance and reality illustrates the doctrine of the Incarnation in which there is the inseparable connection between Jesus as the appearance of God and the reality of God.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, the significance of the appearance of God in Jesus is that His appearance is an enduring present appearance because it is the essential presence of the unlimited future. Theologically stated, the *reality* of God as the unbounded future has *appeared* in Jesus of Nazareth, and this appearance is a *permanent* and *enduring present* because it is the *appearance* of the ultimate reality of the *future* (i.e., God).

The obvious implication of such an "enduring present" is that in Jesus of Nazareth we have the finality of God's revelation so long as history is still hastening toward the eschaton. This is to say, if the reality of God has appeared in Jesus, then He is the anticipation of the ultimate future which is God. And, if the appearance of Jesus is the arrival of what is the ultimate future, then no other event can surpass the Christ-event without involving itself in a logical contradiction. To be sure, God continues to work in history, but He does not reveal Himself in any fundamentally new manner (i.e., if the appearance of Jesus is really the arrival of God as the power of the future).<sup>103</sup>

Pannenberg thus offers an ontological perspective which (1) identifies reality with the comprehensive whole of history rather than with the unchanging, primordial, eternal present of Platonic philosophy; (2) interprets the transcendence of God eschatologically rather than supernaturally; and (3) understands the being of God socially rather than monarchically.

## ANSWERING OBJECTIONS

Pannenberg, in responding to some of his critics, shows that to affirm "that reality is *history hastening toward an End*" does not mean that history is

merely the external exhibition of a logically fixed Idea (as in Hegel), for this in effect would reduce history to the nonessential insofar as anything really new occurring.<sup>104</sup> Rather, history as it moves toward its goal in the eschaton in fact undergoes further development which includes modifications and transformations of present reality.<sup>105</sup> Despite this contingency and inconclusiveness of history, to think in terms of the whole of reality is an inescapable fact of life, even though it is usually done unreflectively.<sup>106</sup>

Pannenberg does not assert, however, that one can attain absolute knowledge as though he would be able, on the basis of present experience, to comprehend the whole of history.<sup>107</sup> But he does argue that the whole of reality can be historically mediated provisionally and proleptically on the basis of God's activity in the world.

Pannenberg acknowledges his indebtedness to Hegel's insights concerning the idea of a universal history, but he denies that he is a Hegelian because Hegel failed to appreciate the biblical understanding of an open future which has been provisionally and proleptically revealed in the history of Jesus. He further insists that the origin of the idea of universal history is in the biblical tradition itself.<sup>108</sup>

In asserting that it is history as the whole of reality that reveals the essence of God, Pannenberg does not intend to suggest that the infinite is reduced to the finite or that God is identical with the process of history itself. But neither is God to be thought of as a timeless, static Being. Rather, He is creatively active in the process of history. He is the power of the future who works in the present in order to usher in His Kingdom. This is not to localize the infinite in the finite. Neither is it to adopt "an exclusive immanence" (which is itself a contradiction in terms)<sup>109</sup> as opposed to a transcendence. Pannenberg explains that "history is not the field of a finitude which is enclosed within itself, an 'immanence' to which one could and indeed would have to oppose a 'transcendence.'" Instead, Pannenberg shows that history is "the ongoing collapse of the existing reality which is enclosed in its own 'immanence' (because centered on itself). The power of the infinite is active and present in this collapse of the finite."<sup>110</sup> Thus, history is not merely the sum total of what human beings have done and suffered. Neither is history merely the creation of human beings. What human beings are and what they create is finite, but history in this sense is not finite. "Rather, it accomplishes the crisis of the finite throughout time. Hence man shows himself to be finite in his history."<sup>111</sup>

Pannenberg further points out that history is not itself self-explanatory apart from the transcendent reality of God who chooses to make Himself known in history. If history were thought of as being "wholly other" from the reality of God, then there would be no purpose in speaking of God, if history in this respect were complete and comprehensible without Him. "Only because the infinite reality, which as personal can be called God, is present and active in the history of the finite, can one speak of a revelation of God in history. For it is thereby concretely shown that the finite is not left

to itself."<sup>112</sup>

This is not to say that history reveals God as an inference, as though this would constitute a cosmological proof for the existence of God corresponding to the Greek idea of a timeless cosmos from which one infers the existence of one God. Rather, God is "immediately perceptible to men" because He makes Himself known, and thus this knowledge "is not first discovered upon reflection by means of an inference."<sup>113</sup>

### SOME FINAL PERSONAL COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

Most Evangelicals have appreciated Pannenberg's theology of Jesus' resurrection, but they have also been skeptical of his historical/critical methodology because of its apparent anti-supernaturalism. Daniel Fuller was one of the earliest American Evangelicals to embrace Pannenberg's theology, but he disagreed with its non-supernatural worldview.<sup>114</sup>

What Fuller and others fail to appreciate is that Pannenberg is not an anti-supernaturalist in the sense which many theologians are (like Paul Tillich), but rather he wants to preserve the essential truth of supernaturalism with its emphasis on God's transcendence and divine otherness. Further, Pannenberg's replacement of supernaturalism with eschatologicalism is not linked to any hesitancy to embrace miracles. Rather, he objects to the idea that miracles are interruptions from *above*. In this respect, Pannenberg is closer to Augustine's view of miracles than Aquinas's. Augustine interpreted miracles as a normal result of God's presence in creation as opposed to Aquinas who saw miracles as superimposed on the created, natural order from *above*.<sup>115</sup> For Pannenberg every event is a miracle because of God's personal and intimate involvement with His creation. Pannenberg will not allow for a supernatural/natural dichotomy.

Some Evangelical theologians in America describe themselves as Protestant in their theology, but Thomistic in their metaphysic.<sup>116</sup> Some find little in Thomistic theology or Thomistic metaphysics which they like,<sup>117</sup> but continue to use the supernatural/natural categories of Thomism. In fact, almost no one in conservative, Evangelical circles would question the validity of supernaturalism—a situation for which they really have Thomas Aquinas largely to thank.

I find myself thankful for the clarifying function of the supernatural model, especially during my own seminary student days. With no alternate model available which could help put the biblical doctrines into a metaphysical framework, supernaturalism has been a most important intellectual tool for enabling me to appreciate the mystery and reality of a transcendent, self-sustaining God who created the world *ex nihilo*. And I have found supernaturalism helpful as a teaching aid for enabling my students to grasp the difference between a biblical understanding of God and the various sub-biblical views which obscure God's difference from creation. It also provided for a more sophisticated way of interpreting the figurative language in the Bible of a three-storied universe of heaven above us with God in the

"highest heaven" (2 Chron 6:18) and hell beneath us.

Yet my students repeatedly found it difficult to understand how we could speak of God's revelation if He is really separated from the world in another world above us. To qualify God's "aboveness" as not really meaning that He was entirely above us leaves unanswered the question of what is meant by the difference between God and the world. To appeal to the analogical nature of religious language (of Thomism) as a basis for explaining the relationship was to admit we should not seek for an answer, but just take it on faith! Of course God is ultimately mystery and incomprehensible, and our explicit knowledge of His reality is limited. (That is why in worship our language becomes doxological!) So our tacit knowledge of God exceeds our explicit knowledge. But the supernatural model obscures our understanding of how God can be known as a real presence in our world, if He dwells cosmologically above us.

Instead of a Thomistic doctrine of analogical language, Pannenberg believes that Michael Polanyi's distinction between *tacit* and *explicit* knowledge, along with his emphasis on the personal/religious nature of human language in general, is a more fruitful way of explaining the nature of theological language.<sup>118</sup> This avoids the logical difficulty associated with the doctrine of the analogy of being—that our words are *forced* to speak of two separate realms at the same time. Analogical language is vulnerable to the charge that its speech is equivocal and artificial, whereas Polanyi's analysis of the tacit dimension suggests a model which maintains that human words are inherently religious ("user friendly") and readily facilitate an understanding of spiritual realities. The theological task of developing a more *explicit* understanding of our *tacit* knowledge of God does not require an artificial linkage between the supernatural and the natural. Human speech is first and foremost religious in its essence and can be further refined by philosophers and theologians to accommodate a more precise and explicit understanding of the religious dimension. On the other hand, a Thomistic concept of analogical language, with its assumption that human words must be lifted beyond their natural meanings and given a supernatural denotation, resulted in the secularistic rationalization of language—as if words are inherently secular. Pannenberg's early research into the history of religious language convinced him of the essentially religious nature of human speech.<sup>119</sup>

I must express my appreciation for the Thomistic doctrine of analogical language. It has been a helpful model for my students to avoid fundamentalistic literalism. I have used it along with Polanyi's tacit/explicit model of knowing. Only recently has it occurred to me that the two models are incompatible because they assume different ontological models.

The reason for the virtual demise of classical orthodox teaching in major centers of learning today is often attributed to the rationalistic presuppositions of Enlightenment thinking, but it can be argued that the apparent logical contradiction of supernaturalism—which both its proponents and oppo-

nents have defended and assailed—may in part be the real culprit. Father Henri De Lubac even admits that secularism is a consequence of the dualistic tendency of supernaturalism itself.<sup>120</sup>

As a creative response to Kant's rationalism, Schleiermacher, the father of modern theology, has been blamed for charting the future course of theology down the road of self-destruction,<sup>121</sup> but clearly he was seeking to find a way of interpreting the doctrines of Christian faith which did not succumb to the inherent logical conundrums of supernaturalism.<sup>122</sup> His reformulation of Christian doctrine seriously wounded orthodoxy, and it has never recovered. Perhaps if Schleiermacher had worked from a different model than his "pantheistic" one, and if he had focused his attention on the need to revise an ontological model which was more in accord with the biblical understanding of God, then the subsequent course of modern and contemporary theology might have been quite different.

Is it right for us to blame the rationalistic presuppositions of Kant and Enlightenment thought in general for the demise of orthodoxy? To be sure, theology since Kant cannot be understood except as an attempt to come to terms with his bifurcated metaphysic which polarized the relations of God and the world. But perhaps the blame for the demise of orthodox Christian doctrines may be more directly related to the supernaturalism in which orthodoxy was *enmeshed* and less to the actual assaults of Enlightenment rationalism. Kant was only attempting to work out more consistently the philosophical implications of his own pietistic/orthodox training, and in the process of doing so he sought to replace the logical incoherence of orthodox supernaturalism itself with his deistic supernaturalism.

Unfortunately, the orthodox doctrines of classical Christianity and the supernaturalism which eventually came to surround those doctrines have not been sufficiently distinguished with the consequence that orthodox doctrines have often been thrown out along with supernaturalism. What has thus emerged, as a result of confusing a supernaturalistic ontology as the necessary presupposition for understanding the major doctrines of the Christian faith, have been largely ineffective or unduly complex rehabilitations of supernaturalism, or various forms of so-called Christian naturalism which eliminate the essential doctrines which make Christianity truly Christian.

The final implication of supernaturalism may well itself be secularistic naturalism which denies the spiritual dimension altogether. And so long as supernaturalism is still the inherent intellectual framework of Christian doctrines, the secularistic and atheistic critique of Christian faith will continue to hold.

But the collapse of supernaturalism into secularistic naturalism may not prove itself to be the final word. While the secular critique of supernaturalism has validity, secular naturalism may inevitably collapse under the weight of its own critique of supernaturalism. For secular naturalism may



be able to survive only in reference to the supernaturalism which it critiques.

Paul Tillich points out that modern atheism is not paganism; rather, it is "anti-Christian in Christian terms."<sup>123</sup> In this respect, modern atheism is really a Christian heresy.

Perhaps the next step beyond secularistic naturalism (if supernaturalism were wiped out) is a revitalized paganism? For the humanistic values which secular naturalism wants to preserve cannot be intellectually substantiated on the same grounds that it says belief in God cannot be accepted—namely, such secularistic values are a mere illusion based on mere psychological need.

The point here is that perhaps supernaturalism may not be an essential component of the orthodox doctrines of Christian faith. In fact, it may be an artificial imposition which Christian faith should dispense with. Perhaps the critique of supernaturalism by secularistic naturalism has performed a useful service for Christian faith by exposing the logical-theological incoherence of a bifurcated worldview.

There may be some truth then to the Death-of-God theology of the 1960s, as well as process theology which has praised Nietzsche for his bold declaration that the God of supernaturalistic theism is dead. Nietzsche's insight was his perception that a personal God who is so totally other from the world cannot be taken seriously by human beings whose daily concerns are related to personal survival and existential meaning. Such interference by an alien authority only stifles human happiness and leads to a negation of the importance of this world. In defense of human dignity and worth, Nietzsche opposed an unethical concept of a tyrannical God who arbitrarily superimposed His will on frail human beings dominated by fear and guilt.

Of course, supernaturalism did not intend to imply such a truncated and bifurcated view of God and the world. Yet, inadvertently, it did lead (perhaps inevitably) to such an extreme dualism. The doctrine of the Trinity with its emphasis on the temporal development of a historical revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are intimately involved in a loving and redeeming way in the affairs of this world stands in contradiction to a supernaturalistic distancing of God from the world.

What creates spiritual distance from God? Is it God's spatial transcendence above us in another, alien world? Is this natural world to be despised and downgraded because it is totally depraved and devoid of any inherent goodness? Is it God's spatial distance from us that defines His holiness and our sinfulness? This misconception of God's relation to the world, which supernaturalism fosters in spite of itself, is what causes Schubert Ogden to say that "supernaturalism...is in principle an inconsistent and self-stultifying position."<sup>124</sup>

It is significant that the concept of a supernatural distancing of God from the world emerged in the feudalistic society of the Middle Ages where

landowners (lords) lived in isolated and well-protected castles, separated from the rest of the human community. In contrast to the self-serving, tyrannical power of a feudal lord is the shepherding concept of the Lord in the Old Testament (Ps 23:1). Also, the Medieval development of a supernatural *ontology* which implies tyrannical loftiness over the world is essentially contradictory to its own *theology* of the God of history whose lordship entails friendship with His subjects ("I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God," Exod 29:45). The biblical imagery of God being high and lifted up (Isa 6:12) expresses God's moral, qualitative difference from sinful humanity, rather than a literal, spatial separation of God above the natural world. The history of salvation was the overcoming of this distance in Jesus of Nazareth.

The spatial imagery in Scripture is largely relational in meaning. For example, Jesus' ascension to His Father is a figure of speech to indicate that Jesus would take up a new relationship with His people through the Pentecostal outpouring of His Holy Spirit. The interpretation of Jesus' ascension which implies that God resides above or outside the natural universe in a supernatural realm contradicts the relational intent of the biblical spatial imagery. The essential meaning of the ascension is not God's removal of Himself from us, but rather that a deeper and closer relationship to God is now possible because He dwells "within" His people (John 14:17, Acts 1 and 2). The spatial imagery of the "descent" of the Holy Spirit is a corollary to the imagery of Jesus' "ascent" to heaven. Of course, this spatial imagery implies divine transcendence, but a supernatural ontology is not the only way to interpret it.

This concept of God dwelling "within" us through the giving of His Spirit to the Church is, of course, not a pantheistic mysticism, for God is other than the world. He transcends us as the power of the unbounded future, but He is immanent because He, as the Future, determines the present course of history. He is infinite; we are finite. We are not distant from God because He is too lofty for us and has to separate Himself from us on a higher plane. Rather, what creates spiritual distance from God whose presence (space) no one can escape (not even in hell, Ps 139:8) is our sinfulness and rebellion against the only possible Source of our being and meaningfulness. It is spiritual distance, not spatial distance, which creates fear and makes us sinners.

That we "feel" distance from God proves that our problem with estrangement from God is a spiritual separation, not a spatial absence of God. If God's absence was spatial, we would not feel it as such. We would simply be ignorant of His reality. This is the problem with Barth's supernaturalism: that the natural world is so spatially empty of God that any religious feeling is tinged with human arrogance and is the product of an anthropocentric attempt to create God in our own image.<sup>125</sup> Hence Barth's capitulation to Feuerbach!

To be sure, God in His triune being is ontologically different from hu-

mans. God alone is self-existent. This is the insight which supernaturalism rightly seeks to capture, but as a model of what is true being, supernaturalism fosters an inherent, self-deprecating attitude as if we are unworthy humans because we are spatially isolated from God in a lower level of (un)reality.

During my doctoral studies, Wolfhart Pannenberg was just beginning to make headlines as a young, contemporary theologian who defied labels and who was calling for a new way of doing theology which would provide for a better understanding of the significance of the God of Jesus. I particularly was impressed with his historical defense of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Most Evangelicals have welcomed his closely reasoned and brilliant argument for the empty tomb and the reality of the appearances of the risen Lord.<sup>126</sup>

I was also particularly impressed with his eschatological worldview, though I was not sure what to think about his apparent anti-supernaturalism. It was clear that he believed in the distinctly personal character of a transcendent God and he affirmed the reality of the miracle of the Resurrection. I was aware that his remarks against supernaturalism were mostly directed against its two-story approach which pitted each against the other. And I concurred with his rejection of that particular form of supernaturalism.

So I found myself using both a Thomistic model of supernaturalism and Pannenberg's eschatological ontology as if they could both be incorporated as supplementary views. What suddenly dawned on me (following Pannenberg's visit to our Asbury Theological Seminary campus) is that the two views are mutually exclusive, even though Pannenberg's interpretation of Christian doctrines are indeed largely, though not completely, compatible with classical orthodoxy. My growing conviction is that all the major doctrines of traditional Christianity (including the doctrines of biblical inspiration and the Virgin Birth, in contrast to Pannenberg's own views on these doctrines) are best understood from an eschatological perspective rather than a supernaturalist one.

To understand the implications of Pannenberg's bold, provocative, creative and apparently biblically based model of reality will require much more time and careful attention by Evangelicals. For now, we can be grateful for his considerable theological contribution. Process theologian John Cobb has said: "It is doubtful that there is another thinker alive today who is as comprehensive in the command of wide-ranging disciplines as Wolfhart Pannenberg." Cobb thinks Whitehead was the greatest philosopher who ever lived, and "on the process side, only Whitehead himself can compare with Pannenberg." Cobb further comments: "The single most sustained and thoroughgoing embodiment of this theological response to the decay of modernity is that of Pannenberg. Pannenberg has rethought the relation of Christianity and the Enlightenment profoundly and brilliantly."<sup>127</sup>

We can look ahead (to use a good Pannenbergian concept!) to his sys-

tematic theology which is just now being translated into English.<sup>128</sup> My personal expectation is that his eschatological model as a paradigm shift from supernaturalism may well serve as a new beginning for theology (not unlike the new beginning which Schleiermacher's liberal theology initiated). If so, then we can expect a resurgence of the importance of systematic theology which has been slighted by neglect or disdained by our pietistic traditions both among those who are conservative and liberal.

More importantly, this new model for understanding the reality of God is an opportunity for Evangelicals in particular to seize the theological momentum and take the leading role in shaping the way the Church thinks and believes. Evangelicals now have had developed for them a more appropriate onto-theological framework in which the orthodox beliefs can best be understood. The time has come to get off the see-saw of supernaturalism/naturalism and affirm with theological and biblical integrity the coming kingdom of God! Instead of a defensive posture of attacking our past enemies who have compromised the faith, we have before us a challenge to re-think our theology in ways which may prove to be more intellectually compelling and spiritually renewing.

## Notes

1. Michel Despland, "The Supernatural," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), 14:159-163. Ian P. Knox, *Above or Within?*, foreword by Richard P. McBrien (Mishawaka, IN: Religious Education Press, 1976), pp. 16-37.
2. Paul Tillich everywhere used *supranaturalism*, as seen in the index of *Systematic Theology*, three volumes in one (The University of Chicago Press, 1971).
3. Knox, p. 24.
4. Ibid.
5. J. L. Neve, *History of Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1946), p. 98.
6. E. L. Mascall, *He Who Is* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1970), pp. 4-10. E. L. Mascall, *The Importance of Being Human* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1958), p. 55.
7. Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 364.
8. Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1941), pp. 38-73.
9. Knox, *Above or Within*, p. 23.
10. *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, ed. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bertall (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), p. 341.
11. Tillich, "The Significance of the History of Religions for Systematic Theology," in *The Future of Religions*, ed. Jerald C. Brauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 80-94, cited by Pannenberg in *Basic Questions in Theology*, trans. George H. Kehm (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 2:65.

12. Tillich defines the various options for doing theology as oscillating between supernaturalism and naturalism. His proposal for an "ecstatic naturalism" is still under the sway of the supernatural/natural metaphysic which he rejects (*Systematic Theology*, 1:64-66. Cf. Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, ed. Carl E. Braaten [New York: Harper and Row, 1967], p. 332); Cf. Shubert Ogden, *The Reality of God* (New York: Harper, 1966), p. 52.
13. Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, p. 332.
14. Barth thus criticizes his earlier *Epistle to the Romans* in *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. T. Thompson (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1963), 1:2, 50.
15. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:289, 202.
16. *Ibid.*, 2:189-190.
17. *Ibid.*, 2:190.
18. Mascall, *The Importance of Being Human*, pp. 61, 59.
19. Cf. Thomas P. Flint and Alfred J. Freddoso, "Maximal Power," *The Existence and Nature of God*, ed. Alfred J. Freddoso (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 81-113.
20. Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, p. 116.
21. *Ibid.* Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (New York: Harper and Row, pp. 16-20.
22. Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, p. 190.
23. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:245. Pannenberg has shown how—from Kant to Fichte to Hegel and finally to Feuerbach—this radical emphasis on self-consciousness as the basis of all forms of knowledge became the model of thinking of personhood and resulted in the atheistic critique (*Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, trans. Philip Clayton [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990], pp. 43-46, 56); Cf. Moltmann, *Theology and the Kingdom*, pp. 13-16. Pannenberg says Leibniz inaugurated the modern idea of a personal God, but Kant's early philosophy was largely shaped by the philosophy of Leibniz. Cf. *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:227; Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt Hudson, "Introduction" to Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Greene and Hudson (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. xxxvii-xxxviii.
24. Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), pp. 201, 235, 236, 240; *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, pp. 44-46.
25. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:245. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:202.
26. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:227-233; Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, p. 66.
27. Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), pp. 153, 157.
28. Vitezslav Gardavsky, *God Is Not Yet Dead*, trans. Vivenne Menkes (Baltimore: Penguin, 1973), p. 28; Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper, 1963), pp. 53-69. Cf. E. L. Mascall, *The Importance of Being Human*, pp. 38-39, who writes: "The concept of personality is not, of course, confined to Christianity or even to the Judaeo-Christian revelation, but it is very significant that it was only when it entered into theology, through the controversies in the early Church about the nature of God, that its full content and implications

became manifest....The idea of personality was present in Greek thought only in embryo, and to this day it is practically absent from Hinduism and Buddhism."

29. Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, pp. 44-46. Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1929), p. 147, where he says: "The order and regularity in the appearances, which we entitle *nature*, we ourselves introduce. We could never find them in appearances, had not we ourselves, or the nature of our mind, originally set them there."
30. Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), pp. 80-85. Cf. Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976), p. 32.
31. *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1983), no. 151, Zusatz, cited by Quentin Lauer, *Hegel's Concept of God* (Albany: State University of New York, 1982), p. 155.
32. Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, p. 40.
33. Pannenberg's forthcoming volumes in systematic theology intend to focus on this problem and to show that God's nature is to be understood primarily in terms of the trinitarian persons rather than in a monarchical obsession with the oneness of God's being. In this regard, his trinitarian refocusing of theology may take us back to a more radical biblical understanding of God's personal makeup even as his eschatologicalism attempts to give us a more biblical understanding of God's relation with creation. Cf. *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing Company, 1988), p. 327.
34. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 139.
35. Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Introduction," in *Revelation as History*, trans. David Granskou (London: The Macmillan Publishing Co., 1969), p. 3-5.
36. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 139; Cf. Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, trans. Ulrich Wilkens (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), p. 181.
37. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Faith According to Luther*, trans. Melvin Chernoff (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 31-39, 126-127.
38. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:184-185.
39. *Ibid.*, 2:197, 202, 227, 241; Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, pp. 34-35, 44-45.
40. Feuerbach, *Faith According to Luther*, p. 33.
41. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:193;
42. *Ibid.*, 2:242.
43. *Ibid.*, 2:191-192.
44. *Ibid.*, 2:193.
45. *Ibid.*, 2:202.
46. *Ibid.*, 2:194-195.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, 2:195.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*, 2:241.
51. *Ibid.*, 2:11.
52. *Ibid.*, 2:9-10.



53. Ibid., 2:10-11.
54. Ibid., 2:3.
55. Hans von Soden, *Was ist Wahrheit? Vom geschichtlichen Begriff der Wahrheit*, *Marburger akademische Reden* 46 (Marburg, 1927), cited by Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:3.
56. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Loelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), pp. 182-196.
57. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:20.
58. Ibid. 2:20.
59. Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, p. 332.
60. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: University Press, 1962), p. 113.
61. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:21.
62. Ibid., 2:22.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., 2:23. Pannenberg denies he is a Hegelian (*The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, p. 16).
65. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:27.
66. Ibid., 2:242.
67. Letter to the author, May 6, 1991.
68. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:236.
69. Ibid., 2:248.
70. Tillich, *Courage to Be* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 185; John Cobb, Jr., *God and the World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 23-33; Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1966).
71. Pannenberg, *Theology as History*, ed. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 133.
72. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:248.
73. Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, p. 130.
74. Eberhard Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 15.
75. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1:1, X.
76. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:249.
77. Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 53.
78. Ibid., p. 52.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid., p. 67.
82. Ibid., p. 60.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., p. 53.
85. Ibid., p. 55-56.
86. Pannenberg, *Theology as History*, pp. 116-117.
87. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:244.
88. Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, p. 62.
89. Ibid., pp. 62-63.
90. Ibid.
91. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:235, 244-245.
92. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:236.

93. Ibid., 2:246.
94. Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, p. 63.
95. Ibid., p. 64.
96. Pannenberg, *Theology as History*, p. 269.
97. Ibid.
98. Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, p. 132.
99. Ibid., p. 134.
100. Pannenberg, *Theology as History*, p. 267n.
101. Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, pp. 127-143.
102. Ibid., p. 135.
103. Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, p. 128ff.
104. Pannenberg, *Theology as History*, p. 133.
105. Ibid., p. 260.
106. Ibid., p. 242.
107. Ibid.; Pannenberg, "Hermeneutics and Universal History," *History and Hermeneutic*, ed. Robert W. Funk (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 151.
108. Ibid.
109. Pannenberg, *Theology as History*, p. 251-152.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid., p. 253.
113. Ibid., p. 255.
114. Daniel P. Fuller, *Easter Faith and History* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 186-187.
115. Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 11-12.
116. Norman L. Geisler, "A New Look at the Relevance of Thomism for Evangelical Apologetics," *Christian Scholar's Review* 4/3 (1975): 189-200.
117. Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), pp. 26ff.
118. As reported to this writer in personal conversation with Pannenberg. Cf., Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) and Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 3-25.
119. Cf., *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, pp. 14-15.
120. Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. xi. Pannenberg frankly says supranaturalism inevitably leads to Nietzsche's atheism (*Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:195.)
121. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1:X.
122. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Steward (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 1:66-68.
123. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:27.
124. Ogden, p. 46.
125. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1:X.
126. Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, pp. 53-114.
127. *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, pp. 55, 58.
128. His choice of William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company as his publisher was in part influenced because of its large Evangelical constituency (a comment Professor Pannenberg made to this writer when he visited Asbury Theological Seminary on April 18-19, 1991).

# Wolfhart Pannenberg: Reason, Hope and Transcendence

STANLEY GRENZ

In the 1960s, the German systematic theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg was hailed as a proponent of the emerging theology of hope. Pannenberg has never been keen on accepting that label for himself. His aversion is correct, in that his program moves beyond the original intent of that theology; nevertheless, the inclusion of Pannenberg within this historical movement remains appropriate. His rise to theological prominence occurred in the context of the advent of the theology of hope, and he shares the central orientation of the movement, namely, the emphasis on the future or the eschaton as the point of transcendence.

## PANNENBERG'S EARLY THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Wolfhart Pannenberg was born in 1928 in a part of northeast Germany that now belongs to Poland. The basic outlook that drives his theological program came to be shaped quite early in life. A crucial factor in this molding process was the path he followed in coming to faith, for this was at the same time the path that led to his choice of theology as his life's pursuit. A series of crucial experiences launched him in this direction.<sup>1</sup>

The first occurred when he was about sixteen years old. While browsing through the public library, Pannenberg happened on a book by the atheist

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philosopher, Friederick Nietzsche. Thinking it was a work on music, Pannenberg's "first love" at that time, he read it. Nietzsche's writings convinced young Pannenberg that the influence of Christianity was responsible for the disastrous shape of the world. Yet they also sparked his interest in philosophy.

At about the same time, what Pannenberg has termed "the single most important experience"<sup>2</sup> of his life occurred. While walking home through the woods near sundown one winter afternoon, he was attracted to a light in the distance. When he approached the spot, he found himself flooded—even elevated—by a sea of light. The theologian now views this experience as the time when Jesus Christ made claim to his life, even though he was not yet a Christian. Over the ensuing years this experience has become the basis for Pannenberg's keen sense of calling.

His first positive experience with Christianity itself came through his *Gymnasium* (high school) literature teacher, who had been a lay member of the confessing church during the Third Reich. In this teacher, Pannenberg saw a contradiction to his view that Christianity is responsible for the distortions of human life. Because he was wrestling with the question of the deeper meaning of reality, he decided to look more closely at the Christian faith by studying theology and philosophy. From his inquiry he concluded that Christianity is the best philosophy, a conclusion that launched Pannenberg's life both as a Christian and as a theologian.

Soon after his experience of light, the Pannenberg family left their home in the wake of the Soviet offensive. Two years later he began studies at the university in Berlin. His initial fascination with Marxism gave way to opposition to it, as he subjected the system to intellectual scrutiny. His first-hand exposure to the evils of two human social orders—Nazi Germany and Stalinist Eastern Europe—forms a part of the background to Pannenberg's conclusion that no human political system can ever fully mirror the perfect human social structure that one day will come as a divine gift in the kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup>

While in Berlin, Pannenberg became impressed with the work of Karl Barth. He saw in Barth's early writings an attempt to establish the sovereignty of God and to claim all reality for the God of the Bible. But study in Basel with Barth himself beginning in 1950 resulted in Pannenberg becoming uneasy with what he perceived to be a dualism in his teacher's thought between natural knowledge and the divine revelation in Christ. This reaction to Barth spawned another important aspect of Pannenberg's theological program,<sup>4</sup> the attempt to show that God's revelatory work does not come as a stark contradiction to the world, but is the completion of creation. Pannenberg seeks to draw out the religious implications found in all secular experience,<sup>5</sup> claiming a continuity between redemption and creation, a continuity he came to find in the historical process.

In 1951 Pannenberg moved to Heidelberg where he studied under such scholars as Peter Brunner, Edmund Schlink, Hans von Campenhausen and

Gerhard von Rad.<sup>6</sup> During the years as a student in this great German university, his thinking concerning the nature of revelation took shape, in part through ongoing discussions with a group of students from various disciplines, which came to be known as the Pannenberg circle. The conclusions of the group were subsequently published as *Revelation As History*.<sup>7</sup>

In 1955 Pannenberg completed his academic training. After teaching at the Lutheran Church seminary in Wuppertal (1958-1961) and the University of Mainz (1961-1968), he moved to the University of Munich in 1968, the site of the bulk of his academic career.

### THE INTENT OF PANNENBERG'S THEOLOGY

Pannenberg is a theologian of both the Church<sup>8</sup> and the public sphere. His program is directed toward the unity of the Church and the place of the one Church in a secularized world. As a result, he has been an untiring supporter of ecumenism. But his understanding of the goals of the ecumenical movement have made him no friend of the political orientation that characterized the World Council of Churches for many years.<sup>9</sup> Such activities take away from what he sees as the central task of ecumenical endeavors, the establishment of eucharistic fellowship among the churches, leading to Christian unity. Unity, he believes, is the only way by which the Church's voice can speak with credibility in the contemporary secular society.<sup>10</sup>

His concern, however, does not end with Church unity, but moves beyond to include the future of humanity. Pannenberg sees the function of the Church in the world as being a witness to the temporality of all human institutions prior to the coming of the kingdom of God. As it gives expression to fellowship among humans and between them and God, especially in the Eucharist, the Church becomes the sign of God's eschatological kingdom,<sup>11</sup> which is the hope of the world. Theology is, in part, a servant to this task.

### THEOLOGY AND TRUTH

Despite this broad intention lying behind Pannenberg's work, its central importance lies in his understanding of the nature of theology itself and of the truth to which theology is related. Simply stated, he is attempting to change the course of contemporary theology, to combat what he perceives to be a widespread privatization of religious belief in general and of theology in particular.

This quest must be put in the context of Pannenberg's assessment of the trajectory of modern theology. In 1975 he indicated his perception of the failure of theology in an autobiographical remark given to a group of students in Denver: "Perhaps if you have heard anything about my work, you have learned that I am accused of being a rationalist by some people. Others call me a fundamentalist...But...there is one thing I am certainly not; I am certainly not a pietist."<sup>12</sup>

Underlying this remark is Pannenberg's conviction that in seeking to deal with the Enlightenment, the intellectual revolution which drastically al-

tered the understanding of the basis of the Christian faith, the theology of the last two centuries has, to its detriment, turned to a pietistic emphasis on a decision of faith.<sup>13</sup> Prior to the Enlightenment, the salvation-historical events, which were seen as providing the foundation for faith, were accepted on the basis of what was claimed to be the authoritative witness of God, mediated either by the teaching office of the Church (the Roman Catholic view) or by the Bible as the product of the divine inspiration of the prophets and apostles (the Reformation position). In keeping with this, the Reformers posited a connection between three aspects of faith—*noticia* (knowledge), *assensus* (assent) and *fiducia* (trust).

In the Enlightenment, however, the understanding of an authoritative testimony to historical knowledge, taught by Augustine and Luther, was replaced by science and a newer historical methodology that sought to reconstruct past events by employing scientific and critical tools. As a result, the historicity of events became uncertain, and the historical basis for faith was called into question. Thus, in the post-Enlightenment world, humanity lives without revelation, understood in the sense of a word from beyond history by means of which reality can be viewed through the eyes of God.

To avoid making faith uncertain and dependent on historical research, post-Enlightenment theology moved the foundation for faith away from historical events to the experience of conversion, which is seen as providing its own certainty. In other words, a shift has been made from the older view, which began with a rational appeal to historical fact, to the modern approach, which moves from the subjective experience of the believer.

This modern position has given birth to two distinct, yet equally erroneous, alternatives. Some theologians dismiss the historical content of the Christian tradition as irrelevant. This is the position of the radical pietists, in whose ranks Pannenberg includes Rudolf Bultmann. Others follow the path of what he terms "conservative pietism," in which the plausibility of the historical aspects of the faith is grounded in the experience of faith. Thus, for example, personal conversion is made the basis for the certainty of the events of Jesus' history, such as his miracles and the Resurrection.

At the heart of Pannenberg's alternative to this development is Luther's thesis that, by nature, faith cannot be derived from itself, but only beyond itself in Christ.<sup>14</sup> From this Pannenberg concludes that faith is dependent on a historical basis. Specifically, the historical revelation of God must form the foundation for the act of trust, if faith is to be trust in God and not in itself. He admits that the revelation which grounds faith remains contestable in this world. But he nevertheless adamantly declares that only the field of argument, and not a nonrational decision of faith, can meet the philosophical and historical challenge to the Christian claim to knowledge of God.

According to Pannenberg, then, theology is necessary because actual truth must underlie faith, if faith is to be valid.<sup>15</sup> His theology, in turn, is an attempt to place Christian faith on firm intellectual footing once again, and thereby to provide an alternative to the subjectivist approach of much mod-



ern theology.

In one sense Pannenberg's understanding of theology follows the classical model. As in the older view, he sees theology as a public discipline related to the quest for universal truth. For him the truth question is to be answered in the process of theological reflection and reconstruction. He criticizes any attempt to divide truth into autonomous spheres or to shield the truth content of the Christian tradition from rational inquiry. Theological affirmations must be subjected to the rigor of critical inquiry concerning the historical reality on which they are based. Theology, in other words, must be evaluated on the basis of critical canons, just as the other sciences for, like they, it deals with truth. And the truth of the Christian faith must be measured according to the coherence criterion,<sup>16</sup> that is, insofar as it fits together with—even illumines—all human knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

At one crucial point, however, Pannenberg's understanding of theology moves beyond the classical tradition. He declares that truth is not found in the unchanging essences lying behind the flow of time, but is essentially historical and ultimately eschatological.<sup>18</sup> Until the eschaton, truth will, by its own nature, always remain partial and truth claims, debatable. Therefore, theology, like all human knowledge, is provisional. It simply cannot pack the truth of God into formulas. The future alone is the focal point of ultimate truth. As a result, all dogmatic statements are to be treated as hypotheses to be tested by means of their coherence with other knowledge. This, he claims, is in accordance with the Scriptures, which declare that only at the end of history is the deity of God unquestionably open to all.<sup>19</sup>

## REASON AND HOPE

Pannenberg's understanding of the nature of the theological task gives rise to a theology oriented toward two intertwined focal points—reason and hope.<sup>20</sup> The significance of the term "reason" is obvious from what has already been noted— theology is a rational undertaking. The term "hope" capsulizes the thorough-going eschatological orientation of his program. In that his entire systematic theology focuses on the eschaton, it may be characterized as a theology of hope. Foundational to the whole of Pannenberg's theology is the concept of the kingdom of God understood as the glory of the Trinity demonstrated in God's rulership over creation.

Pannenberg does not follow nineteenth-century theology in understanding the kingdom in terms of an ethical community. Rather, his view accords with the exegetical discoveries of the twentieth century, which find the source of this term in the apocalyptic movement and the teaching of Jesus.<sup>21</sup> The biblical message of the kingdom is thoroughly eschatological in orientation, for it proclaims the final lordship of God over creation, a lordship which has already broken into history in the appearance of Jesus. Enroute to the eschaton, the Christian community lives in hopeful expectation of the final consummation of the lordship of God over the entire world. Only then will the glory and reality of the triune God be fully demonstrated.

The theme of hope, however, leads back again to the rational dimension of Pannenberg's theological enterprise. As a public discipline, theology's purpose is that of giving a "rational account of the truth of faith."<sup>22</sup> This orientation to "rational accounting" is foundational to the mandate of the Church itself, as he understands it. As a people of hope whose eyes are directed to the eschatological consummation in the kingdom of God, the Christian community dares not retreat into a privatized ghetto of individual or familial piety. Rather, it is called to remain in the world, where the struggle for truth occurs, and there to engage in the theological task. Because the theological task is linked with the quest for ultimate truth, the truth of God, theology is a public and rational endeavour.

### SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Following the classical tradition, Pannenberg asserts that the whole of systematic theology is essentially the doctrine of God. In fact, God is the all-inclusive object of theology.<sup>23</sup> Even though Christian dogmatics moves beyond the doctrine of God to include anthropology, ecclesiology and other disciplines, these must be seen as belonging to that one overarching topic.

The starting point from which we can talk about God is the commonly held "semantic minimum" concerning "God," that views God in terms of power. God is "the power on which all finite reality depends"<sup>24</sup> or "the power that determines everything." From this basic premise, however, Pannenberg draws a far-reaching assertion: The deity of God is connected to the demonstration of God's lordship over creation.<sup>25</sup>

This thesis implies that the idea of God, if it corresponds to an actual reality, must be able to illumine not only human existence, but also our experience of the world as a whole. In his words, "It must be made plausible that all finite reality depends on him, not only human beings and the course of their history, but also the world of nature." This can only be done, Pannenberg adds, by presenting "a coherent model of the world as God's creation."<sup>26</sup> This is why for him to show the illuminating power of the Christian conception of God is the overarching task of systematic theology.

In addition, however, the thesis that God's deity is connected to his lordship over creation means that only the final salvation of God's creatures can ultimately demonstrate the assertion of God's existence. This realization, of course, serves to shift the emphasis of theology to history and eschatology. "It is only in the event of final salvation," Pannenberg argues, "that the reality of God will be definitively established." Consequently, the entire process of history climaxing in the consummation constitutes "a self-demonstration of God's existence."<sup>27</sup> Systematic theology is an explication of this self-demonstration.

### THE STARTING POINT FOR THEOLOGY

In keeping with his thesis of the debatable nature of the assertion of God's existence,<sup>28</sup> Pannenberg argues that theology cannot merely launch

into the doctrine of God, but must win its starting point. To accomplish this, he builds on an anthropological observation which in turn provides a link between philosophical and revealed theology, namely, that humans are in a certain sense naturally religious.<sup>29</sup> By this he means that the structure of the individual human person and of corporate human life is pervaded by a religious component. In theological terms, the destiny of humanity is existence in the image of God, a destiny visible in human "openness to the world."<sup>30</sup>

This understanding of humanity's basic religious nature builds from the early Schleiermacher concept, and a reinterpretation of the Cartesian concept, of the infinite. Its background, however, lies earlier, in the medieval discussions of what is first, albeit dimly known to the human mind. Pannenberg finds this question illumined by means of two contemporary concepts. The first is "exocentricism," the thesis that each human must ground personal identity outside oneself. Although this concept has been disseminated by twentieth-century philosophical anthropology, Pannenberg finds its foundation in Luther's understanding of faith. The other concept is Erik Erikson's well-known idea of "basic trust."

Religious awareness, Pannenberg explains, arises out of the rudimentary consciousness of the difference between "I" and "world" found inherently in the act of trust, which is then augmented by one's presence in the family. As a person experiences finitude and temporality in everyday life, an intuition of the infinite develops. To this, however, Pannenberg adds an innovative thesis. The intuition of the infinite does not itself comprise explicit knowledge of God. Rather, such knowledge is mediated by religious traditions. This subsequent knowledge allows the individual to reflect on the earlier immediate experience and to conclude that therein lies an "unthematized knowledge" of God. In other words, that this basic intuition of the infinite relates to the theme of God is a conclusion drawn only by reflection on the process of religious history.

In this way Pannenberg connects this basic religious phenomenon to the experience of God found in the religions, which come to an awareness of the activity and essence of God through the works of creation. This connection, in turn, opens the way for him to view the rivalry of the religions as the location of the revelation of truth.<sup>31</sup>

With Barth, Pannenberg asserts that revelation occurs only as God gives Himself to be known. But he argues that the focal point of this revelation is the historical process. For Pannenberg this history is the history of religions. On the historical stage conflicting truth claims, which are at their core religious and are ultimately attempts to express the unity of the world, are struggling for supremacy. The religious orientation that best illumines the experience of all reality will in the end prevail and thereby demonstrate its truth value.

In this context, Pannenberg finds significance in the religious history of Israel. In Israel came the breakthrough to monotheism, which allowed for an understanding of the world as a unity, and the breakthrough to the future

orientation of God's activity in history. These discoveries formed the context for the message of Jesus, which Pannenberg declares to be the focus of the revelation of the nature of the eternal God. Jesus is the prolepsis—the historical preview—of God's self-disclosure, which ultimately lies at the end of history. For this reason, Pannenberg develops the Christian doctrine of God out of the life of Jesus.<sup>32</sup>

### THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF GOD: THE TRIUNE ONE

At the heart of Pannenberg's theology is the doctrine of God. And at the heart of the Christian conception of God, he argues, is the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>33</sup> It comes as no surprise, therefore, that God as the Triune One forms the center of Pannenberg's systematic theology.

In contrast to theological practice since the Middle Ages, Pannenberg's systematic theology moves from the concept of revelation immediately to an explication of the doctrine of the Trinity and only then to the delineation of God's unity and attributes.<sup>34</sup> The traditional attempt to derive the plurality of the trinitarian persons from a concept of God as one being, he asserts, can only lead to problems, because in such approaches God remains a single subject, rather than the three persons.

In moving away from the older methodology, Pannenberg's doctrine of God offers an intriguing proposal for the contemporary question of the link between the immanent Trinity (God's eternal essence) and the economic Trinity (God as active in salvation history).<sup>35</sup> The link he forges arises from the foundational thesis that all systematic theology is but the explication of what is implicit in God's own self-disclosure. Consequently, he seeks to ground the doctrine of the Trinity on revelation, that is, on the economy of salvation—on the way that the Father, Son and Spirit come to appearance in the event of revelation—as is presented in the life and message of Jesus. Only then does he move to the discussion of the unity of God found in the divine attributes. In this way, Pannenberg grounds the doctrine of God in the divine economy and, as a result, the understanding of the immanent Trinity flows from the economic Trinity.

Crucial to Pannenberg's development of this doctrine is his concept of self-differentiation.<sup>36</sup> The essence of person, he argues, is to give oneself to the counterpart; hence, the concept of person includes the idea of dependency. All three trinitarian persons are mutually dependent on the others, he asserts.

In this way Pannenberg offers an alternative to the subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father which he finds so detrimental to traditional theology. He brings this mutual dependency into the process of salvation history and emphasizes the eschatological completion of the divine program in the world as the focal point for the revelation of the unity of the divine being. The unthematized infinite comes to be named by the purposeful activity of the three trinitarian persons in the world.

## TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

Whereas Pannenberg was noted in the earlier stages of his career for his attention to Christology, when he set himself to the task of delineating his full systematic theology the importance of pneumatology or the doctrine of the Spirit became increasingly evident. In fact, central to Pannenberg's entire dogmatics is his attempt to develop a new pneumatology. He intends to replace the tendency in theology to reduce the role of the Spirit to that of offering an explanation in situations in which all rational suggestions fail with a much broader and more biblical doctrine of the Spirit. But in so doing, he develops the key to an understanding of the divine transcendence and immanence.

Crucial to his pneumatology is Pannenberg's understanding of spirit as "field," a conception related to, but not to be equated with, the field theory introduced in nineteenth-century science.<sup>37</sup> Actually, the roots of the idea lie much earlier in the ancient Stoic philosophers who developed a doctrine of a physical *pneuma* (spirit). This idea, however, was rejected by the theologians of the patristic era in favor of the conception of God as spiritual mind.

This new pneumatology of field is central to Pannenberg's doctrine of God.<sup>38</sup> In agreement with the atheistic criticism of Feuerbach and others, he rejects as a mere projection the classical understanding of God as reason and will (i.e., mind). The divine essence, Pannenberg maintains, may be better described in terms of the "incomprehensible field"—i.e., dynamic spirit—which likewise comes forth as the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

In addition to field/spirit as characterizing the divine life, Pannenberg sets forth a profound assertion of the Spirit's all-pervasive, creative presence in creation and in human life, climaxing in the new life of the believer and the Church.<sup>39</sup> In this way the same concept that describes the divine essence functions as the principle of the relation of God to creation and as the principle of the participation of creation in the divine life.

Crucial here is the connection Pannenberg draws between the Christian assertion of the Spirit as the source of life in creation and the biological discovery that "life is essentially ecstatic."<sup>40</sup> Each organism lives in an environment which nurtures it and is oriented by its own drives beyond its immediate environment toward its future and the future of its species. This is the sense in which creatures participate in God through the Spirit, Pannenberg asserts. Hence, the Spirit can be understood as the environmental network or "field" in which and from which creatures live.

The Spirit is also the "force" that lifts creatures above their environment and orients them toward the future. This work of the Spirit ultimately leads to the self-transcendence that characterizes the human person and forms the basis for the special life beyond the self in Christ, found in the believing community of the Church.

The concept of field also forms the foundation for Pannenberg's anthro-

pology. The human person, he argues, is not to be seen in terms of an "I" that preexists experience of the world.<sup>41</sup> Rather, he has a more complicated understanding of the formation of personal identity. Important for identity development is the immediate perception of the totality of a person's existence,<sup>42</sup> which Pannenberg terms "feeling,"<sup>43</sup> or the "field" in which a person lives.

Because this totality of existence is an eschatological concept related to the meaning of reality that only arises when the flow of life is completed, Pannenberg views the biblical concept of the image of God as eschatological as well; it is realized at the end of human history, not at the beginning. He likewise defines sin in terms of the idea of the building of personal identity. Sin is "self-love," the "I" as it fixates on its own finiteness, rather than finding its identity from fellowship with God, that is, via existence *extra se* in Christ.<sup>44</sup>

Lying behind this understanding of God and the world is a specific theological interpretation of space and time that parallels the concept of the religious nature of humankind outlined earlier.<sup>45</sup> Pannenberg argues that it is impossible to imagine the parts of space and time without presupposing both space and time as undivided wholes that form the background or context for these parts. This intuition of infinite space points to the immensity and omnipresence of God, whereas the intuition of time as a whole points to God's eternity.<sup>46</sup>

God, then, is the "field" in which creation and history exist. In Pannenberg's words, "the presence of God's Spirit in his creation can be described as a field of creative presence, a comprehensive field of force that releases event after event into finite existence."<sup>47</sup>

As the comprehensive field, God is both immanent in the world and also transcendent over it. His immanence is obvious. All creation and all events live from their environment, which is the divine field, the source of life. And the immanent Spirit is what animates creatures in raising them beyond themselves to participate in some measure in the divine life. Yet in the process of life God is not only immanent; he also remains always transcendent. God is more than the chain of the finite parts of time and space. And the divine life is more than the sum of the lives of finite creatures.

Above all, however, transcendence arises from the future orientation inherent in the relation between God and the world. As Spirit, God functions as the whole which provides meaning to the finite events of history. This meaning is profoundly future, for only at the end of history do we find the meaning of history and the connection of each event with that meaning. The end, then, transcends each moment, as that glorious reality toward which all history is moving. In this way, time and eternity are interrelated, for, Pannenberg writes, "it is through the future that eternity enters into time."<sup>48</sup>



## JESUS AND THE SON

The doctrine of the Trinity lies at the heart of Pannenberg's systematic theology. It remains, however, to round out the picture by indicating the main themes of Pannenberg's doctrine of Christ. For in Jesus, eternity—the future—has entered profoundly into time.

Issues of Christology have always been of central concern to Pannenberg. In fact, the first of his works translated into English was the monograph, *Jesus—God and Man*.<sup>49</sup> This book contains his controversial delineation of the centrality of the Resurrection for Jesus' history and his important emphasis on the historicity of this event. In this work, Pannenberg argues that the resurrection of Jesus is God's confirmation of the appearance and mission of Jesus, for through this event Jesus experienced in the midst of history that eschatological transformation to which humanity is destined.

As a monograph, the earlier work presupposed the reality of God and unfolded solely in terms of a Christology "from below." However, Pannenberg admits that such an approach is incomplete when Christology is pursued within the context of systematic theology. Such a discussion must occur in the context of a specifically Christian anthropology, undertaken with an awareness of the doctrine of God.

To accomplish this, in his systematic treatment, Pannenberg reintroduces the classical theological concept of *logos*, understood as the principle of the unity of the world. But to this traditional idea he adds an interesting twist. The *logos* represents the order of the world as history. Consequently, Jesus is the *logos*, not as some cosmic abstract principle, but in His human life as Israel's Messiah and as the one who brings to light the proper relationship of the creature to the Creator.

Foundational to Pannenberg's proposal is the assertion that the connection between Jesus and God not be viewed directly in terms of the unity of the preexistent *logos* with humanity, but rather indirectly, via Jesus' relationship to the Father as unfolded in Jesus' own history.<sup>50</sup> As the one who was obedient to the Father to the point of death, Jesus is the eternal Son, the *logos*, for the attitude that humbly differentiates oneself from God and places oneself in the service of God is the way to participation in life.

As the one who was obedient to his divinely-given mission to the point of death, Jesus is God's reconciliation. He acted as our substitute, in that Jesus shared our situation (death) and thereby altered it. Pannenberg calls this view "inclusive substitution." Through faith we can participate in the new life brought by Christ. In our voluntary subordination to God we enjoy communion with God and will participate in God's eternal life beyond our own finitude and death.<sup>51</sup>

## PANNENBERG AND HIS CRITICS

The program undertaken by Wolfhart Pannenberg is perhaps the most ambitious attempt since Barth to set forth a complete systematic-theological

delineation of Christian doctrine. Not only does he systematize the teaching of the Church, He seeks to outline an approach for Christian engagement with the philosophical underpinnings of contemporary society's movement away from its religious roots. In this bold undertaking Pannenberg has refused to be dissuaded by the many voices who reject the mere idea of attempting a truly systematic theology in the contemporary context and by those who have sought to shift the focus of the theological task in other, less ambitious directions.

As a result, Pannenberg's work has been rigorously criticized and at times dismissed *in toto* as no longer relevant. However, when viewed from the perspective of theological history as a whole, he emerges as a modern heir to the classical understanding of theology viewed in terms of the reasonable demonstration of the Christian truth claim and the Christian conception of God. Whatever problems are present in his proposal, Pannenberg ought not to be faulted for attempting to "do" theology. Rather, critical discussion with his proposal must focus on questions concerning the correctness and adequacy of his theological method.

#### REVELATION AND THE BIBLE

Pannenberg offers an important contemporary restatement of the traditional attempt to ground theology on revelation. Although not minimizing other focal points of revelation, classical Protestant theology emphasizes the Bible as the deposit of divine revelation. Pannenberg diverges from this traditional approach.<sup>52</sup> He does not adhere to the older Protestant doctrine of verbal inspiration,<sup>53</sup> but bases his understanding of the nature of Scripture in the relation of the history of religions to revelation. For him the history of religions is the location of a dispute among rival religious truth claims. In this history, the religion of Israel, leading to the advent of Christianity, is crucial because of the insights developed through this process. The Bible is the sourcebook for this tradition, and thereby it retains a central importance for theology, even in the post-Enlightenment situation.

Pannenberg's criticism of the older Protestant doctrine of inspiration must be taken seriously. In the contemporary world simple appeal to the Bible as an unquestioned authority is no longer possible. Pannenberg rightly points out that, in the present context, the doctrine of Scripture can no longer simply be set forth at the beginning of theological reflection. Therefore, his suggestion that the authority of the Bible is to be the goal, rather than the presupposition, of theology stands as a valid challenge to the classical Protestant approach.

Nevertheless, agreement with his perception of the contemporary loss of biblical authority does not require agreement with his appraisal that modern textual criticism destroys the doctrine of inspiration. Nor can Scripture simply be set aside for that reason, as even Pannenberg implicitly acknowledges. Pannenberg's doctrine of reconciliation contains a promising basis for a renewed doctrine of Scripture, in the thesis that the apostolic procla-

mation became the vehicle for the ongoing speaking of the risen Lord. Unfortunately the German theologian has not made the step from this idea to a full-orbed doctrine of Scripture.

## REVELATION AND THE SPIRIT

Pannenberg's emphasis on the historical nature of revelation leads to the related question as to how the observer comes to see this revelation, that is, to the question of the role of the Spirit in illuminating history. He sees himself as attempting to develop an understanding of the unity of revelation in the face of the bifurcation of the concept. For this reason, Pannenberg tolerates no suggestion that some additional inspired word or some supernatural working of the Spirit must be added to events; meaning arises out of the events themselves.<sup>54</sup>

Although he does not mean to suggest that the Spirit has no role in the process of faith, at times Pannenberg appears to minimize the place of the Holy Spirit in the epistemological process of grasping the revelation of God in history. The question therefore, remains. How is it that some respond positively to the hearing of the report, whereas others reject the message?

Whatever that answer may be, Pannenberg refuses to ground the solution to the problem of faith and unbelief in the mystery of the action of the Spirit, an approach often found in traditional theology. Why a person comes to faith or remains in unbelief resides in the mystery of human personhood, which he sees as a gift of God.

In his systematic theology Pannenberg comes to a more profound understanding of this dynamic than is found in his earlier works. Here he acknowledges the brokenness of the knowledge of revelation in the era before the consummation, with the result that the apostolic proclamation is of utmost significance for the understanding of revelation in history. This marks a helpful development in his thought. While he continues to maintain that no inspired word must be added to events, the acknowledgment of the brokenness of knowledge opens the way for an affirmation of the mysterious aspect in the epistemological process in this era of the contestability of truth claims.

## REASON AND PIETY

The characteristic orientation to the future of Pannenberg's thought and its attendant revision in ontology could appear to call into question certain aspects of traditional Christian piety. His theology seems to lay no foundation for the traditional emphasis on God's presence as an existing being in the here and now and for talk of current events as in some sense divinely preordained before the world was created.

More problematic than the lack of these themes in his theology, however, is Pannenberg's apparent thorough-going rationalism and hard-nosed rejection of any attempt to base theological conclusions on a faith decision that has not been through the fire of rational reflection and challenged by

alternative viewpoints. Before drawing any conclusions concerning this dimension of his theology, however, we must place his perceived bent toward rationalism in the context of Pannenberg's understanding of himself as a theologian called to serve the church in the setting of the public marketplace of ideas.

Pannenberg's intent is to articulate a solid intellectual foundation for Christian faith in an age in which any religious commitment is often prematurely rejected as unreasonable or even irrational. In response to what he sees as a wrong turn made by theology at the post-Enlightenment fork in the road, Pannenberg is seeking to return to a balanced understanding of the role of reason in establishing faith. He readily admits that, in the present, truth claims can only be provisional; consequently, the quest for truth must orient itself to the eschaton, when truth in its fullness will emerge. Although prior to the eschaton only a provisional, controversial answer can be made to the question of life's meaning, people of faith can obtain a greater degree of certainty than is often admitted. They have good reasons to affirm their faith, which need not be based on an irrational decision.

Although he admits that humans do not only live on the basis of reason, and cautions against thinking that through rational arguments people will be brought to faith, Pannenberg points out that if the reasonableness of Christianity is not indicated, the step to faith is made difficult. In the midst of irrational barriers, he sets himself to the task of changing the climate that presupposes that Christianity fails the test of reason.

At the same time, Pannenberg is also convinced that in the public testing of ideas, a rational delineation of the Christian faith, more so than personal piety, is the chief weapon of the Church. Despite the fundamental correctness of his intent, he has overstated the case. As important as the rational discussion may be, the piety of conscious Christians also provides an important apologetic for the truth of the faith.

In spite of this cautionary word, we must admit that Pannenberg's emphasis on the illuminating power of the idea of God for our experience of the world as a whole challenges those who would reduce the faith to the private world of personal piety. The German theologian invites us to see that Christian theology ought to have an impact on all dimensions of life and the entire range of disciplines connected with the pursuit of faith.

## ESCHATOLOGICAL ONTOLOGY

Critics have raised questions about a final central dimension of Pannenberg's theology, namely, his eschatological ontology and its corollary understanding of God as Spirit. The German theologian identifies God, the all-determining reality, with the divine field which works upon the world from the future. Like Moltmann, he has attempted to reconceive transcendence and immanence in temporal rather than spatial terms. God's transcendence is his futurity and wholeness, and in this ontology, the future has power over every present, not only defining it but also determining it in its depth.

This raises the issue of reverse causality. Can the future, which is in some sense truly open, have an effect on the present? Is retroactive causality conceivable? Does the temporal category of futurity actually solve the problems of divine transcendence which plagued the traditional spatial imagery?

Pannenberg's ontology also raises the question of God's personhood. Does the imagery of God as the divine field working upon the world from the future allow us to conceive of God as truly personal? Does the language of "field," coupled with Pannenberg's aversion to traditional notions of God as mind and will, imply an impersonal or suprapersonal God, a God who is the whole that is greater than the sum of the world's parts but not a gracious, completely free and self-sufficient divine person?

Critics who raise questions such as these await the full development of Pannenberg's theology for clearer answers. No doubt in the future he will address these concerns. In the meantime, however, many readers continue to have reservations about Pannenberg's commitment to God's personhood and freedom over the world, as well as about the cogency of his highly creative ontology of the future.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the reservations stated here, Pannenberg must be lauded as providing an alternative both to the dominant existentialist bent characteristic of German theology throughout much of the twentieth century—with its emphasis on an existentialist transcendence—and to the resurgence of immanent theology found in much of American theological thinking. He offers a quite different proposal, focusing attention again on the classical quest for ultimate truth in the midst of the contemporary, post-Enlightenment situation.

Following the theology of hope, Pannenberg reintroduces the concept of the divine transcendence—and this in the mode of the future as standing over against the present. Yet, he tempers the radical transcendence delineated in Moltmann's early writings and the radical immanence which developed in Moltmann's later writings. For Pannenberg, God's transcendence does not so much contradict the present as bring it to completion, and God's immanence through the divine Spirit does not so much imprison him as give opportunity for his love freely to increase the bountiful unity of creation. More so than Moltmann, Pannenberg has been able to link salvation with creation, thereby developing a creative understanding of the relation of the world to its transcendent/immanent Source.

## Notes

1. For his own account of these experiences, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, "God's Presence in History," *Christian Century* 98 (March 11, 1981):260-263.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

3. Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Die Theologie und die neuen Fragen nach Intersubjektivität, Gesellschaft, und religiöser Gemeinschaft," *Archivio di Filosofia* 54 (1986): 422-424.
4. "God's Presence in History," p. 263.
5. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 18-19.
6. Richard John Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg: Portrait of a Theologian," in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), p. 16.
7. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Revelation As History* [with Rolf Rendtorff, Trutz Rendtorff and Ulrich Wilkens], trans. David Granskow (New York: Macmillan, 1968 [German ed., 1961]).
8. This conclusion is articulated in "Portrait of a Theologian" by Neuhaus, p. 38.
9. For a statement of critique of the World Council of Churches, see "Unity of the Church—Unity of Mankind: A Critical Appraisal of a Shift in Ecumenical Direction," *Mid-Stream* 21 (October, 1982):485-490.
10. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Church*, trans. Keith Crim (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), p. 165; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Faith and Reality*, trans. John Maxwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), p. 138.
11. See the discussions in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Today's Questions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), pp. 152-155; *Jesus—God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), pp. 372-373; *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, pp. 72-101.
12. Pannenberg's fight against grounding theology on a "decision of faith" and on the attempt to create a separate sphere for theology alongside scientific endeavour is well known, for the topic is broached in many of his essays. See "Insight and Faith," Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, trans. George H. Kelm (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 2:43; "Faith and Reason," *ibid.*, pp. 52-53; "Eschatology and the Experience of Meaning," Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Idea of God and Human Freedom*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), p. 208. This concern arises in part from his interest in speaking to the contemporary atheistic alternative to belief, a topic discussed in several of Pannenberg's essays. E.g., "Types of Atheism and their Theological Significance" and "The Question of God" in *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:184-233, and "Anthropology and the Question of God" and "Speaking about God in the Face of Atheist Criticism" in *The Idea of God and Human Freedom*, pp. 80-115.
13. See "The Crisis of the Scripture Principle," *Basic Questions in Theology*, 1:1-14.
14. See, for example, Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), pp. 71-73.
15. See, for example, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pp. 4-5.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
17. See "What Is Truth?" in *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:1-27.
18. *Ibid.*
19. See "On Historical and Theological Hermeneutic" and "What Is a Dogmatic Statement," in *Basic Questions in Theology*, 1:137-210.
20. This characterization of Pannenberg's theology is delineated in Stanley J. Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York: Oxford, 1990).



21. See, for example, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, p. 154.
22. "Faith and Reason," in *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:52-53.
23. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematische Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhöck and Ruprecht, 1988), pp. 70-72. See also, *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:1-27.
24. *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 8.
25. See, for example, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, pp. 55-56.
26. *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 10.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
28. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, trans. Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), pp. 151-152.
29. *Systematische Theologie*, pp. 121-132.
30. For a development of this theme, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What Is Man?*, trans. Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), chap. 1, and *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, chap. 2.
31. *Systematische Theologie*, pp. 133-205. See also "Toward a Theology of the History of the Religions," in *Basic Questions in Theology*, 2:65-118.
32. See, for example, the conclusion reached in *Systematische Theologie*, pp. 280-281.
33. See, for example, "God's Presence in History," p. 263.
34. This is set forth in *Systematische Theologie*, pp. 283-483.
35. For a methodological preview of Pannenberg's doctrine of the Trinity, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The God of History," *Cumberland Seminarian* 19 (Winter/Spring, 1981). Pannenberg's doctrine of the Trinity is discussed in Roger E. Olson, "Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983):213-227; and Roger E. Olson, "Wolfhart Pannenberg's Doctrine of the Trinity," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990):175-206.
36. See *Jesus—God and Man*, pp. 181-183, 340.
37. The concept of field is set forth in Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Theological Questions to Scientists," *Zygon* 16 (1981):65-77; and "The Doctrine of Creation and Modern Science," *East Asia Journal of Theology* 4 (1986):33-46.
38. *Systematische Theologie*, pp. 401-416.
39. *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, pp. 43-47. The basis for his development of pneumatology is outlined in "The Spirit of Life," in *Faith and Reality*, pp. 32-37.
40. "The Spirit of Life," p. 33.
41. Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Spirit and Mind," in *Mind in Nature*, ed. Richard Q. Elvee, Nobel Conference 17 (New York: Harper, 1982), p. 143.
42. *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, pp. 226-229, 235-236, 240, 384.
43. See "Spirit and Mind," p. 137.
44. *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, pp. 85-96.
45. *Systematische Theologie*, pp. 433-443.
46. E.g., *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 48.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
48. *Ibid.*
49. See note 11.
50. *Jesus—God and Man*, pp. 324-349.
51. *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, p. 61.
52. Pannenberg has been accused of minimizing the Bible as divine revelation. E.g., Fred H. Klooster, "Aspects of Historical Method in Pannenberg's Theology," J.

- T. Bakker, et al., *Septuagesimo Anno: Festschrift for G. C. Berkhouwer* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok, 1973), p. 116.
53. Even with respect to the history of Jesus, the biblical texts "allow themselves to be questioned," Pannenberg wrote in 1964 ("On Historical and Theological Hermeneutic," *Basic Questions in Theology*, 1:155). He delineated the importance of Scripture and its use in essays such as "Hermeneutic and Universal History" and "What Is a Dogmatic Statement?" *Basic Questions in Theology*, 1:155, 184-198.
54. For a criticism of Pannenberg's position, see Daniel Fuller, *Easter Faith and History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 186.

# Book Reviews

Hamilton, Victor. *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990. 522 pages. ISBN 0-8028-2308-4.

Whenever a new volume of the New International Commentary appears, it is a cause for considerable interest, because this set has established itself as the most notable series expressing a recent, conservative point of view. This is especially the case when the volume deals with one of the major books of the Old Testament, as this one does.

Victor Hamilton is a well-respected teacher at Asbury College and a gifted preacher. His wit, his common-sense and his ability to expound the meaning of the Bible for the present day are all well known. He gained a hearing in the broader world of learning with his widely-used *Handbook on the Pentateuch*.

This volume follows the pattern set by previous ones in the series in that introductory matters—such as structure, composition, authorship, text, as well as a lengthy bibliography—are dealt with in an introduction (here 100 pages). The commentary then proceeds as usual with a paragraph-by-paragraph consideration of the text giving major emphasis to interpretation.

Dr. Hamilton writes clearly and well. The language used is appropriate to the topic and to the presumed audience: well-educated, but not having either high interest in, nor a high degree of training in, the technical aspects of biblical interpretation. There are a few linguistic oddities like "Enter the problematic sons of God" (p. 262), and "temerarious" (p. 279), but examples like these stand out because they are uncommon.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the work is its careful discussion of the literature on any paragraph or topic. Dr. Hamilton is at his best in reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of various arguments. He is able to summarize fully and yet concisely while going to the root issues with generally unerring aim. As would be expected in this series, his conclusions almost always fall with the conservative side, but one does not have the sense that positions with which he eventually disagrees are introduced only to be dismissed.

Another strength closely coupled with this is the careful treatment of the exegetical alternatives on any passage. The reader will learn the range of possibilities, given the particular morphology, grammar and syntax of the phrase or sentence. By and large this consideration will be with the text as it now stands. Dr. Hamilton has little patience with those who dissect the text according to some critical principle and then interpret the hypothesized original.

In a book which stands out in comparison to many other arid treatments of Genesis, one hesitates to point out weaknesses; but, unfortunately, those which occur are serious enough to require comment. If Dr. Hamilton's strength is his evenhanded review of alternatives, his weakness is his failure to adequately support his ultimate conclusions. Too frequently, he will only tell which alternative he chooses as though the discussion of strengths and weaknesses was self-explanatory. But even more seriously, in some cases he ventures no opinion. The most important of these omissions of opinion is of critical significance for the book. It is on the question of historicity. How are we to interpret the first eleven chapters and indeed, the whole book? Does it contain accurate history through which theology is revealed? Or does it record theologically significant material couched in history-like sagas? In vain we look for Dr. Hamilton to take a clear and coherent stand. It appears that he takes such persons as Cain and Noah to have been historic figures, but there is no discussion of whether or not that is even important.

A second weakness has to do with the stated purpose of the series, which is to be expositional. Dr. Hamilton gives his readers fine exegesis, but almost no exposition. That is, he almost never comments upon the theological significance of the text for that time or this, and the comments he makes tend not to be very penetrating. His commendable treatments of the New Testament's appropriation of the Genesis materials suffer from this same defect. To define the grammatical or syntactic meaning of a statement is only to have begun to interpret it.

Finally, while his treatment of the source-critical hypothesis for the structure and sense of the various passages is good, he does not give enough attention to form-critical and tradition-historical matters. Certainly these could not be the primary focus, given the purpose of the series. However, there are a number of instances where it is necessary to ask why certain elements are in juxtaposition with each other in the present text, and these disciplines have offered a number of suggestions. Whether they are right or wrong, it is important to ask the questions they ask. If it is too simplistic to say that Genesis 1 is the P creation story and Genesis 2 is the J story, then how do we explain the origins of the two components? Dr. Hamilton apparently does not believe Moses sat down and wrote them in sequence (and surely not many do). So how did they get into their present order and why?

Despite these criticisms, this is an excellent help for anyone who wishes to understand the book of Genesis better. For an exegetical treatment of the

text as it stands, with careful consideration of any proposed alternatives, it would be hard to improve upon it.

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Clines, David J. A. *Job 1-20*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 17. Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1989. cxv, 501 pp. \$25.95. ISBN 0-8499-0216-9.

*Job 1-20* comprises the first volume of the author's projected two-volume commentary on the Book of Job. David Clines is professor of biblical studies in the University of Sheffield (England) and serves as co-editor of the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* and editor of *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. He has also published numerous other books and articles, including the Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther volumes in the New Century Bible.

Though shorter and less satisfying than expected, given the size of the commentary and the provocative discussions Job has stimulated over the centuries, the Introduction provides a readable orientation to the Book of Job. Clines has no clear preferences regarding questions of authorship and date of composition. And though he seems inclined to affirm the literary unity of the prose story and poetic dialogues, he is less certain of the original inclusion of the wisdom poem (Job 28) and the Elihu speeches (32-37). An unusual addition to the Introduction is a series of brief discussions on how Job might be read by those with distinctive presuppositions (thus, "Readings" by the feminist, the vegetarian, the materialist and the Christian). A far more significant contrast would have been the view of Job from the perspectives of the theological determinist and the non-determinist. Is Job resigned ultimately to divine providence actualized meticulously in human experience, or is the book, in fact, a reaction to such a notion? More on this point shortly.

The "reasonably comprehensive bibliography" compiled in the final section of the Introduction may be the most useful this reviewer has seen on Job. It includes citations of important sermons and devotions as well as the technical studies of scholarly articles. Under the heading "Job and Its Influence," the bibliography even lists artistic masterpieces (music, visual arts, drama and literature) which owe their themes and inspiration to Job.

The commentary proper, consistent with the WBC series, follows Clines's outline of Job and includes five interrelated components: 1) a specific bibliography for the unit; (2) an original translation, which admirably attempts to reflect the Hebrew idiom; (3) notes which justify the author's translation and at times give helpful explanation and evaluation of other

standard versions; (4) comment consisting of a detailed, verse-by-verse interpretation of the text and an often stimulating exegetical discussion; and (5) an explanation which concludes each section with a summary of the broad intent of the passage, its theological impact and its relationship to the whole book.

The continual importance of the Book of Job for the community of faith, both past and present, is not lost sight of by this worthy contribution to its understanding and interpretation. Clines rightly sees the central issue of Job as a conflict of faith and experience. It addresses not so much the why of suffering but whether there is any moral order in the world. The biblical writer raises serious questions about how God's justice is to be understood in a world where humans experience tragedy and evil. Those who approach Job from the Reformed theological tradition have historically had difficulty with the speeches of Elihu and of Yahweh. Commitment to meticulous providence would necessitate regarding Elihu's monologues as preparatory to the theophany and his arguments against Job as reflecting the "biblical" view of divine sovereignty. But a careful reading of Job clearly suggests that Elihu's pious pronouncements are actually parallel with those of the other counselors whom Yahweh rebukes! God's sovereignty as creator, then, does not assume His purposes to be the manipulation of good and evil and of reward and punishment in human experience. The believing community can benefit immensely from Job's painful journey by recognizing that suffering is part of the common human experience, that questions of justice and order and God's will are complex and cannot be neatly packaged into pat answers, that the honest expression of our frustrations and hurts to God is theologically and psychologically sound (compare with the psalms of lament), and that compassion for those who suffer is essential to living a life that reflects God's character. Fuller analysis of Clines's treatment of these matters will have to wait for his second volume.

There are, however, at least two hermeneutical issues in this volume that should prompt discussion among evangelical readers. First, Clines is in agreement with other recent evangelical commentators—Andersen (Tyndale) and Hartley (NICOT)—in recognizing the literary nature of the prologue/epilogue. Comparisons with other ancient Near Eastern wisdom writings as well as scrutiny of its content and purpose suggest that the account was based on an ancient story about a sage who suffered. One is not compromising the integrity of Scripture by correctly identifying the "wisdom" genre of the passage and acknowledging that the story was used as a springboard for the theological discussions contained in the poetic dialogues.

Second, the familiar passage of Job 19:25-27 has been understood by Christian tradition as having strong Christological overtones. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," together with the phrase "in my flesh I shall see God," have been etched almost indelibly into evangelical proclamation as a clear messianic prophecy. Clines is in agreement with both Andersen and



Hartley that "resurrection theology" should *not* be read back into this passage. But whereas the latter two commentators—using somewhat different arguments—hold that Job's redeemer (Hebrew *goel*) is to be understood as God, Clines offers detailed rationale why Job's *goel* cannot logically refer to the Deity. Since the lawsuit context pits Job against God, it would be most unlikely that God would appear as a legal attorney against Himself. He argues, instead, that Job's "champion" ("defender" or "vindicator") is the metaphorical expression of his own protestations of innocence. He compares the passage with 16:18-21 where his "cry" is explicitly identified with his "spokesman" and, by implication, with the "witness" and "advocate" in the same context. While Clines's treatment of this difficult text seems strained at times, his suggestions are worthy of thoughtful consideration by evangelical interpreters. A sound hermeneutic always searches for the best and most accurate rendering of a passage within its own context.

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Andersen, Francis I. and David Noel Freedman. *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible. Eds. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 1989. xlii, 979 pp. Hardback, ISBN 0-385-00773-6.

Andersen and Freedman's monumental study of Amos is a gold mine of information and insight—theological, literary, linguistic, philological, historical, rhetorical and more. The length of the book allows breadth and depth of treatment seldom possible, even in full length commentaries. (The 220 pages of frontal and introductory material exceed the length of most full commentaries on the book!). Francis I. Andersen is professor of Old Testament at the New College for Advanced Christian Studies, Berkeley, California. David Noel Freedman is professor of biblical studies at the University of Michigan and the University of California at San Diego. Both Andersen and Freedman are students of William Foxwell Albright and obvious heirs of "the Baltimore school," though their work shows interest ranging beyond Albright's and immersion in current emphases in biblical studies.

The Anchor Bible on Amos includes a new translation of the text by two of the world's finest Hebraists, each published pioneers in the modern study of Hebrew grammar and syntax. Appearing as a whole in the prefatory materials and integrated with the writers' outline of the book, the translation stands again in sections with notes and comments throughout the commen-

tary. Andersen and Freedman take up customary introductory matters, such as method of inquiry in Amos studies, form and genre, the composition and development of the book, the text and language of the book, and the question of authenticity in Amos. In the introduction they also approach at length some unexpected but helpful topics: the historical background of the prophet and the work, the God of Israel in Amos, and geopolitical terminology in Amos. The Introduction concludes with a 466-entry bibliography, rich in twentieth-century resources but poverty stricken in the bare handful of pre-1900 references included, one antedating 1772. The body of the work follows standard Anchor Bible format of translation, unit introduction, notes (textual and exegetical) and comment. After the commentary, extensive indexes to topics, authors, words (biblical and related languages) and scriptural references enhance the commentary's use as a reference tool.

Proceeding as one might expect from their work on Hosea (*The Anchor Bible*, vol. 24), Andersen and Freedman focus their energies on understanding the book of Amos in the Masoretic text as a coherent literary composition. Emphasis here is on the work as a literary product with a design and life and purpose of its own, something other than the oral ministry of the prophet but related with integrity to that ministry. Their meticulous reading of the Hebrew text uncovers scores of rhetorical and structural interlacings in the book of interpretive significance. While they may err on the side of over-analysis here, their evidence for careful, purposeful editing of the book is persuasive. Both as a matter of methodological principle and as a result of their study of the book, they are convinced that the major editorial/redactional work evident is either by Amos himself or by an editor (or editors) fully compatible with the literary intent of Amos himself. Thus the entire book is authentically "Amos."

In addition, they think it arbitrary to refuse the prophet the privilege of a dynamic, developing message of broad scope. Therefore, they are skeptical of approaches which, as a matter of principle, e.g., deny to Amos passages that offer hope over against the book's dominant message of doom or which include the nations (and particularly Judah) within this prophet's purview. Even the radical hope of 9:8b-15 is lodged with Amos, against prevailing opinion.

Beyond their methodological stance, their exhaustive reappraisal of Amos's geopolitical terminology supports these views, they feel (pp. 98-139). With reasonable success they show that, with few exceptions (perhaps 1:1 among them), Amos uses "Israel," unmodified, to refer to the kingdom of North Israel, and uses "Joseph" and "Isaac" as substitutes for Israel in this use. He uses qualifications of Israel ("children of Israel," "house of Israel," "my people, Israel") and "Jacob" to refer *not* to the Northern kingdom but to either larger or historic Israel. I remain unconvinced that "my people, Israel" (in 7:8, 15; 8:2) and "house of Israel" (particularly in 5:4, 7:10 and 9:9) necessarily refer beyond the Northern Kingdom and find the analysis strained at points. But over all, they sustain the claim that Amos's message

was for all Israel, with particular focus on the North. From this base, the references to Judah and the crux at 9:8b look much different.

The authors identify the book's literary forms and genres, passage by passage, and use these insights, where possible, to illumine the text. But Andersen and Freedman lack confidence in scholarly ability to reconstruct the history by which these pieces have come to the present text. Moreover, though they do not disdain the form critical enterprise, they doubt the ultimate value of that quest for understanding the work as it now stands. Thus their commitment to focus on the work in its final literary form.

Andersen and Freedman see the book in four major divisions: The Book of Doom (1:1-4:13), The Book of Woes (5:1-6:14), The Book of Visions (7:1-9:6), and The Epilogue (9:7-15). They think the prophet's ministry may have unfolded in four phases, seen in the Book of Visions and the Epilogue and correlating with sections of the present book (pp. 73-88). Visions 1 and 2 (7:1-6) represent phase one. In connection with the plagues noted in the preaching of 4:6-11, Amos receives the first two visions and embarks on a ministry embracing all Israel, announcing imminent judgment, calling for repentance and offering hope. In response to his intercession, judgment is stayed, though his message falls on deaf ears. Chapters 5-6 derive from proclamation from that period.

Visions 3 and 4 (7:7-8:2) represent phase two of Amos's ministry, with focus primarily on North Israel. Destruction is now irrevocable. Confrontation with the crown and religious establishment probably bring Amos's career to an end (arrest? martyrdom?). The Book of Doom, 1:1-4:13, is built on preaching from this phase, with the oracles of chapters 3 and 4 probably preceding the "Great Set Speech" of 1-2.

Phase three, which may have overlapped the previous phase at points, is represented in the final vision (9:1-4) and focuses on the question of the fate of the leaders and justification of the terrible message of phase two. It correlates with 8:3-9:6. Phase four is connected with the Epilogue, pointing to the future.

Andersen and Freedman's approach has the great value of taking the link between the text and the ministry of Amos himself seriously and provides numerous occasions for profitable reflection on the text. Of course, this reconstruction of the prophet's life and the literary correlations linked to that reconstruction are like the historical reconstructions based on form criticism and rejected by the authors. They are intriguing, sometimes brilliant; and the quest is certainly worth the effort. But the picture is plausible at best. The evidence allows little certainty. Fortunately the interpretation of the text itself rarely depends on the reconstruction.

With regard to the division of the book, I have not been persuaded that the rhetorical links between 3:1-4:13 and 1:1-2:16 are strong enough to override the oracular introductions at 3:1; 4:1 and 5:1 and binding chapters 3:1-5:17, at the least, together. This means a four-fold division of the work (1:1-2:16; 3:1-6:14; 7:1-9:6 and 9:7-15) should stand, dividing the "Book of Doom."

Andersen and Freedman's attention to the theology of the book of Amos presents, in this reader's mind, perhaps the most gratifying feature of this entry in *The Anchor Bible* series, and that on three counts. First, they recognize that this work is a theological document and that, as such, any adequate account of it must treat that theology. This they do, in such instructive essays as "The God of Israel in the Book of Amos" (pp. 88-97) and at numerous points in the commentary. Second, they show interest in biblical theology and bring that interest to bear on their understanding of Amos, as, e.g., in the excursus, "When God Repents" (638-679). Finally, and most astoundingly, Freedman and Andersen write as though the God of Amos may well be their God also—a rare find in modern, guild scholarship! They write with spiritual sensitivity and sympathy that appears to grant validity to and seeks to appropriate the significance of the revelation of God to Amos (See, e.g., pp. 95-97).

By far the most obvious weakness of the work, in my judgment, is its operation in a vacuum regarding the history of interpretation before 1850-1900. The work would have been significantly enriched by dialogue with the Church and synagogue's historic understandings of many passages, beyond that accessed through the LXX and Targum. More ruthless editing could have trimmed redundant sections, e.g., the multiple introductions, making room for this dialogue without lengthening the already bulky work. Better production editing would have greatly increased the usefulness of a work this size. Unlike most other *Anchor Bible* volumes, this book's page heading references are so global as to make them nearly useless. For example, "1:1-4:13" stands as the heading reference throughout the entire 273 pages of introduction, notes and commentary on this unit! Locating comments on a single verse is a needlessly arduous task. Even so, what's there is worth plowing through. Not for the lay reader, the work will be most useful to well-informed students of Scripture and serious scholars.

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Cole, R. Alan. *The Gospel According to Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*. Revised edition. Ed. Leon Morris. *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989. 340 pp. pb. ISBN: 0-85111-871-2.

In spite of their diminutive size, the Tyndale commentaries on both testaments often rank among the best buys in evangelical biblical interpretation

for pastors. Unfortunately, neither of Alan Cole's volumes on Mark, the 1961 original nor this revision, approach that. Mr. Cole's revisions of his earlier work appear almost entirely in the introduction where three main changes are evident. First, the blatantly apologetic edge of the earlier work has been softened. Second, form and redaction critical readings of the Gospel and topics related to them receive more extensive and more balanced treatment, with fresh attention to works published not just after but also prior to Cole's earlier commentary. Third, new treatment of the structure of Mark's Gospel, of the theology and main motifs of the Gospel, and of questions of interest to current readers of the Gospel almost double the size of the original introduction. These are all welcome revisions.

But the revised work still labors under serious ambiguity regarding critical study of Mark. This not only colors the tone of Cole's work (alternative views are still "perverse," e.g., p. 67) but also introduces inconsistency into the treatment and inhibits insight. For example, eager to distance himself from radical redaction criticism, he argues against (!) "theological" reading of the Gospel (p. 11), positing that Mark adopted no conscious theological position in his work, his arrangement of materials being "quite instinctive and unself-conscious, under...the Spirit's guidance" (p. 57). Yet he wants to discover Mark's purpose in writing by examining the way he put his material together (p. 37). Other results of this ambiguity diminish the force with which he grasps Mark's theology, as does his failure to appropriate insights of recent literary critical readings of the Gospel which would allow him better to get at the structure and logic of the work as a whole.

Mr. Cole is not only at pains to distance himself from "liberal" critical approaches to the Gospel study. Even treating such topics as "The Status of Women" (pp. 74-78) and "Signs and Wonders" (pp. 78-85), his concern not to be identified with Christian feminists or with charismatic/power understandings of Christian experience, liberal or otherwise, mars the essays. Apologetic concerns again block free exposition of Mark's contribution.

Of course there is much of value in the work. The Rev. Canon Cole is affiliated with the Church Missionary Society of Australia and is a lecturer at Trinity Theological College, Singapore. From long-term mission experience in the Far East, he writes with global perspective, with practical, pastoral concern, and fine insight into the book of Mark at many points. On the whole, however, this reviewer looks for more in the Tyndale series.

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Morris, Leon. *Reflections on the Gospel of John*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986. 750 pp. Paper, ISBN 0-8010-6202-0.

Leon Morris has provided a valuable contribution to studies in the Gospel of John with this recent four-volume paperback work, the final volume having been released in 1988. Reading the first volume soon after its publication, I looked forward to the subsequent releases. Morris divides his study of the Gospel among his four volumes in this way: Volume I, *The Word Was Made Flesh* (John 1-5); Volume II, *The Bread of Life* (John 6-10); Volume III, *The True Vine* (John 11-16); and Volume IV, *Crucified and Risen* (John 17-21). He provides his own translation of a few verses at a time, and then gives a commentary on those verses.

The work maintains a delicate balance for the study of John's Gospel. It yields enough scholarship in the way of historical background and grammatical study to satisfy the serious student. However, it is not so weighty in these areas as to lose the man or woman approaching the Gospel of John for devotional purposes. Indeed, Morris states at the outset that "the tone is devotional." These readable volumes are nonetheless replete with excellent discussion and commentary on the essentials of the Gospel, the obvious result of Morris's own long and careful study of the Gospel of John. Many readers will be familiar with other books by this author, including those which deal with John's Gospel.

There are many invaluable aspects of *Reflections on the Gospel of John*, three of which will be noted here. First, some of the background material and word studies, while perhaps familiar to the seasoned scholar, are certainly helpful for the conscientious student. Second, I found Morris's insights into the various people whom we encounter in the Gospel to be intriguing. One sees Thomas, or Peter, or Pilate in a different light—or a more complete light—after reading Morris. Third, the author was faithful throughout the book in drawing out the devotional nature of the Gospel. Morris's application of the teachings of the Gospel of John to the twentieth-century Christian is perhaps the greatest strength of this work, and for that reason will, I believe, be of benefit to pastors and teachers in churches as well as to college and seminary professors and students.

The proof of a work like this is often in its effectiveness in the classroom. I have used these volumes recently in a course on Johannine literature, and found that the students were engaged both intellectually and spiritually by these books. This came as no surprise to one who has used other works of Morris in various courses, and found them equally well received. However, both the challenge and the appeal of this Christian's writing and thinking, as we have come to know them through the years, are still apparent in *Reflections on the Gospel of John*.

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Wagner, Gunter, ed. *An Exegetical Bibliography of the New Testament*. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1987. 350pp. ISBN 0-86554-157-4.

This is the third volume of this series, and deals with material on the Gospel of John and the Johannine Letters. The author, who began teaching in 1958, writes in the preface that he devised in that year "a detailed system for the collection of bibliographical information relevant to New Testament studies, ranging from the Old Testament background to the theology of the Early Church" (p. V). The exegetical material from that collection pertaining to the Johannine literature is presented in this book.

The student of the Gospel or Epistles who has not yet discovered the volumes in this series will find this an extremely helpful source. Entries are given for entire chapters, or sections, or verses, so that the material listed will be beneficial regardless of how broad or focused the research being done. Because the entries are taken from voluminous sources, they are given in many languages. However, the student who may be limited to English or to English and only one other language need not fear—there are many invaluable sources provided in this volume.

There are two practical matters about the book which I appreciated. First, in each entry the author's last name is given in capital letters so that it is quickly identified if one happens to be looking for Brown's or Metzger's contribution to a particular verse or to a section of the Gospel or Epistles. Second, the entries for each section are given, not in alphabetical order by authors' last names, but in chronological order, so that one can see at a glance the building through the twentieth century of the books and articles germane to a verse or a section of Johannine literature.

It is impossible to imagine the work which has gone into this and other volumes of this series, and it is hard work which sometimes goes unappreciated. Nevertheless, access to this bibliographic resource is invaluable, and continues to fulfil the original purpose which was "to enable the student as quickly as possible to get down to research without wasting days, even weeks, on the search for the literature" (p. V). One anticipates the author's forthcoming fourth volume on major Pauline Epistles. This is, however, intended only as a beginning for the student, and the good student will want to follow this course by continuing his or her own bibliographic reference file in order to keep up with the material published since the completion of this very useful work.

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Barth, Markus. *Rediscovering the Lord's Supper: Communion with Israel, with Christ, and Among the Guests*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1988. 113pp. ISBN 0-8042-3749-2.

Markus Barth here offers a clear and original exegesis of New Testament passages that deal directly with the Lord's Supper. Barth conducts this exegetical endeavor from the perspective of a New Testament scholar who is profoundly dissatisfied with the way in which the Lord's Supper is understood and practiced in the contemporary Church. In fact, the present volume is meant to provide an alternative interpretation of the Eucharist over against the prevailing notions, as these are reflected in the famous Lima Document of 1982.

Barth identifies four major corruptions of the Lord's Supper: (1) a radically individual and mystical emphasis that leaves no room for social concerns; (2) the adoption of non-biblical and irrelevant language, such as "transubstantiation"; (3) an understanding of the Lord's Supper that is exclusivistic, manifested ultimately in the use of the Lord's Supper to enforce excommunication; and (4) the fundamental problem of introducing philosophical-religious elements which have replaced biblical concepts. Barth examines the institution texts of the synoptic Gospels, the teaching of Paul regarding the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 10-11, and John 6 in order to counter each of these four distortions. The book closes with an "epilogue," directly attacking the sacramental theology of the Lima Document.

Barth is to be commended for providing a discussion of the Lord's Supper that is exegetical, concerned with the practical life of the Church, responsive to contemporary thinking and issues, and Christocentric. There are, however, two limitations to the present work. First, the fact that Barth brings specific concerns to the text causes him to focus only on certain dimensions of the relevant passages, and to deal even with these dimensions in a rather narrow fashion. A more comprehensive examination of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament will be found in studies such as that by I. Howard Marshall. Second, in the desire to make his theological points, Barth sometimes overstates his case, and draws conclusions that go far beyond the evidence. Highly problematic, for example, is Barth's claim that the Eucharist, standing as it does in continuity with the Passover, proclaims that Jews and Christians together are the people of God. Barth reaches this conclusion because of his desire to emphasize the *inclusive character* of the Lord's Supper; but it contradicts what he says elsewhere regarding the centrality of Christ and the rejection of sacramental activity as the basis for unity.

In spite of such limitations, this book is a major contribution to the biblical understanding of the Lord's Supper, and an eloquent appeal to the Church to recapture and live according to that understanding.

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Carson, D. A. *How Long O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990. 275 pp. ISBN 0-8010-02556-7.

I have believed for some time that the problem of evil renders Calvinism untenable. So I approached this book on the subject, written by a representative of the Reformed tradition, with considerable interest.

The problem of evil is especially troublesome for Calvinists for the following reason: If God's sovereignty means that He controls all things in the way Calvinists teach, there seems to be no reason why He could not eliminate all evil. He could, but He will not. I will come back to this in a moment.

But first I want to say what I appreciated about this book. It is a straightforward, tough-minded, pastorally motivated treatment of the problem of evil. Carson writes, not as a philosopher trying to give an account of evil to skeptics, but as a biblical scholar addressing fellow believers who struggle with the challenge evil poses for their faith. He warns that his book is not primarily for those who are in the midst of a crisis brought on by suffering or tragedy. Rather, he aims to provide "preventative medicine" which can lessen the shock of evil when it comes.

As Carson recognizes, unbiblical and unrealistic expectations multiply the pain when tragedy strikes. He wants to help his readers bring their beliefs and expectation in line with biblical thought, and thereby inoculate them against unnecessary anguish. To this end, he devotes the bulk of his book to a study of "Biblical Themes for Suffering People." Among the themes discussed are the following: social evils, poverty, war, illness, death, hell, natural disasters and the suffering of God. Carson reminds his readers what it is like to live in a fallen world, emphasizing that Christians should not expect to be exempt from hardship, suffering and tragedy. Those who take to heart what Carson says here will find themselves strengthened in mind and spirit to deal with the trials of life.

The final part of the book is the most intellectually challenging, but even here the author succeeds in his purpose of producing material useful for "general readers." Carson's task here is to tackle the "mystery of providence." More specifically, he takes up the difficult question of the relation between divine providence and human freedom. The difficulty is exacerbated for Carson because of his Calvinistic convictions.

Carson identifies his own position on the matter as "compatibilism," by which he means that it is true both that God is absolutely sovereign, and that human beings are morally responsible creatures. Now the term "compatibilism" is a common one in the philosophical literature on freedom, but it is typically used there to signify the view that freedom is compatible with *determinism*. Absolute sovereignty need not imply determinism, however, so Carson is using the term in a somewhat distinctive sense. Indeed, as he initially defines these terms (pp. 201-202), I would have little quarrel with his claims.

My disagreement comes when he spells out more fully the nature of the

freedom he believes is required for moral responsibility. At this point, it becomes clear that Carson's view is, after all, essentially the same view called "compatibilism" or "soft determinism" in the current philosophical debate on freedom and responsibility. For he endorses the view of philosophical compatibilists that the heart of freedom is voluntarism. A free action, then, is one which is done willingly (p. 214). This is what makes it possible to hold that there is no inconsistency in saying that a person is free and responsible *and* that his actions are causally determined. So God can determine all a person's actions, but this does not destroy his freedom or diminish his moral responsibility. Why? Because his will is also determined and he acts in accordance with his will, not against it.

The debate over freedom seems likely to rage on indefinitely in secular philosophy. (There, of course, actions are thought to be determined by physical causes, not God.) In theology, however, I am convinced that there are decisive reasons for rejecting compatibilism. In a nutshell, the problem with compatibilism is that it is incompatible with God's perfect goodness, given the evil in our world. As I suggested at the outset, if freedom is compatible with determinism, then God could control things in such a way that all persons would *freely* make only good choices. He could, but He has not, if compatibilism is true. If God could eliminate evil and suffering in our world, while keeping our freedom and responsibility intact, but will not, then He is not a perfectly good Being.

This problem is seen most sharply in view of the doctrine of eternal hell. In his book, Carson tells of a young woman who feared that her father had gone to hell, and mentions some helpful things he could say to her (pp. 105-106). The bottom line, however, is that Carson really has nothing comforting to say to such a person if he is true to his Calvinism. For if Calvinism is true, then God could surely have drawn her father to Christ in such a way that he would have come, in the words of the Westminster Confession, "most freely." If her father was not a believer during his life, it is because God had not elected to draw him to Christ. And if he is damned forever, it is ultimately for the same reason. Not surprisingly, Carson's Calvinism does not show its face at this point of the discussion.

As I have already said, there is much in this book that will be helpful to Christian believers of all traditions. But it also illustrates afresh that the problem of evil is an insuperable one for the "truly Reformed."

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Smith, Jonathan Z. *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*. School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion, XIV. Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. xiii, 145 pp. ISBN 0-226-76362-5.

Every once in a while a scholar is able to stand back and see the philosophical structures and the development of an intellectual tradition with a clarity which escaped even the creators of that tradition. Such was the case with Albert Schweitzer's *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben Jesu-forschung* (Zollikon/Zurich: Evangelische Verlag, 1947). Jonathan Z. Smith has provided a comparable analysis of the comparative project which has dominated the study of Christian origins for the past four centuries.

The book's five chapters provide an introduction to the seminal publications as well as an analysis of their role in the scholarly tradition. The primary structural problem of the volume is apparent at the outset: the original function of the chapters as self-standing, self contained individual lectures remains determinative for the presentation in the published medium. However, few will be able to read the volume once! After Smith's intent for the volume becomes clear, most readers will, of necessity, engage in the "divine drudgery" of rereading the earlier portions. The thesis that emerges is that contemporary New Testament and Patristic scholarship, like that of the last several generations, is dominated by the "Protestant hegemony" (p. 143) which imaged a "'pristine' early Christianity centered in Paul and subjected to later processes of 'corruption'" (p. 143), an orientation which does not provide an adequate basis for comparative studies.

Chapter one, "On the Origin of Origins," (pp. 1-35) examines the influence in North America and Britain of Joseph Priestley's *Socrates and Jesus Compared* (London: J. Johnson, 1803) and posthumous *The Doctrines of Heathen Philosophy Compared with Those of Revelation* (Northumberland, PA: John Binns, 1804), discussing Priestley in the context evolving personal relationships of Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and John Q. Adams. From Priestley, it is suggested, comes much of the terminology which has figured heavily in the comparative project. However, the thesis of Priestley had already been formulated by continental Lutheran writers in polemic against Roman Catholicism and used in turn by Pietist scholars against the established Lutherans. This earlier tradition is acknowledged by Smith, but not explored here. The same is true of the transmission by which the Lutheran/Pietist historiography came into the English context where analogic comparisons became weapons in the Caroline and Wesleyan periods (Conyers Middleton, Wesley's protagonist, receives significant attention, pp. 23-25). While it is certain that Priestley is important for subsequent developments, most of the same comparative terms were used by Pietist and Caroline writers long before Priestley, and with the same intent.

The second chapter (pp. 36-53) reflects briefly on the problems posed for comparative studies by unexamined assumptions of uniqueness. These assumptions are frequently guarded by using Judaism as an insulation, suggesting that similarities between Judaism and early Christianity indicate a lack of assimilation of "pagan" ideas, values and structures by the Early Church. Over against this he places a summary of his constructive approach to comparison, a theory which he has discussed and illustrated in other publications.

Chapter three, "On Comparing Words" (pp. 54-84) examines the "word study" tradition of nineteenth- and twentieth-century biblical studies. While noting that the preoccupation, fostered by such giants as E. Hatch, A. Deissmann, H. A. Kennedy and A. D. Nock, has produced quite useful tools for historical, theological and philological study, he argues that this tradition has been motivated and controlled by the same ideological strictures. The same is argued in chapter four with regard to "On Comparing Stories" (pp. 85-115) as he reviews the "life of Jesus" discussions, the comparisons of Paul and the mystery religions, and the use of theories of development to differentiate the stories of biblical characters from their contemporaries.

This leads into the final chapter, "On Comparing Settings" (pp. 116-143). Smith begins with an analysis of the 1950 Haskell Lectures at Oberlin later published as *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (G. E. Wright) and *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (F. V. Filson). Here, too, he finds a preoccupation with "uniqueness" as an assumption, and an inadequate theoretical base to deal with the data for comparison. The evolution to "soteriological" or sociological models has not necessarily, he suggests, improved either situation. Smith concludes his essay with additional suggestions regarding adequate paradigms for comparative studies.

Smith's analysis is an articulate, profound, passionate and accurate critique of the historical and theological enterprise as it has been practiced in the Anglo-Saxon world (with occasional acknowledgements of German scholarship). Unfortunately, there is little dialogue with French historical scholarship, some of which, under the influence of the Structuralist tradition, has developed less ideologically determined structures for comparative study. It would also be interesting to bring Smith's constructive paradigms regarding comparison into discussion with folklore studies where it has been necessary to confront many of the same problems. However, Smith's challenge to those concerned with Christian origins to develop more useful ways of seeing Christianity in its various contexts and of evaluating divergences and convergences, both within the larger tradition and with other religious systems, points toward a scholarly agenda for the next decades. The intellectual climate of both the contemporary academy and the restructure of international relations will not allow facile, unexamined and unexamined assumptions of privilege to be maintained for any religious tradition.

Despite the shortcomings of structure, especially the lack of an introduction and an index which is too brief for a book with no systematic bibliogra-



phy, the volume is one which will probably grow in stature as time passes and as scholars continue to wrestle with these issues of historical method.

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Tuttle, Robert D., Jr. *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1989. 204 pp. ISBN 0-310-75430-5.

For reasons not always clear, John Wesley's relation to mysticism has frequently been minimized or ignored by his biographers and interpreters. John Telford, in his 1924 biography, blatantly and inaccurately stated that by the time Wesley left Georgia he had parted with the mystics. Others have been less sure, but no more helpful in giving us a more accurate picture.

In my opinion, Dr. Robert Tuttle (E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois) has given us the most accurate and comprehensive study to date. Drawing on more than twenty years of scholarly study of this topic, including a Ph.D. dissertation on the subject, Tuttle advances our knowledge in a balanced and helpful way.

For those in particular who realize that the issue is by no means as simple as Telford stated, the book sheds welcome light on a neglected dimension of Wesley studies. But even for the more general reader, Tuttle successfully uses mysticism as a "window" through which to see important issues in Wesley's life and thought.

Although the book has no formal parts, as such, it does have stages of development and progression. Chapter one gives the reader a compass to use in navigating the rest of the book. Tuttle provides an overview of mysticism, offers a controlling definition ("intimate union with God"), and shows the more precise aspects of mysticism with which Wesley dealt (i.e., Catholic Reformation mysticism, for the most part). One leaves this chapter with a readiness to travel on.

Chapters two, three and four are primarily historical in nature. Tuttle charts Wesley's course from Epworth up to ten days before Aldersgate. These chapters are a virtual mystical compendium, filled with names and significant concepts. On the whole, this is slow reading, and a background in church history is helpful. But Tuttle is not hopelessly complex. His style is readable and he carries one along from phase to phase. I know of no finer history of Wesley's experience of mysticism.

Chapter five is the "center" of the book. With the previous journey in

mind, Tuttle rings the changes on Aldersgate in terms of its immediate and long-term benefits. He shows how the Atonement was the "missing link" not only in relation to Wesley's experience of mysticism, but also in his overall Christian life. Tuttle argues that once the Atonement was in place, Wesley could make positive use of the mystics (separating their "gold" from their "dross") for the rest of his life.

Chapters six and seven are implicational. The first draws out abiding influences for the Wesleyan tradition, including perseverance, Christian perfection, prayer, simplicity and social justice. The seventh chapter looks at issues especially relevant for our time: a radical monotheism, "right-brain" awareness, a warning against "new-age" thinking and a reminder of God's presence and work in the world.

What are we to make of this book? Since there is so little previous work on the subject, it is difficult to evaluate it on the basis of comparison. Personally, I found the book to be substantive, reasoned, well-organized, readable and contributive to Wesley studies. Its footnotes and bibliography alone are sufficient to guide one on a major study of the subject after the book is read.

I confess some hesitancy to "take it all in," as I do whenever I read a book which views Wesley through one particular lens. Special-interest books must always be read carefully. It is possible to be more deductive than inductive—that is, to "read into" Wesley more than you "read out" of him on the subject. However, I believe Robert Tuttle survives this problem quite well and writes with overall scholarly objectivity and accuracy.

Those persons for whom the term "mysticism" is negative, or even dangerous, may find the book hard to swallow. The erroneous substance and spirit which Telford represented (albeit well-intentioned) is not dead in the Wesleyan family. But if one will approach the book open-mindedly, the result may be for us what Tuttle says it was for Wesley: an opportunity to separate the "gold" from the "dross" in the mystics.

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Carden, Allen. *Puritan Christianity in America: Religion and Life in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990. 239 pp. Appendix, select bibliography and index. ISBN 0-8010-2543-5.

In his introduction, historian Allen Carden, now president at Spring Arbor College, describes three goals for his work on seventeenth-century Puri-

tan Massachusetts. They are (1) "to provide the reader with an overall perspective encompassing the multifaceted experiences of Puritan Christianity in America"; (2) to correct the errors of previous historians, in particular Perry Miller, for their inattention to Puritan spiritualism and biblicism; (3) and to show that "[t]he Puritans who lived in New England three centuries ago can teach modern Americans much about how to live" (pp. 12-13). Regarding the first, Carden turns in a respectable job; as for the second, I will suggest that his position is seriously flawed; and regarding the last, he makes no effort to support it and, in fact, only mentions it occasionally in passing.

What Carden primarily offers is an overview of the American Puritans that integrates social, intellectual and religious history. He presents fourteen chapters of varying length and complexity on Puritan intellectual and social roots in England; Puritan theology; their cultural and economic life in America; their understanding of church-state relations; their view of the family's and the community's relationship to the individual; and the life, training and ministry of their divines. The work is nicely laid out with footnotes rather than endnotes, a useful chronology of relevant Puritan history, a biographical overview of ministers and a select bibliography. However, surprisingly absent is much of the best work of the 1980s on Puritan theology and religious life. For example, no mention is made of Charles Cohen's impressive, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (1986) or more surprisingly of Harry S. Stout's superb, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (1986). Additionally, he detracts from his synthesis by too frequent judgments of the Puritans which invariably suffer from being anachronistic. For example, he too often chides the Puritans for being intolerant or ethnocentric (p. 109) without realizing that his judgments are not the product of a more enlightened or morally superior culture but rather one that no longer believes that it has access to clear and consensually held truths, and of course the Puritans knew themselves to possess such truths in the Scriptures. Such reservations clearly detract, but not fatally so, from his competent synthesis of the most impressive recent studies on Puritan religious life and New England social history.

In addition to his primary goal of synthesizing the work of others, Carden also advances an original thesis concerning the centrality of Puritan spiritualism and biblicism, and the inattention paid to both by secular historians who he argues overemphasize Puritan reasonableness. His best case is made in chapter three, "The Biblical Basis of the Puritan Way." Unfortunately, his effort suffers from a failure to recognize the seamlessness of the seventeenth-century Puritan rational intellectual and religious world, one unlike ours where revelation and rational knowledge are frequently seen as in competition. This oversight has led to his treating proleptically and naively the Puritans' reliance on Scripture and their traditional understanding of biblical inerrancy.

In effect, Carden creates a straw man, though one corroborated by copious and intelligent reference to published sermons, as he "persuades" his reader of the Bible's centrality to the thought of Puritan divines. He writes as if it were a novel discovery "that biblical infallibility was accepted dogma. Not only was the Bible viewed as the Word of God, but it was also seen as absolutely reliable, accurate, and complete" (p. 26). Carden believes that by demonstrating the primacy of the Bible to the Puritan mind he is correcting the error of secular historians whom he takes to be overly concerned with the logic and learned assumptions of the Puritan divines' hermeneutics. However, since no serious student challenges the Puritans' reliance on Holy Scripture, the more pressing question must be what kind of learning and interpretive strategies they employed in their quest to understand God's Word correctly. It was exactly because the Bible was their most critical source of knowledge that one must attend carefully to their hermeneutics. In contrast, Carden suggests that the American divines approached being biblical literalists. These were men, we must remember, almost all of whom were trained in Greek, Latin, Hebrew and several Near-Eastern languages, as well as Classical Pagan, Renaissance, Humanist and Scholastic learning—all with one intention in mind. Yet, more importantly, as inhabitants of the seventeenth century they would not have felt any need to adopt such a radical, epistemologically naive, exegetical strategy as simple literalism. Carden is, thus, far off the mark when he writes that Miller and other historians, in their desire to understand the various influences on educated Puritan divines, have attempted "to secularize and rationalize Puritan theology to make the Puritans more acceptable in the modern age" (p. 34). In truth, it is Carden who deforms and modernizes them in his implicit effort to make their seventeenth-century inspired mode of exegesis instructive to the dilemmas of contemporary Christians living in a world of hermeneutics shaped by a split between faith and reason, higher criticism, and increasingly powerful strategies of textual analysis.

Is this, then, a work worth reading? It is not if one seeks a sophisticated treatment of the Puritans' complex theology, most particularly because Carden rarely discusses their theology's diverse problems. Nor should it be read if one seeks a scholarly treatment of the intellectual, social or religious historical themes treated therein—for that, one is best served by turning to the monograph literature (for an introduction, see David D. Hall's, "On Common Ground: The Coherence of American Puritan Studies," *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 [April 1987]: 193-229). However, Carden's work is well suited for an undergraduate class in American religious or colonial history, and for such use, I recommend it. Nevertheless, even in this capacity, if I were teaching a talented or demanding group of juniors or seniors I might very well choose instead to use a collection of scholarly monographs such as Vaughan's and Bremer's ed., *Puritan New England: Essays on Religion, Society, and Culture*, or make use of photocopied selections taken from more narrowly focused books than Carden's, with its impressive sweep of concerns.

In sum, Carden provides an acceptable synthesis of the work of others on American Puritanism in the seventeenth century, yet, ironically in regard to his own thesis, he deforms their thought anachronistically in his effort to rescue the Puritans from the interpretive clutches of secular historians who, in fact, have much less reason to modernize their thought than might a contemporary Christian.

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Hardman, Keith J. *Charles Grandison Finney, 1792-1875, Revivalist and Reformer*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990. xvii, 521 pps. Paperback, ISBN 0-8010-4348-4.

The shadows cast by Charles Finney over American social, religious and political history are extensive, profound and often difficult to document. The difficulties in defining the parameters of that influence have been directly related to questions concerning the biographical and personal intellectual structures of Finney's life. Hardman has made a significant contribution to the analysis of these matters. On the basis of extensive research in both primary (some unpublished, previously unexamined) and secondary literature, the structures of Finney's life are delineated.

The volume begins with an introduction which provides a cultural base for contextualizing Finney, drawing upon, and nuancing, the theoretical work of William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings and Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Describing the revivalistic traditions of New England, Hardman observes, "the 'mix' was right for the emergence of a new type of evangelism among American Calvinists, possibly similar to what the Methodists had been practicing for years" (p. 23).

Finney's life is narrated in detail, drawing heavily upon Finney's own *Memoirs* (1876). Realizing that this source was written years after the events described, and designed partially as an *apologia* for his life, Hardman uses the discrepancies between these later recollections and earlier accounts by friends (and enemies), correspondence, ecclesiastical documents and other archival material to illumine the transitions in Finney's perspective. The Finney thus discovered is an ambitious, rapidly evolving western New York country boy who accomplishes the metamorphosis, first to country lawyer and then to the urbane evangelist who would be at ease in the drawing rooms of New York, Philadelphia and Boston. The circle is completed when,

back in the "Old Northwest" at Oberlin College, he taught deportment to ministerial students (Practical Theology) with specific instructions about dress and brushing of teeth!

Theologically he is portrayed as a person whose mentors attempted to form into a Calvinist Presbyterian minister, but who never achieved solid theological footing before coming under the influence of perfectionist theologians and reformers, especially Asa Mahan and the Tappan brothers. Thus influenced, he developed a concern for the Methodist doctrines of sanctification which Hardman dates to about 1836 (pp. 324-349). Hardman traces the perfectionist interpersonal networks back to the Oneida community of Noyes as well as to other New England and New York perfectionist figures, although the closest relationship was certainly with Mahan. However, it is the Presbyterian motif in the life of Finney which Hardman finds to provide the interpretative theological framework for Finney's life. It functioned, he suggests, positively, as with his finding a cooperative ministerial network in the "New School" Presbyterianism which he helped define, or negatively as an orthodoxy against which he reacted, but to which he would eventually conform.

This paradigm of deviation from the theological norm and the possible subsequent increasing conformity of Finney, in his later years, to the Presbyterian tradition raises important issues. It would appear that there are other possible interpretations. The problem of the intellectual and praxis structures of Finney's early ministry can be better understood as continuous with the early Methodist traditions of New England which Nathan Bangs sought to eradicate. Lorenzo Dow is mentioned only twice in the volume and then as an instance in a list of examples. Dow's methods, rhetoric and goals are not significantly different from those of Finney in the pre-1840 period. The differences are primarily the social class within which those are expressed. The efforts to trace Finney's intellectual and ministerial development as reactions against an orthodoxy which he could not adequately comprehend, is too simplistic. It does not give sufficient weight to the cultural, economic and ideological context. The convergences with the "despised Methodists" are too great, and in geographical proximity, to be accidental. It is therefore unfortunate that the suggestion of Hardman in the introduction about Methodist style is not explored. The research of Timothy Smith, Donald Dayton, Richard Shiels and Douglas Strong, as well as the more recent volume of Nathan Hatch (*The Democratization of American Culture* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990]) as well as Winthrop S. Hudson ("The Methodist Age in America," *Methodist History* 12 [1974]: 3-15) suggests that the Methodist factor in the development of revivalist religion (and the attendant intellectual and social structures) on the frontier and its importation to the eastern cities needs to be taken seriously.

It is also unfortunate that only one chapter (pp. 424-448) was devoted to the last quarter century of Finney's life and thought. Here it would have been helpful to explore and document more thoroughly the stated



trend toward declension of interest in both the social and theological aspects of perfectionism. From the narratives of the earlier chapters one could contend that arguments such as those of James H. Fairchild ("The Doctrine of Sanctification at Oberlin," *The Congregational Quarterly* 18, 2 [1876]: 237-259; unfortunately, this article was not cited) were efforts to distance Finney from an increasingly unpopular tradition of radical piety. However, Hardman's preoccupation with Presbyterian orthodoxy tends to suggest agreement with the basic stance of Fairchild. The arguments of Victor B. Howard (*Religion and the Radical Republican Movement 1860-1870* [Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990]) merit attention when further research is done on the life of Finney.

These concerns are not intended to detract from the very useful and stimulating treatment of this major American religious figure. It is to be hoped that Hardman and/or other scholars will explore more fully the formative influences and later decades of Finney's life. Even then, Hardman's treatment will remain a sensitive, balanced, readable standard interpretation of Finney. A carefully selected bibliography, notes and an index facilitate access to the myriad details in the text and supportive of the narrative.

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Crews, Mickey. *The Church of God, A Social History*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990. xvi, 252 pp. ISBN 0-87049-634-4.

The Church of God (Cleveland) traces its beginning to a meeting on August 19, 1886, in Cokercreek, TN, presided over by Richard G. Spurling. Since that modest beginning, the denomination has grown into the second largest North American Pentecostal church and the third largest North American Wesleyan/holiness church. As a "bridge" denomination between the two revivalistic traditions, it self-consciously maintains the insights of the Pentecostal tradition as well as the distinctively Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification. As demonstrated by the analysis of world Christianity by David Barratt, *et alia* (*World Christian Encyclopedia* [Nairobi, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982]), the denomination has maintained an extensive and successful mission program. If the non-North American members are included, it is second in size only to the Salvation Army among the holiness churches. It is also one of only two major North American denominations which have achieved significant levels of racial inclusiveness

(the other is the Church of God [Anderson]).

The volume by Crews had its genesis as a Ph.D. dissertation submitted at Auburn University under the direction of historian J. Wayne Flynt. In its published form, it is the first history of a Wesleyan/holiness denomination to be published by a university press. It endeavors to replace the excellent work of Charles W. Conn [*Like a Mighty Army Moves the Church of God, 1886-1955* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God Publishing House, 1955)] as the standard history of the denomination in the United States. Crews, who has been associated with the Church of God (Cleveland), is presently chairperson of the department of history and social science at Troy State University.

The goal of the volume is to present a history which draws upon social analysis. Unfortunately, this is usually limited to placing the denomination in its "larger social context." What it generally fails to do is to place the denominational development in the larger socio-religious context. The controlling hermeneutic is that the Church of God (Cleveland) began as a sect and, through cultural accommodation, is becoming a denomination. Instead of developing a wholistic approach to the Church of God (Cleveland), the decision was made to focus on selected issues in which the shifts of perspective of the adherents could be observed. The result is a series of essays which explore specific issues over wide-ranging chronological periods. It is especially unfortunate that no attention was given to the formal and informal networks of relationships which have been determinative to the history of the denomination. In this context, it is also surprising that the stance(s) of the denomination on racial issues which led to its racial inclusiveness, quite a remarkable phenomenon in the early twentieth century in the South, are not discussed in any detail.

The chapters, therefore, are unrelated to each other. Chapter one, *Populistic Religion: The Social Origins of the Church of God* (pp. 1-18), briefly describes the social and cultural nexus in which the early Church of God (Cleveland) evolved. The second chapter (pp. 19-37) summarizes the development of ecclesiastical structures from the beginning of the denomination until 1987, with most of the material being devoted to the financial and leadership struggles of the early 1920s. Here questions which might have been raised about style and structure of leadership in response to changing cultural expectations are not addressed.

Chapter three, *Come Out From Among Them* (pp. 38-68), is perhaps the best chapter of the volume. The effort is made to interpret the social mores and taboos established by the denomination in light of the theological perspectives which sustained them and made them viable for the adherents. As Crews suggests, "External adherence to the Holiness code was simply a product of an internal experience" (p. 39). The processes by which these evolved are described, as the tensions within the leadership structures of the denomination which attempted to slow the acculturation and participation in the larger cultural matrix. Crews asserts that the influx of urban members after World War II began to dissipate the "moral rigor" of the denomination.

No statistics, however, are given to substantiate a trend of urban expansion.

Perhaps the least satisfactory chapter is that entitled, *With Signs Following* (pp. 69-91). The early Church of God (Cleveland) believers attempted to actualize the claims of the New Testament, basing their understanding on a common sense reading of the text. That hermeneutic led members to experiment with practices as diverse as healing and snake handling. The efforts are described as "eccentric practices" (pp. 67, 91). The social, psychological and theoretical structures which sustained the practices are not examined sympathetically. Instead, people who experimented and believed are presented as credulous, self-deluded sectarians. If the practices described had been placed in the context of the American healing movement, and its implementation analyzed in terms of group formation and identification, the presentation would have been much more helpful. A similar critique can be made of the discussion of the role of women in the church (chap. 5, pp. 92-107). It does, however, contribute by providing a preliminary sifting of some of the primary documents relating to women in the Church of God (Cleveland).

The discussion of the positions taken by the Church of God (Cleveland) on pacifism and involvement in the military (chap. 6, pp. 108-137) is helpful for its presentation of denominational decisions and their social results. Because of eschatological concerns, understandings of corporate sin and personal responsibility, the Church of God maintained a pacifist stance through World War I, in the face of significant persecution. During World War II, evasion of the military draft was not encouraged, and the denomination maintained (but feared to publish) its pacifist stance. Only at the end of World War II, was the constitution changed to allow for individual decision, while committing the church to support conscientious objectors. No statistical data is provided to demonstrate the results of the relaxation of policy, and once again, the early position of the church is characterized as an eccentric phenomenon. No effort is made to understand it as a considered moral decision which was shared by large numbers of revivalist adherents and denominations throughout this country and in Europe.

A final chapter (pp. 138-172) describes the institutional, ecclesiastical and numerical development of the Church of God (Cleveland), arguing that the process of acculturation to mainstream American values has progressed quickly since World War II. Once again, minimal statistical support for the assertions is provided. The Epilogue restates this observation, suggesting that it is the major theme by which the history of the denomination is to be understood.

The footnotes which lead the scholar to primary and secondary literature are generally helpful, albeit quite brief. The bibliography (pp. 201-248) is a major contribution. It includes periodicals and, especially, theses and dissertations related to the Church of God (Cleveland). Unfortunately there is little dialogue with the secondary literature, or with other ways of looking at the material. The historiographical issues mentioned above significantly

and adversely affect the resultant book. Sect theory combined with suggestions of cultural accommodation were more appropriate in the 1950s and 1960s than they are today. They do not address the deeper relational and structural issues related to a denomination's history or to its self-understanding. As a history, it does not replace the work of Conn which still provides more detail and basis for subsequent analysis, despite its having been written nearly four decades ago.

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Green, Roger J. *War on Two Fronts: The Redemptive Theology of William Booth*. Atlanta: The Salvation Army, 1989. 141 pp. Hardback. ISBN 0-86544-355-7.

Roger J. Green, professor of biblical and theological studies at Gordon College, challenges recent arguments that William Booth initiated his Darkest England social program in 1890 to stop his Salvation Army's decline in Britain's slums. The Army, according to Green, was still a vital force when Booth turned it in the direction of social reform by 1890. Instead, Green holds that Booth underwent a theological change which permitted him to follow the lead of Salvationists and others who were urging him to embrace a program for Britain's social redemption.

In this popular adaptation of his doctoral dissertation, Green defines Booth's theology in its earliest stage as a focused commitment to individual soul salvation and sanctification. Booth's revival ministry began as a result of his personal conversion in 1846 and his admiration for American Methodist revivalist, James Caughey, who first preached in England in the mid-1840s. Booth institutionalized his theology of personal redemption in 1865 when he founded an East London home mission, which he renamed The Salvation Army in 1878.

Apart from a general survey of Booth's theology, Green's concern is with a pivotal question over which Salvationists and historians struggle: Why did William Booth change his theology to include social salvation in 1889-90? Early historians simply noted the change without curiosity as to the reason for it. But in 1963, K. S. Ingalls argued that the change came as a result of The Salvation Army's decline in urban slums by 1887, a decline which was observed by Anglican clergy as Booth's "unique failure" to save the "heathen masses." Booth disagreed with his clerical and newspaper critics and Green defends the general's assertion that the change came when he

saw that the poor needed social redemption as well as personal soul-saving. Without disputing the statistical data of an urban downturn, Green holds that Booth embraced a social salvation theology that led him to publish *Darkest England and the Way Out*. Booth, aware of London's "bitter cry" for reform and of efforts by Salvationist women and lay persons to aid prostitutes and drunkards, developed a new theology of "a double mission" for social as well as personal redemption.

Green argues that until 1889 Booth made "no public pronouncements" about social redemption. Herein he breaks with Salvationist writers who hold that Booth was a consistent social reformer from his boyhood commitment to Chartism in 1848. Only in 1889 did Booth begin to preach "salvation from pinching poverty" and "two gospels of deliverance."

Green devotes fifteen percent of his brief treatise to Booth's 1888-90 post-millennial views wherein he placed the coming kingdom of God on earth and legitimized The Salvation Army as God's "chief instrument to bring about that kingdom." This optimistic view of how man could be God's instrument for perfecting a flawed social system joined Booth to the era's leading utopian thinkers.

Inglis's mistake in placing emphasis on The Salvation Army's failure among the "heathen masses" as the prime motive for Booth's social program was, in Green's view, to concentrate on Booth's history rather than on Booth's theology. Green admits that Booth was not a systematic theologian, but he does not conclude that this made him more susceptible to the winds of the era. Rather, Booth's "theological loyalties," an apparent reference to his Wesleyan moorings, provided "theological legitimacy for a dual mission." Yet Booth, who too was not a systematic social thinker, turned to Frank Smith and W. T. Stead to develop the social scheme which encouraged him to expand his views of redemption to embrace "whole-sale salvation."

It is difficult, Green admits, to make a non-theologian speak in systematic terms. He compares Booth to no other contemporary Wesleyan, such as Hugh Price Hughes, who may have taken a similar theological journey in the 1880s. Nor does Booth tie his doctrinal formulations to previous or contemporary creeds. Green also finds it difficult to confine Booth's statements to time limits he establishes for his intellectual evolution.

Possibly more important than his study of Booth as theologian is Green's challenge to scholars who follow K. S. Inglis's views. Green requires that they reassess their institutional answers to the question of why Booth the revivalist became Booth the social reformer in 1889-90. No doubt there are those who will challenge Green's thesis that a change in Booth's Wesleyan theology is the primary answer to this question.

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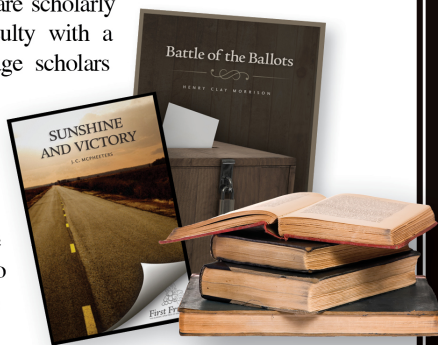
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