

JOHANN BAPTIST METZ'S CRITIQUE
OF RELIGIOUS APATHY

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OF
RELIGIOUS APATHY

BY

JACOB L.C. WASCHENFELDER, B.A., M.DIV.

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AUTHOR: Jacob L.C. Waschenfelder, B.A. (University of
Manitoba)
M.Div. (Lutheran School
of Theology at
Chicago)

SUPERVISORS: Professor Gérard Vallée and
Professor John Robertson

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to offer a distinctive interpretation of the theology of Johann Baptist Metz, who is presently professor of fundamental theology at the University of Münster and the founder of European political theology. It argues that even though Metz's theology has undergone significant changes over the past thirty years, it is nevertheless best understood as a unified attempt to understand and to correct the causes of Christian apathy. At each stage of development, Metz focuses on the inordinant privatizing influence that Greek and modern consciousness has had, and continues to have, on Christian self-understanding and practice.

Previous interpretations have tended to discuss Metz exclusively in terms of his attempt to correct the a-historical tendencies of scholastic and neo-scholastic theology, to develop a theology based on the priority of praxis over theory, and to develop a theological anthropology which is more socially concrete. In each case, what is missed is the deeper and more personal motivating impetus behind his theology: his desire to answer the question of why Christians remain apathetic in the face of suffering. This question

arises out of his own personal experiences of Christian apathy in the face of past Holocaust suffering and present third-world suffering.

Furthermore, each fails to recognize how his theology is unified both in terms of intention and strategy. Throughout, his intention is to disengage Christianity from the apathy-producing effects of Greek and modern consciousness. To do so, he consistently distinguishes between the non-Christian types of consciousness in which Christians find themselves immersed (the form of thought), as well as the implicit certitudes about the human self and the world (the content of thought) which these produce. Each stage is therefore an attempt to understand, criticize, and offer alternatives to Christianity's captivity to non-Christian ways of being in the world which subvert the realization of the Gospel mandate of love and therefore produce apathy.

In this way, this dissertation hopes to contribute to a fuller understanding of Metz's theology. It argues that even though there are significant changes in strategy from one stage to the next, Metz's theology is a unified attempt to disengage Christianity from the negative influences of Greek and modern consciousness in order to give birth to a new socially critical, action-oriented, post-Auschwitz Christianity.

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I

INTRODUCTION

A. THE BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

This thesis focuses on the writings of the German Catholic theologian J.B. Metz,¹ who is presently professor of fundamental theology² at the University of Münster, and former assistant of the renowned Catholic theologian Karl Rahner. Metz is part of the first group of post-conciliar Catholic theologians who are trying to articulate more clearly what it means to be a Christian in light of the new openness to the

¹This study focuses on Metz's writings up to 1986. Unfortunately, given restrictions of time, I was not able to incorporate the insights of a Festschrift written for Metz in 1988 entitled Mystik und Politik, E. Schillebeeckx, ed. (Mainz: 1988).

²Fundamental theology emerges as an independent theological discipline within Catholicism in response to eighteenth and nineteenth century criticisms of religion by the Enlightenment. According to Rahner and Vorgrimler, its task is two-fold: 1. to take stock of and to make clear the fundamental tenets of the faith, and 2. to lay down a foundation of fundamental Christian principles in order to defend the faith in the face of skepticism and disbelief. K. Rahner and H. Vorgrimler, Dictionary of Theology (New York: Crossroads, 1981), pp. 183-184. See also the articles gathered together in Volume 46 of Concilium entitled The Development of Fundamental Theology, ed. J.B. Metz (New York: Paulist Press, 1969).

world initiated by the Second Vatican Council.

Johann Baptist Metz was born in the small Bavarian town of Auerbach in Southern Germany in 1928. In 1944, at the age of sixteen, he was conscripted into the German army and sent to the German front where he experienced the slaughter of his entire platoon and left as the lone survivor. Captured by the Americans, he was sent to France and then the United States where he spent a year as prisoner of war.³ Returning to Germany, he continued his education and, in 1954, became a diocesan priest. In 1952, he completed his Doctorate of Philosophy on Martin Heidegger under Emerich Coreth and, in 1961, finished his Doctorate of Theology on Thomas Aquinas under Karl Rahner.

The aim of this dissertation is to offer a distinctive interpretation of Metz's theology, showing that it is best understood as a unified attempt to answer the question of why Christians remain apathetic in the face of ongoing human suffering? Why have Christians lost their ability to live in solidarity with the poor and oppressed? For the most part, as I will show, this question arises out of Metz's experiences with the Holocaust, out of his struggle to comprehend how such an event could have arisen in the midst of an essentially Christian culture and, similarly, why it so quickly has been

³For an account of Metz's war-time experiences see J.B. Metz, "Streuungen," in Mensch, der Krieg ist aus, eds. Werner Filmer and Heribert Schwan (Düsseldorf/Wien: Econ Verlag, 1985), pp. 251-253.

forgotten by Christians and non-Christians alike. Because his theology tries to understand Christian apathy in the face of the Holocaust, he calls it a "post-Auschwitz" theology. ⁴ It is post-Auschwitz in the sense that it is committed to formulating Christian truth in the face of Auschwitz, not with its back to it.⁵

Metz has written about his first encounter with Christian apathy in the face of Holocaust suffering. As a young boy growing up in a small arch-Catholic village in Bavaria,⁶ he remembers how the people of his community self-consciously chose not to acknowledge the tragedy that was going on around them. For example, the members of his family and village never discussed the plight of the Jews, even

⁴J.B. Metz, Unterbrechungen. Theologisch-politische Perspektiven und Profile (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1981), p. 21. Hereafter cited as Unterbrechungen. Translations are my own.

⁵Metz says: "I became aware that, for me, being a Christian meant: being a Christian in the face of Auschwitz, in the face of the Holocaust; and that, for me, doing theology meant: doing theology in the face of Auschwitz, in the face of the Holocaust (and though this holds good in a very special way for Christians and theologians in Germany, it does not apply to them exclusively; for the Holocaust is not just a German catastrophe, but - on closer inspection - a Christian catastrophe). I began to ask myself: What sort of theology can one do with one's back to Auschwitz - before the impending catastrophe, during the catastrophe, after the catastrophe of Auschwitz" (J.B. Metz, "From a Mysticism of the Elite to a Mysticism of the People. Autobiographical Remarks," unpublished manuscript presented to the communities of Catholic Nuns in Cleveland Ohio, Notre Dame, and Boston College, 1981 and 1982, p. 2).

⁶Spektrum des Geistes, Literaturkalender, 1982, ed. Ehrhardt Henold (Eulenhof: Eulenhof-Verlag, 1982), p. 125.

though fifty kilometers away stood a concentration camp in which thousands of them were being exterminated.⁷ This experience of Christian apathy towards Jewish suffering was followed by his experience of the post-war German effort to forget what had happened and to concentrate on rebuilding. Christians posed little resistance to this ethos of forgetfulness, acquiescing in the eradication of memories of the past. They let the Holocaust become an unfortunate fact of the past, therefore allowing it to lose its capacity to play a critical role within the social, political, and theological decision making of the present.

This thesis tries to demonstrate that Metz's ongoing theological project is a unified attempt to understand and correct Christian participation in this forgetfulness of suffering. It argues that the chief motivating force behind his theology is his desire to expose and move beyond ideas and horizons of understanding which contribute to Christian apathy in the face of past, present, and future suffering.

Though Metz has not written extensively about his personal life, he has commented on the importance of personal biography in the shaping of systems of thought. For instance, he argues that all theologies are biographical whether they

⁷J.B. Metz, "Facing the Jews. Christian Theology after Auschwitz," in The Holocaust as Interruption, eds. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and David Tracy (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd., 1984), p. 27.

recognize it or not,⁸ and that each emerges out of the individual experiences and crisis situations of a particular socio-historical era. Theologians try to address the crises of their day by bringing together personal experiences and the liberative experiences of the Christian faith. Neither, according to Metz, is totally private; each is social and political in nature.

Because of his conviction concerning the personal nature of theology, Metz tries to speak in the first person, wanting to discover truth in conversations with others as well as through the critical analysis of his own subjectivity and the consciousness of his time. He is therefore against theologies which ignore real persons and real situations, theologies which attempt to function on the level of pure theory alone.

Furthermore, given his worry about the presence of ideological distortions within all systems of thought, particularly theological, Metz argues that the time is over for theological meaning systems which claim to be purely objective. He thus recognizes all too keenly the degree to which truth continues to be distorted for the sake of hidden social and personal interest. The result of this awareness is that his theology is characterized by an openness to self-criticism and to changes of direction.

⁸Metz, Unterbrechungen, p. 8.

Another conviction which guides his theology is his belief that Christian truth is attained in the midst of life lived with others and before God, not primarily in abstract reflection. Truth therefore arises out of personal, social, and political commitments and orientations within the world.

Moreover, this conviction, concerning the intimate association of Christian truth and being with others, plays a significant role in shaping his theological style. It makes it unsystematic and difficult to interpret at any one point.⁹ For example, because he is committed to speaking with lay persons as well as trained theologians, he first publishes his articles in popular church magazines and newspapers.¹⁰ Only after the ensuing debate, does he edit, revise, and republish them. The result is a fluid and evolutionary style of thought committed to the belief that theological truth is

⁹Metz is also difficult to study because he does not leave a trail through the theological and philosophical jungle which he passes. One is often left guessing about the sources he is drawing on. In many instances, he simply breathes the intellectual air of certain individuals or schools of thought. This method allows for considerable creativity while at the same time frustrating anyone who engages in a systematic study of his ideas.

¹⁰Metz, Unterbrechungen, pp. 7-9. Even though Metz tries to speak to the common person, the criticism can be made that his abstruse writing style often frustrates this goal. Franz H. Mueller correctly notes: "Metz uses an involved telescopic sentence structure, which tries to anticipate and answer possible objections. He incorporates all kinds of reservations, to assure the reader of the author's awareness of certain remote possibilities. In other words, he tries too much in one breath at the expense of clarity" (Franz H. Mueller, "Social Ethics or 'Political Theology'," Thought 46 [1971]: p. 14).

more a product of the actions and conversations of common Christians than the abstract reflections of famous theologians.¹¹

For the past twenty years, Metz has been developing a type of theology which he calls "Political Theology." It is political in the sense that it believes that Christianity is primarily concerned about the nature of the self and the projected goals and aims of society.¹² It therefore tries to articulate the conditions necessary for Christian action in the world, as social and political action. Given this orientation, political theology criticizes previous fundamental theologies for failing to recognize that the real challenge of the Enlightenment is practical and socio-

¹¹J.B. Metz, Faith in History and Society. Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology, trans. David Smith (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), pp. 210-211. German original: Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1977). Metz thinks Karl Rahner's theology narrates the connection between "the history of salvation and the history of suffering within the framework of an existential biography" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 211). It is "the biographical dogmatic account of the simple, one might even venture to say the average, Christian, the mystical biography of an undramatic life." Rahner tries to "involve the story of the ordinary Christian's religious life and indeed the history of the Christian people's life in dogmatic theology" (Metz, "Excursus: Theology as biography," in Faith in History and Society, pp. 226-227).

¹²Jürgen Moltmann offers a helpful history of the notion of political theology in his article "Political Theology," Theology Today, 28 (1971/72), pp. 9 ff.. David Kelly also gives a brief history of political theology in his "Introduction" to Metz's article titled "Prophetic Authority," in Religion and Political Society, ed. David Kelly (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 173-176.

political in nature, not theoretical. In response, it tries to develop its own type of fundamental theology which focuses on the practical core of Christianity and the intersubjective nature of Christian personhood. More specifically, it bases itself on the conviction that the praxis of entering into solidarity with those who suffer is the defining feature of Christian personhood, and that there is, therefore, a total unity between love of God and love of neighbor. It believes that the message of Scripture concerns the intimate association between truth and love.

B. THE DEVELOPMENT OF METZ'S CRITIQUE OF RELIGIOUS APATHY

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that Metz's critique of religious apathy is a unifying thread within the theological tapestry which he has woven over the past thirty years. Although he continues to appropriate new weapons into his intellectual arsenal, and gives up others, the battle plan remains the same. It is to understand the internal workings of modern Christianity and its subject with the intention of finding out why they are tainted by apathy. Metz's theology is thus an ongoing internal critique of Christian self-understanding in order to find out why the Christian message of love continues to have little impact on the ongoing fact of mass suffering.

Metz's critique, of course, is guided by a vision. He believes that Christianity has within itself underdeveloped resources for change, resources which lie, for the most part, in Christianity's eschatological and apocalyptic tradition, that is, in the capacity of God's promised future to motivate a new way of being a Christian in history and society. Moreover, he looks to the emergence of a new apocalyptic consciousness to generate a discipleship of radical solidarity with the poor and oppressed. Whereas Greek and modern forms of consciousness produce a Christianity apathetic in the face of suffering, apocalyptic consciousness produces a Christianity which motivates persons to be in solidarity with the poor and oppressed. Apocalyptic consciousness generates radical praxis while Greek and modern forms of consciousness generate only apathy.¹³

This thesis demarcates three stages of development through which Metz's critique of Christian apathy passes.

¹³Chapter II will discuss Metz's understanding of Greek and modern consciousness, while Chapter IV will discuss his understanding of apocalyptic consciousness. In each instance, he applies Heidegger's distinction between the form and content of thought characteristic of a particular era of consciousness. The form of thought consists of the a-priori horizon of understanding within which everything for the first time receives its mental image. The content of thought consists of the implicit certitudes about reality held by persons of a particular historical era which are shaped by, and arise out of, the particular form of consciousness. Thought-form is the unthematic feel for life present within a particular historical epoch. Thought-content consists of the implicit axioms about reality which constitute the condition of possibility of communication.

These stages are not isolated and separate from one another but rather are occasions for the appearance, reappearance, and transformation of ongoing themes and ideas. Allow me to briefly summarize these.

The first stage of Metz's critique runs approximately from 1957 to 1963. The central texts of this period are Christliche Anthropozentrik and Chapter I of Theology of the World.¹⁴ This is Metz's pre-political theology stage, though, as I point out in Chapter II, it lays the foundation for much of his later critique. Here, he attributes the cause of Christian apathy to the dominance within Christianity of a Greek cosmocentric form of consciousness. This foreign thought-form taints Christianity's understanding of the human self and the world, thereby inhibiting its living out of the Gospel mandate of love of neighbor within history and society.

Furthermore, while developing his critique of Greek cosmocentrism, Metz also tries to eliminate certain cosmocentric vestiges within the thought of Karl Rahner. While working in intimate collaboration with Rahner and his transcendental theology, he questions Rahner's understanding of the human self and the world. He worries that Rahner's theology has the tendency of defining the self as an isolated

¹⁴J.B. Metz, Christliche Anthropozentrik. Über die Denkform des Thomas von Aquin (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1962). Hereafter cited as CA. Translations are my own. J.B. Metz, Theology of the World, trans. William Glen-Doepel (London: Herder and Herder, 1969). German original: Zur Theologie der Welt (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1968).

monadic consciousness, thereby inviting the criticism that it does not take its social constitution seriously enough. The consequence is a limiting of the sphere of Christian action to private morality.

Towards the end of this first stage of development, therefore, Metz begins to question transcendental theology's emphasis on the interiority of personal religious experience. He begins to worry that transcendental theology dulls Christianity's social and political edge by downplaying the importance of the eschatological promises which aim at the critical transformation of history and society. He also becomes concerned that transcendental theology conceives of the world too abstractly. In response, he pushes to define the world more concretely as history and the self intersubjectively. These issues will be dealt with at length in Chapter II of this dissertation.

The second stage of Metz's critique runs approximately from 1963 to 1970. This is a period of transition from transcendental theology to the first phase of his political theology. It is characterized by a growing discomfort with transcendental Thomism, fueled by newly perceived challenges to theology which arise out of his meetings with Ernst Bloch, along with his participation, in the early 1960's, in formal Marxist-Christian dialogue.

During this period, Metz continues to attribute the cause of Christian apathy to the dominance of the Greek form

of consciousness within modern theology. Theology is tainted by Greek cosmocentrism and therefore faulted for understanding the self and Christian action privatistically and the world a-historically. He now intensifies his critique by focusing on particular types of theology tainted by Greek philosophical assumptions. Modern theology remains, for the most part, socially and politically apathetic because it is concerned only with private interiority and private morality. It privatizes the Christian message by ignoring the socio-political implications of Christianity's future-directed eschatological message. These issues will be dealt with in Chapter III of this dissertation.

The third stage of Metz's critique runs from approximately 1970 to the present. This is a second phase in the development of a political theology. It is characterized by the correction and refinement of political theology under the influences of such thinkers as K. Marx, T. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, W. Benjamin, and of E. Käsemann's emphasis on the importance of New Testament apocalyptic. He now attributes the cause of Christian apathy to Christianity's captivity to the modern notions of history, reason, and religion, which are woven into the fabric of modern consciousness. The modern Christian subject is criticized for having lost his or her soul to the Enlightenment. Christianity is therefore unable to live out the social and political message of the Gospel for three reasons: 1. it no longer values history and tradition,

2. it has erroneously appropriated the new bourgeois authority of technical rationality, and 3. it has uncritically accepted the Enlightenment definition of religion as natural religion. This third stage of development will be dealt with at length in Chapter IV of this study.

This dissertation aims to show that these three stages are unified in their attempt to answer the nagging question of why Christians remain apathetic in the face of suffering. Metz's entire theological career, in other words, can be viewed as an ongoing attack on Greek and bourgeois forms of consciousness for the way they destroy Christianity's ability to engage concrete historical existence, and for the way they interpret the self and the Gospel privatistically.

Furthermore, in all three stages, Metz tries to resolve what he thinks is the major crisis of Christianity today: the crisis of the Christian subject's self-definition and the resultant stifling of the social and political demands of the Gospel.¹⁵ He tries to combat Christian apathy in the face of ongoing mass suffering by advocating a theological shift from a cosmocentrism to an anthropocentrism informed by apocalypticism. Most recently, he directs our attention to

¹⁵See Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 76. Metz asserts here that the historical crisis of Christianity is not one related to the contents of faith but to the self-identity of Christian subjects and institutions which fail to imitate Christ. He therefore refers to his later theology as a "political theology of the subject" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 32).

the possibility of a social (non-private) anthropology of solidarity which can come about by living within the horizon of apocalyptic expectation.¹⁶

C. CONTRIBUTION AND APPROACH

This dissertation is guided by the conviction that prior interpretations of Metz's theology fail to examine closely enough the central question with which Metz himself is dealing: the question of why Christians remain apathetic in the face of human suffering? Interpreters fail to recognize how this question has been at the core of his theology for the past thirty years. Even as Karl Rahner's assistant, Metz struggled to understand and eliminate defects within Christian self-understanding which prevented Christians from living in solidarity with the poor and oppressed. As Chapter II will show, his early work tried to develop an understanding of the world and the self not tainted by the a-

¹⁶Metz hopes for an "anthropological revolution": a Christian self-defining process not dominated by aggression towards and exploitation of others. A Christian self-defining process values the human experiences of death, suffering, love, mourning, and fear, and develops an identity of solidarity with others and the earth, not against them. Metz hopes to contribute to the coming about of a "revolutionary formation process for a new subjectivity" (J.B. Metz, The Emergent Church, trans. Peter Mann [New York: Crossroad, 1981]). In Chapter II of this thesis, I will show how in the early Metz this quest for a new Christian self-definition takes shape. Redefining the Christian subject is at the heart of Metz's attempt to combat Christian apathy. Apathy, according to Metz, is a product of Christianity's captivity to wrong ways of understanding the human self and the world.

historical and privatistic tendencies present within transcendental anthropology. His later development of political theology, though incorporating new intellectual tools, is a continuation of this initial effort to de-privatize and thus to activate politically the Gospel message of love on behalf of the world's impoverished.

This thesis does not try to present an exhaustive treatment of the coming together of the many intellectual currents which contribute to Metz's ongoing theological enterprise. It is concerned primarily with the question Metz is asking: why do Christians remain apathetic in the face of suffering? In this way, it hopes to demonstrate the relevance that Metz's understanding and critique of this apathy holds for overcoming the crisis of Western Christianity. This crisis has come about, Metz argues, due to the emergence of a Christian subject who defines himself or herself according to the values and ideas of modern culture. Rather than facilitating the realization of the Christian mandate to live in solidarity with the poor, the modern process of self-definition makes the realization of this mandate impossible. In as much as this study maintains a focus on this central question about the causes of Christian apathy, it hopes to contribute to further studies of Metz's thought.

The focus of the aforementioned central question makes it imperative for this study to be primarily concerned with an analysis of the structure and inner dynamic of Metz's

critique of Christian apathy. It tries to illumine and amplify his critique as it passes through several stages of correction and refinement. As such, it is largely an exposition of what Metz is saying. It thus hopes to contribute to a much needed conceptual approach to the study of Metz, an approach which is important and needed because of the dense and creatively unsystematic nature of his theological style.

Finally, I think Metz's critique of Christian apathy is timely and relevant to a Western Christianity struggling to find footing within an increasingly post-Christian society. Modern society has absorbed Christianity into itself as the legitimizing agent of its major ceremonies and rituals, transforming into a rubber stamp for its middle-class values.¹⁷ Metz's critique of Christian apathy is one important attempt to understand and then to unravel this complex entanglement of Christianity and culture.

The final chapter and conclusion to this study is divided into two parts. The first attempts to restate, with precision and clarity, the original question of the dissertation along with the answers it gives. This involves a recapitulation of the thesis that each stage of Metz's development is best understood as a moment of his ongoing

¹⁷For confirmation of this point, see Reginald W. Bibby, Fragmented Gods. The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1987).

critique of religious apathy. The second spells out the contribution this dissertation makes to a discussion concerning the existence of a unity governing Metz's literary corpus. It examines several interpreters of Metz to see whether they explicitly or implicitly recognize a controlling unity within his theology. It then analyzes what this unity is, if recognized. And finally, it discusses how the findings of these various interpreters compare with the findings of this dissertation. In each case, the weaknesses and strengths of their interpretations are looked at along with the ways in which this study advances an understanding of the unified nature of Metz's theology. I turn now to the first stage of Metz's critique of Christian apathy.

II

THE EARLY METZ: A FIRST ATTEMPT AT ANSWERING THE QUESTION OF CHRISTIAN APATHY

In this chapter, I try to show how Metz's early writings constitute a first attempt at addressing the issue of Christian apathy in the face of suffering. I discuss how his early theology criticizes Christianity for its blind appropriation of a Greek form of consciousness which robs it of its capacity to live out the social and political implications of the Gospel. It does so by implicitly assuming that persons and the world are essentially unfree because they are locked within the cage of a cosmic process which has no end. This sensed lack of freedom causes Christians to be less engaging of the world than they ought to be. As an alternative, Metz proposes that persons and the world be understood within the horizon of a Christian anthropocentrism which increases, rather than lessens, Christian action in the world.

Hence, Metz's main concern, even at this early stage in his theological career, is to develop a theology which facilitates the realization of the social and political

dimensions of Christian love. Interpreting persons and the world in light of the Greek form of consciousness, which is cosmocentric in nature, prevents this realization because it understands persons as less than free agents of their own history, and the world in terms of cosmos. Both these interpretations, Metz argues, result in Christian love being understood privatistically. They strip Christian love of its socially critical and transformative power by rendering it solely in terms of private morality.

Metz's response to the debilitating effects of Greek cosmocentrism is to search for a form of consciousness which is more authentically Christian, within which Christian love can be interpreted in terms of both private morality and social criticism and transformation. He finds this in Aquinas' Christian anthropocentrism.

This chapter is based on the belief that commentators on Metz tend to overlook the importance of his early writings, focusing more on his later writings in which he openly condemns Christianity for defining itself within the horizon of modern consciousness. There is a reason, however, for this tendency to focus on the later Metz. It is found in the observation that after 1963 Metz himself begins to criticize his early writings for their potential contribution to an already privatized Christianity.

Leaving this point aside for a moment, I think it important to recognize that the difference between the early

and later Metz is smaller than it appears to be, at least if consideration is given to his overall objective. I think his early and recent writings are in fact tied together by an important thread of continuity. They both struggle to develop a non-private understanding of Christian personhood and Christian love. Both his early attempt to give expression to a non-Greek Christian anthropology, and his recent attempt to develop a Christian anthropology beyond the negative influences of the modern world-view, try to give expression to Christianity's unique understanding of persons as being in solidarity with one another, and love as having a non-private locus within the world.

Thus, Metz's theological career is tied together by the attempt to de-privatize Christianity. From the beginning, his aim is to discover a non-privatizing form of Christian consciousness through which the socially liberative power of the Christian Gospel can be realized. As Rudolf Siebert has put it, Metz's career is tied together by the effort to define Christian personhood in terms of radical freedom in the world, in order to fight the world-wide trend towards a one-dimensional defining of persons and the total bureaucratic administration of life.¹⁸

¹⁸Rudolf Siebert, "From Aquinas to Hegel: The Principle of Subjectivity," The Michigan Academician (1974): pp. 409-435. Siebert compares how Hegel and Metz each understand Thomas concerning the principle of subjectivity, a principle important to both. He focuses, especially, on how both offer a philosophical-theological appraisal of human subjectivity characterized by existential freedom. Siebert thinks this

In this chapter, I also show to what extent Metz changes, even though his overall vision remains the same. What does not change is his commitment to articulate a non-private social anthropology which is authentically Christian. What changes are the conceptual tools that he uses to do this. For example, in his early writings, he defines Christian personhood within the conceptual parameters of transcendental Thomism.¹⁹ As Karl Rahner's student, assistant, editor, co-

understanding of subjectivity is important today because it is essential to any humanizing trends which might arise to combat the world-wide trend towards one-dimensional personhood and the total bureaucratic regimentation of life. The "Christian principle of subjectivity," Siebert writes, is needed to combat "the human coldness implicit in the bourgeois principle of subjectivity." This principle, he believes, constitutes "the negative element in the social order of late civil society" (Siebert, "From Aquinas to Hegel," p. 435).

Metz's former American assistant, Francis P. Fiorenza, notes that what is important to the early Metz is "the biblical and Christian experience of the world as history, as the place of God's actions." In other words, as Christians experience themselves as partners in dialogue with God, they experience themselves not as substances but as subjects and therefore see "the world as concrete history rather than abstract and universal nature" (Francis P. Fiorenza, "The Thought of J.B. Metz," Philosophy Today 10 [1966]: p. 248). Understanding the world as history, and not nature, is for the early Metz the formal condition of possibility for the actualization of Christian love within history and society. Only if the world is understood as the mutable medium for human self-realization can a transforming engagement of it take place.

¹⁹For an analysis of Metz's creative appropriation and critical transformation of neo-scholasticism, see Roger Dick Johns, Man in the World: The Theology of Johann Baptist Metz, American Academy of Religion Dissertation Series No. 16, ed. H. Ganse Little, Jr. (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1976), pp. 5-24.

author, and close friend,²⁰ he attempts to move theology beyond the pre-critical scholastic philosophy which dominated theology prior to Vatican II. He encourages an anthropocentric shift within theology, away from a cosmocentric understanding of persons and the world towards a Christian anthropology more biblical and, at the same time, more fully in tune with the Enlightenment's "turn to the subject." The position he finally assumes is that Christian identity is most fully realized in the exercise of one's transcendental freedom in the world in the form of neighborly love.

This search for a non-private social anthropology continues in Stage Two of his development. However, he now defines Christian personhood within the conceptual parameters of a newly evolved historical consciousness, characterized by an openness to the future and an emphasis on historical praxis. The transcendental defining of persons has therefore been set aside, with Metz attributing this change in perspective to three influences: 1. Kant's articulation of the

²⁰See Herbert Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner: Introduction to his Life and Thought, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1986). German original: Karl Rahner verstehen. Eine Einführung in sein Leben und Denken (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1985). This book contains interesting and informative accounts of various projects which Metz and Rahner worked on together during the latter half of Rahner's career. Vorgrimler relies significantly on Metz's most recent accounts of Rahner's life and work, such as "Karl Rahner - ein theologisches Leben," in Unterbrechungen (1981), pp. 43-57, and Den Glauben lernen und lehren. Dank an Karl Rahner (München, 1984).

importance of practical reason, 2. the left wing Hegelian's critique of idealism (Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and Marx), and 3. biblical scholarship's rediscovery of the importance of eschatology in understanding early Christianity. Given these, Metz now recognizes that Christian identity is best fulfilled through liberative actions on behalf of the poor and oppressed, actions motivated by the future-oriented promises of God.

And finally, in his most recent stage of development, Metz's social anthropology is made more concrete as he expands and intensifies his focus on the praxis of solidarity as the defining principle of Christian personhood. He points to suffering solidarity with the poor as the occasion for authentic Christian self-realization, a suffering which takes place within the hope-filled apocalyptic horizon of Christ's imminent return.

What is important to note is that in all three stages, Metz focuses on love of neighbor as the means by which authentic Christian personhood is realized. On all three occasions, he struggles to expose non-Christian ideas and ways of being in the world which frustrate the realization of sacrificial love in the world. As he develops, his understanding of both love and the world becomes more concrete and less abstract. He moves from the abstractions of transcendental Thomism to the specifics of messianic discipleship.

A. CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOCENTRISM

The object of this chapter is to show that Metz's early critique of Greek cosmocentrism is his first attempt to understand and correct the problem of Christian apathy. It argues that from the beginning he tries to free the socially transformative power of Christianity from its entanglement within non-Christian ways of experiencing and understanding the world. His first critique therefore focuses on the Greek ontic defining of persons and the world which takes place within a Christianity dominated by Greek consciousness. And as a proposed alternative, he points to the emergence of a more authentically Christian anthropology originating within the theological writings of Thomas Aquinas. Christians ought to break free from their unconscious immersion within Greek cosmocentrism and replace it with Thomistic anthropocentrism. In doing so, they would be free of that apathy which pervades their faith and be able, more fully, to live out the Gospel mandate of love. I will now examine this critique in more detail.

In 1962, while studying in Innsbruck, Metz wrote a doctoral dissertation under Rahner's supervision entitled Christliche Anthropozentrik (Christian Anthropocentrism).²¹

²¹I will analyze this text while using other publications by Metz of the same period as a larger interpretive framework.

In it, he argues that there emerges within Thomas Aquinas, for the first time in the history of thought, a distinctively new anthropocentric thought-form (Denkform) or a priori horizon of understanding. Although appearing in a groping and preliminary manner, this new thought-form spawned a new understanding of existence and personhood.

Moreover, Metz argues that this new way of being in the world, which is actually founded on the spirit of Christian revelation, is really the forgotten Christian anthropocentric foundation of modernity. The famous "anthropocentric turn" (anthropocentrische Wende) began then not with Descartes or Kant but with Aquinas. Rather than modern secularization being an emancipation from the prior claims of Christianity, it is really the coming to realization of the spirit which it claims to have rejected. Modernity, in other words, is the working out, in a relatively autonomous manner, of the Christian anthropocentric spirit handed down to it by Thomas.

The following analysis of these assertions is divided into seven parts. The first deals with Metz's distinction between thought-content and thought-form, concepts which he uses to distinguish between different historical epochs, particularly the Greek and modern. The second part looks at his understanding of Thomas' anthropocentric thought-form, while the third focuses on how this thought-form has its roots in Christian revelation. The fourth outlines his

secularization thesis, which asserts that Thomas' thought-form is the forgotten mother of modern anthropocentrism, while the fifth looks at his distinction between Greek and Christian forms of consciousness and how each gives rise to different notions of personhood, transcendence, freedom and world. The sixth outlines his critique of the blind assimilation of Greek cosmocentric notions by early Christianity and modern Catholic theology. The seventh offers a summary and conclusion.

1. Thought-Form (Denkform) and
Thought-Content (Denkinhalt)

In an effort to sketch out "a formal hermeneutic for the understanding of Thomist texts,"²² Metz distinguishes between two immanent principles which are present within all historically situated propositions, whether theological or otherwise: the formal and the material.²³ The material principle, or thought-content, is the larger horizon of understanding or interpretive context within which propositions generally are located. It is a "regional

²²Metz, CA, p. 21.

²³Metz, CA, p. 21. Metz thinks that the structure of human consciousness is historically determined. Theological concepts can be understood only by placing them within the context of a larger complex of ideas or notions. This larger complex of ideas is the material principle. This material principle, in turn, fits into an even larger historical context referred to as an historical epoch. Two such epochs predominate in the West: the Greek and the Modern, with the Thomistic Middle Ages serving as a transition stage between the two.

principle"²⁴ which functions to give an "inner unity...[to] a certain sphere of statements."²⁵ As an example, Metz looks at Thomas' notion of "concupiscence," which is an essentially unclarified concept within the Thomist corpus.²⁶ Given its unclear meaning, he argues that it can only be understood within the broader context of Thomas' statements about the original state and fall of humankind, and the overcoming of this sinful state through the supernatural perfection of persons by the grace of Jesus Christ.²⁷ In other words, it can only be understood within the larger (regional) context of a circle of themes pertaining to the state of humankind prior to and after the Fall.²⁸ The salvific destiny of humankind is therefore the required interpretive context, or thought-content, of Thomas' notion of concupiscence.

In addition to this material principle, or regional context, there is a second interpretive horizon which Metz

²⁴Metz, CA, p. 28, n. 4.

²⁵Metz, CA, p. 30.

²⁶The notion of concupiscence does not have "an unambiguous meaning within the series of Thomist statements" (Metz, CA, p. 29).

²⁷Metz, CA, pp. 26-27.

²⁸A proper understanding of concupiscence points to the "whole theological discussion concerning the salvific destiny of man. The question of concupiscence transcends and translates itself into the question of the original status and fall of man and ultimately into the question of the recapitulation which overcomes the sinful origin of man and the question of his supernatural fulfillment in the grace of Jesus Christ" (Metz, CA, pp. 26-27).

considers. It is the formal principle or thought-form, which is the larger unthematic²⁹ horizon of understanding which gives unity and form to thinking as such within any given historical epoch.³⁰ It is an ontological designation which refers to an implicit understanding of being and the human subject.³¹

As such, a consideration of the thought-form is central to understanding the structure of thinking, or the historical consciousness, of any particular epoch. It is the unifying ground of thinking, "the encompassing horizon in which everything for the first time receives its mental image,...the united and uniform archè out of which all material multiplicity originates."³²

As the primary component of the structure of historical consciousness, thought-form constitutes the "'form' of an epoch of thinking...its 'Leitbild', its 'spirit',...its

²⁹"The formal principle, the true form of thinking, can never adequately be reflected upon by the one doing the thinking by means of it, that is, it can never be raised to a status of a pure content of thinking. Thinking can never completely thematize the thought-form which is effective within it" (Metz, CA, p. 36). Metz does not think the existence of this thought-form can be proved. It "can only be pointed to in examples" (Metz, CA, p. 37). In Chapter II of CA, he looks at Thomas' analysis of being, individuality, substance, world, God, and grace, as instances where Thomas' unique anthropocentric a priori thought-form is found operating.

³⁰Metz, CA, p. 30.

³¹Metz, CA, p. 30, n. 6.

³²Metz, CA, p. 31.

respective understanding of being."³³ And within the history of thought, there exist certain moments which constitute a change in this ontological form of thinking, thereby establishing a new metaphysical basis for a new epoch of intellectual history.

As I will show, Metz believes that a new "anthropocentric" thought-form emerges within Thomas' theology which is inspired by the Christian revelation and which eventually becomes the a priori philosophical basis of modern historical consciousness.

Before I discuss this, however, it is important to examine the relationship between thought-form and thought-content, because it is here that one finds the beginnings of Metz's lifelong polemic against a dualistic Greek philosophy which is grounded in a cosmocentric thought-form. As I will show, Greek cosmocentrism becomes Metz's chief philosophical enemy because it subordinates the human subject to the determinants of nature. This subordination, when unwittingly appropriated by Christianity, subverts an authentically Christian understanding of persons as absolutely unique because of the freedom given to them by God.

³³Metz, CA, p. 31. Metz emphasizes the ontological status of a thought-form in order to ward off the criticism that it is a mere "style of thinking" emerging from a particular psychological aesthetic predisposition. Metz, CA, p. 31.

2. Relating Thought-Form and Thought-Content³⁴

Metz argues that the distinction between thought-form and thought-content corresponds to the distinction between an explicit understanding of existence and an implicit understanding of being operating beneath it.³⁵ Thought-content, in other words, refers to what is ontically oriented, to the status and ordering of specific existing things within a particular world-view. Thought-form, on the other hand, refers to what is ontologically oriented, to the a priori horizon of understanding within which the character of and relationship between particular existing things are immersed. There is therefore a "constant and insurmountable ontological difference"³⁶ between thought-form and thought-content, with priority given to thought-form.³⁷ Thought-form is an apriori

³⁴This section is indebted to James William Savolainen, "Theology in the Shadow of Marx: The Theory-Praxis Relationship in the Political Theology of Johann Baptist Metz and in the Liberation Theology of Hugo Assmann" (Th.D. diss., The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1982).

³⁵Metz, CA, pp. 31-32, n. 8.

³⁶Metz, CA, p. 33.

³⁷Metz thinks that Heidegger correctly distinguished between existence (Seiendem) and an understanding of being (Seinsverständnis), or Denkinhalt and Denkform. Heidegger stressed the fact that thought-form shapes ontological assertions. Metz, CA, pp. 34-35, n. 11. Metz's first dissertation was written on Heidegger, with a portion of it published as an article in 1953 titled "Heidegger und das Problem der Metaphysik," Scholastik 28 (1953): pp. 1-22. For a discussion of this dissertation see Johns, Man in the World, pp. 62-66, and Fiorenza, "The Thought of J.B. Metz," pp. 247-248.

understanding of being and, as Metz emphasizes, it is this being itself that "pushes forth this understanding of being [das Seinsverständnis] out of itself." In doing so, this a priori understanding of being "comes to its own self-givenness."³⁸ Metz writes:

According to Thomas, the encompassing understanding of being [Seinsverständnis] does not lie outside of understood being [verstandenen Seins], as if standing objectively over against it. It is rather the case that being [Sein] holds, on the basis of its 'transcendental' structure, the "subjectivity" of the understanding of being [des Seinsverständnisses] within itself and, by that, comes to its self-givenness (which can never adequately be objectivized or made "concrete"). Or, as Thomas formulates it: the truth of being [Sein] is not an "effect" of the understanding of being (Seins-Verstehens), but the understanding of being itself is a certain "effect", an "expression" of the truth of being - cognitio est quidam veritatis effectus (De Ver I,I). Being [Sein] itself pushes forth out of itself the understanding of being [Seinsverständnis].³⁹

In other words, an a priori comprehension of being (thought-form), which is un-objectifiable, always stands behind any particular understanding of existence and the human subject (thought-content) as its ground and source.

Metz stresses that even though form has priority over content, the two are inseparably united. Form does not stand behind content as if separate from it. Rather, it "forms or sketches that basic outlook in which a content of thinking at first becomes perceptible."⁴⁰ Thought-form becomes manifest

³⁸Metz, CA, pp. 31-32, n. 8.

³⁹Metz, CA, pp. 31-32, n. 8.

⁴⁰Metz, CA, p. 33.

within this "sketching or forming." For example, form and content cannot be separated in the same way that a formal logical technique of analysis can be separated from the actual content that it tries to structure and lay bare.⁴¹ Thought-form is not a "style of thinking" per se. Rather, it is prior to it and constitutes its ground. To confuse the two is a formalistic error that Metz wants to avoid.⁴²

Having established the unity-in-difference between thought-form and thought-content, with priority given to thought-form, Metz applies this distinction to the Greek and modern epochs. He shows how they differ in both thought-form and thought-content, and how understanding this difference is important in present attempts to relate, theologically, Christianity and modern culture. He admonishes Christianity to disengage itself from the debilitating influences of the Greek cosmocentric thought-form. Only in doing so, will it recognize itself as the founder of the modern anthropocentric thought-form.

⁴¹Metz asserts that the fundamental form of thinking goes deeper than a mere style of thought. In the case of Thomas, it goes deeper than any formal logical style that he might be using. In fact, the form of thinking is the basis of any such style, though never appearing itself as expressed content. See CA, p. 41, n. 1, where Metz criticizes E. Gilson and A. Kandler for missing this point in their analysis of Thomas. See also, p. 46, n. 7 for Metz's criticism of Gilson's Spirit of the Middle Ages.

⁴²Metz, CA, p. 33.

B. THOMAS' ANTHROPOCENTRIC THOUGHT-FORM

Given that a particular thought-form is the basis of an understanding of existence and the human subject at any given point in history, Metz argues that a change in thought-form initiates a transition from one intellectual epoch to another. Intellectual epochs are therefore distinguished by their thought-form, not their thought-content. He writes:

For it is not the respectively new content of thought, nor the new forms of questioning which accompany it, which are epoch-making within the history of thought. What really creates them is the peculiarly new formal mode of thinking, the new understanding of being [das neue Seinsverständnis], under whose dominance all thought content now stands, and within whose encompassing horizon they are placed.⁴³

Metz's central point is that in Thomas' theology a new thought-form or new "a priori representational scheme"⁴⁴ finds expression. This new thought-form gives subjectivity a unique status by understanding it as the medium through which being discloses itself. Being is disclosed in those self-transcending moments of thinking and willing which are distinctively human. Through these moments, subjectivity becomes the central instance of the self-differentiating capacity of being. It therefore becomes, for Thomas, "the primary place of the openness to being"⁴⁵ and "the sum of the

⁴³Metz, CA, pp. 45-46.

⁴⁴Metz, CA, p. 49.

⁴⁵Metz, CA, p. 55.

entire world process."⁴⁶

Metz points to a transcendental circle which is present in this new thought-form which Thomas' theology gives expression to. Within this thought-form, subjectivity and being are related to one another in a relationship of mutual disclosure.⁴⁷ On the one hand, the world⁴⁸ becomes world by moving toward "anima humana as its highest ontological reality

⁴⁶Metz, CA, p. 70.

⁴⁷Metz notes that being and human subjectivity do not disclose themselves objectivistically, as if entirely knowable. To the contrary, they actively resist total objectification. Metz, CA, p. 58. He acknowledges that a transcendental analysis of being is only implicitly present in Thomas, and that Thomas' understanding of being is still very much determined by a Greek-Aristotelian scheme of things. An explicit transcendental analysis of being does not appear until Kant. He thinks Kant, however, missed the fact that the "the power of being itself" is disclosed within subjectivity, a disclosure which takes place in the very fact of the un-objectifiability of the human ego. Metz, CA, p. 58.

⁴⁸In his 1963 editorial revisions of Rahner's Hörer des Wortes, Metz clarifies for us what he means by world. Because an interpretation of the world is always an interpretation of man, the world is understood as human history, a history which comes about due to "the factual material self-development of the human spirit." In as much as the world becomes history when the human spirit turns to it, so too the spirit comes to its own reality only in its turning to the world as history. K. Rahner, Hearer of the Word, trans. Michael Richards (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 117, n. 6. German Original: Hörer des Wortes (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1963).

(forma),"⁴⁹ that is, it comes about through the self-transcending moments of human cognition and willing. As Metz puts it, "the being (forma) of the world (materia)" is the "real being-outside-of-himself [Außersichsein] (super aliud delatum esse) of man."⁵⁰ It is the primary occasion of his self-transcendence.⁵¹ It is not an object "out there" but

⁴⁹Metz, CA, p. 70. In Munich, in 1960 (October 23-26), Metz gave an address to the sixth German Philosophy Congress on the relationship between theology and metaphysics. He suggested that Dasein, as the peculiar being of man, is "the basis of the possible agreement between the metaphysical and theological orders." He noted that the Thomist term corresponding to Dasein is anima: "the anima that by releasing its spiritual-sentient powers unfolds into the world and is related constantly to itself" (J.B. Metz, "The Theological World and the Metaphysical World," Philosophy Today 10 [1966]: pp. 260-261, n. 3. German original: "Theologische und metaphysische Ordnung," Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie 83 [1961]).

⁵⁰Metz, CA, pp. 68-69.

⁵¹Thomas thinks of God also in terms of human subjectivity. God is thought of anthropocentrically, not objectivistically. Metz writes: "God can be asserted not in objective representation but, if at all, only in transcendental reflection on the conditions of objective thinking" (Metz, CA, pp. 73-74). God, in other words, is thought of as the condition of the possibility of actions and thoughts in the world as well as that towards which these aim for their fulfillment. He is the origin and goal of human willing and acting. Persons are therefore uniquely defined as self-transcendent by virtue of their transcendental "excessus" which is the basis of their cognizing and striving self-existence. Metz, CA, p. 74. "'Our knowledge in its reality is opened up into the infinite', and our will, 'in its origin awakened by God himself', is always already necessarily in 'advance', in the desire towards the one and the absolute" (Metz, CA, pp. 74-75).

This is the basis on which Metz can say that human subjectivity is self-transcendent. Man is an ecstatic spirit drawn beyond himself towards his own self-fulfillment in God as his "finis ultimus." Metz, CA, p. 80. This is what Metz means when he says: "Man is freed to be himself in the first instance only through his connection with transcendence.

rather "the basic feature of his ontological constitution."⁵²
 It is always the world "in which the spirit of man has already entered."⁵³

On the other hand, because the world exists as the locus of the "real presence...of the ecstatic human spirit,"⁵⁴ it is by interpreting and acting within the world that persons are disclosed to themselves. Persons become persons in their encountering the world. They exist in unity with a world which is the objective self-completion of their subjectivity.⁵⁵

Transcendence appears originally as the 'liberating freedom of human freedom', as the 'subjectivity of the subjectivity of man', as the concentration within the intimacy of the being of the self" (Metz, CA, p. 76). Or again: "'To come before God' is at the same time the highest form of man's 'coming to himself', the fulfillment of his subjectivity. God (as finis ultimus) brings man, in the deepest and most encompassing representation of his being-human, into confrontation with himself" (Metz, CA, p. 80).

⁵²Metz, CA, p. 69. Elsewhere Metz says: "All corporeal reality of man is represented as effected reality of his anima itself....The reality of the corporal presence, of the mundane mode of being of man, cannot adequately be separated from the reality of his relationship to himself. His corporeal reality lies within the one reality of his subjectivity" (Metz, CA, p. 71).

⁵³Metz, CA, p. 68. Metz acknowledges that what he is saying has been said already by Karl Rahner in Geist in Welt, 2d ed. (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1957), p. 405.

⁵⁴Metz, CA, p. 70.

⁵⁵Metz is weaving his way between a subject-object dualism and a bad subjectivism. He wants to avoid asserting both that the world is totally other (dualism) and that it has no reality of its own (subjectivism). By positing the world as the real "being outside of himself" of man, he affirms the real externality of the world while avoiding the charge of mere subjectivism. He writes: "The world is real because man in his existence in reality confronts himself, because he exists as ecstatic self-existence" (Metz, CA, p. 69). On the

Metz writes:

Encountering the world is always a self-encounter. An interpretation of the world is always an interpretation of man (in civilization, technology, culture, history) because man, as one who exists (that means however as subjectivity), is always already "in the world." The worldliness of the world...is represented - anthropocentrically - as the real Wherein [Worin] of the ontological constitution, of the becoming-man of man.⁵⁶

In summary, Metz highlights what is new in Thomas' thought-form. In it, the world for the first time is defined anthropocentrically and persons are understood in light of the world. Subjectivity and the world thus form an epistemological circle, each serving as the necessary interpretive framework for the other. The world is understood only in terms of transcendental subjectivity, and transcendental subjectivity only in terms of the world.⁵⁷ Whereas the being of the world emerges as a moment of human self-transcendence, human self-transcendence (being as spirit) emerges only in light of the world.

Human subjectivity is therefore the place where the

other hand, by showing how the world comes about "as the locus of the real presence...of the ecstatic human spirit" (Metz, CA, p. 70), he avoids the Greek error of seeing the world as totally other. He thinks Thomas has resolved this issue in precisely this way.

⁵⁶Metz, CA, p. 68

⁵⁷We note that by dialectically relating human subjectivity and the world, Metz rejects an objectifying deficiency within Greek cosmocentrism. He rejects the way "the worldliness of the world...is presented as...that which is other undialectically and, in this sense, that which is absolutely opposed, strange and alienating, over against subjectivity" (Metz, CA, p. 68).

a priori (metaphysical) synthesis of persons and world takes place.⁵⁸ Just as the form and content of thought are related to each other in the manner of an a priori unity-in-difference, wherein form assumes primacy, so too world (content) and human subjectivity (form) are related to each other in the manner of an a priori unity-in-difference,⁵⁹ with priority given to transcendental subjectivity.⁶⁰ Just as form assumes an a priori status in the form-content relationship, as that which gives unity and form to the content of thinking, so too human subjectivity gives unity and form to the world. Human subjectivity is ontologically prior to the world in that the world subsists as a moment within human self-transcendence.

Metz argues that a turning point occurs in human history when this new intellectual epoch, embryonically realized in Thomas' re-appraisal of human subjectivity (his

⁵⁸Metz, CA, p. 69.

⁵⁹The metaphysical categories operative within man, of a priori-a posteriori, formal-material, and transcendental-temporal, stand in a relationship of mutual determinacy. Metz writes: "The one is 'given-of-itself' only in and through the other. Only if the transcendental a priori has to realize 'itself' in time, a posteriori, does it become evident how an (a posteriori) historical event becomes Dasein-founding" (Metz, "The Theological World and the Metaphysical World," p. 261, n. 9).

⁶⁰Subjectivity has an objective priority in this relationship because it is a determined mode of the presence of being in general. Metz, CA, p. 51. I am indebted here again to Savolainen for clarifying how Metz dialectically relates the world and human subjectivity. See Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp. 263-264.

new anthropocentric thought-form), replaces the Greek intellectual epoch which preceded it. I will explain.

According to Metz, Greek thought is dominated by a cosmocentric thought-form, not an anthropocentric one. It is cosmocentric because a static cosmos (nature) serves as the a priori framework within which being is understood.⁶¹ Being is thought of in terms of a static, pre-given, objectively real cosmos in which persons are placed and ordered. It is not understood in terms of a subjectivity which is grounded in God. Within this "objective-mundanelly oriented horizon of being,"⁶² persons are conceived of statically⁶³ and "objectivized into a scheme of levels or a hierarchy,"⁶⁴ and therefore placed alongside other existing things.⁶⁵

Metz concludes, therefore, that Greek thought is anthropocentric in terms of its thought-content yet cosmocentric in terms of its thought-form. He explains:

⁶¹Metz describes the turn from cosmocentric to anthropocentric thought form as a "turn from objectivity to subjectivity, from substance to subject or, more accurately, from an objectivistic to a transcendental, from an ontic to an ontological understanding of the subject, from world to man, from nature to history, from the abstract to the concrete generality, from the static-spatial-reified, to a temporal-personal vision" (Metz, CA, p. 111).

⁶²Metz, CA, p. 49.

⁶³Metz, CA, p. 66.

⁶⁴Metz, CA, p. 90.

⁶⁵Metz does not deny that the Greeks placed persons above other existing things within this hierarchy. They ranked them highest by virtue of reason, even though this ranking owed itself to cosmological considerations.

Greek thinking is anthropocentric as to its content, that is, ontically, in reference to the order of being (=material anthropocentricity). However, as to its form, ontologically, in reference to the prevailing understanding of being, it is cosmocentric-objectivistic (=formal cosmocentricity). Thomist thinking, on the other hand, with reference to the content, that is, ontically, with regard to the order of beings, is theocentric (=material theocentricity). However, formally, that is, ontologically, with regard to the prevailing understanding of being, it is anthropocentric, therefore oriented along the particular mode of existence of man, along "subjectivity" (= formal anthropocentricity).⁶⁶

C. CHRISTIAN REVELATION AS THE BASIS OF THOMAS' ANTHROPOCENTRIC THOUGHT-FORM

To this point, I have explained how Thomas, according to Metz, moves beyond the cosmocentrism of Greek thought and initiates a new anthropocentric era within intellectual history. In terms of thought-form, Thomas shifts from a cosmocentric a priori horizon of understanding, ontologically speaking, to an anthropocentric one. In terms of thought-content, he shifts from an anthropocentric world-view, ontically speaking, to a theocentric one. Hence, while Greek thought is materially anthropocentric and formally cosmocentric, Thomas' thought is materially theocentric and formally anthropocentric.

Metz's next step is to show how this anthropocentric consciousness is related to Christian revelation. He believes that Thomas' new thought-form is a product of

⁶⁶Metz, CA, p. 47.

revelation and fulfills revelation's philosophical demands.⁶⁷ In Thomas, revelation begins to create for itself the appropriate philosophical horizon necessary for its mediation into a theological content capable of bringing about God's plan of salvation. Put differently, revelation demands a philosophical appraisal of being (thought-form) in which human personhood is fundamentally reassessed in terms of subjectivity.⁶⁸ Thomas' anthropocentric form of consciousness is the first important step in the emergence of this reassessment. Theology's task, therefore, is to recognize the emergence and ongoing development of this divinely inspired philosophical framework of understanding (thought-form), and to use it as the philosophical basis of an effective theological transmission of the Gospel. A closer look at Metz's understanding of revelation will make clear this relationship between revelation and Thomas' thought-form.

For Metz, revelation is not a one time holy intrusion into a foreign world but the ongoing process of God's gracious self-communication.⁶⁹ Revelation "creates for itself in nature the dispositio (ultima) for its arising in the

⁶⁷Metz, CA, p. 108.

⁶⁸Metz says that the "leading intention" of Christliche Anthropozentrik is to show that revelation, correctly understood, involves a fundamental reassessment of man in terms of radical subjectivity. Metz, CA, p. 109.

⁶⁹Metz, CA, p. 100.

horizon of this nature."⁷⁰ This disposition is none other than the unique transcendental subjectivity of persons. God is compelled to work through this subjectivity if he is not to be seen as working magically or mechanically in persons.⁷¹ Put simply, the transcendental subjectivity of persons is "already illuminated by grace"⁷² and, as such, a moment of the continually one and whole appearance of revelation.⁷³

⁷⁰Metz, CA, p. 100.

⁷¹Metz points to the Thomist principle of "secundum conditionem humanae naturae" which demands that an objectivistic appraisal of revelation be avoided. Metz, CA, p. 98. He writes: "The revelatory word regarding man, which steps forth finally and totally from a transcendent origin full of grace, cannot simply ignore the transcendent originality of that subjectivity by which man is distinguished ontologically. Rather, it must expand within the horizon of this subjectivity. The subjectivity which perceives by listening, and in this way perfects itself, belongs, therefore, theologically speaking, in formal pre-definition to the happening of revelation itself. The individually pre-set horizon of human existence mediates, constitutively, the (manifest) arrival of revelation in man" (Metz, CA, p. 98). See also Metz's editorial addition to Rahner's Hearer of the Word, p. 22, n. 6. Here, he discusses how and why grace, as the divine enlightening of humanity's a priori capacity to hear the word of revelation, is a basic mode of revelation as divine word.

⁷²For a more in-depth discussion of how humankind is an event of God's self-communication, see K. Rahner's discussion of the "Supernatural Existential" in K. Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), pp. 126-133. German original: Grundkurs des Glaubens: Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1976). For an earlier discussion of the same, see Theological Investigations, vol. 1 (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 300-302 and 310-315.

⁷³Revelation "occurs as a mode of the spiritual self-possession (intellectus), as 'the light of men' (John 1,4). The subjectivity which is always already illuminated by grace belongs to the substance [Ansich] of revelation. It is an

Because revelation creates transcendental subjectivity as a condition for its reception, it is able now, through Christ, to break into this transcendental horizon and brighten it up. Jesus Christ is the essential factor in the revelatory illumination of humankind's transcendental subjectivity. By illuminating for us who we are already, Jesus seeks to bring about "an epochal (this means transcendentially underivable) occasion of human self-understanding."⁷⁴ He seeks to transform human consciousness in order to create a new a priori horizon of understanding which, in turn, can serve as the basis of the effective theological reception of the gospel message.⁷⁵

element of its continually one and whole appearance" (Metz, CA, p. 100). Metz points here to an essential unity between revelation and grace, a theme which becomes important in his revisions of Rahner's Hearer of the Word a year later. Rahner, Hearer of the Word, p. ix. Metz's point is that factual divine revelation does not merely coincide with the total history of humanity, but has a spatial-temporal placement within it. A person's total history, in which the human spirit consummates and objectivizes itself, is at the same time a history of revelation determined by grace. Rahner, Hearer of the Word, p. 158, n. 6. All of human history is, in fact, inwardly determined by a person's a priori history with God. Rahner, Hearer of the Word, p. 157, n. 4.

⁷⁴Metz, CA, p. 99. This 'underivable' element refers to the fact that human reflection cannot objectively articulate on its own this a priori horizon. See also Metz's editorial additions to Rahner's Hearer of the Word, p. 10, n. 8. German original: Hörer des Wortes, p. 23, n. 8. Here, he states that there are two constitutive moments in a person's capacity to hear the word of revelation: a person's spiritual transcendence (one's subjectivity) and the elevation or illumination of this subjectivity by grace.

⁷⁵Metz, CA, pp. 101-102. See also Metz's editorial additions to Rahner's Hearers of the Word, p. 113, n. 3, and p. 78, n. 6. Here he makes the point that in the same way that the transcendental a priori of the human spirit

Revelation is therefore attempting to create for itself the right philosophical framework for its most potent theological expression.⁷⁶ As Metz puts it:

Revelation becomes theology where a reflex self-understanding, where philosophy, becomes methodologically effective in its own realm. The theological mediation of revelation happens therefore always through philosophy; philosophy and theology form continuously a complete unity in the auditory-reflex appropriation of the word of revelation.⁷⁷

The writings of Thomas, which give expression to and are based on the new anthropocentric thought-form, constitute this "methodologically effective philosophy." They form that biblically inspired person-centered philosophy intended by revelation and required for revelation's theological self-realization.

Given that this divinely inspired philosophy emerges for the first time in Thomas, Metz thinks Thomas is the first real Christian theologian. He is the first to develop a theology in which a "conceptually clarified understanding of

determines itself when it enters upon a posteriori-categorical reality, so too transcendental revelation is actualized within the categorical history of revelation, becoming itself temporal. Categorical and transcendental revelation thus form a complete unity.

⁷⁶Revelation "mediates itself into theology when it brings forth and compels historically that 'spirit'...under whose governance revelation is illuminated into a theological system" (Metz, CA, p. 103). Theology is therefore the means by which the "content" of revelation becomes known to humanity. Philosophy, which attempts to bring to articulation a certain a priori thought-form, is the required medium for the transmission of any and all theology.

⁷⁷Metz, CA, p. 102.

being [Seinsverständnis],"⁷⁸ inspired by revelation, becomes operative. In Thomas, revelation inspires not only a systematic appraisal of the content of revelation but, more importantly, the horizon of the possibility for understanding this content in the first place.⁷⁹ Revelation inspires in Thomas a new thought-content and a new thought-form. Again, Metz:

Theology is Christian, then, only when both the object of the systematically clarifying reflection, and its horizon itself are determined in a Christian way,...when this remembering reflection itself is formed and pervaded in a Christian way, that is, by a biblical Christian form of thinking (at least in its beginnings). For the logos of Christian theology is not to be qualified primarily in a material way (starting with the objects), but in a 'formal' way. Thus, in order for Christian theology to arise, there must at the same time arise a new thought-form.⁸⁰

The question remains: what precisely is this "biblical Christian form of thinking" that revelation inspires in Thomas, and why is it the most adequate philosophical conveyer of revelation's content? Metz's answer is that "the revelatory word, with its 'anthropocentric point', demands the 'anthropocentric thought-form' adequate to it."⁸¹ In other words, because the content of revelation is person-centered,

⁷⁸Metz, CA, p. 104.

⁷⁹Metz warns that revelation "must not be misunderstood objectivistically" (Metz, CA, p. 98). It ought to be considered both in terms of its content and its form. Metz, CA, p. 99.

⁸⁰Metz, CA, pp. 105-106.

⁸¹Metz, CA, p. 110.

oriented toward the reconciliation of persons to God and one-another, the philosophical medium through which this message is conveyed must itself be person-centered. A philosophy compatible with revelation must give rise to a systematic appraisal of human personhood high enough to be the medium of God's gracious love. Only a person-centered philosophy, in which transcendental subjectivity is systematically exposed as the receptive medium for God's love, is adequate.

Hence, because the content of revelation concerns a new and unique re-appraisal of persons in light of God's intimate and saving relationship with them (which calls them to become brothers and sisters of Christ to the extent they become sacraments of God's son to others⁸²), it requires a corresponding anthropocentric thought-form for its conveyance. The theological defining of persons as sacraments of God's love, by the content of revelation, demands a philosophical re-defining of persons as transcendently grounded in God. Only persons who understand themselves anthropocentrically, as subjects grounded in God, can function as 'sacraments' of God's love to others. Only a transcendental way of being in the world, of thinking and acting, can correspond fully to the inner love-dynamic of the revelatory word.⁸³

⁸²Metz, CA, p. 109.

⁸³Metz, CA, p. 113.

D. Metz's Secularization Thesis

So far, I have explained that Metz thinks Thomas' thought-form is the basis of a newly emerging Christian form of consciousness. I will now discuss Metz's claim that this thought-form constitutes the basis of the modern epoch. He begins by telling us his method, that is, that he is going to interpret the historical uniqueness of Thomas' thought-form "forwards" rather than "backwards." To interpret Thomas backwards, as is generally done, is to understand him in light of Aristotle. To interpret him forwards, as Metz intends, is to understand his anthropocentrism as the forgotten mother of modern anthropocentric consciousness.⁸⁴

Metz's thesis, therefore, is that modern thought is the conceptual working out of Thomas' anthropocentric thought-form. Kant's "Copernican turn," and Hegel's "revolution of consciousness," begin then already with Thomas.⁸⁵ Thomas mediates between Greek and modern thought and gives birth to the new anthropocentric way of thinking characteristic of modernity.

⁸⁴"Whatever stands as the origin of a thinking, shows itself only in the course of intellectual history. True origin is always to be interpreted 'looking forward'....What is in the source, and what the source itself is, can be seen only in the stream" (Metz, CA, p. 124).

⁸⁵Metz, CA, pp. 124-125.

Metz understands Thomas' mediating role between Greek and modern thought in a two-fold way. First, he thinks Thomas' anthropocentrism is the means by which a new ontological appraisal of existence and the self has entered into the history of philosophy. And second, he thinks that through Thomas the anthropocentric direction of revelation has found its place within theology, and through theology into philosophy. Both mediations, he notes, are intimately connected.⁸⁶ I will explain.

First, Metz argues that Thomas is responsible for the emergence of a new metaphysical understanding of being and the self (a new thought-form) within modern philosophy. Modern philosophy is therefore wrong in thinking it has emancipated itself from Christian influence. To the contrary, it is the unwitting inheritor of an anthropocentric a priori horizon of understanding first given expression to by Thomas. The historical a priori "given to" modern philosophy is thus an anthropocentricity inspired by Christianity and articulated by Thomas.⁸⁷ Metz goes as far as to say that modern philosophy

⁸⁶Thomas "becomes the historical locus of a two-fold mediation...: from the point of view of the history of philosophy, the mediation of a new understanding of being [Seinsverständnis], and from the point of view of the history of theology, a mediation of revelation into theology (in the narrow sense), and through it, into the philosophical history of the spirit...The two mediations...always form a continuously whole unity" (Metz, CA, pp. 117-118).

⁸⁷This point is discussed in a 1961 article concerning the relationship between theology and metaphysics wherein Metz argues that metaphysics presupposes theology. He writes: "Man's refined understanding of himself from an historically

is really "Christian philosophy in anonymity."⁸⁸

This Christian inheritance does not mean that modern philosophy continues to be dominated by Christianity. On the contrary, it has been liberated by it. The liberating spirit of the Christian incarnation releases philosophy to be more fully itself, that is, to be more fully secular.⁸⁹ Christian revelation, mediated through Thomas, therefore gives modern philosophy its starting point within human subjectivity, as well as its aggressively emphasized independence from a

appropriated transcendental origin" presupposes a "reflexively ascertained and developed understanding of himself based on the address of God's free word" (Metz, "The Theological World and the Metaphysical World," p. 254). Metaphysics, in other words, cannot "ground" the Dasein. As a reflexive science, it can only act as a servant to theology and "expound that metaphysical a priori which points beyond itself and forces man into his ground taking historical decision" (the religious act of faith). In doing so, it serves the spiritual destiny of man "who acts from a more profound and richer a priori than he can bring to fruition by transcendental deduction" (Metz, "The Theological World and the Metaphysical World," p. 256). A metaphysic, in other words, perfects itself only by becoming a Christian philosophy, a philosophy which explicitly acknowledges the revelatory event, particularly the way it defines human personhood as free subjectivity before God, as its basis (as the form of its content).

⁸⁸Metz, CA, p. 134. Metz assumes here that philosophy, whether modern or ancient, cannot articulate the thought-form within which it operates. A thought-form always remains un-objectifiable to the philosopher who is immersed in it. Philosophical reflection, which tries to explicate this unthematic form, is already moving within the horizon of it. Metz writes: Philosophy "cannot itself create that thought-form from which it originates, that understanding of being [Seinsverständnis] which encompasses it, but it can only ever take it over. Philosophy is, in relation to its thought-form, always directed back into an historical a priori beyond all reflexive self-assertainment" (Metz, CA, p. 129).

⁸⁹Metz, CA, p. 132, n. 22.

supernatural order of salvation.⁹⁰ Again, Metz:

Modern thinking comes, therefore, from a theological a priori,...an a priori which...establishes the reflected differentiation between theology and philosophy and, thereby, entrusts philosophy to itself in a true sense.⁹¹

Second, it is through Thomas that the anthropocentric focus of revelation is mediated into theology, and through theology, into the history of philosophy.⁹² For the first time, through Thomas' theological works,⁹³ the Christian logos gains "historical power over the human spirit"⁹⁴ by establishing an anthropocentric thought-form as the basis of the modern philosophical world-view. This means that the spirit of Christianity has been seeking to direct the history of philosophy in a salvific direction all along,⁹⁵ and it has finally succeeded in modern philosophy's appropriation of an anthropocentric thought-form which is authentically

⁹⁰Metz, CA, p. 132, n. 22

⁹¹Metz, CA, p. 132, n. 22.

⁹²Metz, CA, p. 118.

⁹³Metz notes that in Thomas' theological writings we find this new thought-form. These writings are shaped, most clearly, by the anthropocentric intention of the revelatory word.

⁹⁴Metz, CA, p. 125.

⁹⁵"Thomas appears, then, as that historically graspable locus in which philosophical thinking (represented primarily in 'the philosopher': Aristotle) is struck by the 'spirit' of Christianity, which proves its power and universal claim precisely by the fact that it illuminates, and changes it epochally, and furthers this philosophical spirit itself" (Metz, CA, pp. 124-125).

Christian. Put another way, the Christian logos has gained ground in its attempt to win power over the human spirit by bringing about the acceptance, within modern philosophy, of the turn to the subject. Metz concludes that modernity is "the philosophical realization of the spirit of Christianity."⁹⁶

E. Metz's Critique of Greek Cosmocentric Notions of Personhood and the World: A First Critique of Christian Apathy

How then is the above relevant to my broader theme of Metz's critique of religious apathy? It is clear that Metz's major concern to this point is not with a critique of privatized Christianity. He is more concerned with re-evaluating Thomist thought in light of modernity. In his effort to apply new tools to the interpretation of Thomas, he establishes an apologetic front with modern secularization, as well as shows that the modern form of thinking is a result of the ongoing historical unfolding of the Christian spirit.

Given this difference, between the aim of Metz's early and later writings, there is nevertheless an important thread of continuity. Both, I believe, are guided by the same underlying intention. Let me explain.

We have begun to see how Metz's early writings are a critique of Christianity's appropriation of an a-historical

⁹⁶Metz, CA, p. 126.

Greek anthropology, in which persons are thought of as things within an eternal cosmos. His later writings, as I will show, are also a critique of how persons are misunderstood. They criticize the privatized and a-historical understanding of human subjectivity offered by modernity.

My point is this, that in both cases Metz is trying to find a theoretical framework within which to talk about the God-person relationship without diminishing the importance of the world and history. His early theology, for example, is an attempt to integrate the world as history into a transcendental understanding of human personhood. At the same time, he criticizes the ontic and a-historical defining of persons which takes place within Greek cosmocentrism. This early critique paves the way for his later critique, even though it will use different conceptual tools. He goes on, in his later theology, to define persons as concrete socio-historical beings, while at the same time denouncing the privatizing and a-historical tendencies of the Enlightenment and post-modern thought.⁹⁷

In both instances, Metz is looking for the causes of Christian apathy. He wants to make Christian love more socially and politically potent by removing the barriers to its historical realization. To do this, he searches for an

⁹⁷See Metz, "Political theology of the subject as a theological criticism of middle-class religion," Faith in History and Society, pp. 32-49.

understanding of persons which relates the spiritual and social dimensions of human life, while at the same time rejecting non-liberating and non-social anthropologies. He will eventually reject Greek, Enlightenment, and post-modern anthropologies for ignoring the concrete historical nature of persons as revealed in Jesus Christ. On the constructive side, he searches for a more adequate context within which Christian personhood can be articulated. In the end, he chooses history (theologically understood) over nature as the framework within which persons and the world are best understood. History, understood within the horizon of revelation, fosters a new appraisal of persons as free in the world defined as history.

To exemplify this continuity, it will suffice for now to quote what Metz said as recently as 1986. He attempts here to answer a question put to him by Peter Rottländer concerning the relationship between his proposed post-idealistic theology and the ongoing challenge of Marxism. His answer causes him to reiterate, once again, that concern which has motivated his theology from the very beginning: his concern about the dangers associated with modern Christianity's blind appropriation of the Greek-Hellenistic heritage and its essentially a-historical consciousness. Metz writes:

'History', for the Jewish-Christian religion, is that which distinguishes it from all other great world religions. Ultimately, it is guided by the vision of 'God and History', or rather 'God in History'. There are several reasons why this is not sufficiently clear to us. For one, Christianity and theology now stand beneath the

anonymous pressure of our late modernity with its tendency for post-history. For another, it seems to me that today the irrepressible Jewish heritage within Christianity is too much, and too onesidedly, overshadowed by the Greek-hellenistic heritage, with its a-historical cosmocentrism (and in my eyes this has to do with the fact that there exists at present a secret or, as well, open coalition between this Greek-hellenistic heritage and the tendency towards a so-called post-modernity)...[There exists, therefore,] a one-sided over-valuing of the Greek-hellenistic heritage within theology...,[an] over-valuing of the God of Plato over against the historical God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.⁹⁸

This warning is reminiscent of a good deal of what was present in Christliche Anthropozentrik, written a quarter of a century earlier.⁹⁹ It is clear that Metz has not abandoned his earlier

⁹⁸J.B. Metz, "Politische Theologie und die Herausforderung des Marxismus. Ein Gespräch des Herausgebers mit Johann Baptist Metz," in Theologie der Befreiung und Marxismus, ed. Peter Rottländer (Münster: edition liberación, 1986), p. 180. The translation is my own.

⁹⁹History does not have the same meaning for Metz in 1986 as it did in 1962. There remains, however, an important similarity. History is still generally thought of as that arena within which and through which God's saving actions take place. In CA, he understands history as the medium through which the Christian logos strives to reveal itself. For example, the anthropocentric thought-form which Thomas introduced and which works itself out in modern philosophy is thought of as a product of the "historically developing logos of Christianity" (Metz, "The Theological World and the Metaphysical World," p. 259). History is thus the necessary medium for the unfolding of the word of God. And since the word of God concerns the revelation of the transcendental a priori structure (grounding in God) of persons, it is, as well, the necessary temporal a posteriori medium for the actualization of transcendental personhood. Transcendental subjectivity is thus fulfilled in concrete historical acts of selfless love. Metz, "The Theological and the Metaphysical World," p. 261, n. 9.

In 1986, Metz understands history in terms of apocalypticism, as a time of suffering. No longer is it a metaphysical construct. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 105. Though his understanding of history changes, he still thinks of history as the inescapable arena within which the love of neighbor is realized and through which persons find

uneasiness with the misguided theological appropriation of the a-historical Greek philosophical tradition. His goal remains the same: to articulate an authentically Christian anthropology which does justice to the original Jewish-Christian valuing of freedom in history.

In the following, I will show more clearly how Metz finds in Thomas the authentically Christian social anthropology which he is looking for. For a short while at least, he thinks he has found in Thomas a spiritual (transcendental) understanding of persons which does not limit, by implication, the importance of history and the world as essential features of being human. He thinks Thomas' theology, for the first time, gives philosophical and theological expression to the truly incarnational character of human life.

Metz uses this transcendental and incarnational understanding of persons as a vantage point from which to criticize Greek cosmocentrism in more detail. He questions Christianity's unwitting appropriation of cosmocentrism and the abandonment of its own unique incarnational and transcendental way of understanding persons and freedom. Put simply, he tries to replace Greek anthropology with Thomistic anthropology. Thomas' anthropology is more authentically Christian because it bears witness, more fully, to the Hebrew

their self-fulfillment.

and Christian understanding of persons. It understands persons as spiritual beings for whom the world, as history, is an inseparable part of the human makeup.

Given this, Metz argues that Thomas is the first to articulate an ontological appraisal of persons which is not overly spiritualized. And Thomas does this without a devaluing of the social and historical makeup of persons. He shows how persons, in light of Christian revelation, are essentially free subjects in the world as history. They are not mere things trapped within an eternal cosmos.¹⁰⁰

To draw out Metz's critique of the cosmocentric understanding of persons and the world, the following is

¹⁰⁰Two years after writing Christliche Anthropozentrik, Metz wrote an article entitled: "Freedom as a Threshold Problem Between Philosophy and Theology", Philosophy Today 10 (1966): pp. 264-299. Hereafter cited as "Freedom as a Threshold Problem." The German original was entitled "Freiheit als philosophisch-theologisches Grenzproblem," in Gott in Welt: Festgabe für Karl Rahner, vol. 1, ed. J.B. Metz (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), pp. 287-314. In it, he argues for an understanding of freedom as 'transcendental freedom', in the same way as he had done earlier in Christliche Anthropozentrik. Referring to Thomas' achievement in giving voice to this essential freedom of persons, he writes: "A way of thinking was needed that could greet the spirit of revelation with an openness for the underived and unobjectivizable positivity of the historical subject, a kind of thinking that could attend to the fundamental being-freedom of man. Thus it came about that the deliverance of man through the Christian message entered the history of thought as the gradual liberation of man's understanding of being and of himself in the direction of the primary individuality of human subjectivity. There was a formal reorientation of man's understanding of himself from the horizon of thing-nature toward the horizon of 'liberated' nature as found in modern thought, though of course it proceeded under the most varied leadership" (Metz, "Freedom as a Threshold Problem," p. 267).

divided into two parts. The first compares and contrasts Christian and non-Christian ways of understanding and relating personhood, transcendence, and freedom, while the second outlines Metz's critique of the cosmocentric way of understanding the world and history. From here, I will move to the next major section of this chapter and discuss Metz's critique of the unwitting appropriation of these non-Christian Greek notions by early Christianity and modern Catholicism. This study argues that this critique is important because it is Metz's first attempt, in a life-long theological effort, to liberate the socio-historical power of Christian love from entrapment within privatistic ways of understanding and relating Christian life and the world.

1. Personhood: Transcendence and Freedom

Metz believes that Thomas understands transcendence anthropocentrically, not cosmocentrically. That is, he understands transcendence within the horizon of human subjectivity and not of nature. Transcendence is not something which exists objectively, distinct from persons, as the Greeks thought.¹⁰¹ Neither is it something spatially located which exists beyond history.¹⁰² For the Greeks, for example, human permanence is thought of in terms of a

¹⁰¹Metz, CA, p. 73.

¹⁰²Metz, CA, pp. 111-112.

relationship which persons have to "space," whereby space is thought of as something numinous. "Transcendence itself is thought of 'spatially'" because "it does not become, it does not pass away, it is the epitome of the eternal, it is the medium of the realm of the gods."¹⁰³

Thomas, in contrast, understands transcendence in terms of subjectivity, not in terms of numinous space. Transcendence is that which constitutes persons as persons.¹⁰⁴ It is the a priori basis of what it means to be human, that is, it is experienced in the ever-present a priori lurement of the human reason and will towards God and is most fully actualized through the love of one's neighbor.¹⁰⁵ Thomas refers to this pre-directedness of human cognition and will

¹⁰³Metz, CA, p. 111, n. 23

¹⁰⁴Elsewhere, Metz discusses in more detail the relationship between transcendence and freedom. He says that freedom, transcendently understood, is the divinely grounded, pre-reflective, ontological basis of human existence. It is what constitutes persons as persons because it is the "faculty for the wholeness and finalization of human existence" and is grounded in God as mystery. We experience it as that "which we are, as which we exist....It constitutes the horizon of any possible experience....It is experienced transcendently, not categorically" (Metz, "Freedom as a Threshold Problem," p. 268).

¹⁰⁵In a meditative text on the Advent of God, Metz speaks of transcendence as mystery, as "the silent sway of God's mystery" made actual by fully opening oneself to "mankind itself and all the aspects of man's concrete life in history" (J.B. Metz, The Advent of God, The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York, trans. John Drury [New York: The Newman Press, 1970], p. 1. German original: Advent Gottes [Munich: Ars Sacra, 1959]).

towards love, and therefore God, as "excessus" (ecstasy).¹⁰⁶ As ecstatic, the human spirit fulfills itself by allowing itself to be moved towards God as its "finis ultimus," as the end goal of its self-fulfillment.¹⁰⁷ Hence, whereas the Greeks understand transcendence spatially, Thomas understands it teleologically.¹⁰⁸ Metz writes:

Man's collectedness (ordinatio) towards the ultimate goal, by love, accomplishes itself as an active collecting (dispositio) of the whole man. The 'conversio ad finem ultimum' happens as a total opening of man's being for itself....'The ultimate goal of man means his highest self-fulfillment.' To 'come before God' is at the same time the highest form of 'the coming to oneself' of man, the fulfillment of his subjectivity. God (as finis ultimus) confronts man, in the deepest and most extensive representation of humanity, with himself.¹⁰⁹

Human transcendence is thus an occasion of divine transcendence "from ahead."¹¹⁰ It is the human spirit being

¹⁰⁶Metz, CA, p. 74.

¹⁰⁷Metz, CA, p. 77.

¹⁰⁸Transcendence is that "gathering horizon (finis) of that original cognitive free self-fulfillment [Selbstvollzug] (reditio completa) by which man exists" (Metz, CA, p. 77).

¹⁰⁹Metz, CA, p. 80.

¹¹⁰In The Advent of God (1959), Metz speaks of the "religious destiny of mankind" in terms of God's coming in the future, a coming which "will show up the world for what it really is and then transform it. All our masks and masquerades will fall away, and only the poverty of love will abide" (Metz, The Advent of God, p. 13).

It is interesting to note that already at this time in Metz's career, transcendence, as mystery, is described eschatologically as a reality which "threatens to break in upon us," to "transform" our world. Metz, The Advent of God, p. 13. It is "God's lightning bolt" (Metz, The Advent of God, p. 19). Here, eschatology is understood with the conceptual framework of transcendental theology. God is imaged as "the secret yearning of the heart" (Metz, The Advent of God, p.

ecstatically drawn ahead through acts of love towards its fulfillment in God. Through love, persons become most fully who they were meant to be, actualizing themselves in self-transcendence towards God.¹¹¹

Unlike the Greeks, who kept transcendence and human subjectivity apart, or at most saw the individual as a mere instance of an abstract universal,¹¹² Christianity, via Thomas, affirms the self as the particular occasion of the presence of transcendence. It recognizes Jesus as the form of the "universale (possibile) concretissimum," the universal within the concrete particular. As Metz puts it, Jesus is the individual who became "in his unique and un-repeatable historical existence the total representation and consummation of all human 'possibilities', the 'general man', the epitome

29) and the transforming agent of personal and inter-personal life. Hence, though the socio-critical dimension of eschatology is not yet developed in Metz's early writings, the theme of eschatology is nevertheless very much present. Metz's political theology is thus not so much a sudden discovery of eschatology, as it is a coming to realization of its socio-critical dimensions.

¹¹¹Love "is not 'added' afterwards to the existence of man (quasi accidens). Rather, it is grafted in the first act (actus primus) of the ontological constitution of man, in his existence itself [er geht...in sein esse selbst ein] (redit),...because, and in so far as, his being is characterized by subjectivity" (Metz, CA, pp. 53-54, n. 20). Persons, therefore, are most fully present-to-themselves (Beisichsein), and have their highest portion of being, by actualizing their transcendence through acts of love in the world as history. Metz's discussion of 'Being' is found in Metz, CA, pp. 52 ff..

¹¹²Metz, CA, pp. 111-112.

and norm of human existence as such."¹¹³

Of further significance for Metz is the fact that Thomas identifies transcendence with freedom. Transcendental directedness towards God (as the "finis ultimus") is the original basis of human freedom. People are who they are by virtue of the fact that they are free, and they are free because they are transcendently grounded in God. Transcendental (ontological) freedom therefore constitutes personhood as such. Theologically speaking, it is grace which gives individuals the means to actualize their transcendental freedom, a freedom which originates from and is directed towards God. In and through Christ's love, individuals are given the power to exercise their freedom to love, thus becoming who they most authentically are.

Metz suggests that Thomas is original in moving beyond the oppressive dominance of a Greek cosmocentric defining of the self. Unlike the Greeks, he refuses to think of the individual as either a divinized reflection of a numinous nature or as an objective thing. He does not divinize people by understanding them as microcosms of a "comprehensive cosmos of nature" and a "pre-established order."¹¹⁴

The Greeks, on the other hand, thought of people as "set within numinous nature, protected and respected as 'part'

¹¹³Metz, CA, p. 113.

¹¹⁴Metz, Theology, p. 59.

of it, as a 'numinous value'."¹¹⁵ By virtue of their reason, individuals mirrored and participated in the divinized cosmos. Thus, the Greeks threw a mystical veil over individuals because of the numinous backdrop of nature against which they were cast.

Neither does Thomas understand the individual, as the Greeks did, in terms of 'substance'. He does not think reason is the substance of individuals, and that it makes them the highest objects among other objects within a static, objectively given nature.¹¹⁶ Metz thinks that even though the Greeks understood humanity as a microcosm of a divinized nature, people were still understood objectivistically. They were still thought of as things alongside other things trapped within an all-encompassing cosmic order.

The point of Metz's critique is that Greek cosmocentric anthropology does not allow individuals to "emerge in [their]...own quality as...unique and unrepeatable [entities]."¹¹⁷ People are attributed freedom within the limits and laws of their own nature, a nature which mirrors the laws of the cosmos, but they are not essentially free. It is only under the impact of the Christian revelation of God in history, that persons first come to realize who they really

¹¹⁵Metz, Theology, p. 75.

¹¹⁶"Man appears as an 'instance' of res animata" (Metz, CA, p. 90).

¹¹⁷Metz, Theology, p. 75.

are. They realize that their uniqueness is attributable not merely to the faculty of reason, but to an underivable and free subjectivity given to them by God.¹¹⁸ They no longer see themselves in terms of substance, but as free subjects.

With Thomas, therefore, there is the first preliminary philosophical attempt to speak about this original Christian experience of the self as subject, as free subjectivity grounded in transcendence.¹¹⁹ Transcendental subjectivity, brought to light by revelation and given methodological articulation in Thomas' new anthropocentric thought form,¹²⁰ is the basis of this new estimation of personhood. It gives

¹¹⁸Metz doubts whether the concept of analogy can get at the "original phenomenon of man." "It cannot prevent the human being from coming under the yoke of a representation which does not disclose his being in its truth,...but covers and distorts it" (Metz, CA, p. 48, n. 11). He thus believes that "the originally underivable mode of being [Seinsweise] of subjectivity...is not seen and appreciated" by Greek cosmocentrism. Metz, CA, p. 48.

¹¹⁹Metz thinks Kant missed the fact that being itself could not be conceived objectivistically but could only be conceptually approached if it was framed in terms of the unobjectifiability of the human ego. That is, he failed to recognize that the basic form of being-in-itself [Ansichsein] is the transcendental subjectivity. Metz paraphrases the Thomist principle upon which this is based as follows: "An existent stands within being to the degree it relates to itself irreducibly [unaufhebbar] (super seipsum reflectitur)" (Metz, CA, p. 52). Man is most fully "being-with-itself" (Beisichsein), that is, standing within being, through the activities of his intellect and will (actualized through love). Metz, CA, p. 52.

¹²⁰Metz admits that this thought-form emerges in Thomas only methodologically because he is still heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. It is left to modernity (from Descartes to the present) to give fuller conceptual expression to this thought-form.

individuals, in their particular existence, a new underivable dignity not before possible within a Greek cosmocentric form of consciousness.¹²¹

Thomas thus grounds the untouchable and irreducible uniqueness of human individuality in a transcendental subjectivity which expresses itself in absolute freedom.¹²² This transcendental freedom means that individuals, in their free existence, belong entirely to themselves and therefore to God. They cannot be forced to act or not to act in a certain way, not even by God. This is because, as Thomas explains, "each divine determination of man is always a deepened mode of his own self-determination as well."¹²³ Transcendental freedom is thus the condition for the possibility of any and all particular freedoms of choice.¹²⁴ Transcendental freedom is the basis of all specific freedoms. It is the freedom in and through which individuals belong most

¹²¹See "Individuality" in CA, pp. 59-62. Here, Metz discusses how revelation establishes the absolute uniqueness of human personhood over against the Greek cosmocentric understanding of persons. For the first time in history, Thomas' anthropocentrism defines persons ontologically as free subjectivities. Persons are not understood ontically as mere things within the cosmos.

¹²²This "existential freedom" (Seinsfreiheit) is what constitutes the individuality and unquestionability (Unantastbarkeit) of human subjectivity. Metz, CA, p. 62.

¹²³Metz, CA, p. 63.

¹²⁴"For the human being, freedom designates the developing fundamental state of belonging to oneself which develops from the reditio-completa-structure" (Metz, CA, p. 62, n. 35).

fully to themselves and to God.

2. World and History

Thus far, I have shown how and why Metz thinks Thomas' transcendental appraisal of human subjectivity is the conceptual working out of revelation's anthropocentric direction. He believes this intention is realized, preliminarily so, in Thomas' transcendental appraisal of persons. Thomas' transcendental anthropology illumines revelation's intention to redefine reality in terms of human subjectivity.

In Metz's later theology, as I will show, his focus is not on transcendence but on apocalypticism as the context in which Christian personhood is best understood. Revelation now intends not so much to redefine a subjectivity transcendently grounded, but a subjectivity shaped by apocalyptic expectation. His focus shifts from anthropocentric consciousness to an apocalyptic consciousness which is more action-oriented and historically engaging. The Gospel command of love now involves not so much the actualization of transcendental freedom, but the actualization of God's eschatological promises through a love expressed in the form of living in solidarity with the poor. While in the early Metz, love is conceived of rather abstractly, as the actualization of one's transcendental freedom, in the later Metz, it is conceived of more concretely as suffering in

solidarity with those in need. God's eschatological promises are made real in the midst of a history defined by apocalyptic suffering.

I continue by looking at Metz's understanding of the relationship between persons and the world in light of Thomas' new anthropocentric thought-form. Metz argues that Thomas' thought-form gives rise to a more fully Christian notion of personhood as well as a more fully Christian understanding of the world.

According to Metz, Thomas' new anthropocentric thought-form relates persons and the world dialectically. Within it, the world is understood ontologically as a constitutive component of human subjectivity, and subjectivity as "the basis of the reality of the existing (vorhandenen) world."¹²⁵ The world is the "being-outside-of-itself" (Aussersichsein) of the ecstatic subject.¹²⁶ It is not, as the Greeks thought, the undialectical other, opposed to subjectivity.¹²⁷ Rather, it is that within "which the spirit

¹²⁵Metz, CA, p. 70.

¹²⁶"This worldly being-outside-of-himself is therefore not an added determination of constituted man, but is the basic feature of his ontological constitution. Human existence - that is: ecstatic subjectivity; both - man and world - are a priori synthesized in the one being of man" (Metz, CA, p. 69). Also, "the in-itself (Ansich) of this being of the world is the real outside-of-itself (Aussersich) of the being of the subject" (Metz, CA, p. 69, n. 50).

¹²⁷Metz, CA, p. 68.

of man (convertendo se ad phantasma) has already entered."¹²⁸
 It is thus joined in a synthesis with persons. Persons can never be separated from the world as if it were something other than they are. Metz writes:

Man and world are synthesized, a priori, in the one being of man, and this (strictly meta-physical) synthesis cannot be resolved by way of reflection (as it were, into a pure in-itself [Ansich] of the world), because in every reflection, man stands once again over against himself and is therefore "outside of himself," that means in the world. By reflecting on his relation to the world he brings to light this very relation once again. He cannot withdraw from it. He cannot give it up without giving up his own self-being.¹²⁹

Persons therefore are "always already 'in the world'"¹³⁰ and the world is the objective self-completion of human ecstatic subjectivity.¹³¹

The other side of this dialectic concerns the fact that human ecstatic self-existence is the basis of the world's

¹²⁸Metz, CA, p. 68.

¹²⁹Metz, CA, p. 69.

¹³⁰Metz, CA, p. 68.

¹³¹Johns, Man in the World, p. 68. In Metz's 1963 revision of Rahner's Hearer of the Word, we get a clearer picture of what Metz means by world. World means a co-world (Mitwelt), a "domain of the mutual exchange and mutual dismissal of free historical existences" (Rahner, Hearer of the Word, p. 133, n. 2). Persons thus fulfill themselves through their encounter with "a plurality of the co-world of free persons" (Rahner, Hearer of the Word, p. 138, n. 6). See Johns, Man in the World, pp. 61-80, for a detailed analysis of Metz's revisions of Rahner's text, especially for the way Metz, with Rahner's consent, replaces the notion of world as environment (Umwelt) with that of co-world (Mitwelt). References to co-world are found in Rahner, Hearer of the Word, pp. 133, n. 2; 138, n. 6; 141, and 142, n. 2.

reality. Again, Metz:

World 'exists' ('ist') as the locus of the real presence, as the being-there [Da-Sein] of the ecstatic human spirit. And World 'is in a state of becoming' ('wird') by its moving toward anima humana as its highest ontological reality (forma).¹³²

Every interpretation of the world is therefore always an interpretation of persons already in the world.¹³³ In this way, the human spirit (subjectivity) serves as the unifying form of the world,¹³⁴ and the world as the real externality (Aussersichsein) of persons, as that through which they come most fully to themselves. Metz writes:

[Man] is concretely the one reality of the being-with-itself [Beisichsein] of soul (anima), insofar as this soul is really itself only in the real being-outside-of-itself [Aussersichsein], i.e., as the reality (granting being through informing) of matter, as - body.¹³⁵

By dialectically relating subjectivity and the world, Metz rejects the Greek understanding of the world as timeless static nature, wherein "space possesses a certain a priori

¹³²Metz, CA, p. 70.

¹³³Metz, CA, p. 68

¹³⁴In an article entitled "Leib," Metz says that Thomas clarified, sharpened, and surpassed the essentially dualistic Aristotelian position on the body-soul relationship through his notion of "anima unica forma corporis" (the body has an unique soul as its form). Thomas' achievement was in dialectically relating the body and soul. Metz says: "Man 'is' body, and he is body not merely to become spirit, but in order to be a consummated human spirit, he must become more and more body." Body and soul complete each other in a relationship of dialectical unity-in-difference. J.B. Metz, "Leib," Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, vol. 6 (Freiburg: Herder, 1965), column 903.

¹³⁵Metz, CA, p. 71.

numinosity."¹³⁶ On the contrary, because of the impact of the Christian incarnation and its absolute valuing of human subjectivity, the world is understood anthropocentrically, not cosmocentrically. The world is the indispensable arena in which the free transcendental subjectivity of persons (revealed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ) interprets and actualizes itself.¹³⁷

In other words, whereas Greek cosmocentrism understands the world in terms of unchanging nature, Metz understands it in terms of history, as "a moment within the historical course of humankind."¹³⁸ Through the incarnation,

¹³⁶Metz, CA, p. 111.

¹³⁷Metz, CA, pp. 64-66. Metz refers to the world as the stage "for the great drama of...[humankind's] freedom" (Metz, "Freedom as a Threshold Problem," p. 271). The experience of transcendental freedom, as "an 'immediate' non-objective lucidity (the light of truth)," can never be an experience of objective knowledge, as if persons can step outside themselves and know with absolute certainty that a particular course of action will actualize their transcendental freedom. (Metz, "Freedom as a Threshold Problem," p. 278, n. 38). Human conscience, immersed in the "onerous obscurity of...freedom, experiences the 'light of truth' not in some form of pure backwards self-reflection, but by forgetting itself in the rapture of each new deed. He who does the truth comes to the light (Jn. 3:21)" (Metz, "Freedom as a Threshold Problem," p. 271). It is thus in the midst of historical actions and decisions on behalf of others, decisions always immersed in the existential dialectic of good and evil (Metz, "Freedom as a Threshold Problem," p. 272), that man is able to respond to the lurement of God. He is able to respond to that mystery which "is always withdrawing itself and thus drawing the freedom subjectively to itself by opening it up" (Metz, "Freedom as a Threshold Problem," p. 275).

¹³⁸Metz, CA, p. 73.

the world as history is exposed as the required medium of human self-fulfillment. God's incarnation therefore makes history the arena of transcendence, temporally and eschatologically understood.¹³⁹ As Metz puts it, because Jesus became "the general man, the epitome and norm of human existence,"¹⁴⁰ it is through his life, death, and resurrection, his history, that humanity is able to realize its ultimate eschatological goal: the fulfillment of human subjectivity through self-abandonment to the transcendent ground of one's being.¹⁴¹ It is this goal, transcendently understood, which gives history its eschatological character. Again, Metz:

The Christian understands his relation to transcendence in temporal-eschatological terms. He expects the beyond as the historical advent which changes his historical existence into the one Basileia of God and of humanity.¹⁴²

Transcendence, therefore, is historically ahead and not above. Persons fulfill themselves to the extent they allow themselves to be drawn towards God through acts of love within history. It is this attraction ahead, realized through historical actions, which is the transcendental ground and aim of human personhood. By Jesus becoming "the total

¹³⁹Metz, CA, pp. 111-112.

¹⁴⁰Metz, CA, pp. 113.

¹⁴¹"To the degree that man puts himself at the disposal of the inescapable demand of this transcendence, he belongs to himself and gains his ontological identity [Selbstsein]" (Metz, CA, p. 75).

¹⁴²Metz, CA, p. 112.

representation and consummation of all human possibilities"¹⁴³ within history, history becomes the arena in which the ultimate eschatological goal of humanity is realized. In it, the promised fulfillment of humanity's subjectivity occurs. History becomes the inescapable medium through which persons are "on the way" to meeting God and at the same time "on the way" to becoming most fully who they are.

Finally, the question needs to be asked: what form does the exercise of this freedom in the world take in order to realize its intended goal of salvation? Metz's answer, borrowed from Thomas, is that persons are free (existentially) to make decisions within the world, and by doing so, to shape their disposition towards themselves and God. Human nature, according to Thomas, is not a function of a permanent "nature" conceived of objectivistically, as the Greeks thought. Rather, it is a function of free decision, above all the decision to love or not to love one's neighbor.

The "essence" of persons, therefore, does not lie in their relationship to what is "spatially" permanent, that is, to a substance thought of in terms of numinous space. Rather, it is a "nature" whose disposition is determined by free choice. As Metz puts it: "Human existence is finalized [vorendgültigt] by freedom."¹⁴⁴ Love is thus "the true and

¹⁴³Metz, CA, p. 113.

¹⁴⁴Metz, CA, p. 66.

unavoidable definition of man in his existence."¹⁴⁵ It is the means by which persons come before both God and themselves. Persons are able to become the "'sacrament' of God's son"¹⁴⁶ because of the anthropocentric direction of revelation which invites them to become conversation partners with God and brothers and sisters of Christ.¹⁴⁷ As Metz puts it:

Every religious act moves in the direction of the concreteness of God 'in one's brother' and finds therein its vital completeness and, at the same time, its deepest transcendent rooting....Love of the neighbor...is not really something different from the love of God, it is, at one and the same time, that love's other side. Both are, and this is what is the novelty of the Christian message, originally one.¹⁴⁸

The world as history is therefore understood existentially as a process by which persons are drawn ahead and collected into God and, through acts of love, into themselves.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵Metz, CA, p. 53, n. 20.

¹⁴⁶Metz, CA, p. 109.

¹⁴⁷This is a paraphrasing of an extensive quote taken by Metz from Karl Rahner's article on "Theological Anthropology," in Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, vol I, 2 (1965), p. 619. It concerns what revelation has done to radically transform human self-understanding. Metz, CA, pp. 108-109.

¹⁴⁸Metz, CA, p. 109, n. 21. Metz asserts that love of God and love of persons are originally one. This unity becomes the basis of his later project of dialectically relating the mystical and political dimensions of Christianity (the individual before God and the individual before others as inseparable components of Christian personhood). Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 63.

¹⁴⁹Metz wrote a small book in 1962 on Christian asceticism titled Poverty of Spirit. In it, he talks about poverty of spirit as an acceptance of the fact that one does not belong to oneself, but to God. This radical self-acceptance does not involve a turning away from the world, but

From a Christian perspective, therefore, the Greeks were wrong in understanding the world within the horizon of nature rather than within the horizon of human freedom.¹⁵⁰ The world is not trapped within nature as a superior, mysterious, unconquerable, and sometimes gracious and avenging reality. It is not a numinous divine-like reality, "a tangible divine subjectivity" capable of serving as the medium for religious experience.¹⁵¹ Neither is history the ultimately indifferent constant return of the same,¹⁵² trapped within the all-

a turning towards it. It involves constant attention "to human beings and their world. God himself drew near to us as our brother and our neighbor, as 'one of these' (cf. Mt. 25, 40.45). Our relationship with God is decided in our encounter with other men. One of the non-canonical sayings of Jesus is: 'A person who sees his brother sees his God'...Our human brother now becomes a "'sacrament' of God's hidden presence among us, a mediator between God and man" (J.B. Metz, Poverty of Spirit, trans. John Drury [New York: Paulist Press, 1968], pp. 34-35. German original: Armut im Geiste [Munich: Ars Sacra, 1962]).

¹⁵⁰This recalls the earlier discussion of how the world and persons cannot be separated. For Metz and Thomas, the world as history functions as the objective self-completion of human subjectivity, and subjectivity is the formal basis of the reality of the world. For a Christian-inspired anthropocentrism, there is no world-out-there. There is only the "being-outside-itself" (Aussersichsein) of the ecstatic human subject.

¹⁵¹Metz, Theology, p. 59. Metz says that for the classical pagan world the divine was tied to nature as its "world principle, as a kind of cosmic reason and cosmic law, as the immanent regulating principle of the universe" (Metz, Theology, p. 34). The divine was one element among others within a world as nature. By no means was it conceived of as transcendent creator.

¹⁵²Metz, "The World as History," Appendix I, Theology, p. 53. This Appendix is an expanded version of "Welt," in Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, X, 2 (1965), pp. 1023-1026. For a further description of the world as a fixed,

encompassing numinous reality of nature.¹⁵³

F. Metz's Critique of the Appropriation of Cosmocentric Notions of Personhood and World by Early and Modern Christianity

Thus far, I discussed Metz's critique of the Greek cosmocentric notions of personhood and the world. I also outlined the alternatives which he offers, which arise out of Thomas' epoch-making anthropocentric thought-form. Now I will look at his critique of the misguided appropriation of these cosmocentric notions by Catholic theology. He thinks the Greek notions of personhood and the world are as present today within modern theology as they were within early Christianity. As was the case in early Christianity, these Greek notions continue to prevent the full realization of Christian love in the world as history. They continue to hamper the full realization of a Christian personhood which is transcendently free and made actual through the loving of others. What follows, therefore, is a summary of Metz's critique of early Christianity's unintentional appropriation of the Greek notions of the self and the world.¹⁵⁴

indifferent, and ultimately fatal human framework, see Metz, Theology, p. 24.

¹⁵³Metz, Theology, p. 58. Metz refers to nature as a "superior a priori framework" (Metz, Theology, p. 53).

¹⁵⁴This section is based, for the most part, on Chapter I of Metz's Theology of the World. This chapter is titled "How Faith Sees the World. The Christian Orientation in the Secularity of the Contemporary World." Written in 1962 and based on a 1957 article entitled "Die 'Stunde' Christi. Eine

1. Early Christian Appropriation

According to Metz, early Christianity was mistaken in its appropriation of the Greek view of the world as numinous nature, as something which reflected the holy radiance of God. It was thought of as an epiphany, a projection of God which operated according to divine laws.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the early Christians thought that the history of the cosmos and salvation history were in essential continuity, that they were two moments within God's ongoing creative and redemptive project. The consequence of this was that they tended to divinize or numinize the world,¹⁵⁶ thereby running the risk of "equating God and nature pantheistically."¹⁵⁷

geschichtstheologische Erwägung," Wort und Wahrheit 12 (1957): pp. 5-18, it represents Metz's first attempt to develop a fully anthropocentric theology based on Thomas' anthropocentric thought-form discovered in CA. Whereas CA was concerned mainly with the impact of Greek cosmocentrism on the development of a philosophical anthropology, Theology of the World, as a whole, is concerned with the way cosmocentric vestiges within theology and piety shape the church's relationship to the world. It tries to go beyond the soteriological extrinsicism and theological positivism of earlier theologies which evolved out of cosmocentric understandings of personhood and the world. Metz, CA, p. 135, and Theology, p. 16. Its goal is to understand the Incarnation of God in Christ within the framework (thought-form) of a fully anthropocentric view of persons and the world. It also expands on the idea developed in CA, that modern secularization is a product of God's incarnational acceptance.

¹⁵⁵ Metz, Theology, p. 59.

¹⁵⁶ Metz, Theology, p. 59.

¹⁵⁷ Metz, Theology, p. 59.

In short, early Christianity mystified the world. Whereas the Greeks saw the "morning twilight of the gods" in every facet of the world, the early Christians saw the world as "the inchoate beginning of God himself."¹⁵⁸ Even the "classical" Middle Ages, Metz believes, were dominated by this Greek view of the world. They had "a strong general quality of the pre-Christian world view...and were dominated by a straightforward 'divinism' (Y. Congar)."¹⁵⁹

2. Modern Catholic Appropriation

The modern Catholic understanding of the world is not significantly different from that of early Christianity. Catholic theology, Metz argues, continues to be shaped by Greek cosmocentric ways of understanding the world and persons, with the result being that it misunderstands both itself and the world.

First, Catholic Christianity misunderstands itself because it misinterprets the Incarnation as a divinizing of persons and the world. And, as a related consequence, it thinks of salvation history as the further unfolding of this divinization process.¹⁶⁰ This misinterpretation arises, Metz

¹⁵⁸ Metz, Theology, p. 65.

¹⁵⁹ Metz, Theology, p. 35.

¹⁶⁰ Metz, Theology, pp. 26 and 29.

suggests, because of the use of a model of acceptance¹⁶¹ that is more Greek than Christian, that is, acceptance is interpreted more in terms of absorption than release. The notion of absorption, Metz argues, is rooted in a Greek cosmocentric view of the world, not a Christian anthropocentric one. It is an interpretation shaped by the context of nature rather than personhood, and therefore more cosmocentric than existential in orientation.¹⁶²

Hence, under Greek influence, Catholic theology interprets the Incarnation as God's taking into himself of an already partially divinized human nature. Incarnation is the culmination of the process of divinization. Persons, as objects of nature, yet connected to the divine via reason perfected in contemplation, are absorbed into the infinite as an act of divine acceptance.

¹⁶¹Central to Metz's understanding of the Incarnation is his belief that God's acceptance of persons and their world can be extrapolated from God's acceptance of Christ's human nature. Such an extrapolation is valid insofar as the divine Logos is "for all eternity, man, a man of this world" (Metz, Theology, p. 26, n. 22).

¹⁶²Metz, Theology, p. 27. See also Metz, CA, pp. 180 ff. for a discussion of how revelation brings about a new anthropocentric view of the world. The world and persons are understood existentially, not naturally. A model of acceptance taken from an anthropocentric (existential) view of the world acknowledges the underivable uniqueness of persons which stems from the fact that their freedom is grounded in God. True acceptance of another (even of persons by God) can happen only when this underivable uniqueness is acknowledged by releasing the other to be more fully himself or herself. Absorbing the other into one's sphere of influence and control is a direct and clear negating of that person as a subject whose freedom is rooted in God.

Metz warns that this interpretation puts Christianity in danger of descending into mythology.¹⁶³ It wipes away the distance and difference between God and his creation.¹⁶⁴ Rather than freeing persons to become fully themselves, God draws the profane world (though never fully profane) into the sacred, and sanctifies it in an immediate way.¹⁶⁵ God becomes a Moloch, an usurper who, in his acceptance of the world and humanity, violates it by sucking it into himself and divinizing it theopanistically.¹⁶⁶ All that is left is God and only God.

Modern Catholicism, Metz concludes, has therefore developed more of a pagan piety than a Christian one, because it has tended to interpret the Incarnation as a drawing of the world into God. This pseudo-Christian piety is based on the immediate divinizing and religious mystical veiling of persons and nature.¹⁶⁷ Faith, for example, becomes the affirmation of one's divinized nature, "the objectification of the timeless

¹⁶³Metz, Theology, p. 14.

¹⁶⁴Metz, Theology, pp. 26 and 29.

¹⁶⁵Metz, Theology, pp. 20 and 47, n. 47. Transcendence is already and always the basis of human personhood. It is the "timeless metaphysical self-awareness" of God which all persons have whether they acknowledge it or not. Metz, Theology, p. 22. Metz asserts that the Incarnation is an event within which this transcendently grounded human subjectivity is accepted and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

¹⁶⁶Metz, Theology, p. 26.

¹⁶⁷Metz, Theology, p. 34.

metaphysical self-awareness of individuals, clothed...in...dramatic form."¹⁶⁸ No longer is it a response to a unique historical event.

As well, the nearness of God is no longer mediated through encounters with the brother and sister in the world as history.¹⁶⁹ Rather, God is mediated through the divinized character of persons and the world. He is experienced within the infinite depths of the divinized self as

always the same, colorlessly and facelessly present as the numinously shimmering horizon of our being, withdrawn into the infinite distance and involvement of his transcendence. He is...the symbol for the apex of our existence which is lost asymptotically in the infinite.¹⁷⁰

A theology of Incarnation which starts from this supposition, that humankind and the world is already divinized, is therefore pre-disposed to understand God's acceptance as a process of final and complete divinization. Incarnational acceptance of the world does not mean the releasing of the

¹⁶⁸Metz, Theology, p. 22.

¹⁶⁹Metz, Theology, p. 77. Metz's critique of the Greek divinizing of persons and the world may be at the same time a growing discomfort with the transcendental method in theology, which posits God as an a priori divine mystery within which man is grounded. It eventually occurs to him that this basic proposition of transcendental theology is more Greek than Christian. He eventually breaks with the transcendental method because he thinks it does not make adequate contact with concrete human history. It sidesteps history by locating the experience of God primarily within private interiority. This worry will express itself most clearly in his later critique of Karl Rahner's notion of anonymous Christianity.

¹⁷⁰Metz, Theology, p. 22.

world to itself, as Metz argues in his Theology of the World, but a further and complete absorption of it into the sacred.

In addition to misunderstanding itself, Catholic theology misunderstands the world by thinking of it in terms of divinized nature rather than in terms of human subjectivity. It does this, Metz suggests, because it has internally assimilated an understanding of the world more cosmocentric than anthropocentric. This is why, for example, it fails to recognize the dialectical¹⁷¹ unfolding of the Christian logos in history, particularly in the process of modern secularization. Instead of embracing secularization, it labels it as misguided and profane, as unholy resistance to God's attempt to absorb and divinize the world.

Metz thinks modern Catholicism is wrong in understanding the world as a "pure, absolutely transparent appearance of the self-communication of God; theologically, as a transfigured world which already hands itself over in its perfection to God, as the perfect 'kingdom of God'."¹⁷² It

¹⁷¹Metz proposes that the Incarnation be understood dialectically. That is, it is a moment of God's simultaneous acceptance and release of the world. Acceptance means the releasing of the other to be most fully its profane secular self, not absorption into divinity. Metz, "The Inner Dialectic of the Acceptance of the World through the Incarnation of God," Theology, pp. 25-32.

¹⁷²Metz, Theology, p. 30. Metz sees a danger in understanding the world as "the material of salvation, [as]...the beginning of a universal cosmic liturgy" (Metz, Theology, p. 15). What is missed is the fact that the Incarnation is the occasion for Jesus' experience of the world as an "abyss of human suffering and human paradox" (Metz, Theology, p. 30). His acceptance of the world takes more the

is thus also wrong in thinking that its mission is to fetch it "out of its worldliness into a numinously shimmering divinity."¹⁷³ If the world resists, the church is justified in condemning it. Secularization is therefore labelled as a "profane historical development, unimportant for Christianity and the church and, at most,...the external situation within which the church carries on its activity and the Christian preserves his way of life."¹⁷⁴ It is merely "something temporary, merely illusory and ultimately unreal,"¹⁷⁵ an historically intensified attempt to dethrone Christ in the world,¹⁷⁶ and therefore the supreme moment of the world's rejection of God's acceptance in Christ.

Given this, God's objective is to absorb the world as history into the divine Logos, reducing it to the status of a dead tool and accessory.¹⁷⁷ What becomes most important is not the the world's history but the history of salvation operating within it.¹⁷⁸

form of a suffering servant.

¹⁷³Metz, Theology, p. 49.

¹⁷⁴Metz, Theology, pp. 16-17.

¹⁷⁵Metz, Theology, p. 26.

¹⁷⁶Metz, Theology, p. 19.

¹⁷⁷Metz, Theology, p. 26.

¹⁷⁸Metz calls this mistake a "monophysite understanding of salvation history" (Metz, Theology, p. 16). The rending apart of world history and salvation history goes against the basic Christological assertion that Jesus' divine and human nature form a hypostatic union. Metz, Theology, p. 26.

G. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed how Metz's early investigation of Thomas' anthropocentric thought-form aims at uncovering an authentically Christian anthropology. He believes that Thomas' thought-form, for the first time in the history of thought, gives expression to revelation's absolute valuing of the individual in the world as history. In God becoming a person, the human self becomes the measure of the world and is freed into the world. In turn, the world, understood in terms of history, becomes the medium for the self-becoming of the self. It becomes the milieu within which the transcendental freedom of the self is realized. In actions of love, human beings become most fully themselves and closest to God. The world, understood as divinized nature, does not mediate God's presence, the neighbor does.

Metz acknowledges that the characterizing of secularization as the "protesting emancipation of the world from the ultimate grasp of God" has some truth to it. It is true in that secularization is not a pure and innocent expression of Christ's release of the world to itself. Secularization often does take the form of a clear rejection of Christianity. Given this, however, he also wants to avoid an undialectical understanding of secularization's rejection of Christianity. Metz, Theology, p. 36. As a result, he is quick to point out how the world's rejection of Christianity is at the same time a fulfilling of its Incarnational mandate. Incarnational acceptance is at the same time a releasing of the world to become its profane and demythologized self. Christianity, originating from the simultaneous acceptance and release initiated by the Incarnation, appears then not "as a growing divinization, but precisely as an increasing de-divinization and, in this sense, profanization of the world, dispelling magic and myth" (Metz, Theology, p. 34).

Later, I show how Metz's recent critique of bourgeois Christianity is based on the conviction that the Christian subject is too much defined by privatistic Enlightenment values which quieten the socio-political demands of the Christian message. In this chapter, I have shown that this worry is already present in the early Metz. In Christliche Anthropozentrik, he is already concerned with liberating Christians from definitions of the world and the self which prevent them from taking the world seriously as the medium for their religious self-fulfillment. He worries that modern Catholic Christianity is incapable of fully realizing the historical incarnational character of the Christian Gospel because it has unwittingly assimilated Greek cosmocentrism as the a priori context for its understanding of the world and the subject.

The consequence is that it fails to recognize that, through the Incarnation, human history has been taken into the history of the universal Christian logos. In and through the history of persons and their love towards one another, through the history of free subjects grounded in transcendence, God's redemptive plan is unfolding. Salvation history and mundane history therefore form a unity-in-difference. Salvation history attains its objective self-completion in and through human history, and human history achieves its goal through the consummation of the transcendental groundedness of individuals through acts of love. In this way, Metz hopes to avoid both

soteriological extrinsicism and theological positivism.¹⁷⁹

Metz's early writings thus go a long way in defining the Christian subject in terms of worldly engagement. This project anticipates his later attempt to do the same in his mature critique of modern Christianity. In both projects, there is continuity of aim regardless of differences in the way both the problems and the solutions are defined. Let me explain.

In Metz's early writings, for example, the problem is understood as the cosmocentric ontic defining of humanity and the consequent blindness to the absolute uniqueness of human subjectivity. The solution is found in Thomas' defining of the subject ontologically, or anthropocentrically, instead of cosmocentrically. Subjects are defined as religious subjects, transcendentally grounded in God, yet who require worldly engagement with others in love for their own self-fulfillment. As Metz puts it, the advent of transcendence as mystery within individuals, brought about through acts of love, represents the "wondrous arrival of [one's]...own true existence, the wondrous destiny prepared for [persons]...from the very beginning"¹⁸⁰.

In his later writings, the problem is not so much the cosmocentric ontic defining of the subject as it is the one-

¹⁷⁹Metz, CA, p. 135.

¹⁸⁰Metz, The Advent of God, p. 32.

dimensional market place defining of subjects by the Enlightenment ethos. The subject is once again reduced to a mere object within the overarching context of modern society. People and their values are accorded importance only insofar as they contribute to the market place economy. All values which do not contribute directly to the smooth functioning of the market place, especially religious values, are relegated to the private sphere of life. Metz finds a solution to this privatistic defining of the individual and human values in the discipleship of radical following. In the imitation of Christ's living in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, a new social anthropology can emerge which does not define persons individualistically, but as subjects bound to one another in solidarity.

It is important to note that in both the early and later Metz, the problem addressed is the blind appropriation by Christianity of non-Christian anthropologies; in the one instance, Greek cosmocentrism and, in the other, Enlightenment privatism. Each thinks of individuals as essentially unfree objects within a larger restrictive whole. In both instances, the solution offered, though conceptualized differently, is the development of an authentic (biblically based¹⁸¹) Christian anthropology which defines individuals as free subjects in the

¹⁸¹In CA, Metz tries to show that Thomas thinks biblically, in an original way. That is, the "mode of thinking" (his thought-form) which underlies his theological statements is anthropocentric. Metz, CA, pp. 44-45, n. 4.

world as history, free to actualize their freedom through love of neighbor.

The early Metz finds a solution to this problematic notion of Christian personhood in Thomas' defining of persons as transcendently free subjects. Here, freedom is actualized through a rather abstract notion of love. In the later Metz, persons are still defined by freedom, but now by a freedom actualized through the concrete discipleship of living in solidarity with the poor. The freedom given to persons in the Incarnation now becomes the freedom to follow Christ in a solidarity with the poor which involves suffering.

It is this ongoing quest to free Christians from non-Christian principles which stifle the realization of the Gospel mandate of love in the world which is at the core of Metz's theological enterprise. The first such attempt is made in Christliche Anthropozentrik. Others soon follow.

Finally, allow me to restate, in point form, Metz's critique of Christianity's appropriation of Greek cosmocentrism. Greek cosmocentric vestiges within modern Catholicism result in the following misunderstandings about the Incarnation, world, personhood, freedom, God, and the Church and its Mission. These, in turn, contribute to a one-sided rejection of modern secularization and Christianity's role within it.

Incarnation: Within the cosmocentric perspective, God's acceptance of human nature and of the world is

misunderstood as a drawing of both further into God, over and above what was implied in Creation. Incarnational divine acceptance is the final culminating step in the process of God's divinizing possession of humankind and the world. This notion of acceptance, taken from the sphere of nature (a cosmocentric understanding) rather than from the sphere of existence¹⁸² (an anthropocentric one), interprets divine acceptance as a final usurping and absorption of humankind and the world into God. As such, it misses the fact of the real liberating event of the Incarnation; a liberation of persons and their world to be most fully themselves.¹⁸³

World: Cosmocentrism understands the world in terms of cosmos and not of history. Such a misunderstanding is therefore not able to appreciate how the Incarnation gives to persons the freedom to transform the world. The world remains essentially untouchable as a numinous divinized reality. Modern secularization is therefore interpreted as an un-Christian attempt at autonomous self-affirmation.

Personhood: First, a Christianity which is cosmocentrically oriented views persons as creatures of God

¹⁸²Metz, Theology, p. 27.

¹⁸³The Incarnation is the apex of God's liberating activity. As CA tried to show, the power of this central event of freedom is working itself out historically through the emergence of a new form of historical consciousness. Secularization, as the growing recognition of the autonomy of human history, constitutes the concrete expression of this Incarnational freedom.

who are never fully autonomous. Persons are created by God but yet remain a part of God, as a numinous reflection of divinity. Freedom is the limited freedom of a servant, never fully expressing itself in the form of autonomous actions. Second, as divinized realities, persons are never fully corporeal. Their bodies and their world are thought of as the material mediums through which the Christian logos carries out its work of ongoing divinization. And third, conceived of objectivistically, as mere objects, the socio-political constitution of persons is missed. The intersubjective character of human personhood is not recognized.¹⁸⁴

Freedom: The cosmocentric perspective views persons and their world as numinous realities which are never fully free. Creation is thought of not as a moment of liberation but as an event of separation (though not completely), which the process of human history exemplifies. Secularization is an intensified moment of the historically unfolding process of this separation. Incarnation is therefore God's attempt to draw humankind back into himself.

¹⁸⁴In Metz's editorial revisions of Rahner's Hearer of the Word, he defines persons intersubjectively. In Metz's later theology, this concern blossoms into a more fully developed socio-political definition of persons. It is from the perspective of this socially and politically broadened anthropocentrism that Metz launches his attack on the privatization of the Christian faith. For how intersubjectivity is central to an understanding of Christian personhood, and especially to an understanding of the act of faith, see J.B. Metz, "Unbelief as a Theological Problem," Concilium, vol. 6 (New York: Paulist Press, 1965), pp. 62, n. 5; 63, n. 7; 66, n. 14; 67, 72, and 72, n. 23.

God: Within a cosmocentric framework, God is not the God of an historical revelation, which interrupts and transforms human reality. He is rather the unchanging numinous horizon of our being. He is not experienced within moments of autonomous love within history, but in private moments of contemplation as the "numinously shimmering horizon of our being."¹⁸⁵

Church and its Mission: Because cosmocentrism sees creation as a moment of separation between God and the world, the church must gain the world back for God through increased theo-political control over it. It must draw the world back into God's dominion. God's prime concern, therefore, is with the church, because the church is the sole sphere within which salvation history takes place.¹⁸⁶

Metz thinks such views must be overcome if modern Christianity is to avoid being dissolved into an a-historical religion whose roots are more in the Greek than in the biblical world. Metz's prescription for change, which is at the same time his first attempt to answer the question of Christian apathy, is that Christianity recover the biblical understanding of persons as historical agents whose freedom is grounded in God and mediated through love of neighbor. Christians will become less apathetic when they realize that

¹⁸⁵Metz, Theology, p. 22.

¹⁸⁶Metz, Theology, p. 50, n. 51.

activities of discipleship in the world are the primary means by which they come to know God, become most fully human, and become more fully religious.

III

METZ'S CRITIQUE OF PRIVATIZED CHRISTIANITY

In Chapter II, I discussed Metz's early critique of Greek cosmocentrism, examining his claim that the Greek thought-form (a priori horizon of understanding) gives rise to distinct notions of personhood and world. Cosmocentrism understands persons in terms of substance (thing-ness) rather than subjectivity (persons are therefore mere entities alongside other entities), and it understands the world in terms of nature rather than history. Its fault therefore lies in the assumption that persons are essentially unfree and trapped within an unchanging cosmos.¹⁸⁷

Metz argued that the Christian appropriation of this view of reality is dangerous for two reasons. First, the cosmocentric understanding of persons, in terms of substance, negates Christianity's own understanding of persons as

¹⁸⁷It ought to be recognized that some of these affirmations by Metz appear very much like generalizations for the sake of a thesis. They cannot therefore fail to surprise the reader who is conversant with Greek philosophy. They were nevertheless found in Christliche Anthropozentrik, as we saw in the previous chapter, and essentially belong to the case Metz was then making.

subjects whose freedom is grounded in God and realized in and through historical actions of love. Christians fail to live out the Gospel mandate of love in the world because they do not recognize the freedom given to them by God in Creation and Incarnation. And second, Christians become disabled in their loving because they think they are trapped within a cosmic eternity and therefore unfree. They despair over historical actions which hold little meaning in a world trapped within a static nature.

Metz also praised Thomas for the way he incorporated, into the form of his thinking, the anthropocentric spirit of Christianity, and he thinks this spirit is working itself out today in the process of secularization. In as much as secularization understands persons as free agents and the world as history (notions which are the product of God's incarnational acceptance), while at the same time rejecting the cosmocentric assumptions that persons are things and history is trapped within nature, it is actualizing the original liberative intention of revelation.

In this third chapter, I discuss the second stage of Metz's theological development which runs from approximately 1964 to 1969.¹⁸⁸ This is the first phase in his construction

¹⁸⁸CA and Chapter I of Theology of the World anticipate Metz's later political theology in that they criticize and correct tendencies within transcendental theology which make it less than fully engaging of the world. For a comprehensive list of texts which constitute the second stage of Metz's development of a political theology, see J.B. Metz, "'Politische Theologie' in der Diskussion," in Diskussion zur

of a political theology. My goal is to show how Metz's theological perspective becomes more nuanced, and how this affects both his critique of Greek cosmocentrism and his understanding of secularization. Eschatology, in particular, becomes a central part of the theological platform from which he continues to criticize cosmocentrism and praise modernity. Furthermore, the appropriation of this eschatological horizon causes him to leave behind explicit reference to Thomas, though not his anthropocentric legacy. He still counters cosmocentrism with anthropocentrism, though he now interprets anthropocentrism from the perspective of eschatology.

To explain this emerging perspective and its effect on his ongoing critique, I will focus on Metz's first internationally acclaimed work: Theology of the World. This work is a collection of essays written between 1962 and 1969. Let me explain why I delayed consideration of this text until

'politische Theologie', ed. H. Peukert (Mainz and Munich, 1969), 267-301. I think three works, in particular, mark the transition to political theology: Metz's Weingarten lecture of June 1963 titled "The Future of Faith in a Hominized World" (published in 1964 as Chapter II of Theology of the World); his 1965 article titled "Welt," Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, vol 10, 2 (1965), pp. 1023-1026 (later published as Appendix I, "The World as History," in Theology of the World, pp. 51-55); and "Unglaube als theologisches Problem," Concilium, 6/7 (1965). Metz says that in this article he began his reflections on political theology. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 236, n. 2. These three works reveal a movement towards a more practice-oriented theology aimed at greater historical engagement. They try and move beyond the a-historical cosmocentric vestiges which plague modern Catholic theology by focusing on the intersubjective nature of persons and humanity's God-given freedom within history.

now.

In my examination of Christliche Anthropozentrik, I showed that Metz's primary focus was philosophical. He found in Thomas a more adequate philosophical basis for a theology which neither over-spiritualized Christian personhood nor depreciated history. He praised Thomas' philosophical understanding of persons and the world for being holistic and authentically biblical, because it gave persons the full ontological status accorded to them by Christian revelation. It also initiated a new non-cosmocentric understanding of the world by interpreting it anthropocentrically in terms of history rather than in terms of nature.

In Christliche Anthropozentrik, Metz hinted that what remained to be done was to develop a theology within which this "reflex self-understanding,"¹⁸⁹ this anthropocentric thought-form, inspired by revelation, could become methodologically effective. Theology of the World is his attempt to do just that. In it, he tries to answer the two earlier challenges which he had put to Catholic theology¹⁹⁰: 1. to develop a theology which takes seriously the

¹⁸⁹Metz, CA, p. 102.

¹⁹⁰Metz concludes CA with an appeal to Catholic theology no longer to ignore the fact that the history of salvation and the history of thought are contained in each other, and that modern thinking contains a Christian a priori. In Theology of the World, Metz intends to lead the way in drawing out the implications of this fact for modern Catholic theology. Metz, CA, p. 135.

anthropocentric intention of Christian revelation,¹⁹¹ and 2. to acknowledge the gradual unfolding of this intention as the basis of the modern turn to the subject.

In Theology of the World, Metz appropriates two notions which significantly shape the direction of his ongoing critique, as well as the way he understands secularization. These notions are hominization and eschatology. As Chapter IV demonstrates, the theme of eschatology remains an essential feature of Metz's theology to the present. Hominization, on the other hand, is set aside in favor of a more critical appraisal of the modern project. For now, let me introduce these new themes of hominization and eschatology.

¹⁹¹In CA, Metz says that revelation becomes theology through the mediation of basic metaphysical structures which are demanded and inspired by revelation. Metz, CA, p. 102. Christian revelation, in other words, prepares a suitable metaphysic for itself by means of which it can then become a theology. Metz, CA, p. 103. In Thomas' anthropocentric thought-form, revelation brings about, for the first time, a suitable conceptually clarified understanding of existence, which is inspired by Christianity, adequate for its own mediation into a theology. Metz's theological project, at least in its initial stages, is an effort to do theology within Thomas' (or revelation's) anthropocentric horizon. His "theology of the world" is a first attempt to develop Christian theology within the metaphysical horizon of this new anthropocentric way of being in the world.

A. HOMINIZATION

In Chapter II of Theology of the World, entitled "The Future of Faith in a Hominized World,"¹⁹² Metz discusses the notion of "hominization," defining it as that process of change, inspired by Christianity, which is taking place within modern consciousness. It is a process by which the individual is changing "more and more from the purely speculative to the practical world-subject, from the observer of the world to its shaper."¹⁹³ Persons are thus no longer merely passive

¹⁹²Chapter II of Theology of the World was first published in Hochland 56 (1964), and in J.B. Metz, ed., Weltverständnis im Glauben (Mainz, 1965), pp. 45-62. A part of it was also published under the title "Welterfahrung und Glaubenserfahrung heute. Von der Divinisierung zur Hominisierung," in Kontexte, vol 1, ed. H.J. Schultz (Stuttgart, 1965), pp. 17-25.

¹⁹³Metz, Theology, p. 68. See also Savolainen, "Theology in the Shadow of Marx," pp. 303-308. Savolainen correctly notes that Metz's turn to "praxis", and his initial participation in the debate over the interpretation of modern secularity (not just over an understanding of its origins), are consequences of the notion of hominization. But I find debatable Savolainen's assertion that this turn towards hominization, and therefore praxis, indicates that Metz moves beyond the "strict confines of transcendental Thomism" (Savolainen, "Theology in the Shadow of Marx," p. 308). I would assert, rather, that Metz thinks the notions of hominization and praxis are themselves required by Thomas' transcendental anthropology. He assumes that the anthropocentric shift, inspired by Christianity and made explicit in Thomas, is made more concrete when the world is understood as vestigia hominis, rather than vestigia Dei. The Christian anthropocentric form of consciousness is present when it becomes clear that persons have been granted the use of the world as material for their God-given freedom. God's creative activity therefore continues in humanity's free and creative appropriation of the world. As Metz puts it, "the 'creation' of God is mediated everywhere by the 'work' of man" (Metz, Theology, p. 61).

observers of the world but builders of it. They no longer understand themselves as trapped within an eternal cosmos, but as liberated agents of change, capable of transforming both nature and history.

As with secularization, Metz believes hominization would not be possible apart from the liberative spirit of Christian revelation. More specifically, it has its roots in God's eschatological promises. Through these promises, human activity has a future to be pursued and therefore a history. God's promises thus establish history as a future-oriented project towards which all persons are empowered and called. Through these promises, God becomes the power of the future and opens the future to persons as the horizon of possibility. With a future, humankind has a history. Without a future, humankind has only the eternal return of the Greek cosmocentric vision.

Though Metz does not say so explicitly, he implies that God's promises are the basis of Christian anthropocentrism, the same anthropocentrism which has been trying to take hold of human consciousness since the time of Christ. Now, in the modern orientation to the future (which is based on the belief that history is an open project), this anthropocentrism, inspired by Christianity, is beginning to realize itself. It is realizing itself in the social, political, and technological revolutions of the modern era which receive their impetus, for the most part, from hope in

the future.

Hominization, therefore, is an expression of the historical unfolding of the authentically Christian anthropocentric thought-form inspired by revelation. It is a form of consciousness, inspired by Christianity, in which persons are defined as agents of historical change, and not as passive observers and sometimes victims of the world as nature.¹⁹⁴ In this latter view, persons are all too often marginalized and made to suffer.

Metz suggests that Christians who stand within the boundaries of God's eschatological promises should relate themselves dialectically to this newly emerged process of hominization. They ought to be dialectically related to the present because God's future is dialectically related to the present. Let me explain.

On the one hand, God's future is continuous with the present in that it is the divine end towards which all persons are inwardly directed. It is the end towards which history is lured, and the horizon of hope towards which humanity moves in its struggle against the ambiguities of the modern era.¹⁹⁵ Because God's future is continuous with the present (in that

¹⁹⁴Metz, Theology, p. 60.

¹⁹⁵God's promises are "a critical liberating imperative for our present times. These promises stimulate and appeal to us to make them a reality in the present historical condition and, in this way, to verify them - for we must 'verify' them" (Metz, Theology, p. 114).

its liberating intention is mirrored, though ambiguously, in the modern hope-filled turn to the future), Christians are called to affirm it and participate in it.

On the other hand, God's future is discontinuous with the present because it promises an historical fulfillment different from all historically attainable achievements. God's promised future is something more than what is attainable by humanity on its own,¹⁹⁶ and radically new and different from everything that has gone before. Given this, Christians are called, as well, to be critical of the hominization process, to use God's promised future as a critical horizon by which to judge it as incomplete and pointing beyond itself.

Metz understands God's future, therefore, as dialectically related to the present: as both the end towards which it moves and the perspective from which it ought to be criticized. Christians are called to be dialectically related to the modern hominization process which is oriented to the future. At one and the same time, they ought to affirm it and to criticize it.

It is important to note that Metz's appropriation of the concept of hominization is influenced by his encounter

¹⁹⁶Rebecca Chopp says that, for Metz, God's promised future "is neither totally within history nor totally apart from history, but always dialectically related to history from the future" (Rebecca S. Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering. An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies [New York: Orbis Books, 1986], p. 68).

with "specific forms of theoretical atheism."¹⁹⁷ In extracting God from the world, modern atheism defines the world as material for humanity's newly found freedom.¹⁹⁸ Metz believes that this interpretation of the world as material, and persons as agents, is, in fact, an expression of the hominization process and, as such, is based on a Christian a priori. Marx's observation that real humanism is possible only when persons move from contemplating the world to changing it is, for Metz, a direct bringing to expression of the hominization process inspired by Christianity.¹⁹⁹

B. ESCHATOLOGY

Eschatology is the second notion which Metz appropriates into his conceptual arsenal at this stage of his development.²⁰⁰ Its appearance in his theology is attributable

¹⁹⁷Metz, Theology, p. 61.

¹⁹⁸Metz, Theology, pp. 62-63.

¹⁹⁹Metz argues that Christian anthropocentrism, and its focus on the brother and sister as mediatory agents of the experience of God, is present, as well, within the various "models of thinking and patterns of consciousness" operative within modern atheistic humanism. Metz, "God Before Us Instead of a Theological Argument," Cross Currents 18:3 (1968): p. 298. Hereafter cited as "God Before Us." German original: "Gott vor uns. Statt eines theologischen Arguments," in Ernst Bloch zu ehren, ed. Siegfried Unseld (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1965). See also Metz, Theology, p. 77.

²⁰⁰Metz's eschatological theology is developed largely in his 1965 and 1966 articles "God Before Us," pp. 296-306, and "An Eschatological View of the Church and the World," in Theology of the World, Chapter III (1966), pp. 81-100.

to three major influences which played on him at the time: 1. the beginning, in 1963, of an ongoing dialogue with Ernst Bloch, 2. his participation in formal Marxist-Christian dialogue (1962-1968), and 3. his appropriation of Old Testament exegetical research, showing the centrality of the concepts of promise and future within Israel's understanding of the world as history. These three events, and the eschatological focus they produced, warrant further discussion. Their significance comes from the fact that through them Metz becomes aware, for the first time, of the radical challenges Marxism poses to Christianity.²⁰¹ He also becomes aware of the resources which Christian eschatology has to answer these challenges. He discovers that Christianity can be transformed into a practice-oriented faith²⁰² by

²⁰¹See Nedjeljko Ancic, Die 'Politische Theologie' von Johann Baptist Metz als Antwort auf die Herausforderung des Marxismus (Frankfurt: Peter D. Lang, 1981).

²⁰²In Metz's early theology of secularization, Christian practice takes the form of suffering imitation of Christ's acceptance of the world (Metz, Theology, p. 45). In this second stage of development, practice takes the form of social and political criticism. This change is due, in large part, to a more sober assessment of the modern world. In his early writings, historical ambiguity was attributed to the occurrence of profane forms of secularization (secularism). Secularism detracted from the positive development of a secularization process inspired by Christianity. In his later writings, he becomes more pessimistic about historical progress and proclaims the liberating freedom of eschatological Christianity in the face of growing threats to freedom, justice, and peace. He believes the danger is real that "'collective darkness' will descend upon us. The danger of losing freedom, justice, and peace, is, indeed, so great, that indifference in these matters would be a crime" (Metz, Theology, p. 124).

focusing on the social and political nature of God's eschatological promises.²⁰³

1. Ernst Bloch

Having recently become a professor at Münster, Metz met Ernst Bloch for the first time in June of 1963.²⁰⁴ During the next fourteen years (Bloch died in 1977), Bloch was to have

²⁰³In his early writings, Metz focused on the acceptance and liberation of persons which takes place through God's actions of Creation and Incarnation. The fact of this liberation is seeking to express itself philosophically in an understanding of persons and the world which has freedom as its central principle. He thinks that the pre-conceptual basis of modernity's self-understanding, its thought-form, is a direct consequence of this divine liberative action. In a second stage, Metz focuses on God's eschatological promises rather than Creation and Incarnation. These promises are now the basis of God's liberative action. They liberate persons by offering a real future towards which they can work and from which they can receive hope and inspiration. This open future is what establishes history as an open project and frees it from the confines of an eternal cosmos, as the Greeks understood it. The world is experienced as history because God has given it a history through his promises of a future. Metz, Theology, p. 87.

Incarnation and eschatology are not set in opposition by Metz. Their relationship is simply not worked out. See Metz, Theology, p. 142, n. 4, where he alludes to the "inner connection" between Chapters I and II, and III and VI of Theology of the World. Chapters I and II interpret the world as anthropocentric and hominized, while Chapters III and VI interpret the world and Christian action from an eschatological and political perspective.

²⁰⁴J.B. Metz, "Ernst Bloch - im Spiegel eines theologisch-politischen Tagebuchs," Unterbrechungen, p. 58. This was first published as "'Neugierde, Jagdtrieb und Flügelschlag.' Ernst Bloch - im Spiegel eines theologisch-politischen Tagebuchs," in Denken heißt Überschreiten. In memoriam Ernst Bloch 1885-1977, eds. Karola Bloch and Adelbert Reif (Cologne and Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1978), pp. 78-89.

a formative influence on Metz's theology. As Gerhard Bauer has noted, it was through ongoing dialogue with Bloch and other prominent Marxists that Metz came to realize the rather abstract nature of his reflections on the faith-world relationship.²⁰⁵ Confronted with the insights of modern atheists, Marxist humanists, and scientific positivists, Metz moved beyond his secularization thesis to a consideration of the inherent constitution and direction of secularization. He became especially concerned about how modernity and its progress ought to be understood. As a Christian, he now argued that God, and not humanity, was ultimately the subject of history, and that the future towards which all progress aims would not be humanity's making, but God's.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵Gerhard Bauer, Christliche Hoffnung und menschlicher Fortschritt. Die politische Theologie von J.B. Metz als theologische Begründung gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung des Christen (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1976), p. 19.

²⁰⁶God is comprehended within the conceptual category of the future. He is the telos towards which persons and their history are progressing. He is the inherent goal of history. This much is not new. Metz had already stated this in CA. What is new is that God, as the power of the future, is now conceived of as the power of the "radically" new future, a future which is not-yet and therefore totally free in relation to the present. Metz, Theology, pp. 88-89. This proximity of God in relation to present history offers a transcendent (transcendence from ahead) perspective from which to criticize our present history which is ambiguously constituted. The church is then to actualize and mediate this criticism through the power of the "eschatological proviso," that is, through the power of the future which has been proleptically revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. The church realizes God's presence within its midst to the degree

In 1967, Metz acknowledged that the chief thing he had learned from Bloch was the "critical revolutionary power of hope,"²⁰⁷ that Christian hope is not a passive waiting for the fulfillment of promises, but a power which has transformative social and political implications in the present.²⁰⁸ This insight has had a decisive impact on his theology right up to the present.

2. Marxist Christian Dialogue

From 1962 to 1968, Metz was a participant in the Marxist-Christian dialogue organized by the West German Paulus

that it embodies this power of criticism from the future. For an insightful analysis of theology's appropriation of Ernst Bloch, see C. Braaten, "Ernst Bloch's Philosophy of Hope," in The Futurist Option, eds. C. Braaten and R.W. Jensen (New York: Paulist/Newman Press, 1970), pp. 59-78.

²⁰⁷J.B. Metz and J. Moltmann, "Ernst Bloch und die Theologie," in Bloch-Almanach 3. Folge 1983, ed. Ernst-Bloch-Archiv der Stadtbibliothek Ludwigshafen (Baden Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1983), p. 35. This text originates from a 1967 television interview which was first published under the title "Ernst Bloch and Georg Lukacs im Gespräch mit Iring Fetscher, J.B. Metz und J. Moltmann," Neues Forum 14 (1967): pp. 837-843.

²⁰⁸Metz thinks that the experience of being lured towards the future, which is the key feature of present historical consciousness, is an anonymous experience of God. See Metz, "God Before Us," pp. 296-297. For a more detailed account of the influence of Bloch on Metz and early Political Theology see Francis Fiorenza, "Dialectical Theology and Hope," Heythrop Journal of Theology 9 (1968): pp. 142-163, 384-99; 10 (1969): pp. 26-42, and Bauer, Christliche Hoffnung und Menschlicher Fortschritt, pp. 113-116. I am grateful to Rebecca Chopp for these references.

Society (Paulus-Gesellschaft).²⁰⁹ Here, he struggled to formulate and defend a Christian interpretation of modern secularity and its goals and aims. He encountered such issues as the Marxist critique of religion as ideology, the primacy of praxis over contemplation, the primacy of the future over the present and past, the primacy of the socio-political realm over private subjectivity, and the Frankfurt School's critique of modernity.²¹⁰ In the midst of these discussions, Metz did not remain unchanged. He took to heart the concerns of Marxist humanists and modern atheists²¹¹ and

²⁰⁹See Bauer, Christliche Hoffnung und menschlicher Fortschritt, p. 19, n. 51 for a summary of Metz's published contributions to this dialogue. For a detailed discussion of the Paulus Society meetings, see Arthur F. McGovern, Marxism: An American Christian Perspective (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1981), pp. 113-115 and pp. 129-130, ns. 88-93. On page 130 (n. 92), McGovern refers to Peter Hebblethwaite's report on these Marxist-Christian discussions in The Month (June 1966 and June 1967); The Tablet (May 6, 1967); and in his own book The Christian-Marxist Dialogue (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

²¹⁰This critique is best exemplified in the work by Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno entitled Dialectic of Enlightenment (New York: The Seabury Press, 1972). Original edition: Dialektik der Aufklärung (New York: Social Studies Association, 1944).

²¹¹Metz thinks that Marxist atheists and humanists express new "models of thinking and patterns of consciousness" (Metz, "God Before Us," pp. 296-298). Stemming from the "great intellectual revolution of the nineteenth century," Metz suggests that these movements, with their focus on praxis and the future, may inadvertently be expressing the authentic spirit of Christianity. He asks: "Does the spirit not move where it will and does the understanding of faith not always have to be prepared to let itself be outbid by others, not only by virtue of a practice more worthy of belief, but also because of a more receptive awareness of a new epoch in historical consciousness" (Metz, "God Before Us," p. 298).

responded by trying to formulate a view of Christian faith oriented toward practice. He struggled to develop a new Christian self-definition which could answer the criticism that Christianity was merely an ideology which legitimized existing social and political powers.²¹² And he found resources for this theological apologetic within the neglected arena of Christian eschatology, especially within an eschatology which understood the promises of God through social and political categories, not through transcendental, existential and personalist ones.²¹³

The issues which emerged within this Marxist-Christian dialogue contributed to the eventual emergence, in 1967, of what came to be known as "political theology." It was now

²¹²Metz is critical of the Marxist tendency to overlook the concrete historical subject and his or her suffering. For his early critique of Marxism (1965) see "God Before Us," pp. 300-302 and 305. For a recent critique (1986), see *Politische Theologie und die Herausforderung des Marxismus. Ein Gespräch des Herausgebers mit Johann Baptist Metz*, in Theologie der Befreiung und Marxismus, ed. Peter Rottländer, pp. 178 ff..

²¹³In a small book written in 1959, titled Advent Gottes (translated in 1970 as The Advent of God), Metz criticized the Christian preoccupation with the past and its inability to face up to the imminent coming of God. God is the transcendent power breaking in from the future, with transforming consequences. The future promises of God are realized within Christian life through an opening of hearts to the divine advent and a subsequent transformation and actualization of who we are as God's creatures. Although at this stage Metz is opposed to a "neutral, theoretical acknowledgement of this divine future" (Metz, The Advent of God, p. 11), he tends to confine the transformative power of the future to personal and interpersonal dimensions of life. God's advent generates longing, expectancy, impatience and restlessness, but not political and social activism. Metz, The Advent of God, p. 17.

clear to Metz that the social and political content of eschatological theology should become the basis of a new action-oriented theology. His conviction was this: that "every eschatological theology...must become a political theology, that is, a (socio-) critical theology."²¹⁴

3. Post-Bultmannian Biblical Research

Post-Bultmannian biblical research constitutes a third influence on Metz's development of an eschatological theology and, subsequently, a political theology. Two aspects of this research influenced him especially: 1. its research into Old Testament themes, and 2. its use of the Old Testament in interpreting the New.²¹⁵ First, let us look at the issue of Old Testament themes.

According to Metz, post-Bultmannian research shows that the words of the Old Testament are primarily words of promise. They are proclamations of a promised future which both initiate the future and abrogate the present. Metz drew two conclusions from this.

²¹⁴Metz, Theology, p. 115. In Faith and History and Society (p. 236, n. 2), Metz says that his first reflections on political theology emerged in his 1965 article entitled "Unbelief as a Theological Problem," Concilium, Vol. 6 (New York: Paulist Press, 1965). Here, he defines faith intersubjectively rather than individualistically, as transcendental theology tended to do.

²¹⁵Metz, Theology, p. 87.

First, he came to recognize that the Judeo-Christian experience of a promised future initiates something fundamentally new within human consciousness. It initiates, for the first time, an experience of the world as "history oriented to the future."²¹⁶ This epoch-making experience frees persons, for the first time, from the prior Greek cosmocentric understanding of the world as (history-less) nature. Metz concluded from this that the Old Testament's "pathos for the new (das Novum), for the new time and for the new coming world, i.e., for the new as that which never was,"²¹⁷ is the basis of modernity's own orientation towards the future.²¹⁸

Second, Metz recognized the importance of this Old Testament insight for understanding the event of Jesus Christ. The Christ-event was clearly the concrete realization of the power of the not-yet realized future. Post-Bultmannian research argued that the Old Testament's promised future of God is proleptically realized in the Kingdom of God which is

²¹⁶Metz, Theology, pp. 87-88.

²¹⁷Metz, Theology, p. 88.

²¹⁸In his early writings, Metz said that Christians first experienced the world as history as a result of God's liberating acceptance of them. They understood themselves and the world differently. They were now subjects within history, not things within a cosmos. Now, Metz shifts his focus from the early Christians to the Hebrews. He points to how the Hebrews understood themselves and the world differently in light of God's covenantal promises. Because of the horizon of hope, revealed to them in God's covenant promises, the Hebrews saw themselves as partners with God in shaping the world as history. Metz, Theology, p. 91.

proclaimed and actualized in Jesus the Christ. Hence, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are in fact proclamations of promise, proclamations which liberate persons to alter the world towards the promised future of God.²¹⁹ The New Testament, therefore, proclaims hope, in the form of creative expectancy, as the essence of Christian experience. It is a hope pre-figured in Israel's experience of covenantal promises. Hence, the task of Christian theology is to develop this "relationship to the world as a relationship of hope, and therefore to explicate...theology (in every aspect) as eschatology."²²⁰

Thus far, I have shown that between 1964 and 1969 there emerge within Metz's theology two new and important themes: hominization and eschatology. I will now show how the appropriation of these themes influences the direction and content of his ongoing critique of religious apathy. Thinking within the categories of eschatology and hominization, Metz's critique of religious apathy now expresses itself in three interrelated ways: 1. as a broad critique of privatized Christianity, 2. as a critique of scholasticism and neo-scholasticism (which he calls metaphysical theology), and 3. as a critique of transcendental, existential and personalist theologies (which he calls modern theology). I will deal with

²¹⁹Metz, Theology, p. 89.

²²⁰Metz, Theology, p. 90.

each in turn.

C. METZ'S CRITIQUE OF MODERN PRIVATIZED CHRISTIANITY

In this second stage, Metz is especially concerned with what he thinks is the most debilitating feature of modern Christianity: its tendency to privatize the Christian message. He thinks the credibility of modern faith is in doubt because the kerygma is interpreted solely within the context of the private individual.²²¹ Modern Christianity has therefore lost sight of the socio-political importance of God's eschatological promises of freedom, peace, justice, and reconciliation.²²² It no longer recognizes the liberating power of God's promises as they pertain to social and political life and is therefore blind to the socially critical and transformative power of God's promised Kingdom, a power which Metz thinks was present among early Christians.

To probe further into the reasons for this privatization, Metz utilizes the conceptual category of thought-form which was central to his earlier study of Aquinas. He asserts that privatization is a consequence of Christianity's ongoing and misguided appropriation of two interrelated non-Christian thought-forms: Greek consciousness and modern consciousness. Both debilitate the motivating

²²¹Metz, Theology, p. 110.

²²²J.B. Metz, "Political Theology," Sacramentum Mundi, vol. 5 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 36.

power of God's promised future within modern theology, and both capture and make impotent the socially-directed eschatological message of hope.²²³ Above all, both make Christians hopeless and apathetic by robbing them of the eschatological horizon which can motivate and direct Christian actions in the world.

Metz's central point is that vestiges of the Greek cosmocentric thought-form exist today in modern Christianity, and that their presence, in the form of a privatistic emphasis, contributes to the crisis which Christianity finds itself in. These cosmocentric vestiges exist especially in a type of theology which Metz calls "metaphysical theology," a designation within which he includes scholastic and neo-scholastic theologies. These theologies have uncritically appropriated Greek assumptions about the world and human nature which limit their ability to recognize the socially critical power of the Christian eschatological message. As well, under the influence of Greek assumptions, they have developed a privatistic understanding of religious experience,

²²³In defining the role of apologetics, Metz warns against the danger of embodying the faith in "a ready-made thought-form, no matter how purely formal or generalized, of any type whatever - cosmological and metaphysical, transcendental, existential or personalist" (Metz, "Apologetics," p. 67). Metz refers to this danger again in Faith in History and Society, p. 12, n. 8, where he warns against fitting "the Christian faith into a ready-made universal pattern."

interpreting it as timeless metaphysical self-awareness.²²⁴

Furthermore, Metz implies, though does not say so explicitly, that modern Christianity's appropriation of the modern thought-form is in many ways as destructive as the appropriation of the Greek thought-form, because the two are not so different. In fact, I take him to believe that the modern thought-form is really an extension of the Greek thought-form. A major reason why the modern thought-form is dangerous to modern Christianity is because of the way it understands the human self in terms of private monadic subjectivity. And the consequence of appropriating this assumption is that Christian love is thought of merely as a private matter, without social or political implications.

This tendency, on the part of modernity to view the human self privatistically, and therefore to depreciate social and political reality, has especially influenced what Metz calls modern theology, a category within which he includes transcendental, existential, and personalist theologies.²²⁵ He argues that these theologies participate in the modern anthropological reduction of the socio-historical realm of

²²⁴Metz, Theology, p. 22. Metz says that the essence of faith, according to the scholastic view, is "the objectification of the timeless metaphysical self-awareness of man, clothed simply in a dramatic form" (Metz, Theology, p. 22). It is not a lively response to a unique historical event.

²²⁵Metz, Theology, p. 108. By "transcendental, existential, and personalist theologies," Metz means modern theology in general and its tendency towards privatization.

life. Social and political life becomes a secondary appendage to the private life of the individual.²²⁶

²²⁶ Metz says that his early thesis of deprivatization "attempted to criticize prevalent theologies (such as the existential theology of demythologization, the personal theology and the transcendental theology) in an effort to get away from privatistic categories and the long established abstract contrast between the subject on the one hand and history and society on the other.... In so far as they are relevant in this type of theology of the subject, history and society only appear as anthropological reductions. They can be regarded only as variables of a subject or of an anthropology which tries to keep the subject out of its historical and social struggles for identity, as it were almost a priori, by means of a late and diminished form of metaphysics and which compensates for its suspected dissociation from history by a weakened idea of the historicity of the subject" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 63). This statement indicates that Metz locates this "late and diminished form of metaphysics" within a particular stream of German Idealism which he thinks had a major influence on modern Catholic theology. German idealism, Metz says, "was therefore considered by the new theologians along the path of certain clear (Hegelian) traditions, embracing phenomenology, existentialism, and personalism, to such an extent that present-day systematic theology, and apologetics still seem to be determined by the philosophical forms within the tradition of German idealism, even when the latter is not explicitly taken into account" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 23). He thinks that because the "new theology" within Catholicism (German and French theology of the 20's and 30's and post WW II Catholic theology prior to Vatican II) began as a debate with Idealism, especially with the transcendental Kant and his critique of pure reason, it failed to pay attention to the insights of the Kant of the philosophy of history or the Kant of practical reason. It failed to acknowledge the primary importance of history and society in the constitution of enlightened persons. Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 22-23. We note that the "philosophical form" within the tradition of German Idealism which Metz argues against is a "metaphysic of being." This metaphysic of being serves as the philosophical apparatus for both scholasticism, neo-scholasticism and modern theology and disables it in its attempt to understand properly the subject, history, and society.

Certain assumptions common to both modern and Greek forms of consciousness, when blindly assimilated into Christianity, therefore contribute to Christianity's present state of privatization. Three assumptions stand out: 1. the assumption that history is trapped within nature, 2. the assumption that the future is closed and unfree, and 3. the assumption that the self is a private monad-like object.²²⁷

The result of the blind appropriation of these assumptions by metaphysical and modern theology is that both tend to ignore the socio-political-directedness of God's promises by failing to understand history as a societal reality unfolding towards God's promised future.²²⁸ They fail to recognize that the eschatological promises of God have fundamentally re-defined history as a social reality which is future-directed and coming into existence under the impetus and guiding horizon of God's promised future. Concerning human personhood, they either miss the central importance of human subjectivity all together, as in the case of

²²⁷Concerning history and the future, metaphysical theology (scholastic and neo-scholastic theologies) makes the general assumption that both are locked within a cosmic totality. In the case of modern theology (transcendental, existential, and personalist theologies), the assumption is that both are merely existential or personal realities. Political theology, on the other hand, "does not allow 'world' to be understood in the sense of cosmos, in opposition to existence and person, nor as a merely existential or personal reality. It requires it to be understood as a societal reality, viewed in its historical becoming" (Metz, Theology, p. 115).

²²⁸Metz, Theology, p. 115.

metaphysical theology, or they understand the human subject too privatistically, as in the case of transcendental, existential, and personalist theologies.²²⁹

What follows is a more detailed analysis of Metz's critique of these two theological types: metaphysical, on the one hand, and transcendental, existential, and personalist theologies, on the other. Both are guilty of inadvertently appropriating privatizing elements of the non-Christian and Greek form of consciousness. In particular, I will look at what Metz calls the "metaphysics of being." He thinks this non-Christian metaphysic²³⁰ is the philosophical substratum

²²⁹Metz's early writings (1957 to 1964) were an attempt to locate the subject at the center of theological discourse. They tried to give voice to an anthropological shift within theology, a shift intended by revelation and given methodological articulation by Thomas. Metz's early political theology (1964-1969), what I have designated as Stage II in his development, continues to argue for the centrality of the subject in theological discourse. It argues against metaphysical theology because it understands persons and the world cosmocentrically, not anthropocentrically. In addition, Metz now argues against modern theology in general and its atomistic understanding of persons and its failure to see the subject as essentially a social reality. He now recognizes that even though modern theology is anthropocentric, it is not yet fully anthropocentric. A theology that is fully anthropocentric recognizes the social character of persons and the socio-political nature of the Christian Gospel. As I will show, Metz's third stage of development continues to criticize modern theology for being only partially anthropocentric. It attributes its ongoing privatistic understanding of the subject to specific Enlightenment notions and tries to move beyond them.

²³⁰Because "metaphysics" is a plural designation, I will use instead the singular term "metaphysic" for metaphysic of being.

present beneath both Greek and, to a lesser degree,²³¹ modern consciousness. It is responsible for the non-Christian notions of history, future, and the self which these theologies hold. Central to the inadequacy of this metaphysic is the epistemology it uses. It operates on the basis of a purely contemplative way of knowing which yields a privatized understanding of the self, a static notion of history, and an abstract and un-dynamic picture of the future.

D. METZ'S CRITIQUE OF METAPHYSICAL THEOLOGY

Metaphysical theology, as found in scholasticism and neo-scholasticism, is Metz's general way of referring to the kind of theology that preceded the rise of modern theology in its transcendental, existential, and personalist forms. The bulk of Metz's critique focuses on neo-scholasticism.²³² Extending roughly from the middle of the nineteenth century to the nineteen-twenties and thirties, neo-scholasticism is criticized for remaining isolated from contemporary historical and philosophical developments. Instead of responding creatively to the challenges of the Enlightenment, it sought

²³¹Metz makes no explicit mention of a metaphysic of being when he criticizes modern theology. What he criticizes is a privatized understanding of the human self which has its origins in the transcendental Kant and German idealism. Hence, I assume he thinks that the notion of an isolated monadic self, present within Kant and German Idealism generally, has its roots within the Greek metaphysic of being.

²³²Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 17-19.

refuge in the past through the revival of earlier traditions.²³³ Rather than opening itself to the Enlightenment, it raised a protective wall against it. Why then did this type of theology, especially in its neo-scholastic form, retreat from the social and political challenges of the Enlightenment?

1. History and the Future

Metz thinks metaphysical theology retreated from the challenges of the Enlightenment because it was unable, by virtue of the metaphysic it was using, to understand the concepts of history and future. He refers to this disabling metaphysic as a metaphysic of being,²³⁴ asserting further that it was developed within scholasticism and neo-scholasticism²³⁵ and still functions today as the metaphysical substratum of much of modern theology.²³⁶ I will proceed by examining the debilitating role of this metaphysic within metaphysical theology.

According to Metz, the metaphysic of being rendered metaphysical theology incapable of understanding history and

²³³Metz, Faith in History and Theology, pp. 17-18.

²³⁴Metz, Theology, p. 98.

²³⁵I have added neo-scholasticism here even though Metz only refers to scholasticism. I have done so on the basis of Metz's critique of neo-scholasticism in Faith in History and Society, pp. 17-19.

²³⁶Metz, Theology, p. 98.

the future eschatologically. In terms of history, it prevented it from understanding history eschatologically, as a free history which is being propelled towards God's promised future. Rather than understanding history from this future-oriented perspective, the metaphysic of being could only understand history from the perspective of an un-free, pre-established, eternal order or cosmos. The result was that metaphysical theology was blind to what Christianity had in common with the Enlightenment: an understanding of history as open and free.

In addition, this metaphysic rendered metaphysical theology incapable of understanding the future eschatologically. This is because it operated with a purely contemplative and abstract way of knowing and could only understand the future in terms of the present. It conceived of the future, therefore, as an extension of the present which was constant and always had been,²³⁷ as "exclusively...a correlate of the present."²³⁸ It thought of it abstractly, fitting it into an abstract cosmic totality. Put simply, it reduced the future to the status of an object of abstract

²³⁷Metz, Theology, p. 99.

²³⁸Metz, Theology, p. 98. "The future appears exclusively as the correlate of the present, but not as a reality grounded in itself and belonging to itself, which precisely does not have the character of what exists and is present and therefore cannot be - in the classical sense - ontologized" (Metz, Theology, p. 98).

metaphysical speculation.²³⁹

This contemplative way of knowing, operating within the metaphysic of being, is therefore incapable of grasping the radically open and free nature of God's eschatological future. It cannot understand God's new and open future as "what is coming into being, what does not yet exist, what has never been, what is 'new'."²⁴⁰ Instead, it robs the Christian future of freedom by reducing it to an objectifiable part of an objectifiable cosmos. It conceives of it as never really free and never really transcendent.²⁴¹

In like manner, a metaphysic of being, and its contemplative awareness, misunderstands history by thinking of it as static and closed.²⁴² For example, it interprets all three categories of past, present, and future as imperfect reflections of an eternal realm of being. What emerges is the implicit assumption that all three dimensions of time are encased within an unchanging eternal cosmic totality and

²³⁹Metz, Theology, p. 98.

²⁴⁰Metz, Theology, p. 99.

²⁴¹Metz thinks that modernity's orientation towards the future, rooted in the intellectual revolution of the nineteenth century (à la Marx, Feuerbach, and Nietzsche), is calling Christianity back to what is inherent to the biblical message. It is calling it to re-join what has been "disastrously separated in theological consciousness, i.e., transcendence and the future" (Metz, "God Before Us," p. 299).

²⁴²Metz refers to this way of understanding history as a "history of origin" (Herkunftsgeschichte). Metz, Theology, pp. 98-99.

that history is therefore essentially unfree, with no room for the radically new.

Metz's point is made clearer if we recognize how, according to eschatological thinking, history and the future ought to be understood. Biblical Christianity, Metz argues, sees "the future...(as) the constitutive element of history as history."²⁴³ History is sustained and wrought forth by the eschatological promises of God, which are proleptically realized in the event of Jesus Christ and unfolding within history. History, therefore (and remember, Metz is thinking about the history-founding event of Jesus Christ), is not primarily something which happened in the past. It is the proleptic unfolding of this future in the present. It is a "final history" (Endgeschichte).²⁴⁴ The origin, sustaining ground, and goal of history is therefore the eschatological Kingdom of God proleptically revealed in Jesus Christ. Hence, the Christ-event is both the founding event of history and the revelation of the fulfillment towards which it aims. It founds history in that God's promises make possible, for the first time, a new understanding of history as constituted by human freedom.²⁴⁵ History is now open for humanity's making,

²⁴³Metz, Theology, p. 99.

²⁴⁴Metz, Theology, p. 82.

²⁴⁵This is what Metz means when he says: "Only in relation to the future can the soul of all history, namely, freedom, be finally grasped" (Metz, Theology, p. 99).

with real hope and real freedom.²⁴⁶

To summarize, metaphysical theology is unable to recognize and to value the Christian conviction that God's promised future is the essence of history because it is limited by the metaphysic of being on which it is based. Operative within this metaphysic is an epistemology which approaches reality contemplatively, viewing reality "as a whole within the framework of what exists, that is, of nature."²⁴⁷ It is therefore blind to the fact that God's future is "the soul of all history."²⁴⁸ The result is the subordination of history and the future to a cosmic eternity which has no end, thereby making real hope and real freedom impossible.

2. Active Awareness

As already noted, the problem with a metaphysic of being is that its purely contemplative way of knowing cannot appreciate the importance of the biblical message concerning God's promised future. The condition of the possibility of

²⁴⁶This is not to say, of course, that the content of the end goal of history is known. It is not. God's future is always the coming into being of what has never existed before. In this sense, it is constantly an interruption and surprise to all predictions and expectations of the future. This note of interruption and surprise plays an important role in Metz's later theology. See, for example, "Vorwort," Unterbrechungen, pp. 7-9.

²⁴⁷Metz, Theology, p. 99.

²⁴⁸Metz, Theology, p. 99.

contemplation knowing anything is the "world as it exists at any given moment."²⁴⁹ Hence, it cannot comprehend the future Kingdom of God which has no correlation with the "world as it exists at any given moment."

What is required, Metz asserts, in order to tap the resources of an eschatological Christianity, is a theology which is not crippled by this purely contemplative way of knowing. What is needed is a change in the "transcendental"²⁵⁰ conditions which make theological knowledge possible in the first place. In the language of Christliche Anthropozentrik, what is needed is a new thought-form, a new a priori horizon within which understanding itself takes place.²⁵¹ Metz calls this new thought-form "active awareness," which is a "new and authentic combination of theory and practice, as it were of reflection and revolution, which lies wholly outside metaphysical thinking and its conception of being."²⁵²

Hence, active awareness involves a new relationship between contemplation and action, a relationship in which the concrete love of neighbor is not subordinated to correct belief or a privatized form of religious experience. Put

²⁴⁹Metz, "Political Theology," p. 36.

²⁵⁰Metz, "Political Theology," p. 36.

²⁵¹"Only a change of the present age and of the conditions which make its insights possible can give access to the future truth of the Godhead of God" (Metz, "Political Theology," p. 36).

²⁵²Metz, Theology, p. 99.

another way, Metz is searching for a new form of Christian consciousness which would relate action and knowledge differentially, relating them in a manner of unity-in-difference, with priority given to action. This new consciousness would have the ability to recognize that God's future-oriented promises are realized in moments of love, a love defined as "the unconditional determination to bring justice, liberty and peace" to others.²⁵³ Given this understanding, love would therefore be present in actions of socio-political criticism and transformation.²⁵⁴

3. Modernity and the Emergence of Active Awareness

Metz argues that this active awareness, which is the pre-condition necessary to appropriate God's promised future, is emerging today as a "new epoch in historical consciousness,"²⁵⁵ as a new consciousness which recognizes that all persons are free to shape their own history. The origins of this modern recognition of historical agency, Metz claims, are found in two places: 1. in the Kantian critique of pure theory,²⁵⁶ and 2. in the critique of idealism by the left wing

²⁵³Metz, Theology, p. 119.

²⁵⁴Metz, Theology, p. 119.

²⁵⁵Metz, "God Before Us," p. 298.

²⁵⁶Metz, Theology, pp. 111-113.

Hegelians.²⁵⁷ Together, these intellectual streams have contributed to a transition from an intellectual era preoccupied with theory to an era stressing the primacy of praxis.²⁵⁸ This turn to praxis is the "real Copernican revolution in philosophy,"²⁵⁹ according to Metz, and must be appropriated by modern theology. It is, as well, the distinctive feature of the hominization process discussed at the beginning of this chapter. What follows, therefore, is Metz's analysis of the origins of the hominization process. This discussion is important because, along with eschatology, hominization forms the nucleus of Metz's theological enterprise at this point in his theological career.

a. Kant and Practical Reason

Kant's contribution to this newly emerging

²⁵⁷Metz, "God Before Us," p. 299. Metz refers to these historical influences in a very undifferentiated way. This is probably because he is trying to describe something as diffuse as a new way of thinking which has emerged from an array of historical influences. In his 1969 article on "Political Theology," he refers to "critical reason" as the new standpoint from which political theology ought to begin. He refers to the Enlightenment which paved the way for its emergence and the philosophical tradition of the nineteenth century (especially Hegel and Marx) which gave articulate expression to it. Metz, "Political Theology," p. 35. In my analysis, I am equating this "critical reason" with what Metz calls active awareness, which I will discuss in a moment.

²⁵⁸"The central problem of the Enlightenment that Kant had approached and Marx had later explored in depth with important consequences...(was) the primacy of practical reason" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 17).

²⁵⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 53.

consciousness, Metz believes, is his re-thinking of the relationship between theory and practice, especially his assertion that "theoretical transcendental reason appears within practical reason, rather than the reverse."²⁶⁰ Kant was one of the first to realize that enlightenment is not attainable on the basis of theory alone, even if actions follow. A consciousness which gives theory, knowledge, or reflection priority within the theory-practice relationship is, Kant argued, pre-critical, resulting in the inordinate privatizing of reason. As an alternative, Kant taught that true enlightenment (the fulfillment of reason, knowledge, and reflection) comes about "at the same time"²⁶¹ as one is engaged in practical, moral, and revolutionary actions. It is wrought forth in the midst of actions aimed at creating the socio-political conditions necessary for the practical political use of one's reason. It is attained in fighting for the conditions necessary for its socio-political realization.

This Kantian emphasis on the practical political fulfillment of reason should not go unnoticed, Metz argues, because it has become a central part of the new epoch of historical consciousness within which theology now operates. If theology does not want to be left at a pre-critical stage, it must reconsider the way it relates theory and practice.

²⁶⁰Metz, Theology, p. 112.

²⁶¹Metz, Theology, p. 112.

As Metz puts it: "Practical...political reason must take part in all critical reflections in theology."²⁶² For example, theology should re-think the relationship between faith and reason, how the practical political love of neighbor is essential for determining the truth-claims of theological assertions.²⁶³ The "fundamental hermeneutic problem of theology," Metz concludes, is therefore the "relation between theory and practice, between understanding the faith and social practice."²⁶⁴

b. Nineteenth Century Critique of Idealism

A second contributing factor to the emergence of this new form of consciousness is the nineteenth century critique of Idealism initiated by the left wing Hegelians: Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and Marx.²⁶⁵ Their legacy has given this new

²⁶²Metz, Theology, p. 112.

²⁶³"The truth of the promise which the Christian word has to convey cannot be revealed only in the sense of aledia, but must be 'performed'" (Metz, Theology, p. 128). Note: Aledia should read aletheia, as it is in the original German. This is the translator's error.

²⁶⁴Metz, Theology, p. 112.

²⁶⁵Metz says that this post-idealist tradition is being carried on in the work of J. Habermas. He thinks Habermas' work is important for theology's own attempt to do theology on the other side of idealism. Metz, "Political Theology," p. 36. In Metz's later theology, Habermas and the Frankfurt School become increasingly important, playing a significant role in his growing recognition of the dialectical nature of the Enlightenment. He thinks this post-idealist tradition has been "too little considered in modern theology" (Metz, "Political Theology," p. 36). It has often been ignored because it was thought to pose a direct threat to theological

consciousness two of its most distinctive features: 1. its focus on persons and their freedom in history, and 2. its orientation to the future.²⁶⁶ Metz thinks these two features comprise the unavoidable present horizon of theological self-understanding.²⁶⁷

The impact on theology of this new recognition that persons are free agents of their history has been profound, resulting in what Metz calls a "critical 'anthropological change' in the historical form of the Christian consciousness of faith."²⁶⁸ Humanity's quest for freedom and justice (individual, social, and political) is now as central a theme in theological consciousness as it is in modern consciousness

consciousness. Metz, "God Before Us Instead of a Theological Argument," p. 298. However, Metz argues it has positive contributions to make to theology. He accepts, for example, for the most part, its criticism of religion as bad self-alienation. Feuerbach was therefore partially correct in defining theology as anthropology, and in transforming the alienating "otherworldliness" of Christianity into a future built by persons. Metz, "God Before Us Instead of a Theological Argument," p. 297. Metz also points to similarities between the Christian focus on the future and the left wing Hegelian's focus on the future. In fact, he reverts back to earlier themes within his secularization thesis when he asserts that their emphases on human agency and the future are products of Christianity, that their focus on persons and the future is what was originally intended by revelation.

²⁶⁶Metz, "God Before Us," p. 299. Metz hopes that this new epoch in historical consciousness, characterized by a more receptive awareness, can open theological consciousness to the possibility of uniting that "which for a long time had been disastrously separated:" transcendence and the future (Metz, "God Before Us," p. 299).

²⁶⁷Metz, "God Before Us," p. 297.

²⁶⁸Metz, "God Before Us," p. 298.

generally. Faith assertions can no longer be divorced from situations of oppression and suffering without the suspicion that oppression is being religiously justified. In short, this new consciousness has caused Christians to recognize the following:

...the original and continually complete unity of love of God with love of brother, the stress on the necessary and continuous role of mediator of the brother for the relationship to God, and thus the brotherly mediation of the immediacy of God, the determination of the Christian subject in his essential 'intersubjectivity,' and in all of this the insight that in regard to the Christian understanding of salvation everything is false which appears to be true only for the isolated individual.²⁶⁹

In addition to bringing to light for theology the importance of human agency within history, the left wing Hegelians have also encouraged modern theology to reflect more seriously on the importance of the future as a motivating force for human engagement of history. They have created a climate within which theology's "a-historical, transcendental orientation" is no longer acceptable and a more "historically engaged future orientation"²⁷⁰ is demanded.

²⁶⁹Metz, "God Before Us," p. 298.

²⁷⁰In CA, Metz asserted that revelation (the Christian logos) is trying to bring about, in history, a methodologically articulated (philosophically explicit) horizon of understanding necessary for its own historical mediation. He pointed to Thomas' anthropocentric thought-form as precisely this. In addition, this thought-form was proclaimed to be the horizon of understanding for the modern world and its process of secularization (hominization). Secularization was spoken of as the Christian-inspired mediatory horizon of understanding, required for the Christian logos to take root within history.

At this stage, however, Metz thinks of the Christian logos more in terms of eschatological promises than

Metz proposes that modern theology's response to the left wing Hegelian critique ought to be to revive eschatological themes, particularly the theme of God's future promises as a motivating horizon for Christian engagement (social and political) of the world. Theology should recognize that God's future Kingdom is made most real through actions of love, and not through contemplation alone.²⁷¹ As Metz puts it, modern theology's relationship to the future ought to become "markedly operative in character, and any theory of this relationship [ought]...therefore [to be] a theory that is related to action: it...[ought to be]

Incarnational acceptance and secularization. It is true that in both instances the person-world relationship is radically redefined. In both instances, persons become the radically free transformative agents of their world as history. Now, however, modernity is understood more in terms of its orientation towards action and the future than secularization. It is characterized by an orientation towards human agency in history and the future. This orientation originates in the Enlightenment's critique of pure contemplation and its positing of praxis as the condition of the possibility of persons understanding themselves and their world. Kant's focus on practical reason, and the transformation of theology into anthropology by Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and Marx, contributed to the emergence of what is for Metz a new historical consciousness inspired by Christianity. This consciousness is both a product of Christian revelation (i.e., via eschatological promises) and a medium for its effective taking hold within the modern world.

²⁷¹Christian truth is "a truth which cannot be guaranteed like a pure idea, but only in a (historical) action orientated to its eschatological promises" (Metz, "Apologetics," p. 67). God's future "cannot...be purely contemplative or purely imaginative, since pure contemplation and pure imagination refer only to reality that already exists" (Metz, Theology, p. 147). Metz attributes this idea to Ernst Bloch.

characterized by a new relationship between theory and practice."²⁷²

In summary, Metz commends the "great intellectual revolution of the nineteenth century"²⁷³ for giving modern consciousness its awareness of the importance of the future in humanity's shaping of history. In this sense, Christianity ought to listen and learn.

[It]...must be fundamentally ready here...to listen and to learn - admittedly, not so much in regard to content as in regard to certain models of thinking and patterns of consciousness which are historically of significance in such positions. Does the spirit not move where it will and does the understanding of faith not always have to be prepared to let itself be outbid by others, not only by virtue of a practice more worthy of belief, but also because of a more receptive awareness of a new epoch in historical consciousness.²⁷⁴

Before looking at Metz's critique of transcendental, existential, and personalist theologies, let me summarize his critique of metaphysical theology.

First, he admonishes metaphysical theology for the way it is unable to understand history because of its use of a metaphysic of being which employs a purely contemplative way of knowing. It is deficient because it relates to history in a contemplative and abstract way, claiming to comprehend it

²⁷²Metz, Theology, pp. 147-148.

²⁷³Metz, "God Before Us," p. 296.

²⁷⁴Metz, "God Before Us," p. 298.

as a whole.²⁷⁵ In doing so, it does not recognize history as the arena within which God's eschatological surprises and interruptions unfold. It does not recognize God's promised future as the always unfolding essence of history.

Second, he thinks that for the same reasons metaphysical theology cannot understand the Christian concept of the future. The passive awareness of contemplation which it uses understands the future only in relationship to what already exists. Because God's promised future is totally other than what has ever been, it cannot be comprehended.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵Metz's earlier critique of the Greek cosmocentrism understanding of the world (a world locked within an eternal cosmos) now finds company in Ernst Bloch's critique of the pre-modern notion of history. For Bloch, the pre-moderns understood the world as "fixed in a span of time which is inherently void, or repeats itself at will 'in closed totalities'" (Metz, "God Before Us," p. 305). Both Bloch and Metz are concerned about the effect that a pre-modern divinized world-view continues to have on modernity. Metz is consistent in his critique of a view of the world which negates human freedom. In his early writings, he criticised the Greek view of the world for negating freedom and hope. When unwittingly appropriated by theology, it negates humanity's freedom given by the Incarnation. Now, Metz thinks that this view of the world, as a closed totality, negates the human freedom given to humankind by virtue of God's eschatological promises of a new world. In both instances, human freedom is grounded in revelation (Incarnation and Eschatology) and negated by a false world-view.

²⁷⁶Metz asks: "How does the Church realize its mission to work for the future of the world? It cannot be by pure contemplation, since contemplation by definition relates to what has already become existent and to what actually exists. The future which the Church hopes for is not yet here, but is emerging and arising (entstehend). Therefore the hope which the Church sets in itself and in the world should be creative and militant. In other words, Christian hope should realize itself in a creative and militant eschatology" (Metz, Theology, p. 94).

What is required is a new active awareness, an active way of coming to know. By it, God's future can then be known more in moments of love of neighbor than in private moments of contemplation.

Third, Metz fears that metaphysical theology maintains a purely speculative relationship to the world rather than an operative one. It remains at a pre-critical stage of consciousness by not participating in the new epoch of historical consciousness spawned by the post-idealist philosophical tradition and its focus on human subjectivity, human agency, and the future. It is therefore unreceptive to the anthropological shift within theology that this tradition has brought about, and thus refuses to develop an active-receptive consciousness towards the world. In short, it chooses to remain pre-critical and pre-modern.

And fourth, metaphysical theology is a privatistic misreading of Christianity. Above all, it misses the operative relationship to the world demanded by the eschatological kerygma because its relationship to the world is merely a passive contemplative one. It thus fails to acknowledge the "fundamental society-directedness of the NT message."²⁷⁷ It interiorizes, spiritualizes and individualizes the content of the eschatological promises.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷Metz, "Political Theology," p. 36.

²⁷⁸Metz, "Political Theology," p. 37.

E. METZ'S CRITIQUE OF MODERN THEOLOGY IN ITS
TRANSCENDENTAL, EXISTENTIAL, AND PERSONALIST FORMS

Metz's critique of privatized Christianity sharpens when he turns to modern theology in its transcendental, existential and personalist forms.²⁷⁹ He thinks modern theology is captive to modern consciousness, particularly to the modern privatized understanding of the human self. It is therefore a privatizing form of theology preoccupied with matters of intimacy and interiority, unable to appropriate God's promises as agents of socio-political criticism and transformation. Like metaphysical theology before it, it is a-political and privatistic.

Modern theology is different from metaphysical theology. Unlike metaphysical theology, it has appropriated, to some degree, the anthropocentric shift characteristic of modernity, that is, it has tried to bring the "Christian faith into a proper relationship to human existence and

²⁷⁹In Theology of the World, Metz uses the designation "transcendental, existential, and personalist theology" to refer to the prevailing theological types of recent years. Metz, Theology, p. 108. This type of theology is characterized by a "theological personalism" and dominated by the categories of "the intimate, the private, the apolitical" (Metz, Theology, p. 109). To avoid confusion, I will use the designation "modern theology in its transcendental, existential, and personalist forms" or simply "modern theology." At this point, Metz's criticisms are mostly directed at existential and personalist theologies, even though transcendental theology is formally included. His critique of transcendental theology is most fully elaborated in his recent writings.

subjectivity."²⁸⁰ However, Metz thinks this attempt to develop anthropocentric theologies of the subject,²⁸¹ in response to metaphysical theology's crisis, was indirect and unsustainable.²⁸² Modern theologies never became fully anthropocentric because they failed to appropriate, sufficiently enough, the insights of Marx and the Kant of practical reason. They therefore never completely broke free from the limitations of the German idealistic philosophic tradition within which their theological sketches took shape.²⁸³ Metz's critique of modern theology, therefore, is a critique of theology's captivity in the hands of German

²⁸⁰Metz, Theology, p. 82. Metz commends modern theology for two reasons: 1. contrary to metaphysical theology, it takes as its starting point the human person and his subjectivity (Metz, Theology, p. 82), and 2. in doing so, it asserts that "'the brother' is...the necessary mediator of our relationship to God - immediacy to God is gained only through the mediation of others" (Metz, "Religious Act," Sacramentum Mundi, vol. 5 [New York: Herder and Herder, 1969], p. 289).

²⁸¹Several years later, in 1977, Metz comments: "In my earlier attempts to formulate a political theology, I directed my arguments against the various theologies of the subject that dominate the theological scene today" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 62).

²⁸²Metz, Theology, p. 109.

²⁸³"Present day systematic theology and apologetics still seem to be determined by the philosophical forms within the tradition of German Idealism, even when the latter is not explicitly taken into account" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 23). German Idealism is thought of here as that philosophical legacy which stems from Kant's critique of pure reason.

philosophical idealism.²⁸⁴

Metz traces the origins of modern theology to the attempt to develop an alternative to metaphysical theology, more specifically, to fashion a theological response to the two criticisms of metaphysical theology which it was unable to answer. The first was the Enlightenment criticism of metaphysical objectivity and the second the Marxist criticism of religion as ideology. I will look at each in turn.

First, Metz argues that modern theology arose in the course of the debate with "the transcendental philosophy of Kant, German Idealism and its successors."²⁸⁵ It took seriously and tried to answer the Enlightenment's critique, led by Kant, that metaphysical theology's appraisal of the self and the world was overly objectivistic. Modern theology responded by developing theology on the basis of human subjectivity rather than metaphysical objectivism. It now made anthropocentric assertions rather than metaphysical ones.

Second, modern theology arose as a rather weak attempt to answer the Marxist critique of religion as ideology.

²⁸⁴Again, it is worth noting that Metz nowhere relates the Greek metaphysic of being and German idealism of the transcendental Kant. I am assuming, nevertheless, that he thinks that Kant and German idealism carry within themselves the vestige of the Greek metaphysic of being, and that this shows itself, especially, in the modern understanding of the human self as a privatized monadic subjectivity.

²⁸⁵Metz, "Political Theology," p. 36.

Metaphysical theology simply ignored this critique because it had no resources to deal with it. The Marxist critique questioned metaphysical theology's basic assumption concerning the essential "unity and coordination of religion and society."²⁸⁶ It destroyed this assumption by showing how religion legitimized social and political structures, and thus exposed it as society's ideological superstructure. Out of this critique proceeded a new general perception of religion as a phenomenon capable of being separated from society. Religion was now seen as "a particular phenomenon within a pluralistic milieu."²⁸⁷ The result was that metaphysical theology had to relinquish its "absolute claim to universality,"²⁸⁸ thus throwing it into a state of crisis from which it never recovered.

Why then, according to Metz, did modern theology fail to respond adequately to these two challenges? Two reasons are given. First, it failed to respond to the Enlightenment's attack on metaphysical theology because its theologies were less than fully anthropocentric, a fact attributable to the

²⁸⁶"The unity and coordination of religion and society, of religious and societal existence, in former times acknowledged as an unquestionable reality, shattered as early as the beginning of the Enlightenment in France. This was the first time that the Christian religion appeared to be a particular phenomenon within a pluralistic milieu" (Metz, Theology, p. 108).

²⁸⁷Metz, Theology, p. 108.

²⁸⁸Metz, Theology, p. 108.

privatistic way it understood the human self. Only by understanding the self intersubjectively could a fully social and political anthropocentric theology arise. And second, it failed to respond adequately to the Marxist ideology critique because it had a privatized understanding of Christian praxis.²⁸⁹ It never developed an understanding of praxis which dialectically related private-moral and socio-political action. Had it done so, it could have avoided the criticism that its privatistic moral practice simply legitimized the status quo. I will elaborate on each of these shortcomings.

1. Modern Theology's Failure to Develop a Fully Anthropocentric Theology

Modern theology never answered the Enlightenment's critique of metaphysical theology because it could not develop a theology which was fully anthropocentric. It was unable to do so for two reasons: first, because it appropriated a privatistic understanding of the human self from the Enlightenment, and second, because it subordinated social and political life to private interiority. In short, it created "an abstract theology of the subject divorced from history."²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹"This theology sought to solve its problem, a problem born of the Enlightenment, by eliminating it. It did not pass through the Enlightenment, but jumped over it and thought thus to be done with it" (Metz, Theology, p. 109).

²⁹⁰Metz says that all modern theological approaches seem to be committed to "an abstract theology of the subject which is divorced from history" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 64).

Let me explain.

Metz thinks modern theology was handicapped by its inadvertant appropriation of the formal principle of the Enlightenment as its theological cornerstone. That is, it developed its anthropocentric theologies of the subject on the basis of the Enlightenment's abstract and privatized understanding of the human self,²⁹¹ an understanding originating with the "transcendental Kant" (the precursor of idealism) and his critique of pure reason. What modern theology overlooked, however, was the "Kant of the philosophy of history or the Kant of practical reason."²⁹² Here was offered a less privatistic understanding of the self which, if appropriated into modern theology, could have become the basis of a more fully anthropocentric theology. It could have offset modern theology's one-sided appropriation of the transcendental Kant and his a-political, privatized, and

²⁹¹"What...is firmly established in modern theology...is the formal Enlightenment or contemporary principle of the subject" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 32).

²⁹²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 23.

abstract understanding of the self.²⁹³

On the constructive side, Metz proposes theology adopt a more social understanding of the self in order to develop a more fully anthropocentric theology. Several important theological implications would follow. First, the implicit certitude held by Christians that persons stand alone before God as isolated monadic subjectivities would have to be questioned. If persons are understood intersubjectively, then the individual before God must be understood as an individual permanently in community with others and vice versa. One's relationship with God and with others are inseparable by virtue of being dialectically related.²⁹⁴ Metz believes modern

²⁹³We note that the understanding of persons as isolated subjectivities is similar to the objective appraisal of the human self given by Greek cosmocentrism, and criticized by Metz in CA. It implies that the self is merely an "'object that has consciousness,'" a mere conscious 'piece' of the cosmos (Metz, Theology, p. 54). Metz therefore fears that the theological advance made by modern theology, in its recognition of the importance of subjectivity, is lost when subjectivity is understood as "monadic existence" rather than shared existence.

²⁹⁴Modernity, for Metz, marks a new era in understanding the world. No longer is the world a "comprehensive finished whole" within which persons are situated. Rather, it is now "the milieu of human activity that can be worked on and transformed, as the 'material' of the continual, historical free self-fulfillment of man before God" (Metz, Theology, p. 54). However, even though this anthropocentric turn has been achieved, Metz thinks an error was made. Focus on persons and their agency in history has resulted in persons being understood apart from the world. A scheme of 'I-world' or 'mind-world' has arisen. Metz, Theology, p. 54. In light of this, persons are thought of as isolated subjectivities, as objects that have consciousness. The world, in turn, becomes a "purely manipulatable world of objects" (Metz, Theology, p. 54).

Metz attributes these misunderstandings to the

theology has yet to appropriate this insight, and has yet to recognize that it is dealing with an abstraction when it thinks of the self apart from society, politics, and history.²⁹⁵

It should be noted that even though Metz focuses on the social constitution of the self he does not deny the importance of the individual. He acknowledges the existence of a New Testament focus on the individual, with "the gist of its message - in its Pauline expression - pertaining to...the individual before God."²⁹⁶ What he questions is the way

influence of German idealistic philosophy. To correct them, one needs to revive the nineteenth century Left wing Hegelian critique of idealism. This critique gave significant impetus to the modern anthropocentric view of the world and persons by criticizing the subject-object dichotomy set up by Idealism. It criticized the way persons became "adjectival attributes of an object" and the world a manipulatable thing. As an alternative, it proposed that persons be understood intersubjectively, not individualistically, that "experience of the world and behaviour in relation to it take place...within the framework of human community." This community, Metz warns, should not to be understood in the private sense of the "I-thou relationship, but in the 'political' sense of social togetherness" (Metz, Theology, p. 54).

²⁹⁵"Existence is to a very great extent entangled in societal vicissitudes; so any existential and personal theology that does not understand existence as a political problem in the widest sense of the word, must inevitably restrict its considerations to an abstraction" (Metz, Theology, p. 111).

²⁹⁶Metz, Theology, p. 110. "When we insist on deprivatization, we do not in the least object to this orientation. On the contrary, for it is our contention that theology, precisely because of its privatizing tendency, is apt to miss the individual in his real existence" (Metz, Theology, p. 110).

transcendental, existential, and personalist theologies define 'individual existence'. They tend to think of the self as a private isolated interiority engaged in a lonely quest for meaning.²⁹⁷ In doing so, they tend to think of the self as a "monad-like subjectivity"²⁹⁸ isolated from social and political life.

Not wanting to reject modern theology completely, Metz does commend it for moving beyond metaphysical theology in its recognition of the central role played by the brother and sister in Christian self-understanding and praxis. Primarily, he thinks it correctly recognized that "the love of God and of man...[is] a primordial and total unity."²⁹⁹ However, he

²⁹⁷Metz suggests that the decline of interest in religious literature and the rise of interest in the contemporary novel occurred because the novel mirrored more realistically the existential reality of people's lives. "The individuality and existentiality that we assume in our language of existential theology is highly abstract. The concrete individuality and 'loneliness' of contemporary men is not at all identical with the celebrated form given it by existentialism. It has, rather, a social substructure and is conditioned and actualized by it: the unlimitedness and mobility of society, the variety of human situations in which he is involved and acts, causes man today to be, in a qualified sense, a lonely individual" (Metz, Theology, p. 129). For Metz, persons are not then essentially isolated monadic subjectivities. This is a fiction of modernity. What modern persons fail to recognize is that they are isolated and lonely for social reasons. For example, their experience of disclocation is caused by their being immersed within a highly mobile modern society. Person are therefore only secondarily lonely and isolated. Essentially, they are social creatures constituted by relationships with others.

²⁹⁸Metz, "Religious Act," p. 290.

²⁹⁹Metz, "Religious Act," p. 289.

also thinks this insight was tainted by modern theology's inability to recognize the dialectical unity of the "I-God" and the "I-thou" relationships. Instead, it falsely assumed the existence of two separate inter-subjectivities: an anthropological (horizontal) "I-thou" relationship, and a theological (vertical) "I-God" relationship.³⁰⁰ In doing so, it forfeited most of the gains it had made in its recognition of the central mediatory role played by the brother and sister in Christian self-understanding and praxis.

Metz thinks four theological dangers have arisen as a consequence of modern theology's tendency to separate the I-God and the I-thou relationships. The first is the danger of diminishing the importance of the I-thou relationship. In thinking of the two relationships separately, the tendency is to give precedence to the I-God relationship. The result is the reduction of the I-thou relationship to the status of a mere "model for man's relation to God."³⁰¹

A second danger is modern theology's tendency to diminish the importance of the horizontal dimension of life, thus failing to recognize that the I-thou relation is itself the locus for the love of God. As Metz puts it, it fails to recognize that "the one (and only) intersubjectivity between men is itself open toward God; in biblical language: in

³⁰⁰Metz, "Unbelief," p. 73. For the same point, see Metz, "Religious Act," p. 289.

³⁰¹Metz, "Unbelief," p. 72.

brotherly love salvific love of God takes place."³⁰²

The third danger is modern theology's tendency to understand the self in relation to God non-socially. Because it tends to assume a separate I-God relationship, the impression is created that the self, as a private "monad-like subjectivity," stands alone before God and apart from relationships with other persons. This, Metz says, is wrong. Understood intersubjectively, the self is inseparable from the complex nexus of relationships which define his or her existence. There is no private kernel of the self which is the authentic Christian subject standing before God. Rather, the self relates to God as a social, political, and historical person, not as a person with a private isolated monadic core. Metz says: "The subject of the human relationship to God is not the individual as such ('the soul' in face of 'God'), but man in his fellowship with other men, in his 'brotherliness'."³⁰³

The fourth danger, arising from the undialectical relating of the I-thou and I-God relationships, is the development of too narrow an understanding of the socio-political sphere of life. Modern theology has done this, Metz suggests, by tending to think of history and society as

³⁰²Metz, "Unbelief," p. 73.

³⁰³Metz, "Religious Act," pp. 289-290.

secondary to private interiority.³⁰⁴ It measures everything, including the socio-political dimension of faith, in relation to the all important I-God relationship. Socio-political life is therefore accorded only a "shadowy existence" at best.³⁰⁵ This danger is exemplified in modern theology's understanding of Christian charity, where charity is depicted as "a private virtue with no political relevance;...a virtue of the I-Thou relation, extending to the field of interpersonal encounter, or at best to charity on the scale of the neighborhood."³⁰⁶ In short, the socio-political dimensions of charity are smothered beneath the more important concerns of personal encounter, private virtue, and intimacy, while the eschatological kerygma, with its social and political directedness, is subordinated to issues of religious interiority. What takes theological centre stage, Metz argues, is the "silent center of the I-Thou relation,"³⁰⁷ forming the "apex of free subjectivity."³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 63.

³⁰⁵Metz, Theology, p. 109.

³⁰⁶Metz, Theology, p. 109.

³⁰⁷Metz, Theology, p. 109.

³⁰⁸Metz, Theology, p. 109 "The hermeneutics of the existential interpretation of the New Testament proceeds within the closed circuit of the I-Thou relation" (Metz, Theology, p. 110). Metz believes that Christian freedom is actualized in social and political actions of solidarity as well as in personal and interpersonal acts of charity.

2. Modern Theology's Failure to Respond Adequately to the Marxist Ideology Critique

According to Metz, an appropriate theological response to the Marxist ideology critique has yet to be given, either by metaphysical or modern theology. Both have failed to appreciate the challenge to uncover "the socio-political implications of its ideas and notions."³⁰⁹ Modern theology tried to escape this ideology critique by concentrating on the personal and interpersonal dimensions of religious identity. Its failure is especially apparent in the way it conceived of Christian practice as the private and "timeless decision of the person."³¹⁰ In developing decisionist theologies, it turned a blind eye to the socio-political dimensions of Christianity's eschatological tradition. Let me explain.

Modern theology failed to respond adequately to the Marxist ideology critique because it never developed a socio-political understanding of Christian praxis. Instead, because of its privatized understanding of the self, and the subsequent narrowing of the socio-political dimensions of the Gospel, it developed a privatized understanding of Christian praxis. It understood Christian praxis primarily in terms of the private "present moment of the religious decision."³¹¹ In

³⁰⁹Metz, Theology, p. 108.

³¹⁰Metz, Theology, p. 109.

³¹¹Referring to Bultmann's exclusion of the horizon of the future in biblical interpretation, Metz says: "This neglect is so persistent that, for example, the so-called existential interpretation of the New Testament involves only

doing so, it became a "formalistic decision-theology of the present,"³¹² with its theological form being determined by its preoccupation with the faith-decision of the naked soul before God.³¹³

This decisionist theology failed to adequately respond to the Marxist ideology critique, Metz suggests, because it misunderstood Christian praxis in two interrelated ways. First, it failed to recognize the essential intersubjective ground of Christian praxis. Instead of acknowledging the "original and continuous intersubjectivity"³¹⁴ of the believer, it interpreted the believer as a private monadic core of subjectivity before God.

Metz rejects this understanding of Christian action as primarily a decision of the private individual before God ("'the soul' in the face of 'God'"³¹⁵). Rather, he thinks of

the re-actualization and the re-presentation of the past in the present moment of religious decision. The present alone dominates. There is no real future! Exempli gratia: Bultmann!" (Metz, Theology, p. 86).

³¹²Metz, "God Before Us," p. 299.

³¹³This is not to say that Metz denies the importance of the individual before God. He only wants to emphasize that the individual before God is never entirely separable from the nexus of relationships within which he or she stands. He rejects the Enlightenment understanding of the individual as an isolated monadic subjectivity. The self is always the self "in human community, and this not simply in the 'private' sense of the I-thou relationship, but in the 'political' sense of social togetherness" (Metz, Theology, p. 54).

³¹⁴Metz, "Unbelief," p. 71.

³¹⁵Metz, "Religious Act," p. 290.

Christian actions, including the act of faith, as always performed in the context of a continuous and original intersubjectivity, in the context of brotherliness and sisterliness.³¹⁶ He therefore reprimands modern theology for not having recognized that intersubjectivity is the supporting ground of Christian praxis, including the act of faith. It failed to recognize that faith is always more than an isolated moment of private decision, but rather an event "actuated by lovingly and trustfully resting in the belief of the others, of the community, of the 'Church' and her 'subjectivity'."³¹⁷

Modern theology failed to answer the Marxist ideology critique because of a second misunderstanding concerning Christian praxis. It failed to recognize that love, not private decision, was the primary means by which Christians actualize their faith. Again, it failed to recognize that there is a dialectical relationship between the I-thou and the I-God relationships. On the one hand, it failed to recognize that the Christian stands before God, most fully, when he or she is in relationships of love with other persons. And on the other hand, it failed to recognize that through love Christians become most fully themselves in the depth of their personality and existence.³¹⁸ It placed insufficient emphasis

³¹⁶ Metz, "Unbelief," p. 71.

³¹⁷ Metz, "Unbelief," p. 71.

³¹⁸ Metz, "Unbelief," p. 73.

on the fact that love is the single criterion for both human fulfillment and religious fulfillment: that, at one and the same time, love brings persons most fully before themselves and before God. Love of God and love of neighbor are therefore dialectically related and inseparable, inclusive of one another yet distinct, and related to one another in the manner of a unity-in-difference.

In conclusion, Metz affirms modern theology for its focus on the love of neighbor as the defining feature of Christian praxis. However, he thinks its understanding of love is too narrow. Love is more than what takes place within the private realm of life shared by two persons who are like-minded. Such an understanding confines love to the realm of interpersonal encounter or, at most, to the realm of neighborly charity.³¹⁹ In either case, modern theology misses the point made in the story of the Good Samaritan, that love is not primarily a private affair between two similar people, but takes the form of a "public, social responsibility for the other, for 'the least of these'."³²⁰ Love is most fully realized when it finds its object in the needs of the stranger, not in the needs of the intimate other. Modern theology thus underplays the fact that Christian life is most fully actualized by emptying itself for "the least of these"

³¹⁹Metz, Theology, p. 109.

³²⁰Metz, "Religious Act," p. 290.

in the service of the promises of God's kingdom. Hence, Metz:

The basic anthropological characteristic of the religious act, in the Christian view, is not that the individual finds and realizes himself, but that he empties himself and goes out of himself in the service of the promise that 'all flesh shall be saved'.³²¹

This alone, according to Metz, is the answer Christianity should give to the Marxist ideology critique. It should demonstrate its commitment to an understanding of Christian praxis as a non-private love of neighbor.

E. SUMMARY

To summarize, Metz criticizes modern theology for essentially two reasons: first because it fails to understand the real nature of the Christian subject, and second, because it ignores eschatology as the chief interpretive context for Christian self-understanding and praxis. The first failure concerns modern theology's inability to develop a fully anthropocentric theology capable of adequately responding to the Enlightenment critique of metaphysical theology. The second failure concerns its inability to develop a non-privatized understanding of Christian identity and praxis capable of adequately responding to the Marxist ideology critique.

³²¹Metz, "Religious Act," p. 290.

Subject: Metz commends modern theology for the way it appropriated the modern principle of subjectivity.³²² However, he thinks it did so uncritically, thereby inheriting the "formal Enlightenment principle" of an essentially abstract subject.³²³ The Enlightenment never did understand the self in other than an abstract manner, and by modern theology appropriating this understanding, it remained untouched by the

³²²Wolfhart Pannenberg refers to this appropriation in the following manner: "The philosophical theology of the modern age...has been guided by the apprehension that there is no assured way leading from nature to God, and that therefore the whole burden of proof of the truth of faith in God falls upon the understanding of man, upon anthropology" (Wolfhart Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, trans. R.A. Wilson [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973], p. 82]).

³²³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 32. "Much that was called into question in the Enlightenment is still waiting for an answer in theology. What, however, is firmly established in modern theology - and, what is more, in the theological thinking and the different theological positions of all the various Christian confessions - is the formal Enlightenment or contemporary principle of the subject. The deepest level of theology has in fact been reached in this principle of the subject and attempts have been made to reconstruct it as a specifically religious subject, going back beyond the Enlightenment, in Protestant circles to the Reformation and in Catholic circles to medieval theology. It is, however, worth pointing out here that the supremacy of the subject in theology in the abstract sense has not become more easily distinguishable in the process. By this I mean that it is difficult to distinguish, in the Enlightenment itself, the validity of speaking about man as such and his reason, autonomy, freedom and other abstract attributes. No real, critical clarity existed here with regard to the concrete subjects intended and defended in the idea of man or the subject, in other words, with regard to the social reality expressed in this concept" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 32).

so-called "enlightenment of the Enlightenment"³²⁴ which sought to "understand human existence as a political problem in the widest sense of the word."³²⁵ Modern theology therefore never arrived at an understanding of the self as a concrete social reality, even though it did move metaphysical theology beyond the confines of cosmocentrism to Enlightenment anthropocentrism. This was a limited achievement, however, because its notion of subjectivity remained essentially privatistic,³²⁶ with the self still being thought of in terms of "monadic existence."³²⁷ Its concentration on intersubjectivity and subjectivity was thus commendable, but deficient, because it still thought of intersubjectivity as a relationship between two separate and individual monadic entities. It thus missed the fact that fellowship with other

³²⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 33.

³²⁵Metz, Theology, p. 111.

³²⁶See Helmut Peukert's criticism of Bultmann's appropriation of Heidegger's understanding of existence. Peukert thinks that Bultmann was mistaken in assuming that "Heidegger adequately worked out the question of authentic existence" (Helmut Peukert, Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology. Toward a Theology of Communicative Action, trans. James Bohman [Cambridge Massachusetts and London England: The MIT Press, 1984], p. 265). Peukert thinks Bultmann inherited from Heidegger an "'existential' solipsism" (Peukert, Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology, p. 267), wherein the subject remains an isolated subject. Of central importance for Peukert, and this becomes increasingly important for Metz in his later theology, is the development of an understanding of subjectivity and intersubjectivity with solidarity as the defining principle.

³²⁷Metz, "Unbelief," p. 62, n. 5.

persons, whereby persons become most truly themselves in the depths of their personal existence, involves more than being in fellowship with persons of like mind.³²⁸ It involves being in solidarity with others as strangers in need.

In addition, Metz criticizes modern theology for positing two kinds of Christian relationships (a God-person and a person-person relationship), thus diminishing the importance of its initial insight into the central role played by other persons in Christian self-identity and action. Though it proclaimed the "primordial and total unity"³²⁹ between love of God and love of neighbor, it failed to see that by positing two relationships, it succumbed to four theological dangers: 1. it made the I-thou relationship secondary in importance to the I-God relationship, 2. it failed to recognize that the one and only intersubjectivity between persons is itself open towards God, 3. it failed to recognize that the subject of our relationship to God is not the individual in his or her singularity (soul-God) but the self in community with others, and 4. it subordinated the socio-political dimensions of faith to a decisionist theology whose chief concerns were intimacy, private interiority, personal encounter, and private morality.

³²⁸Metz, "Religious Act," p. 290.

³²⁹Metz, "Religious Act," p. 289.

Eschatology: Finally, by basing theology on private decision and action, modern theology lost sight of the future-directed promises of God as a major interpretive horizon for understanding the Christian faith.³³⁰ It replaced biblical eschatology, which is socially and politically directed, with privatized Christianity, by making the category of the future "another name for the intractable factors of the present decision."³³¹ God's promised future became a symbolic paraphrase of humanity's existential predicament and the private decisions therein.³³²

³³⁰"The present alone dominates. There is no real future! Exempli gratia: Bultmann!" (Metz, Theology, p. 86). Or again: "this anthropological theology tends to limit the faith by concentrating on the actual moment of the believer's personal decision. The future is then all but lost" (Metz, Theology, p. 86).

³³¹Metz, Theology, p. 82.

³³²Metz, Theology, p. 110.

IV

METZ'S CRITIQUE OF BOURGEOIS³³³ CHRISTIANITY

In Chapters II and III, I discussed Metz's critique of modern Christianity's assimilation of non-Christian thought-forms. This critique unfolded in two stages. His early writings criticized Greek cosmocentrism for blinding Christians to the transcendental nature of human freedom. The next stage in his theology criticized the presence of cosmocentric vestiges within metaphysical and modern theology, pointing especially to theology's use of a metaphysic of being which functions as the chief philosophical horizon within which persons and the world are interpreted. He worried that Christianity loses its socially critical and transformative power when it uses this metaphysic as the philosophical

³³³I am translating bürgerlich as "bourgeois" for two reasons. First, it conveys in English, as it does in German, the notion of persons defined entirely by market place values. Second, it conveys better the negative connotations that Metz intends when he uses it in the context of bourgeois religion, that is, a religion captured and perverted by the values and goals of the market place economy. "Bourgeois" does this better than "middle-class" or "citizen." Hence, I am in agreement with Peter Mann, translator of Metz's The Emergent Church. Peter Mann, "Translator's Preface," The Emergent Church, p. ix.

horizon of its self-understanding. In particular, this metaphysic prevents the self and history from being properly understood, by fostering an understanding of the self as an isolated monadic subjectivity, and conceiving of history only in terms of the past and the present. These misunderstandings, Metz argued, are harmful to Christianity in two ways: 1. they confine the Gospel message of love to the private realm of life, and 2. they ignore the social and political directedness of the eschatological message.

In this chapter, I discuss Metz's most recent critique of modern theology.³³⁴ Here, he continues to expose Christianity's captivity to alien world-views which subvert the socially critical and transformative power of the Christian message. For example, he continues to worry about the way non-Christian philosophical frameworks of understanding distort Christianity's understanding of persons and the world. This much is the same. However, there enters

³³⁴The third stage of Metz's theological development runs from approximately 1969 to the present. I have chosen 1969 as the end of Stage II and the beginning of Stage III because of what Metz says in Faith in History and Society. He writes: "The first stage in the development of a political theology came to an end, at least as far as my particular responsibility for it was concerned, with the publication of the article on political theology in Sacramentum Mundi (and later in Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi) and the volume entitled Diskussion zur 'politischen Theologie' (H. Peukert, ed., Mainz and Munich, 1969). The aspects of political theology that emerged during this first phase remained dominant throughout the debate that continued in the years that followed" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 77, n. 2).

a new focus. He is now more concerned about the dangers of modern consciousness than Greek consciousness. We recall that his early political theology (what I designated as Stage II in his theological development) criticized Greek cosmocentric vestiges within modern theology for creating a privatized understanding of persons and Christian practice. Now, he criticizes modern bourgeois consciousness for doing essentially the same thing.³³⁵ He still wants to eliminate hindrances to the emergence of authentic Christian consciousness, but now by bringing to light the uniquely Christian way of being in the world which comes from living a life of solidarity with the poor, within the horizon of

³³⁵Stage III is both similar to and different from the first two stages. It is similar in that Metz is still concerned with defining the proper historical consciousness of the Christian subject. He is still searching for the right anthropocentric form within which the content of Christian freedom can be realized in the world. However, unlike Stages I and II, wherein he thought that the Christian content of freedom within history could find a home and realize itself within already existing or evolving forms, he now realizes that this required form must be brought about by the praxis of faith. He is now convinced that the philosophical conditions of the possibility of realizing Christian personhood are not something that can be pre-given, either in the thought-form of Aquinas' anthropocentrism, or the anthropocentrism of the Left-wing Hegelian revolution in consciousness. Form does not precede content. Theory does not have priority over praxis. Rather, the practiced content of Christianity, in and of itself, brings about the required anthropocentric form. Praxis in solidarity with the poor and oppressed of the world brings about an authentically Christian historical consciousness.

God's eschatological promises.³³⁶ Both modern consciousness and Greek consciousness prevent the emergence of authentic Christian consciousness because they eliminate the hope-filled eschatological framework required for the radical praxis³³⁷ of solidarity with the poor.³³⁸ Each creates apathy rather than

³³⁶Rebecca Chopp notes that Metz's critique of the unique "structures of consciousness" emerging out of the Enlightenment is similar to the Frankfurt School's appropriation of Max Weber's critique of rationalization. Building on Weber's critique of the rise to dominance of technical rationality, the Frankfurt School pointed to the danger of this form of Enlightenment thought leading to a new form of totalitarianism. Humanity and nature are negated by the rationalist, idealist, and progressive view of history arising out of modern consciousness. Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 164, n. 25. For a detailed discussion of the Frankfurt School's appropriation of Weber, Chopp makes reference to Paul Connerton, The Tragedy of Enlightenment: An Essay on the Frankfurt School (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

³³⁷David Tracy makes the point that what unites political theologians on a theoretical level is their commitment to two Marxian axioms: that the task of philosophy (theology) is not to interpret the world but to change it, and that this change best comes about when critical theory informs and is informed by political, social, and economic practice. Praxis, therefore, is not practice in the ordinary sense. Rather, it is constituted by a critical dialectical relationship between theory and praxis wherein each influences and transforms the other. See David Tracy, Blessed Rage For Order. The New Pluralism In Theology (New York: Seabury, 1975), pp. 243 & 253, n. 23.

³³⁸In Stage I, Metz was concerned that authentic Christian consciousness, characterized by transcendental freedom in the world as history, was being negated by a Greek cosmocentric understanding of the self and the world. In Stage II, he attacked Enlightenment idealism and its metaphysic of being for contributing to an overly privatized understanding of the self and the world. Now in Stage III, he rebukes the Enlightenment for giving rise to a bourgeois subject who is captured by evolutionary logic. His present task, therefore, is to expose negative features of the bourgeois subject. He wants to show that the bourgeois form of consciousness, as an evolutionary logic, and the notions

action in the face of suffering.

Metz's latest critique thus bears on Christianity's blind appropriation of bourgeois consciousness.³³⁹ It incriminates modern theology for not recognizing the dangers this appropriation poses to its struggle for an authentically Christian understanding of the self and praxis. In particular, the bourgeois mentality is denounced for the evolutionary logic which operates in it, a logic based on the primal experience of being captive to the timelessness of nature. As the most pervasive modern ideology, evolutionary logic (as a logic of timelessness) threatens Christianity's historical substance by snuffing out the past and the future through a preoccupation with the present. Furthermore, it endangers Christianity, and the freedom of modern persons generally, by manifesting itself in the form of a technical

of history, reason, and religion operative therein, are antithetical to an authentic Christian consciousness based on apocalyptic expectation. Greek and bourgeois consciousness pose a direct threat to the emergence of an authentically Christian apocalyptic consciousness.

³³⁹David Tracy correctly points out that Metz is following the method of the Frankfurt School of Social Research in focusing on the limitations of modern "subjectivity" or "historical consciousness." Unlike "orthodox" Marxists, who direct their attention to the "infra-structural" (economic) elements determining modern culture, the Frankfurt School looks almost exclusively at "supra-structural" elements, as does Metz. Tracy, Blessed Rage for Order, p. 254, n. 28. Tracy points to Martin Jay's book, The Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950 (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), pp. 173-219, for a fuller discussion of this issue.

rationality which stands unimpeded in its goal of domination of persons and their environment. Evolutionary logic, therefore, as an anthropology of domination, threatens Christianity from within by eliminating the conditions of the possibility of living in solidarity with the world's poor.³⁴⁰

This chapter outlines Metz's critique of Christianity's captivity to this non-Christian bourgeois consciousness. To articulate the main features of this critique, it is divided into three sections. The first examines Metz's disapproval of Catholic theology for its uncritical appropriation of the Enlightenment and bourgeois subjectivity.³⁴¹ Even though at times Catholic theology correctly questioned features of the Enlightenment, Metz suggests it was still too much influenced by the timeless and

³⁴⁰"At the beginning of what we call 'the Modern Age,' the limits of which we are now reaching with ever-increasing clarity, there unfolds - embryonically and overlaid with many religious and cultural symbols - this anthropology of domination. In it man understands himself as a dominating, subjugating individual over against nature; his knowledge becomes, above all, knowledge via domination, and his praxis is one of exerting power over nature....Man is by subjugating" (Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 35).

³⁴¹The following works offer three different appraisals of the Enlightenment: 1. Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: An Interpretation (New York: Vintage, 1968) (a positive commendation of the Enlightenment's view of humanity), 2. H.G. Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: Crossroad, 1982) (a criticism of the Enlightenment's failure to value historical contextualization), and 3. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Cumming (New York: Seabury, 1972) (almost a wholesale rejection of the Enlightenment for the threat it poses to modern freedom). Tracy, Blessed Rage For Order, pp. 12-13 and 16, n. 15.

a-historical subjectivity of modernity and the implicit certitudes about history, reason, and religion therein. The second section outlines Metz's critique of the philosophical horizon out of which this bourgeois subjectivity arises. It focuses on that particular "feeling for life" which is present beneath the surface of bourgeois subjectivity and the worldview that this basic experience fosters. And finally, the third section discusses Metz's critique of three central notions operative within bourgeois subjectivity: historicism, technical rationality, and natural religion. It examines how each is influenced by the bourgeois "feeling for life" and, above all, how each is essentially non-Christian. This section is the longest because it includes Metz's critique of the bourgeois notion of history, from which Metz especially wants to free Christianity. I turn then to Metz's critique of Catholic theology's response to the Enlightenment.

A. METZ'S CRITIQUE OF MODERN CATHOLIC APOLOGETICS

1. Introduction

According to Metz, modern Catholic theology is characterized by an ongoing apologetic attempt to respond to the challenges of the Enlightenment. As already noted in Chapter III, Metz thinks there were three Enlightenment challenges in particular which posed a threat to Christian identity. First, there was the threat arising from the

breakdown of the long standing equation of faith and religious consciousness. For the first time, Christianity had to defend its particular form of consciousness against a "universal critical concept of religion."³⁴² Second, Christian identity was threatened by the breakdown of the unity of religion and society. For the first time, Christianity was viewed as a particular phenomenon along side other historical and social phenomena.³⁴³ And third, out of these two challenges grew a third: the accusation that Christianity promulgated a false and immature form of consciousness which ideologically legitimized traditional social structures and processes.³⁴⁴

Metz argues that the response to these challenges, on the part of Catholic theology, was inadequate for two reasons: 1. they failed to acknowledge the inherent dialectic of the Enlightenment, and 2. they did not recognize that German idealistic philosophical presuppositions shaped their apologetic efforts. Metz especially focuses on Catholic apologetics surrounding Vatican I and II.³⁴⁵ Here is his first attempt to define the problem of modern theology as the

³⁴²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 15.

³⁴³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 15.

³⁴⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 15.

³⁴⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 16.

uncritical appropriation of bourgeois subjectivity³⁴⁶ and praxis.

2. Theologies Surrounding Vatican I

Metz points to three theological movements surrounding Vatican I which developed distinct apologetic responses to the epoch-making event of the Enlightenment: the Catholic Tübingen School, Neo-Scholasticism, and Traditionalism. Even though these schools consciously and assertively engaged the Enlightenment (either in terms of rejection or partial appropriation), they were nevertheless blind to the fundamental threat it posed, that is, they failed to recognize the danger involved in the blind assimilation of bourgeois subjectivity. Let us look at each in turn.

Metz praises the nineteenth Century Tübingen School theologians for their aggressive engagement of the Enlightenment.³⁴⁷ He commends them for their brilliant

³⁴⁶According to Metz, subjectivity, whether bourgeois or Christian, has two layers, one unthematic and the other thematic. The unthematic layer consists of a particular "feel for life" operative within a particular historical era. The thematic layer expresses itself in a particular way of thinking, inclusive of assumptions about reason, history, freedom, etc.. These layers correspond to Metz's earlier distinction between thought-form and thought-content, discussed in Chapter II of this thesis.

³⁴⁷Metz points to the "brilliant theoretical apologetics" of J.B. Drey, J.B. Hirscher, J.A. Möhler, and J.E. Kuhn, who wrote at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 17.

theoretical apologetics which took into consideration the insights and agendas of both systematic and historical theology, as well as Enlightenment philosophy and the science of the day. Their shortcoming, however, resided in what they took for granted. They incorrectly assumed that theory alone was an adequate instrument for Christian apologetics. Their philosophical idealism, in other words, blinded them to the central problem of the Enlightenment, a problem approached by Kant and later elaborated by Marx: the problem of the primacy of practical reason.

Unlike the Tübingen School, Neo-Scholasticism closed itself off to the Enlightenment. Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century and extending to the 1930's, it generally evolved as a reaction to the Left-wing Hegelian attack on religion. It responded by isolating itself from the historical and philosophical concerns of the day and sought refuge in the past. Though its reaction to the Enlightenment differed from the Tübingen School's, by attempting to transform apologetics into polemics, it displayed an important similarity. It too took the form of what Metz calls "pure apologetics."³⁴⁸ Even though it remained cognitively and politically isolated, it engaged in theoretical apologetics by constructing elaborate social teachings wrought from the

³⁴⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 17.

bastion of "a nineteenth-century Corpus Catholicum."³⁴⁹ In this, it sidestepped the social and political issues of the day. Committing the same mistake as the Tübingen School, it failed to employ the practical substance of the Christian faith as the core of its apologetic effort. It used theoretical arguments in the form of "pure social ethics,"³⁵⁰ rather than Christian praxis, as the primary vehicle for its apologetic response.

Finally, Metz criticizes the French Traditionalists, a nineteenth Century apologetic movement, lay directed and oriented to society and politics. It emerged as a reaction to the political form of Enlightenment current during and after the French Revolution. Traditionalists criticized the Enlightenment for two reasons: 1. for its inordinate praise of knowledge, supposedly gained through natural reason, and 2. for its uncritical belief that the public use of this reason would automatically lead to more democratic and just social structures. Its motivation for criticizing the Enlightenment's faith in the public use of natural reason was its hope of restoring former religio-political authority. It wanted, in other words, to bring back and defend the monarchical idea of political order over against the newly evolving democratic one.

³⁴⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 18.

³⁵⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 19.

Metz thus recognizes that this movement was regressive in its restorative, authoritarian intent. Nevertheless, he thinks it had some positive features. Its attack against the way Christianity based its identity on the notion of pure reason alone arose from an important insight. What traditionalists saw, and neo-scholastic social teachings missed, were the devastating implications of establishing a "cult of abstract reason" and of "handing down a rationality...independent of subjects."³⁵¹

Hence, the French Traditionalists correctly recognized three problems inherent in the Enlightenment's focus on pure reason. First, they saw the danger of blindly accepting the assertion that abstract reason is the core of individual identity. To accept this, would automatically confine Christian identity to the sphere of private rationality. Second, they recognized that political power becomes perverted, inevitably, when politics becomes subject to the similarly abstract notions of freedom and reason.³⁵² And third, they saw that bourgeois reason, and its dissociation from history and the subject, and its "rejection or destruction of tradition and memory, would not necessarily lead to increased freedom and autonomy. On the contrary, it usually results in a new form of stultification in which man

³⁵¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 30.

³⁵²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 30.

is easily manipulated or corrupted."³⁵³

In short, traditionalists questioned the enthronement of abstract reason as the defining principle of persons, an abstract formulation of the nature of freedom, and the destruction of memory and tradition as key components of critical reason. That is, they were against the bourgeois understandings of religion, religious personhood, and freedom. For this, Metz believes, they ought to be commended, for "acting with the right conservative instinct in combatting the Enlightenment and the emergent middle-class as enemies of Christian faith."³⁵⁴

The reason why they failed, Metz notes, is that their opposition was neither consistent nor conscious enough.³⁵⁵ In the following, I hope to show how Metz's political theology of the subject³⁵⁶ offers similar criticisms of the Enlightenment's influence on religion, only with a consistency and self-awareness that the Traditionalists lacked.

³⁵³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 30.

³⁵⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 28.

³⁵⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 28.

³⁵⁶See "Political Theology of the subject as a theological criticism of middle-class religion," in Faith in History and Society, pp. 32-48.

3. Theologies Surrounding Vatican II

In evaluating the apologetic efforts of Catholic theology immediately before and after Vatican II, Metz worries about their uncritical appropriation of the Enlightenment, and the fact that German idealism negatively constituted the philosophical parameters of their apologetic endeavors. His critique focuses, in particular, on the "new theology" developed in France and Germany before Vatican II.³⁵⁷ He also admonishes several types of theology of secularization which arose out of the liberal theological program of this new theology. I will deal first with his critique of the new theology.

Metz praises the new theology for its critical and productive assimilation of the positive elements of modern consciousness, and for its recognition that dogmatic theology must itself have an apologetic face.³⁵⁸ He especially commends Karl Rahner for asserting that the classical contents of faith (formal dogmatic theology) must be mobilized for a critical justification of faith (in the form of a fundamental, apologetic theology) in response to the questions raised by

³⁵⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 22. On the French side, Metz refers to the "immanentist apologists" who incorporated the philosophy of Maurice Blondel into their theological efforts. On the German side, he mentions G. Söhngen, B. Welte, H. Fries, and K. Rahner. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 23.

³⁵⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 24.

modernity.³⁵⁹

Yet, as with the nineteenth century Tübingen School, Metz thinks this new theology is blind to the philosophical idealism by which it interprets the content of the Christian faith. Rather than taking up the anti-idealist agenda, proposed by the Kant of the philosophy of history and practical reason, it is debilitated by its preoccupation with the legacy of the transcendental Kant. New theology is faulted, therefore, because German Idealism constitutes the boundaries within which its apologetic engagement of the Enlightenment took place. By not taking up the agenda of the Kant of practical reason, it failed to develop a theology based on the priority of praxis.

In addition to new theology, Metz appraises various forms of theology of secularization which evolved out of the new theology, and which, in like manner, tried to do theological justice to Enlightenment assertions about the autonomy of reason and the world.³⁶⁰ He considers two types: 1. a theology of secularization in which the process of secularization is interpreted as a coming to fruition of the freeing event of the Incarnation (here Christianity is the originator of modernity), and 2. a theology of secularization in which basic modern principles such as emancipation, freedom

³⁵⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 24.

³⁶⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 25.

and coming of age, are thought to be fundamentally Christian, with the consequence that secularization is thought to be Christianization (here Christianity is the victim of modernity).

The incarnational type of theology of secularization is incriminated for inadvertently disengaging Christianity from the world. Included here are the theologies of F. Gogarten, D. Bonhoeffer, H. Cox, as well as Metz's own early theology.³⁶¹ In letting the world go its own secularized way, this theology obscures the critical and liberating power of Christianity in relation to history and society. This letting go of the world results, inevitably, in Christianity restricting itself to the private sphere of life. Furthermore, when defined as a private affair, Christian faith succumbs to the danger of becoming either an ideological appendage to particular historical or social processes, or of becoming so isolated from the world that it finds itself, perhaps contentedly so, immune to criticism. Hence, it could become either the instrument of ideological legitimization, which Marx thought it to be in the first place, or a bad form of apologetics, where it is immunized from criticism by receding from the world.³⁶²

³⁶¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 31, n. 10.

³⁶²Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 25-26.

In addition, Metz criticizes a second form of theology of secularization, which asserts that those principles which are central to the Enlightenment are in fact Christian principles.³⁶³ Here, secularization becomes no more than the socio-historical working out of the Christian notions of freedom and emancipation. This theology, Metz suggests, has allowed itself to be swallowed whole by the Enlightenment by unwittingly allowing its own "theological reason [to be]...absorbed into the abstract emancipative reason of the modern era."³⁶⁴ It has allowed Christianity to be replaced by the Enlightenment.

4. Summary

Although there are differences in the way Catholic theologies surrounding Vatican I and II responded to the Enlightenment, common criticisms can be made. First, there was a tendency on the part of Catholic apologetic to absorb too quickly and uncritically the Enlightenment principles of natural reason and emancipation. They failed to recognize the abstract nature of these notions and how, when divorced from real persons within particular socio-historical circumstances, they can lead to irrationality and a loss of freedom.

³⁶³Metz has in mind T. Rendtorff's theory of Christianity. Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 26 and 31, n. 12.

³⁶⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 26.

Catholic apologetic, therefore, was blind to the "inner dialectical tension in emancipation, Enlightenment and secularization."³⁶⁵ It failed to see that with the canonization of abstract emancipative reason there could evolve an instrumental reason of domination. Reason separated from subjects, traditions, and memories could lead to bondage rather than freedom. Second, it was unaware that Idealism formed the philosophical horizon within which Christian personhood and practice were being interpreted, therefore remaining essentially untouched by the nineteenth Century Left-wing Hegelian intellectual revolution and its critique of idealistic metaphysics and Christianity.³⁶⁶ It was simply too quick to think it had dealt with the Enlightenment when in fact it had missed altogether the most pressing challenge put to it: the Marxist challenge to develop a post-idealistic Christian apologetic based not on theory but on the practice of the imitation of the suffering of Christ.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 26.

³⁶⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 24.

³⁶⁷This dissertation argues that throughout his career Metz tries to break down barriers which prevent Christian engagement of the world. In Christliche Anthropozentrik, he tried to liberate Christianity from a cosmocentric thought-form which prevented the full expression of its Incarnational freedom in the world. In the second stage, he tried to wrench Christianity free from the disempowering cosmocentric vestiges operating within recent Catholic theology. He wanted to release the critical and transformative power of Christian love into the world by restoring the motivating horizon of Christian eschatology. More recently, he tries to liberate Christian praxis from the disempowering effect of modern consciousness which generates apathy and undermines the

B. METZ'S ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE
OF BOURGEOIS SUBJECTIVITY

1. Introduction

In the preceding section, I outlined Metz's chief objections to the modern Catholic apologetic: those theologies formulated, either positively or negatively, in relationship to the Enlightenment. We saw how Metz commended the liberal theologians for joining with the Enlightenment in its plea for democracy, freedom of conscience, and freedom within public life.³⁶⁸ More importantly, we looked at his critique of them for their undialectical appropriation of the Enlightenment³⁶⁹ in their failure to recognize the dialectical nature of reason and emancipation. And we saw how he commended the French Traditionalists for having at least a sensitivity to these problems, though their preoccupation with restorative

capacity to be a disciple in solidarity with the poor. At this stage, the motivating horizon for Christian praxis is still God's eschatological promises, though now understood within the context of apocalyptic expectation. For a discussion of eschatology with an apocalyptic sting, see Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 73-77, 129, 175, and "Unterwegs zu einer nachidealistischen Theologie," in Entwürfe der Theologie, ed. Johannes B. Bauer (Graz, Wien, Köln: Verlag Styria, 1985), p. 229. Hereafter cited as "Unterwegs." Translations are my own.

³⁶⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 27.

³⁶⁹"The liberal theologians pleaded, with the restrained pathos of the Enlightenment, for democracy, public life, honesty, freedom of conscience, autonomy and freedom to express one's opinion in the Church. Their plea was to a great extent justified, but it should not be forgotten that, when they took up the weapons of the Enlightenment, these liberal theologians also took over the difficulties" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 27).

political objectives, and a lack of focused criticism, prevented them from developing a full blown critique.

What is important to recognize is that Metz sees his practical fundamental theology as a corrective to these earlier apologetic encounters with the Enlightenment. He wants to move beyond their more or less naive appropriation of the Enlightenment in order to re-examine "the Enlightenment itself and to throw a new and radical light on the Enlightenment in the form of a political and theological enlightenment of the processes of the modern era."³⁷⁰ Put more dramatically, he wants to initiate a theological and political "enlightenment of the Enlightenment."³⁷¹ In doing so, he hopes to avoid the danger of a self-sufficient theoretical approach to the study of Enlightenment ideas, an approach which too often is purely a "theoretical intellectual process dissociated from the human subject."³⁷²

Above all, Metz wants to show how Enlightenment ideas have played a central role in the emergence of an uniquely bourgeois understanding of the human self and of praxis. His attempt to do this involves three steps. First, he describes the "new man, the citizen"³⁷³ which has emerged within the

³⁷⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 27.

³⁷¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 33-34.

³⁷²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 33.

³⁷³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 28.

Enlightenment, and shows how this new subject has been made absolute within the modern era.³⁷⁴ Second, he demonstrates how the Enlightenment subject has become the modern Christian subject, how Enlightenment subjectivity has inadvertently become Christian subjectivity.³⁷⁵ And third, and "most important of all,"³⁷⁶ he tries to move beyond the uncritical

³⁷⁴With a touch of cynicism, Metz asks: "Was it not precisely the bourgeois who became the bearer of that modern age which figures in all these characterizations? Was it not the bourgeois who stood at the dawning of this so-called modernity? - the bourgeois whose historical enthronement was accomplished by means of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, a process not without that quasi-messianic glory which such enthronements tend to take upon themselves" (Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 69).

³⁷⁵Metz undertakes a theological enlightenment of the Enlightenment and its subject, the middle-class citizen, because he wants to move Christianity beyond its blind appropriation of bourgeois subjectivity and praxis. He wants to show that when modern Christianity uncritically equates bourgeois subjectivity with Christian subjectivity, its capacity for suffering love is debilitated. He thinks the crisis of Christianity is therefore the crisis posed by the emergence and dominance, within modernity and modern Christianity, of the bourgeois subject. He writes: It "is not primarily a crisis of the content of faith and its promises, but a crisis of subjects and institutions which do not measure up to the demands made by faith" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 76). Metz describes the emergence of the bourgeois subject in this way: "This new man emerged in the Enlightenment. He is the subject within the subject. He is concealed behind the rational, autonomous man who has come of age in the modern era. He is finally also the creator of that form of religion which is used, as it were, to decorate and set the scene, freely and in private, for middle class festivals and which has for a long time been current even in normal Christianity. Theology, which believes that it is bound to defend the contemporary human subject uncritically as a religious subject, is, in this perspective, simply a late reflection of this middle-class religion ('bürgerliche Religion')" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 33).

³⁷⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 28.

equating of the praxis of the Enlightenment subject with modern Christian praxis. He attempts to demonstrate that authentic Christian praxis, as an imitation of Christ in the form of solidarity with the poor, is more than the modern praxis which is confined to the realm of "individual moral righteousness."³⁷⁷

In short, his theological enlightenment of the Enlightenment opposes and tries to replace the bourgeois subject with a more authentically Christian subject, a subject defined not by the abstract notions of pure reason, freedom, and private moral praxis, but by a reason informed by history and tradition, a freedom with socio-political applicability, and a praxis which aims at individual and social reconciliation and transformation.

In the following, I therefore elaborate on Metz's enlightenment of the Enlightenment, with a focus on his critique of modern subjectivity and praxis. First, I examine what he thinks is the uniquely philosophical dimension of Christian captivity to the Enlightenment, that is, its captivity to a modern evolutionary logic. This logic serves as the metaphysical substratum of bourgeois subjectivity. Second, I look at the three most important notions implicit within this bourgeois subjectivity or modern metaphysic: the notions of historicism, pragmatic reason, and natural

³⁷⁷ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 28.

religion. Furthermore, I show how each of these is shaped by the metaphysic of evolutionary logic and, as such, threaten authentic biblical Christianity. I turn first to Metz's analysis of bourgeois subjectivity and the metaphysic which lies beneath it.

2. Metz's Understanding of the Philosophical
Substratum of Bourgeois Subjectivity:
Evolutionary Consciousness and
Evolutionary Logic

Metz begins his theological enlightenment of the Enlightenment by exposing and criticizing the philosophical underpinnings of bourgeois subjectivity. His method, in doing so, is similar to that employed in 1962 in Christliche Anthropozentrik, though it is not made explicit. In Chapter II, I discussed how he applied the distinction between thought-form and thought-content to the theology of Thomas Aquinas, to show how Thomas' a-priori horizon of understanding was anthropocentric and not cosmocentric. Now, to expose the hidden philosophical dimensions of modern subjectivity, and to show its fundamental incompatibility with Christian subjectivity, he employs the same distinction. He points to two dimensions operative within bourgeois subjectivity. The first he refers to as a "meta-theory" (paralleling his early discussion of thought-form) which reflects a particular feeling for life which is dominant within a particular historical epoch. He argues that in order to understand

bourgeois subjectivity and its world-view, it is necessary to understand first this a-priori horizon of understanding which underlies it. And second, there is the bourgeois world-view itself (paralleling his earlier discussion of thought-content), in which are contained particular bourgeois pre-suppositions and notions about reality. This world-view, and the notions of history, reason, and religion contained within it, are shaped by the deeper a-priori "feeling for life"³⁷⁸ operative within a given historical epoch. In short, where in Christliche Anthropozentrik Metz used the language of thought-form and thought-content, he now uses the language of "meta-theory" and "existing world theories".³⁷⁹ I will look at each in turn.

According to Metz, there are two layers operative within human subjectivity, whether Greek, bourgeois, or Christian: one unthematic and the other thematic.³⁸⁰ Within bourgeois subjectivity, the unthematic component is referred to as evolutionary consciousness, while the thematic is

³⁷⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 6. This "feeling for life" is not unique to the Enlightenment subject. It was already present as a central feature of humankind's pre-scientific consciousness. Hence, it is a common experience shared by persons throughout time.

³⁷⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 7.

³⁸⁰The unthematic dimension of subjectivity consists of a particular "feeling for life," while the thematic component of subjectivity expresses itself in a particular way of thinking, inclusive of assumptions about religion, reason, history, freedom and so on.

referred to as evolutionary logic.³⁸¹ Evolutionary consciousness is the single most important meta-theory operative within bourgeois subjectivity.³⁸² It is a particular form of consciousness shaped by a particular experience of the world,³⁸³ an experience which Metz describes in the following manner.

[It is the experience of being] at the mercy of a darkly speckled universe and enclosed in an endless continuum of time that is no longer capable of...[surprise]. [Man]...feels that he is caught up in the waves of an anonymous process of evolution sweeping pitilessly over everyone.³⁸⁴

³⁸¹Metz is especially disapproving of the "ideological application" of this myth of evolutionary logic; with the effects this mythical "generalization of the symbol of undirected evolution" has on religion and society. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 172.

³⁸²Metz thinks the bourgeois subject, captured by evolutionary consciousness, lives in both the East and the West. Hence, historical materialism is also trapped by this debilitating form of consciousness. For example, it bases its "intention to set the world free on a teleology of freedom that is perhaps wrongly expected of matter or nature itself" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 7). Evolutionary logic, therefore, even in its historical materialist manifestation, constitutes the historical consciousness of the middle-class subject, whether that subject exists in the capitalistic societies of the West or the socialist societies of the East. Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 5 and 74-75. When Metz reprehends evolutionary logic, therefore, he is reprehending it as that which lies at the basis of both dialectical materialism in the East and various evolutionary theories in the West. I am grateful to Chopp for this clarification. Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 72.

³⁸³Metz points out that the roots of evolutionary consciousness are found both "in the Enlightenment on the one hand and our western middle-class society on the other," which arose out of it. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 5.

³⁸⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 6.

Furthermore, in the modern era, this experience has resulted in the coming to dominance of an "evolutionary logic," which pervades the modern psyche to such an extent that it has become the uniquely modern way of thinking and acting.³⁸⁵ Evolutionary logic is the "fundamental symbol of knowledge and logic"³⁸⁶ operative beneath the surface of modern life, the new bourgeois philosophy, the "new form of metaphysics"³⁸⁷ within which the experiences and ideas of

³⁸⁵Evolutionary logic is the present-day metaphysical substratum upon which modern theories of evolution have been built, both within the empirical sciences and politics. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 172.

³⁸⁶"It is active as a fundamental symbol of knowledge and logic and has a theoretical status which is not clear as far as its totalizing tendency is concerned" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 6).

³⁸⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 171. We recall that in Christliche Anthropozentrik, Metz said that the thought-form is "the encompassing horizon in which everything for the first time receives its mental image,...the unifying, uniform arche out of which all material multiplicity originates" (Metz, Christliche Anthropozentrik, p. 31). As such, any particular form of metaphysics is based on a particular thought-form, or "feel for life." Metz's ongoing project, therefore, is an attempt to give expression to Christianity's unique "feeling for life" (thought-form) and, in turn, to a more adequate expression of its content. In his early career, he thought that transcendental metaphysics, in a corrected form, most adequately expressed Christianity's unique "feel for the world." In his recent work, he has shied away from adopting any particular theoretical horizon which might thematize the unique Christian feel for the world. He has become convinced that the fundamental experience of being liberated by God generates not, first and foremost, a way of thinking, but a way of acting. Christian discipleship, therefore, in the form of imitating Christ's suffering solidarity with the poor, has replaced his earlier concern for finding the proper philosophical expression for Christianity. His interest has shifted from how Christians think, to how they act.

bourgeois life take colour and shape.³⁸⁸ Put differently, it is the all-pervasive "theory of nature" dominating bourgeois consciousness.³⁸⁹ Let me explain.

Important to Metz is the fact that this evolutionary logic functions as the modern symbol for time. To the modern mind, time is evolutionary time, rolling on forever, over everyone and everything. Persons unconsciously assume that everything is locked within a timeless evolutionary process without aim or purpose.³⁹⁰ Metz writes:

The apocalyptic symbolism of discontinuity and the end of time has given way to the pseudo-religious symbol of evolution which, in its impenetrable way, has penetrated to the depths of everyone's consciousness, to such an extent that its irrational control and its quasi-religious

³⁸⁸Everything, Metz says, is "timelessly and continually reconstructed on the basis of this philosophy. This includes the religious consciousness and the dialectical criticism of religion" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 171). Hence, bourgeois, Christian, and Marxist understandings of history are based on an evolutionary logic. I will draw this out further when I discuss Metz's critique of modern Christian soteriologies as well as classical Marxist, neo-Marxist, and Positivist theories of history.

³⁸⁹I will show how Metz is concerned that evolutionary logic, as a comprehensive theory of nature, inevitably results in a depreciation of history. He wants to show that an authentic Christian apocalyptic consciousness, over against a bourgeois consciousness, is based not on a theory of nature but on an apocalyptic theology of history. See "Nature and History," Faith in History and Society, pp. 106-109.

³⁹⁰Metz quotes Nietzsche: "'Evolution does not aim at happiness; it is only concerned with evolution'" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 171). As I will show, he reprimands the dominance of evolution as a symbol for time because it negates Christianity's own symbol for time: time as apocalyptic.

totality have become almost imperceptible.³⁹¹

The individual and social consequences of the dominance of this evolutionary logic, as the modern symbol for time, are profound. Even though modern persons are unaware of it, their conscious lives are ruled by the effects of this unending or "timeless-time."³⁹² Above all, their immersion within it creates a deep and pervasive sense of fatalism and apathy,³⁹³ which Metz believes is the driving force behind the frenzied activity of bourgeois life. The modern experience of "having no time" is therefore really an expression of the deeper conviction that there is no end to time.³⁹⁴ Moreover, the modern conviction that anything can be made and done, with the proper application of technical rationality, is really "an expression of defeatism, a special form of resignation that is produced by our experience of

³⁹¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 172.

³⁹²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 170.

³⁹³Apathy manifests itself culturally in increased occasions of unreflected hatred while the sense of fatalism expresses itself in greater occurrences of fanaticism. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 170, and "Unterwegs," p. 228.

³⁹⁴Metz believes this fear is more basic than that associated with the inevitability of personal extinction or even of global nuclear destruction. It is the "fear that nothing any longer is coming to an end, that, generally speaking, there is no end, that, on the contrary, everything is dragged into the surging of a faceless evolution which ultimately rolls over each of us from behind like the grains of sand on the seashore, and which makes everything all the same, just as death does" (Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 228).

timeless-time."³⁹⁵

Hence, evolutionary logic (a metaphysic of timeless-time) fosters a "cult of fate" whose adherents are convinced that everything is replaceable, including themselves. This, in turn, in the attempt to compensate for the hopelessness brought on by this sense of timelessness, fosters a "cult of the makeable," in which persons conceive of themselves as being omnipotently in control of everything, even their own destiny.³⁹⁶ Evolutionary logic is therefore the unconscious, fear-generating, philosophical principle beneath the relentless do-ability and make-ability of modern technological society.

Before looking at Metz's critique of this logic, it is important to recognize how this analysis is similar to his earlier analysis of Greek cosmocentrism. The most important similarity is that Greek cosmocentrism and bourgeois evolutionary consciousness stem from a similar primal experience of the world: an experience of being locked within a larger whole and of therefore being essentially unfree. Whereas Greek cosmocentrism was based on the experience of being hopelessly locked within an eternal cosmos of eternal returns, bourgeois evolutionary consciousness is based,

³⁹⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 169-170.

³⁹⁶Metz says that the "cult of the makeable" is a "mirror image" of the "cult of fate." They are "two sides of the same coin" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 170).

similarly, on the experience of being locked hopelessly within nature's endless continuum of time, devoid of surprise or interruption. Though Metz nowhere explicitly discusses the similarity between these two experiences of being un-free, I think this similarity nevertheless points to an important thread of continuity between his early and later writings. In both instances, the enemy of Christianity is an unconscious perception of human life locked within a larger totality with the consequence being that persons are made apathetic towards social and historical life.

The claim of this dissertation, therefore, is that Metz's theology is unified by its attempt to criticize and disentangle Christianity from non-Christian philosophies which make it apathetic in the face of human suffering. At each stage, he argues that Christian revelation is attempting to transform the experience of human entrapment into the experience of being fundamentally liberated, personally and socially. He points to how revelation is seeking to express this basic Christian experience of liberation in the form of a unique type of Christian consciousness, a new Christian thought-form. In his early theology, for example, he pointed to an anthropocentric form of consciousness which emerged within the theology of Thomas Aquinas, and which gave fuller expression to the freedom given to persons in the Incarnation. In his recent theology, he points to a post-bourgeois Christian form of consciousness, characterized by apocalyptic

expectation, which can motivate Christians to act on behalf of the less fortunate of the world. I will proceed by looking at Metz's critique of evolutionary logic.

3. Metz's Critique of the Philosophical Substratum of Bourgeois Subjectivity: Evolutionary Logic

Thus far, I have pointed out that Metz's main problem with bourgeois subjectivity is that its understanding of time is fundamentally incompatible with Christianity because it thinks of time in terms of nature's ongoing evolutionary process. Time, in the modern sense, is thus essentially timeless.³⁹⁷ In contrast, Metz points to Christianity's quite different understanding of time, that is, an apocalyptic understanding of time which is anything but timeless. Biblical Christianity, for example, assumes that there is an apocalyptic, not an evolutionary, logic to time. The New Testament, in particular, indicates that Christianity is a religion of apocalyptic expectation rather than a religion of timelessness. Its notion of time is based on an action-motivating, hope-inspiring, imminent expectation of the Messiah's return.³⁹⁸ Christian time is thus apocalyptic time.

³⁹⁷ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 174.

³⁹⁸ "Imminent expectation...provides hope, which has been pacified and led astray by the evolutionary idea" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 176-177). The "bad infinity" of evolutionary logic allows for everything except for "that moment which becomes the 'gate through which the Messiah enters history' (W. Benjamin on the Jewish idea of the Messiah) and because of this surprising moment would time be found for time?" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 175).

This point is made clearer by looking at how the bible understands the world, God, and the future in light of apocalyptic time, over against evolutionary time.

Biblical Christianity, Metz argues, understands the world within the horizon of apocalyptic time, and does not interpret it within the framework of nature (along the lines of "Deus sive natura"³⁹⁹), as the modern mind does.⁴⁰⁰ It does not view nature as the eternity within which everything, even God, is contained.⁴⁰¹ Rather, with its notion of apocalyptic time, Christianity understands the world as the arena of human freedom in history, a freedom exercised in imitating the suffering of Jesus on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. The world, therefore, is the world of history and the suffering accumulated therein. Metz writes:

For the apocalyptic writer, the continuity of time is not the empty continuum of evolution, but the vital lead of suffering. And respect for the dignity of suffering

This quote is found in Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), p. 266.

³⁹⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 174.

⁴⁰⁰This is similar, we recall, to Metz's earlier criticism of the Greek cosmocentric understanding of the world. Modern persons, like the Greeks before, understand the world as enclosed within a larger whole referred to as nature.

⁴⁰¹Metz writes: "In evolutionary logic, God - the God of the living and the dead, the God who does not let the past, the dead, rest in peace - is simply unthinkable. It is, far more than any form of emphatic atheism, which remains rooted in negation, a real absence of God" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 173).

accumulated within time leads the apocalyptic author to understand the time of nature from the perspective of the time of suffering and, therefore, evolution from the perspective of history.⁴⁰²

Metz argues that God, as well, ought to be understood within the horizon of apocalyptic time. God should not be subordinated to the infinite continuum of evolutionary time but correctly understood as the "end of time, its delimitation and discontinuity - and therefore its possibility."⁴⁰³ For the apocalyptic writer, "God is the mystery of time, not yet unveiled and impending. God is not seen as the beyond of time, but as its end pressing in on the present, as its limitation as well as its saving interruption."⁴⁰⁴ Hence, time belongs to God and not God to time. God does not belong to the graceless, directionless, and endless evolutionary continuum of the time of nature,⁴⁰⁵ but, as the owner of time, he is the guarantor of meaning and hope within the midst of authentically Christian apocalyptic time, a time characterized by suffering, guilt, crises, sadness, mourning, danger, and

⁴⁰²Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 229.

⁴⁰³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 174.

⁴⁰⁴Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 229.

⁴⁰⁵"The questions that concern the apocalyptic vision most deeply - to whom does the world belong? to whom do its suffering and its time belong? - have, it would seem, been more effectively suppressed in theology than anywhere else" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 178).

death.⁴⁰⁶ God guarantees hope and meaning because he is not encased in time, but time is in him. In this way, he is "the God of the living and the dead and a God of universal justice and the resurrection of the dead."⁴⁰⁷

And finally, Metz argues that the future as well must be understood in terms of apocalyptic rather than evolutionary time.⁴⁰⁸ He opposes the bourgeois understanding of the future

⁴⁰⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 174. "In the apocalyptic vision, time appears, above all, as the time of suffering" (Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 229). Given this, Metz rejects two types of eschatology which, in two different ways, deny time and thereby succumb to the seduction of evolutionary timelessness. On the one hand, there is the type of eschatology which asserts that the future of God is totally other than the evolutionary continuum within which history is contained. Here, the Kingdom of God becomes the opposite of the Kingdom of the world. The Kingdom of the world is damnably timebound and the Kingdom of God is timelessly holy and other. In addition, there is the type of eschatology within which the future of God is in continuity with the evolutionary process of history and, as such, serves as its end, fulfillment, and goal. Here, the Kingdom of God is an utopia, attainable through human progress. Metz's disapproves of this type because in spite of its emphasis on time (on history), it succumbs to the seduction of evolutionary timelessness by interpreting time teleologically. As I will show, Metz thinks that time, teleologically understood, is not the authentically Christian apocalyptic time of the New Testament. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 174.

⁴⁰⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 74.

⁴⁰⁸Metz is concerned with the way history and God's promised future are related. When history is thought to be captive to an endless evolutionary process, then God's promised future is related to history in one of two ways: 1. either this future is in essential opposition to history, and the choice is clearly between God's eternity and the forever-time of the world, or 2. God's future is connected with the evolutionary process of the world and, therefore, realizable in and through it. Within this scheme, authentic Christian time, as apocalyptic time, is swallowed up by the myth of evolutionary time, therefore forfeiting its apocalyptic future. Put simply, eschatology loses its apocalyptic sting.

as essentially unfree and locked within a "rigid world pattern,"⁴⁰⁹ as merely a "timeless infinity into which the present is extrapolated at will,"⁴¹⁰ an empty screen on which the images of the present are projected.⁴¹¹ Such a notion contains no real expectation and no real hope,⁴¹² thereby denying the basic Christian conviction that history and the future are very much in God's hands.

Theologically, Metz is concerned that this bourgeois understanding of the future, as trapped within evolutionary time, has found its way into contemporary theology, thereby contributing to the emergence of a "bourgeois eschatology," a theology of last things stripped of the apocalyptic tensions

Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 174.

⁴⁰⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 175.

⁴¹⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 176.

⁴¹¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 176.

⁴¹²Metz distinguishes between a bourgeois and a biblical messianic future. Bourgeois religion interprets the messianic future as a continuation into the future, with God, of the bourgeois values and aims. It pictures the future optimistically as an endless horizon of opportunity for the further securing of possessions, capital, and control. Thus, God's messianic future becomes the "ceremonial elevation and transfiguration of a bourgeois future already worked out elsewhere, and in the face of death the extension of this bourgeois future and ego dominant within it into the transcendence of eternity" (Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 1). In contrast, the real messianic future "disrupts" this preconceived bourgeois future and "breaks in from above to shatter the self-complacency of our present time" (Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 2), calling for a radical conversion away from bourgeois value-structures and goals to the Gospel value of "unconditional love for the 'least of the brethren'" (Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 6).

of danger, contradiction, and downfall.⁴¹³ This type of eschatology is devoid of radical messianic expectation because it assumes that everything is already reconciled within the overarching totality of nature's endless continuum. The subversive, disturbing, and restless characteristics of apocalyptic expectation are thus eliminated. What emerges is a bourgeois eschatology which, as Metz says,

...bestows, unknown to itself, a testimony of political and moral innocence on the present time, reinforcing bourgeois society as it is, instead of driving it beyond itself, according to the theme that everything will be all right in the end anyway, and all things will be reconciled.⁴¹⁴

As an alternative, Metz points to an apocalyptic eschatology which does not stand under the "dictatorship of what has been,"⁴¹⁵ which is not constituted by the mere extrapolation of present bourgeois values into the future. Rather, it understands the future in terms of the imminent expectation of the day of the Lord. It is God's future that is hoped for and not ours. As imminent expectation of the Messiah's return, it is a real future, promising to be radically different from what has gone before. It is a future of real expectation and therefore of real hope.

⁴¹³See "Wrong Choices in Christian Eschatology," Faith in History and Society, pp. 177-179.

⁴¹⁴Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 4.

⁴¹⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 179.

4. Summary

Thus far, I have discussed Metz's understanding and critique of the metaphysical substratum operative beneath bourgeois subjectivity. Evolutionary logic was identified as the chief metaphysical context within which bourgeois life interprets itself. The bourgeois experience of the world is one of being hopelessly trapped within nature's timeless evolutionary process. Moreover, this experience of entrapment creates a deeply rooted sense of fatalism and apathy which is compensated for by increased manipulation and domination of persons and nature. As well, I discussed Metz's belief that evolutionary logic, as the bourgeois symbol for time, is incompatible with the apocalyptic notion of time for three reasons: 1. it destroys the Christian understanding of the world as history, 2. it eliminates God as the saving interruption of time, and 3. it eradicates the 'totally other' nature of God's promised future.

I now move to the next step in tracing Metz's analysis and critique of bourgeois subjectivity. This involves a discussion of what Metz thinks are the three most important concepts operative within bourgeois subjectivity: historicism, pragmatic reason, and natural religion, each of which are negatively influenced by the timelessness of evolutionary logic. All three carry the scars of evolutionary fatalism and apathy and, as such, pose a threat to authentic Christian self-understanding and praxis.

C. METZ'S ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE OF THREE
NOTIONS OPERATIVE WITHIN BOURGEOIS
SUBJECTIVITY: HISTORY, REASON, AND RELIGION

1. Bourgeois History

In the above, Metz criticized 19th and 20th century Catholic apologetic for not recognizing the inherent limitations of certain Enlightenment notions. Chief among these was its uncritical appropriation of an Enlightenment understanding of history which was fundamentally incompatible with Christianity's own understanding. The primary difference concerned the fact that the Enlightenment notion of history was not based on the liberating freedom of the Incarnation but on an evolutionary logic originating in the primal experience of being trapped and unfree within nature's grace-free evolutionary continuum. Hence, Catholic apologetic failed to recognize the inherent danger in the unconscious bourgeois assumption that history is unfree. It did not recognize that interpreting history in light of nature threatens Christianity's historical substance.

The following tries to demonstrate that a good part of Metz's present project is best understood as an attempt to break free from this unwitting appropriation of the bourgeois understanding of history as unfree. In its place, Metz wants to restore Christianity's own unique understanding of history based on apocalyptic time as a time of suffering. It is in suffering, and in solidarity with those who suffer, that authentic Christian freedom is realized. Metz's aim,

therefore, is to develop an apocalyptic theology of history which understands history as accumulated suffering and the remembrance of suffering. Only by viewing history in this way, he believes, can Christians, as well as modern persons, attain the liberating critical consciousness they seek.⁴¹⁶ Only by developing a post-bourgeois Christian understanding of history will history again be allowed to contribute to the formation of norms and values within modern religious, cultural and political life. I turn then to Metz's reasons for rejecting the bourgeois notion of history. I also discuss briefly his alternatives.

To begin, Metz thinks there are two opposing views of history operative within the bourgeois mentality. One operates on the conscious and the other on the unconscious level. On the unconscious level, history is thought to be trapped within timeless nature. As discussed earlier, this conviction arises from the all-pervasive bourgeois experience of everything, including history, being trapped within the cage of an infinite evolutionary continuum. On the conscious level, however, there is quite a different view of history. History is thought to be progressing inexorably forwards, opening up greater possibilities for freedom and prosperity. The conviction held is that through the enlightened actions of individuals and groups, history will continue to become an

⁴¹⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 39.

emancipative history in which persons become increasingly free from the dictates of nature and the greed and exploitation of others.

This latter view of history, Metz suggests, is an illusion, arising out of the attempt to compensate for the fear and fatalism generated by the experience of evolutionary timelessness.⁴¹⁷ Modern persons react to their immersion within timelessness by feverishly trying to control and dominate everything, especially their present and future. The bourgeois belief that history is progressing towards greater freedom is an illusion required in order to compensate for the deeper awareness that all progress is in fact made meaningless within the cage of evolutionary timelessness. The illusion of progressive historical freedom, therefore, combats the reality of history's entrapment within nature.

Furthermore, Metz opposes these compensatory illusions of historical freedom and progress because they destroy an appreciation for the past. The bourgeois mentality makes the past meaningless on two levels. On a conscious level, the past is thought unimportant to the primary task of controlling and dominating one's destiny. On an unconscious level, like

⁴¹⁷Metz credits Ernst Bloch with the idea that the awareness of evolutionary timelessness creates a "latent despair" beneath the surface of modern persons. Bloch refers to this despair as "the jaws of death" which gnaw away at the modern soul. Modern persons respond to this despair by engaging in feverish activity, competition, and conflict. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 135, n. 25.

the present and the future, the past is thought to be trapped within nature's timelessness and therefore meaningless. The modern mentality depreciates the past, therefore, both through its consciously expressed modern theories of history and its unconscious conviction that history is trapped within nature. Metz concludes: "The logic of evolution is the rule of death over history - in the end, everything makes as little difference to it as death. Nothing that has ever been can be spared its continuity, that is indifferent and without grace."⁴¹⁸

The central point is that there is a clear difference between the bourgeois understanding of history which denies the past, and a Christian understanding of history which values it. Above all, apocalyptic Christianity denies that the past, present, and future are trapped within nature. It does not subordinate history to nature but understands nature within the horizon of history. In doing so, it restores to importance the categories of past, present, and future, denying that they are meaningless designations within nature's timelessness. Its view, rather, is that history is a history of freedom, which, in turn, is a history of suffering. It

⁴¹⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 173. Metz believes that without an apocalyptic vision, death is made even more deadly by society and the church. Death which is "overwhelmed by the anonymous waves of evolution" is more deadly than a death within which the "apocalyptic and temporal expectation" is kept firmly alive. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 178.

believes that history (as humanity's suffering-filled struggle for freedom), rather than nature, is "the original process of life."⁴¹⁹ Only by recognizing this priority of history over nature, freedom over evolutionary destiny, will nature be understood correctly as subject to the responsibility of human freedom, instead of human freedom being subject to nature.⁴²⁰ By recognizing this, the past can be restored to its rightful place as a category of history, with present and future relevance.

Furthermore, Metz argues that the bourgeois understanding of history as trapped, and the despair and fatalism which follow, gives rise to the modern notion of history as merely the record of things past. History becomes a privatized object of inquisitiveness and entertainment for modern life and thought because it is rendered meaningless both on an existential and on a practical level. Existentially, it is meaningless because it is trapped within nature, and practically, it is meaningless because it is irrelevant to the dominant task of controlling the present and the future.

This process by which history is privatized and made meaningless, Metz suggests, has expressed itself most clearly in the rise to prominence of modern historicism, which

⁴¹⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 106.

⁴²⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 106.

restricts matters of history to the private realm of life and, in doing so, prevents them from playing a normative and guiding role in present and future considerations. Above all, he thinks historicism is dangerous because it regards events of the past as mere facts over and done with, as encased in a larger forward moving historical process. As over and done with, they are robbed of their ability to play a role in the social and political decision-making processes of the present.⁴²¹ The bourgeois mentality believes, therefore, that anyone who allows himself or herself to be significantly influenced by past events and traditions is irrational and superstitious for going against the prevailing ideology of the autonomous use of reason. The past is thus negated as a vital part of Enlightenment reason because, as over and done with, it is irrelevant to the dominant bourgeois task of securing greater control and domination over the present and the future.

A major reason for Christianity's present crisis, Metz argues, is that it has uncritically appropriated this bourgeois understanding of history and, at the same time, has lost sight of its own unique apocalyptic theology of history, in which past events do have a present and future reality. Furthermore, this blind appropriation has undermined the ability of Christian memory and biblical narrative to foster

⁴²¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 36.

a critical Christian consciousness towards social and political theories which claim to understand humanity's historical quest for freedom. Christianity can no longer offer, for example, an effective critique of the dominant modern theories of emancipation developed by the Marxists, neo-Marxists, and positivists because it no longer recognizes the Christ event as a past, present, and future reality.⁴²² That is, it no longer stands apart from the basic assumptions

⁴²²Metz uses the term "history of freedom" in the way Marx used it, to refer to a process of general human self-emancipation distinct from all illusionary forms of emancipation which distract persons from their project of making their own history. Metz asserts the presence of a transcendental dimension within this concept of emancipation. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 120. By this, he means that there exists within it a subtle yet real aspiration towards totality and inexorability. He believes further, that this tendency to speak of the process of emancipation, as if it were inexorable and total, serves a two-fold function. On the one hand, it immunizes the theory against external criticism, while on the other hand, it creates a transcendental agent of history to whom is attributed responsibility for the social contradictions which emerge in the process of emancipation. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 121. Metz thinks this two-fold criticism is generally applicable to modern theories of emancipation (Marxist, neo-Marxist and Positivist) as well as to modern Christian soteriologies. To avoid confusion in what follows, I will use the expressions "theory or theories of emancipation" and "emancipative history" only in reference to non-Christian interpretations of humanity's general emancipation within the modern era. In contrast, I will use the expression "history of freedom," to refer to Christianity's unique "history of freedom" initiated by the Jesus-event. The all important difference between "emancipative history" and Jesus' "history of freedom," according to Metz, is that the latter includes "redemption" as an uniquely theological inner moment of its understanding of emancipation. In addition, Jesus' history of freedom is defined by suffering solidarity. Emancipative theories are not so defined. Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 121-123.

which shape these theories, particularly the assumption that the past is irrelevant. Let me explain.

Given Christianity's acceptance of Enlightenment historicism, Christians believe that the historical events recorded in biblical narratives are mere facts of the past, over and done with. As such, biblical stories are unable to convey any longer Christian truth directly to the present and are no longer seen as dangerous, subversive, and liberating.⁴²³ They have become mere paradigms for Christian actions in the present, containing not much threat and little demand.

What is crucial for Metz, is that this assimilation of Enlightenment historicism has resulted in the Jesus-event being understood as a mere fact of the past, therefore robbing it of its power in the present. Historicism is unable to recognize, for example, that to remember Jesus is to recall "God's eschatological history of freedom."⁴²⁴ It is unable to understand how Christian memory remembers Jesus' life, death, and resurrection forwards, as an eschatological event which

⁴²³ Memory is "the fundamental form of expression of (the) Christian faith" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 90). Faith is the memory of how Jesus established the Kingdom of God among persons by proclaiming that he was on the side of the oppressed and rejected, and that the Kingdom was constituted by the liberating power of God's unconditional love. The memoria Jesu Christi, therefore, anticipates God's future as the future of those who are "oppressed, without hope and doomed to fail." The memory of Jesus does not anticipate a future of those who are successful and ruling. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 90.

⁴²⁴ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 91.

bears on the future. It is only capable of understanding the Jesus-event as an event of the past, and unable to see how the memories of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection constitute the proleptic presence of God's promised Kingdom of absolute justice, solidarity and reconciliation. Hence, for apocalyptic Christianity, Jesus is as much a future event as he is a past event. As a future-directed event, his history of freedom is offered to Christians as a future which ought to be accepted as their own, a future marked by the imitation of the suffering of Christ on behalf of others, and not by success, domination, and conquest.

The distinction made here, therefore, is between an historicist and an eschatological interpretation of the Jesus-event. The former interprets Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as having only paradigmatic significance for the present, while the latter interprets it as having critical, dangerous, and transformative power in the present.

a. Bourgeois Versus Christian Interpretations of Humanity's Emancipative History

Metz argues furthermore that an eschatological interpretation of the Jesus-event serves a twofold critical function in relation to the modern theories of emancipation propounded by classical Marxists, neo-Marxists, and Positivists. These are secular theories of history which offer interpretations of humanity's recent self-liberation, on the part of individuals and groups, from social, political and religious repression.⁴²⁵ Metz's critique of these secular theories of history is important because it parallels closely the one he makes of modern Christian soteriologies. His chief criticism of both is that they implicitly assume the presence of an "alibi-subject" or overarching emancipative totality which is then thought responsible for human suffering.⁴²⁶ Most often, as we will see, this alibi-subject is interpreted as nature.

Metz's first criticism is made from the perspective of an eschatological interpretation of the Jesus-event. It is two-fold. On the one hand, he accuses these theories of

⁴²⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 91.

⁴²⁶When Metz uses the term "emancipative totality," he applies it to two quite distinct groups of thinkers: evolutionists and dialecticians. There exist, then, both dialectical and evolutionary notions of emancipative totality. Faith in History and Society, p. 124. Under the former, he includes the three groups already mentioned: neo-Marxists, classical Marxists, and Positivists. Under the latter, he includes Teilhard de Chardin and Alfred North Whitehead. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 107.

lacking the necessary religious horizon required in order to understand properly humanity's quest for freedom. That is, they fail to understand themselves within the larger religious context of God's liberative activities in history, especially his activity in the person and work of Jesus the Christ. Simply put, they fail to understand themselves within the context of Jesus' history of freedom, which, as a future-directed event, points to the promised future fulfillment in God of every quest for freedom. They therefore fail to recognize that all freedom-quests are incomplete and seeking fulfillment beyond themselves in God. As Metz puts it, "every power of perfection, reconciliation and peace, which presupposes human freedom and the conflicts involved in it, is reserved [vorbehalten] in this memory of God."⁴²⁷

In addition, they also make a false assumption about who or what the subject of history is. That is, they fail to recognize that God alone is the true subject of history,⁴²⁸ that "the God of Jesus' passion" is alone the "subject of the

⁴²⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 91.

⁴²⁸It is not always clear what Metz means by the phrase "subject of history." He could mean either the causal agent of history or the subject matter of history. In this instance, given that the quote is likely referring to the proletariat as the motivating force behind historical movement, he means causal agent. In other places, however, where he rebukes the assumption that nature is the subject of history, for example, he seems to mean the subject matter of history. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108.

universal history of suffering."⁴²⁹ Without this recognition, they are in constant danger of mistaking certain individuals or groups for the true subject of history.⁴³⁰

Metz's second criticism, made from the perspective of an eschatological interpretation of the Jesus-event, is that these theories fail to appreciate the central role played by suffering within the human quest for freedom. They ought to be reminded, in other words, that "the history of freedom remains rather always a history of suffering."⁴³¹ Christianity, for example, interprets history from below, as a history of the vanquished, rather than history from above, as a history

⁴²⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 123.

⁴³⁰Metz writes: "Whenever the history of freedom takes place without reference to this memory of the eschatological reservation, it always seems to fall victim to the compulsive need to substitute a worldly subject for the whole history of freedom and this always moves in the direction of a totalitarian control of men by men" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 91).

⁴³¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 128. See Helmut Peukert's comments about the contribution that Walter Benjamin has made to the development of both his own theology of communicative praxis, as well as Metz's theology. Benjamin is a source of inspiration for both Metz and Peukert through his conviction that "history...(is) the history of the suffering (Passion) of the world" (Peukert, Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology, p. 208). Peukert takes this quote from Benjamin, The Origin of German Tragic Drama, trans. Steiner (London, 1977), p. 166. Benjamin's "Theses on The Philosophy of History," in Illuminations, pp. 255-266 is also an important source for Peukert's and Metz's critique of the forgetfulness of historicism, as well as for their attack on the bourgeois assumption that history is caught within a timeless continuum. See, especially, Theses XVI & XVII, in Benjamin, Illuminations, pp. 264-265.

of the conquerors.⁴³² It therefore denies the general bourgeois assumption that history is moving inexorably forward in progress.⁴³³

b. Suffering and Modern Theories of Human Emancipation: Relating Nature and History

In the above, I stated that Metz's critique of modern theories of emancipation is similar to his critique of modern soteriologies. Before looking at the latter, however, it is important to understand better why he thinks modern theories of emancipation misinterpret humanity's quest for freedom.

These theories are problematic, Metz argues, chiefly because their understanding of humanity's recent struggle for freedom is tainted by the modern assumption about history, that is, that history, and therefore humanity's emancipative history, is locked within the cage of nature's larger and more permanent evolutionary process.⁴³⁴ Metz points to three negative consequences which follow from understanding emancipative history within the context of nature in this way.

The first is that nature's evolutionary continuum is thought to be the authentic subject of history, rather than

⁴³²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 111.

⁴³³As we have seen, Metz thinks this assumption is an illusion which compensates for the evolutionary logic which grips the souls of modern persons.

⁴³⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108.

God or persons.⁴³⁵ Nature becomes the "alibi subject" of history,⁴³⁶ with important implications for the way suffering is understood. For example, the suffering which constitutes humanity's history of freedom is now thought of as only a part of nature's evolutionary drive towards its goal. It is merely the unfortunate by-product of nature's relentless forward moving process, which humanity's struggle for freedom reflects. This implicit assumption leads then to another: that persons are not themselves ultimately responsible for the suffering that makes up humanity's history of freedom, but nature is.

The second consequence of subordinating history to nature is the emergence of the further assumption that nature and history are related to each other teleologically. It is assumed that the end goal of nature's evolutionary process is humankind and its history, and that humanity has been driven to this pinnacle of the evolutionary process by changes and adaptations demanded by nature.⁴³⁷ It becomes an accepted fact

⁴³⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108.

⁴³⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 126.

⁴³⁷Metz finds Monod's theory attractive in his battle against the bourgeois assumption that man is the undisputed culmination of the evolutionary process. Monod's theory asserts, to the contrary, that humanity arose as a "'chance shot' of nature, the cosmic 'accident'" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 107). This view of nature, characterized by chance interruptions and not by a relentless forward moving process, is significant for Metz because it is amenable to the apocalyptic theology of history which he wants to develop. Metz states: "I should like to stress that this element of chance in nature is not a spectre that can threaten

that human life is the intended outcome of nature's indomitable forward moving process.

The third consequence, and most significant, concerns the assumption that the movement of history is as inexorable as nature's evolutionary process. It is assumed that history is also an un-interruptable, relentless, evolutionary march forward. Metz worries that by interpreting history in this way, history becomes un-dialectical, linear, and one-dimensional in character, while emancipative theories become "ideologies of...linear and one-dimensional emancipation."⁴³⁸ In short, history interpreted non-dialectically fails to recognize the fact that advancements of freedom go hand in hand with new conflicts, disasters, and losses of freedom.⁴³⁹

In contrast to these theories of history which subordinate history to nature, Metz offers a way of relating the two without diminishing the importance of the Christian apocalyptic insight that humanity's history of freedom is at the same time a history of suffering.

To begin, he does not think that nature and history are related teleologically. He rejects the assertion that they are reconcilable within an overarching evolutionary

a theology of history, which has learnt not to think of reality in terms of a closed cosmos that exists without surprises" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 107).

⁴³⁸ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 91.

⁴³⁹ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 91.

process which is teleologically directed.⁴⁴⁰ Rather, he believes that nature and the human quest for freedom are related dialectically. Stressing this dialectic, he writes:

It would therefore not be idealistic pride, but respect for the dignity of historically accumulated suffering if we were to try to understand nature in the light of history (if we were, in other words, to interpret the relationship between nature and history dialectically rather than teleologically) and to interpret the milliards of years of natural time as opposed to the time of human suffering as what Ernst Bloch has called 'inflation time.'⁴⁴¹

Metz therefore denies that emancipative history is undialectically the continuation of nature's evolutionary

⁴⁴⁰See Susan Buck-Morss' discussion of how Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Walter Benjamin were in fundamental agreement in their total rejection of the Hegelian concept of history "as the identity of subject and object, the rational and the real" (Susan Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics. Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute [Hassocks, Sussex, England: The Harvester Press, 1977], p. 47). They were aware, as Metz is, "that the glorification of history as higher truth functioned to justify the suffering which its course had brought upon individuals, the violence it had done to humans as natural, physical beings" (Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics, p. 48). For the relationship between Metz and the Frankfurt School, especially concerning the relationship between history and suffering, see Buck-Morss, pp. 222-223, ns. 32 and 38. For Horkheimer's attack on Hegel's metaphysics of history, Buck-Morss refers to Max Horkheimer's, "Hegel und das Problem der Metaphysik," Festschrift für Cal Grünberg: Zum 70. Geburtstag (Leipzig: Verlag von C. L. Hirschfeld, 1932). For Benjamin's criticism of history as a triumphal procession of rulers stepping over those lying prostrate, she refers to Walter Benjamin's, Über den Begriff der Geschichte. Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 1:2, Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser eds. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974). For a discussion of the way Adorno dialectically relates history and nature, see Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics, p. 49.

⁴⁴¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108.

process, such that nature is the ever constant "substratum of history."⁴⁴² Rather, he raises for consideration the apocalyptic view that humanity's history of suffering is as much the substratum of nature as nature is the substratum of history. What is meant by this apocalyptic insight, Metz suggests, is that persons and nature are related dialectically, that is, that the human spirit is both grounded in, yet trying to transcend nature.⁴⁴³ In both ways, suffering is implied. Let me explain.

On the one hand, humanity's groundedness in nature causes suffering. As finite creatures, persons are forced into a constant struggle for survival against the forces of inevitable decay and death. On the other hand, and this is perhaps less apparent, every effort to free the human spirit

⁴⁴²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108.

⁴⁴³See Buck-Morss' discussion of how Adorno also related nature and history dialectically, in a relationship of non-identity yet mutual determinacy. Adorno, having had "no concept of history in the sense of an ontological, positive definition of history's philosophical meaning," saw nature and history as mutually corrective of one another. On the one hand, nature exposes every regulative concept of history as false insofar as every concept of history does violence to material nature in its diminishment of the importance of suffering. And on the other hand, history exposes every concept of nature to be relative in that every concept of nature can be shown to have been historically produced. Adorno's purpose, in relating nature and history in this way, was to demythologize both. He wanted to "destroy the mythical power which both concepts wielded over the present, a power which was the source of a fatalistic and passive acceptance of the status quo. This demythifying process relentlessly intensified the critical tension between thought and reality instead of bringing them into harmony" (Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics, p. 49).

from nature, through an ongoing historical quest for freedom, results in suffering. Suffering occurs because the attempt to gain freedom from the compulsions of nature inevitably takes place in the form of control and domination over nature. Humanity tries to free itself from its rootedness in nature by controlling, dominating, and exploiting nature. This, in turn, diminishes the freedom it is seeking in the first place.

Metz writes:

The human spirit, which rises above natural originality, is the same spirit that tries to objectivize its lasting dependence on nature in the form of dominating nature. If this spirit is, as history, different from nature in so far as it points to the state that liberates us from the compulsion of nature and even reconciles, then it is no longer the same in so far as it continues as a technique of natural compulsion of nature in increasing exploitation and control of nature. In this dynamic tension, the species is present as a natural element that can overcome itself and is therefore in conflict with itself and always harming itself. This is why the process of becoming man is characterized by suffering and there can be no teleological and final mediation between man and nature.⁴⁴⁴

Suffering, then, is the necessary consequence of the human spirit's attempt to transcend its rootedness in nature and, at the same time, to deny this rootedness by dominating and controlling nature. It is an expression of the fact that nature and the human spirit cannot be teleologically mediated in any final way. Again Metz:

Suffering stresses the contrast between nature and history, teleology and eschatology. There can be no 'objective' reconciliation and no visible and manageable unity between them. Any attempt of this kind would be

⁴⁴⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 107.

below the status of human suffering.⁴⁴⁵

Metz concludes that suffering is a central feature of human self-identity, not merely a by-product of nature's drive towards its goal as spirit. It is, rather, a constitutive feature of the human spirit in the world seen as history, a feature too often forgotten in the face of modernity's preoccupation with the control and domination of nature. It is especially forgotten within the modern theories of emancipation which Metz criticizes. His point is that "there is, in suffering, a consciousness of identity in the negative sense which cannot be reduced to the trivial identity of natural persistence in time."⁴⁴⁶

Furthermore, Metz believes that the acceptance of suffering, as essentially human, has important cognitive and practical implications which are overlooked. Above all, by restoring the experience of suffering to its proper status,

⁴⁴⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 107.

⁴⁴⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108. Metz does not deny that domination and control are features of human self-identity. He asserts, however, that suffering is an important feature as well. He writes: "Not only the anthropocentricity of power over and control of nature, but also the anthropocentricity of suffering, which asserts itself over all cosmocentricity, are both expressed in this consciousness of identity" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 111). An imitation of Christ which involves suffering is therefore the chief way for modern persons to liberate themselves from the cage of evolutionary timelessness, which itself is the legacy left to them by the Greek cosmocentric experience of the world. Only in suffering solidarity with the poor and oppressed can the despair that eats away at the modern soul be overcome.

it could be possible to combat the current domination of the scientific knowledge of control, thereby giving greater cognitive and critical meaning to other forms of human behaviour and knowledge "such as...pain, mourning, joy, play, and so on."⁴⁴⁷ Doing this, could serve as the impetus for "a kind of anti-knowledge ex memoria passionis forming in our society, by which the existing identification of 'praxis' with 'the control of nature' could be abandoned."⁴⁴⁸ Praxis would no longer be thought of as action alone, but as sorrow and joy, as well. It would have a pathic structure capable of combatting the one-sided perception of action as the subjugation and domination of others and nature.⁴⁴⁹ In suffering, joy and solidarity, a new form of knowing could emerge, quite different from the knowing of technical reason, which aims only at control and domination.

⁴⁴⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 111.

⁴⁴⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 111.

⁴⁴⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 57.

c. A Bourgeois Versus An Apocalyptic Understanding of History

(i) A bourgeois understanding of history: Metz's critique of Marxism, neo-Marxism, and Pragmatism

Metz thinks that an apocalyptic theology of history, as a negative theology of history,⁴⁵⁰ is the correct context within which emancipative history ought to be understood.⁴⁵¹ He rejects natural evolution as an interpretive context because it diminishes the importance of suffering as a central

⁴⁵⁰See James Bohman's "Translator's Introduction" to Helmut Peukert's Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology for the use of the term "negative theology of history" (Peukert, Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology, p. x.). Briefly stated, this is an understanding of history wherein the fact of ongoing concrete human suffering and the fact of Christian redemption are not theoretically reconcilable. They have a dialectical relationship of non-identity yet mutual determinacy, just as nature and history have. Suffering and redemption are related in such a manner that the desire for, and anticipation of, redemption emerges out of suffering itself. See, as well, Buck-Morss' discussion of Benjamin's notion of a "negative theology" as a way of "approaching profane objects with a religious reverence." Buck-Morss refers to Benjamin's theology as an 'inverse' or 'negative theology' in which mysticism and materialism converge. Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics, p. 6. In a similar way, Metz's theology attempts to bring about a convergence of concrete historical suffering and the fact of Christian redemption.

⁴⁵¹Metz is especially critical of Jürgen Habermas' attempt to "reconstruct historical materialism on the basis of evolution." Metz worries this will bring about an "evolutionary disintegration of the dialectics of liberation" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 12, n. 7). See also Metz, "Von der produktiven Ungleichzeitigkeit der Religion. Eine Antwort an Jürgen Habermas," in Unterbrechungen, pp. 11-19. Here, Metz responds to Habermas' critique that Christianity is an anti-emancipatory, pre-Enlightenment remnant. He argues that it is precisely Christianity's un contemporaneity that can offer important resources for the creation of a new post-bourgeois subject.

component of human identity-formation. Theories of emancipation based on evolution,⁴⁵² which presuppose immersion within a larger natural evolutionary process, ignore the fact that emancipative history is also a history of suffering. They do not recognize that humanity's quest for freedom is also a "history of guilt and...the fated destiny of finitude and of death."⁴⁵³

An apocalyptic theology of history, on the other hand, refuses to sweep this history of suffering beneath the carpet of an evolutionary totality. Rather, it acknowledges suffering, more than progress and domination, as a defining principle of the human predicament. Metz concludes, therefore, that "the slightest trace of senseless suffering in the world of human experience gives the lie to all affirmative ontology and all teleology and is clearly revealed as a modern mythology."⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵²Under the heading of "evolutionary theorists," Metz includes such diverse thinkers as Teilhard, Whitehead, liberal Marxists, classical Marxists, and positivists. Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 125-126. Metz is using the category "evolutionary theorists" in an undifferentiated manner to include both those who hold to a dialectical notion of emancipative totality and those who hold to an evolutionary notion of emancipative totality. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 124. I will use the term "evolutionary" in this same broad sense.

⁴⁵³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 123.

⁴⁵⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108. Metz refers to T.W. Adorno's criticism of "an ontologization of suffering" found in Adorno's work Negative Dialectics (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 118, n. 5). See also my analysis of Metz's critique of Rahner where Metz reprimands "the triumphalism of being and becoming." Ontology refers to

Suffering is thus the consequence of the human predicament of guilt and sin. What abstract theories of emancipative totality fail to recognize, because of their acceptance of the bourgeois way of relating nature and history, and the subsequent placing of responsibility for suffering onto nature, is that humankind is responsible, and therefore guilty, for the continuation and the planet-wide increase of "unhappiness and deprivation, misery and evil, oppression and suffering."⁴⁵⁵ "Man as the maker of history must be blamed for the history of suffering"⁴⁵⁶ because human actions reflect the sinful self-degenerative nature of human existence. They mirror "the suffering of finitude, of morality, [and]...that inner corroding nihilism of created being."⁴⁵⁷

being, teleology to becoming. See also Buck-Morss' discussion of Adorno's attempt to relate nature and history dialectically in order to avoid both an ontological and a teleological interpretation of history. Referring to Adorno, Buck-Morss writes: "Whenever theory posited 'nature' or 'history' as an ontological first principle, this double character of the concepts was lost, and with it the potential for critical negativity: either social conditions were affirmed as 'natural' without regard for their historical becoming, or the actual historical process was affirmed as essential; hence the irrational material suffering of which history was composed was either dismissed as mere contingency (Hegel) or ontologized as essential in itself (Heidegger). In both cases, the result was the ideological justification of the given social order" (Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics, p. 54).

⁴⁵⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 124.

⁴⁵⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 125.

⁴⁵⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 124.

Given this, Metz isolates three modern theories of emancipation which exonerate persons from responsibility for suffering by positing an abstract emancipative totality, a totality which quickly becomes the subject of history and assumes responsibility for human suffering. The three theories are those developed by neo-Marxists, classical Marxists, and Positivists. Each posits the existence of an abstract totality or alibi-subject of history, and each irrationally dichotomizes history into two histories: one real and the other ideal. First, Metz's critique of neo-Marxism.

Metz attacks the neo-Marxists for implicitly assuming that historical processes are divorced from the actions of concrete human subjects.⁴⁵⁸ Whether it is the 'world spirit' of Hegel, or the 'nature' of Shelling (towards whom Metz thinks the Frankfurt School is favorably predisposed⁴⁵⁹), the tendency is to posit an abstract totality which functions as the transcendental subject of history. This abstract subject then assumes responsibility for "the dark side of emancipation and the history of guilt...without repercussions, while the successes, victories and progressive strides on earth remain attributable to the emancipative acts of man as maker of

⁴⁵⁸See Metz, Unterbrechungen, p. 11. Here, he challenges Habermas and the German left to abandon its adherence to notions devoid of references to real historical persons. He challenges them to stand closer to the non-contemporaneity of the common person, as Christianity does.

⁴⁵⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 125.

history."⁴⁶⁰ The result is a picture of history with two faces: a categorical and a transcendental one.⁴⁶¹ History is dichotomized into a vague 'nature' or 'spirit,' on the one hand, and a categorical history on the other. The former is responsible for the suffering in the world, the latter for the successful acts of emancipation. By means of this dichotomizing mechanism, the human self, as homo emancipator, is exonerated of responsibility for suffering. She or he is excused from being, as well, homo peccator, and thus permitted to creep quietly "away from the throne of the subject of history."⁴⁶² In the end, nature is responsible for suffering, and persons for self-emancipation.

In like manner, Metz denounces the classical Marxists for solving the problem of suffering dualistically. They place responsibility for suffering squarely on the shoulders of the non-proletariat, while the proletariat is praised for bringing about emancipation. Here, the alibi-subject is clearly the non-proletariat, who is passionately repudiated as the evil enemy. Whereas the non-proletariat creates the suffering, the proletariat creates the emancipation.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 125.

⁴⁶¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 120.

⁴⁶²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 125.

⁴⁶³Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 125-126.

Finally, Metz attacks the positivists for their resolution of the problem of suffering.⁴⁶⁴ He thinks they are the most sinister of the three groups because their alibi-subject is anonymous, that is, even though they ignore the question of the meaning and subject of history, they nevertheless posit an anonymous "history of nature" operating beneath the surface of so-called emancipative, technological, and economic progress. Their history of nature becomes what Metz calls a "destiny of second order, a post-historical, social structuralism with a teleology of emancipation that overlooks the subject of history."⁴⁶⁵ Hence, their answer to the question of suffering is the elimination of the subject altogether. Silently, responsibility for suffering is placed onto the shoulders of the anonymous process of nature.

(ii) An apocalyptic understanding of history

Metz reprimands these three groups, therefore, for ignoring humanity's concrete history of suffering. All three attribute human emancipation to some form of "universal historical totality" which serves as "an irrational mechanism of exoneration or guilt repression" for human

⁴⁶⁴Metz is thinking here especially of M. Foucault's book Les mots et les choses (Paris, 1966). Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 134, n. 22.

⁴⁶⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 126-127.

responsibility.⁴⁶⁶ They either project the responsibility for suffering onto a transcendent referent, or they deny the agency of the human subject altogether. In either case, guilt and responsibility for the history of suffering is repressed by means of an alibi-subject. Because persons are no longer guilty, neither are they desiring redemption and reconciliation. The result is that the history of freedom, and humanity's suffering therein, are trivialized and reduced to a one-dimensional linear march of progress. The history of freedom ends up as "the apotheosis of banality."⁴⁶⁷

Metz's intention, as already mentioned, is to counter this bourgeois evolutionary understanding of history. He protests against the linear and non-dialectical nature of these theories. In their place, he proposes an apocalyptic theology of history, which defines humanity's emancipative history as a history of suffering. He wants to revive Christianity's own apocalyptic theory of history which, by interpreting history as suffering, does not eradicate the power of remembered suffering, but employs it as a transformative power. An apocalyptic theology of history negates the bourgeois attempts to place human suffering within a larger overarching totality, a totality which inevitably assumes responsibility for suffering and exonerates persons

⁴⁶⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 127.

⁴⁶⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 127. Metz attributes this idea to T. W. Adorno, but gives no reference.

from guilt and responsibility. Biblical apocalyptic Christianity flatly denies that suffering can be attributed to the inner workings of a larger, universal, historical, emancipative totality.⁴⁶⁸

What then are the specific theological resources Metz draws on in order to combat the Enlightenment eradication of the memory of suffering and humanity's associated guilt and responsibility? First, he argues that apocalyptic Christianity understands history within the context of "the memory of the crucified Lord," not within the context of natural evolution, as modernity does.⁴⁶⁹ In doing so, it derives hope from within concrete historical suffering, not beyond it. It points to a hope which is simply not possible when history is understood as encased within the larger totality of nature.

More specifically, Metz argues that the memory of Christ's suffering is unique in that it is not the memory of a past event, over and done with, but the memory of an event which is future-directed and therefore hope-inspiring. To remember Christ's history of suffering, in other words, is to remember the future of human freedom beyond suffering.⁴⁷⁰ It

⁴⁶⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 124.

⁴⁶⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 109.

⁴⁷⁰"We remember the future of our freedom in the memory of his suffering" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 111).

therefore has a "future content"⁴⁷¹ and, as such, does not create "'a false consciousness' of our past, and an opiate of our present,"⁴⁷² as other forms of memory do. It is not a bourgeois memory, "superstitious and left to the private whim of the individual."⁴⁷³ Rather, it is a memory which stands "outside the calculations of our technico-pragmatic reason,"⁴⁷⁴ establishing what Metz calls "a kind of anti-history, in which the vanquished and destroyed alternatives will also be taken into account: an understanding of history ex memoria passionis as a history of the vanquished."⁴⁷⁵

In summary, Metz rejects modern emancipative theories because they locate suffering within the context of a larger whole, therefore failing to recognize a fundamental fact about suffering within historical life, a fact which an apocalyptic theology of history recognizes:

[that] no improvement of the condition of freedom in the world is able to do justice to the dead or effect a transformation of the injustice and the non-sense of past suffering. Any emancipative history of freedom in which the whole history of suffering is suppressed or supposedly superseded is a truncated and abstract history of freedom

⁴⁷¹See Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 110, and p. 118, n. 6, where he refers to H. Marcuse's One Dimensional Man (New York, 1968).

⁴⁷²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 109.

⁴⁷³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 110.

⁴⁷⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 110.

⁴⁷⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 111.

whose progress is really a march into inhumanity.⁴⁷⁶

d. Modern Theology and Suffering

While Metz thinks suffering, guilt, and responsibility have been underdeveloped themes within bourgeois theories of emancipation, he fears the same has happened within Christian soteriologies. In other words, he worries that Christian theology, particularly its soteriologies, has likewise succumbed to the bourgeois understanding of history and therefore unconsciously appropriating the myth of evolutionary logic. By inadvertently interpreting history within the framework of nature, modern theology also diminishes the importance of suffering within its self-understanding and praxis. It ought therefore to be suspicious and critical of Christian theories of redemption which "offer definitive meaning for the unexpiated sufferings of the past"⁴⁷⁷ and, in doing so, deny the uniqueness of Christianity's own history of freedom. Such theories, most often unconsciously, deny the fact that God's eschatological history of freedom is a history of suffering: that Jesus' history of freedom involves his descent into hell and his suffering solidarity⁴⁷⁸ with those

⁴⁷⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 129.

⁴⁷⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 129.

⁴⁷⁸Solidarity has future, past, and present dimensions. It is a "forward solidarity" with those generations yet to come, a present solidarity with those suffering today, and a "backward solidarity" with those who have suffered and died in the past. Concerning solidarity with present sufferers and

who suffer and die in history.⁴⁷⁹

For Metz, the uniqueness of a Christian history of freedom is that it is a history of suffering, a history interpreted from the perspective of an apocalyptic understanding of time as suffering, rather than from the perspective of a bourgeois understanding of time as endless. The Christian view of history should not allow concrete suffering to be swallowed up by the time of nature, as it has been in secular theories of emancipation, as well as in some Christian theories. Humanity's history of freedom, and the suffering therein, should not be equated with nature's timeless evolutionary continuum. If it is equated, then every struggle for and attainment of freedom will be overcome by the meaninglessness of timeless evolution. As Metz puts it, when the history of freedom is permitted to be reduced to the level of natural history, "history...aborts itself [and] the historical end of freedom [becomes]...the apotheosis of nature."⁴⁸⁰

those yet to come, it is a solidarity of praxis, working for the alleviation of suffering, present and future. Concerning solidarity with those who have suffered in the past, it is a "practical solidarity of memory," which views history from the perspective of its victims, not its victors. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 130.

⁴⁷⁹ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 128.

⁴⁸⁰ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 129.

(i) Relating redemption and emancipatory history (as a history of suffering)

Modern theology's adoption of the bourgeois understanding of history, as a comprehensible totality, significantly affects the way it understands the relationship between redemption and emancipation. By examining how modern soteriologies relate redemption and emancipation, Metz hopes to expose how Christianity has succumbed to the danger of offering yet another overarching theoretical answer to "the non-identity of the history of suffering."⁴⁸¹ Modern Christianity, along with secular theories of history, incorrectly assume that the enormity of public suffering can be represented within overarching theories of history. In doing so, they fail to recognize that theoretical historical interpretation is unable to capture the full reality of this suffering. They are blind to the fact that events like the extermination of six million Jews, or the death by starvation of millions of faceless third-world persons, cannot be appropriated into theories of history without doing injustice to the faceless victims of history. Inevitably, the injustice of forgetfulness follows on the heels of every attempt to express objectively, quantitatively, or theoretically, the horror of mass human suffering.⁴⁸² I turn now to Metz's

⁴⁸¹ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 133.

⁴⁸² Rebecca Chopp puts it well when she says: "Events of massive public suffering have no identity or completed meaning in history; they cannot be fully explained, understood, or represented. The non-identity character of suffering means

attempt to connect Christianity's apocalyptic understanding of history, as suffering, to soteriological assertions about the achievements of Christ's redemptive action. The question Metz is asking is: How can Christian soteriology relate the promise of salvation to the reality of suffering without doing injustice to either history as suffering or to God's redemptive activity?

Metz is guided in his attempt to relate redemption and emancipation (humanity's history of freedom as a history of suffering) by the awareness of the danger of stressing one side of the relationship over the other. On the one hand, he wants to avoid emphasizing redemption at the expense of the history of suffering. He does not want to repeat the mistakes of the past by creating yet another false picture of God, where God becomes "an ahistorical and ever suspiciously mythological being over the heads of a mankind plundered,

that suffering cannot be forgotten or ignored in history's interpretation or construction; once progress has shoved the masses of humanity onto life's margins, history is broken, its end forever in question, and its purpose lost in suspension" (Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 2). The philosophical background to the principle of non-identity can be found in the Frankfurt School's attack on the identity theory of Hegel. Hegel incorrectly believed that history guarantees the identity between reason and reality, historical suffering and theories of history. In reference to Adorno, Buck-Morss says: "This total rejection of the Hegelian concept of history as the identity of subject and object, the rational and real (indeed, skepticism regarding all progress-interpretations of history) was a fundamental point of agreement between Adorno and his closest intellectual colleagues. It defined the limits of their willingness to see Marx through Hegelian glasses" (Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics, p. 47).

humiliated and destroyed by the history of suffering."⁴⁸³ Such a God would be just another alibi-subject of history, at whose feet would be placed, in a new and ingenious way, the responsibility for human suffering.⁴⁸⁴ On the other hand, he is equally aware of the danger of over-emphasizing humanity's history of suffering to the degree that history becomes simply unredeemed and unredeemable suffering, and no more.

Furthermore, in his attempt to develop a post-bourgeois Christian soteriology, Metz tries to avoid an irrational dichotomizing⁴⁸⁵ of humanity's history of freedom. He does not want to duplicate the a-historical dualism present within many previous attempts at reconciling redemption and suffering, a dualism which posits not one history but two histories, one belonging to persons and the other to an abstract totality. He thinks previous emancipative theories, Christian and non-Christian alike, have asserted the existence of an abstract universal "historico-philosophical totality"⁴⁸⁶ and, in doing so, have given in to the "totality aspiration

⁴⁸³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 130.

⁴⁸⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 126. This raises the question of how God can be thought of as something other than another alibi-subject of history who exonerates persons of responsibility and guilt within the history of suffering. How can God be thought of so that he is not simply another agent of a hidden totality (developing and evolving) over and above history. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 126.

⁴⁸⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 124-127.

⁴⁸⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 125.

at the origin of the modern history of emancipation."⁴⁸⁷ They have, in other words, tried to answer the theodicy question theoretically, developing more elaborate theories which posit the existence of a larger totality within which humanity's emancipative history and suffering are then interpreted and given meaning.⁴⁸⁸

Theologically, Metz rejects all purely argumentative soteriologies⁴⁸⁹ which explain humanity's history of suffering in terms of a comprehensive understanding of history. He gives two reasons for his rejection of their claim to know history as a whole, or history in itself. First, he believes that speculative argumentation is inadequate to speak about this totality. And second, he thinks that the full nature of this totality has yet to be revealed. Put simply, modern soteriologies are inadequate because they are idealistic in nature. They make the basic assumption, as the Enlightenment did, that history is comprehensible as a whole, and that it has an innate direction and purpose conceived of either in terms of ontology or teleology, being or becoming.

What disturbs Metz the most is the effect these

⁴⁸⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 122.

⁴⁸⁸Metz says his theology is an attempt to offer a "religious-political treatment of the so-called theodicy question," and that preoccupation with this question stems from his traumatic experiences of war as a youth. Metz, Unterbrechungen, p. 21. For a vivid telling of these war experiences see Metz, "Streuungen," pp.251-253.

⁴⁸⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 124.

idealistic theologies of history have on an understanding and appreciation of concrete human suffering. By claiming to know the essence or direction or overall goal of history, they have little difficulty neatly reconciling human suffering and Christian redemption. In bringing about this theoretical reconciliation, they are guilty of what Metz calls a "triumphalism of being and becoming."⁴⁹⁰ They claim victory over suffering by developing "a triumphalist metaphysics of salvation."⁴⁹¹

Metz thus rejects all teleological projections and ontological generalizations⁴⁹² that claim to understand history as a whole. He opposes all idealistic systematizations of human history and suffering which claim to have found a place and reason for suffering. Any attempt at theoretical reconciliation degenerates, he believes, into "a bad ontology of human passion" which is always "below the status of human suffering."⁴⁹³

Over and against Christian attempts to reconcile suffering and God's redemptive activity, Metz points to the insights of Christian apocalypticism, which holds that no such theoretical reconciliation is possible. The apocalyptic

⁴⁹⁰Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 218.

⁴⁹¹Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 20.

⁴⁹²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108.

⁴⁹³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 107.

understanding of history is that it very simply is a time of suffering, without an explicitly recognizable goal or essence. There is no theoretically construable meaning to the history of suffering apart from the "end-time meaning of history."⁴⁹⁴ History has no goal nor essence. What it does have, though, is a future,⁴⁹⁵ a future which is a time beyond suffering, and which is brought to awareness in the midst of suffering and the remembrance of suffering. Suffering and the memory of suffering act, therefore, as "a negative consciousness of future freedom" from suffering. This awareness, in turn, acts as "a stimulus to overcome suffering within the framework of that freedom."⁴⁹⁶ The future of suffering is thus the proleptically anticipated freedom from suffering which is realized in moments of suffering. Only within the context of concrete actions of liberative action, by and on behalf of the poor, and apart from expounding more elaborate theories of reconciliation between human suffering and a larger totality, can hope be developed in a reality beyond suffering. If there is meaning to suffering, it is not discoverable through theoretical constructs, but through the concrete praxis of the imitation of the suffering which Christ went through on behalf of the poor and oppressed.

⁴⁹⁴Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 218.

⁴⁹⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108.

⁴⁹⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108.

Metz's proposition, therefore, is that present suffering and the remembered history of suffering, and not any abstract totality, should serve as the authentically Christian "medium for a redeeming and emancipating history of freedom."⁴⁹⁷ Only by focusing on humanity's concrete history of suffering can Christianity break "the spell of emancipative totality which seems to haunt the modern history of freedom."⁴⁹⁸

This disapproval of modern Christianity's attempt to reconcile the Christian promises and the history of suffering, is made more concrete when Metz takes aim at three prominent modern Christian soteriologies. He believes that each, in turn, has succumbed to the myth of an emancipative totality and therefore been seduced by a "triumphalist metaphysics of salvation."⁴⁹⁹ The three soteriologies he looks at are those developed by his European colleagues, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, and Karl Rahner.

(ii) Metz's critique of Pannenberg's, Moltmann's, and Rahner's soteriologies

By way of introduction, let me further clarify the context out of which Metz's critique of these soteriologies arises. In brief, he reprimands them for inadvertently

⁴⁹⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 123.

⁴⁹⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 122.

⁴⁹⁹Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 20.

contributing to, rather than combatting, misunderstandings concerning the notions of history, Christian personhood, and the task of theology.

First, he points out that the way they conceive of history is incompatible with apocalyptic Christianity's insight that the history of freedom is at the same time a history of suffering. All three succumb to what he calls the "spell of emancipative totality," a spell which the modern notion of history is under generally. Because they have uncritically appropriated the Enlightenment understanding of history, which assumes that history is understandable as a whole, they further believe that humanity's history of suffering and the Christian message of redemption can be reconciled theoretically. They assume, along with the Enlightenment, that the universal meaning of history is discernable and therefore can be interpreted within Christian categories. In other words, they assume that history has either an essence or an innate purpose and aim,⁵⁰⁰ an interpretation which is idealistic in nature, as is the

⁵⁰⁰Metz's position is that meaning in history does not come from a preconceived historical totality. To the contrary, Christianity asserts that meaning is attainable, partially, in the midst of suffering. Full meaning will be revealed only at the end of history. Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 218.

Enlightenment's.⁵⁰¹ Given the assumption that history has a purpose and aim, it falls to the task of Christian soteriology, then, to explain to modernity, ever more intelligibly, precisely how history is unfolding as it should from a Christian perspective.

The second misguided assumption that these soteriologies make concerns the nature of Christian personhood.⁵⁰² It is that the essence of Christian personhood has already been revealed in history and therefore only needs to be rediscovered again and again. What they fail to recognize, however, is that authentic Christian personhood may yet be emerging within history. Their understanding of Christian personhood, therefore, is idealistic in nature, in the same way that their understanding of history is.

And the third assumption these soteriologies make, which follows from the above two, is that the present historical crisis of Christianity concerns the content of faith. The task of theology, therefore, is to develop greater speculative precision and acumen in explaining more clearly

⁵⁰¹An idealistic appraisal of history holds that "the idea of a meaning of history is not a category of practical reason, but (following idealistic tradition) a category of reflection" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 157).

⁵⁰²Perhaps the most decisive question for Metz is this: "Can there be another point of departure for Christian theology apart from the one that insists that the universal meaning of history and historical identity of Christianity is already established?" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 163).

this Christian content to modern persons.⁵⁰³ Its task is to develop ever more evocative and creative "theological theories of secularization"⁵⁰⁴ in order to reconcile the fact of Christ's redemption and the achievements of the modern history of emancipation. What theology fails to recognize, however, is that the recent history of emancipation is dialectically constituted. Modern theology, Metz believes, has forgotten the insight offered to it by apocalyptic Christianity: that humanity's recent history of emancipation, like all of history, is a history of suffering.

The context of Metz's critique of Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Rahner is illumined even further if we recognize four distinct dangers which he thinks confront modern Christianity. These dangers arise out of Christianity's ongoing attempt to relate to Judaism, especially its struggle to incorporate, meaningfully, the experience of the Holocaust into its own self-understanding and praxis. They are, as Metz puts it, "constantly recurring and therefore quasi-endemic dangers within Christianity and its theology."⁵⁰⁵ To varying degrees, he thinks that the soteriologies of Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Rahner have succumbed to these dangers.

⁵⁰³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 76.

⁵⁰⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 157.

⁵⁰⁵Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 23.

The first danger is Christianity's tendency to be "purely 'affirmative'," speaking as if it has all the answers and few questions.⁵⁰⁶ As purely affirmative, it has tended to be a "religion of conquerors," with a christology of conquest generating a sense of apathy and insensitivity towards the broader history of human suffering. As a religion whose adherents see themselves as victorious over life's suffering, Christianity finds it easy to connect the atoning power of Christ's suffering to the suffering of its followers. It has far greater trouble applying this atonement to the suffering of those who stand outside of Christianity in the so-called profane arena of history. Metz's question to modern Christianity is this:

Has not our attitude as Christians to this suffering often been one of unbelievable insensitivity and indifference - as though we believed this suffering fell in some kind of purely profane sector, as though we could understand ourselves as the great conquerors in relation to it, as though this suffering had no atoning power, and as though our lives were not part of the burden placed upon it?⁵⁰⁷

The second danger is modern Christianity's tendency to obstruct or repress the apocalyptic-messianic wisdom of Judaism.⁵⁰⁸ This invariably happens whenever Christianity is

⁵⁰⁶Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 23.

⁵⁰⁷Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 24.

⁵⁰⁸Metz characterizes his theology as an attempt to break free from the dualism inherent in Greek-Hellenistic Christianity and to bring to light the more historically engaging Jewish wisdom latent within it. Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 212.

triumphalistic about its claim to salvation through Christ. In its triumphalism, it fails to recognize how messianic expectation can be a "principle of theological knowledge,"⁵⁰⁹ that is, how God can be known most intimately by those who suffer and await the coming of the Messiah. Jewish messianic trust, wherein God is known in moments of suffering and in anticipation of the Messiah's return, is quickly replaced by a euphoric triumphalism about meaning within history. Metz worries that this triumphalism blinds Christians to the existence of "radical disruptions and catastrophes within meaning."⁵¹⁰ It causes them to interpret history with little regard to the enormous suffering which is a key part of it. Metz's second question to modern Christianity concerns the implications of Christological triumphalism and the subsequent elimination of messianic consciousness. He asks: Has not Christological triumphalism created "something like a typically Christian incapacity for dismay in the face of disasters? And does this not apply with particular intensity to the average Christian (and theological) attitude toward Auschwitz?"⁵¹¹

The third danger, and the most critical for Metz, is modern Christianity's tendency to interiorize and

⁵⁰⁹ Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 24.

⁵¹⁰ Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 25.

⁵¹¹ Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 25.

individualize the messianic message of salvation. Christianity avoids conflict with existing political structures, and the suffering they may cause, by silencing the socio-political dimensions of its eschatological message. It accommodates its understanding of salvation to the exigencies of the political powers of the day, thereby exchanging its clearly stated preference for the poor and oppressed, expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, for the stability and comfort of political and social accommodation.⁵¹² Metz's third question to modern Christianity is this: "Is it not the case that we Christians can recognize that concrete destiny which Jesus foretold for his disciples more clearly in the history of suffering undergone by the Jewish people than in the actual history of Christianity?"⁵¹³

Finally, the fourth danger is modern Christianity's tendency to forfeit the practical core of its message.

⁵¹²Metz says that it was his awareness of Christianity's accommodation to political powers, through interiorization and individualization of the Christian message, which compelled him to "project and work on a 'political theology' with its program of deprivatization (directed more toward the synoptics than to Pauline traditions), to work against just these dangers of an extreme interiorization of Christian salvation and its attendant danger of Christianity's uncritical reconciliation with prevailing political powers. This theology argues that it is precisely the consistently nonpolitical interpretation of Christianity, and the nondialectical interiorizing and individualizing of its doctrines, that have continually led to Christianity taking on an uncritical, as it were, postfactum political form" (Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 27).

⁵¹³Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 26.

Repeatedly, concern for preservation of doctrinal purity replaces what Metz believes is the essence of the Christian faith: "the messianic praxis of discipleship, conversion, love, and suffering."⁵¹⁴ This messianic praxis is replaced by a bourgeois Christianity which only believes in discipleship rather than living it.⁵¹⁵ It only believes in conversion, love, and suffering, but "continues...untroubled believing and praying with [its]...back to Auschwitz."⁵¹⁶ Metz's fourth question to modern Christianity is: Why does it seem that post-Auschwitz Christianity, especially in Germany, remains "incapable of real mourning and true penance," and why have the churches not resisted "society's massive repression of

⁵¹⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 27.

⁵¹⁵Metz believes that Christian discipleship is bourgeois when it is confined to the private realm of the immediate family or the larger parish community. Christian acts of selfless-love, active compassion, loyalty, gratitude, friendliness, and grief, are understood, solely, as family acts. Love, as comprehensive justice and applicable to one's enemy, has been all but forgotten. When discipleship is attempted beyond the family, it is crippled by the use of money as its means. Money becomes, as Metz say, "the substitute for compassion" (Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 7). It is the sterile way for bourgeois discipleship to mediate between the Christian virtues of love and compassion and societal suffering. It is the "quasi-sacrament of solidarity and sympathy." And it takes the place of the messianic considerations of political and social solidarity, political education, and practical social and political change. Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 8.

⁵¹⁶Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 27.

guilt in these postwar years?"⁵¹⁷ Metz's analysis and critique of bourgeois consciousness and the evolutionary logic operative therein is his attempt to answer just this question.

Having established the larger context for Metz's critique of modern Christianity, I now move to his critical analysis of the soteriologies developed by his German colleagues Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Rahner. Each is faulted for diminishing the importance of suffering by reconciling it too quickly to an overarching totality of meaning.

Metz's Critique of Pannenberg. Metz worries that Pannenberg, by means of an idealistic notion of history, has too quickly reconciled historical suffering and the redemption initiated by Christ. He thinks Pannenberg's notion of history is shaped too much by Enlightenment idealism and not enough by apocalyptic Christianity, a suspicion which is verified when one examines how he understands history ontologically, as Hegel understood it,⁵¹⁸ as a process with an already revealed essence and meaning, and not apocalyptically, as a history of suffering.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁷Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 28.

⁵¹⁸Metz describes Pannenberg's theology as an "'idealistic'...ontology of history and meaning that is strongly oriented towards Hegel" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 157).

⁵¹⁹Metz is not assuming here that understanding history ontologically and understanding it within apocalyptic categories, as a history of suffering, are necessarily incompatible. What he worries about are the unrecognized and

Metz points to two negative consequences which follow from Pannenberg's Enlightenment understanding of history. First, he thinks it leads to a relativizing of the importance of humanity's history of suffering by placing it within an already known historical totality. And second, it leads to an understanding of the Christ-event as merely "the anticipation of...total meaning in history."⁵²⁰ Christ becomes the proleptically realized goal and aim of an historical process which is already known from beginning to end.

The danger of such an interpretation, Metz suggests, is that suffering is diminished in importance by virtue of it being interpreted as simply a part of a Christ-directed historical process. Catastrophes, faceless sufferings, and pain become mere events within the historical process, and history becomes a history that has suffering but not a history that is suffering. Historical time becomes the time of an evolutionary continuum and not the apocalyptic time of imminent interruptions and catastrophes. The assumption therefore abounds that history is caught within a "rigid world pattern"⁵²¹ in which there is a "consciousness of the time of catastrophes," but not a "consciousness of the catastrophic

unintended consequences of interpreting history ontologically. The major consequence, in spite perhaps of Pannenberg's intentions to the contrary, is that the status of suffering, as a primary feature of historical life, is diminished.

⁵²⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 55.

⁵²¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 175.

nature of time."⁵²²

Metz disapproves of Pannenberg's theology, therefore, because of the way it attributes to history a "previously conceived totality of meaning."⁵²³ By interpreting history as "a movement of the so-called objective spirit,"⁵²⁴ it disguises the uniquely human destiny of history as a history of suffering. History is no longer the occasion of free human actions, the consequences of which are suffering, but more the logical and uninterrupted unfolding of the objective spirit of God.⁵²⁵

Opposed to this theoretical reconciling of redemption and suffering is Metz's assertion that the ultimate meaning of history has yet to be revealed, and that both ends of history have yet to come into view.⁵²⁶ According to

⁵²²Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 176-177.

⁵²³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 55. "According to Pannenberg, praxis is of secondary importance and subordinate or else it is in danger of becoming a praxis that is oriented towards a previously conceived totality of meaning" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 55).

⁵²⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 162.

⁵²⁵Metz asks: "But does history really follow its course in this sense? And, if it is really uninterrupted in its course, does it then (as Max Horkheimer, for example, correctly asked) fulfill its human destiny?" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 55).

⁵²⁶"Those who suggest these approaches have the course of history in view. Because they view it from both ends, however, there is no need to enter it....History is made into a movement of the so-called objective spirit which we have already seen through. And theology is made a kind of information service for world history, but one that is consulted less and less by the public" (Metz, Faith in History

apocalyptic Christianity, historical meaning is not, as Pannenberg suggests, an already pre-established given which theology must explain ever more clearly. Rather, meaning is tentatively evoked in the praxis of a discipleship of imitating Christ in his life of solidarity with the poor and suffering. Metz writes:

The ultimately promised saving meaning of history is...disclosed as it were while the course of that history is being run. It is...evoked, remembered and narrated (for all men) as a practical experience of meaning in the middle of our historical life.⁵²⁷

Historical meaning is therefore always a tentatively evoked product of participation in the human history of suffering and, as such, cannot be a solidified object of theological reflection. It is a meaning evoked by praxis, and thus always threatened by fears, catastrophes, and interruptions. As threatened meaning, it is always in need of a "hope provided with expectation."⁵²⁸ Pannenberg therefore diminishes the importance of apocalyptic expectation by assuming that the completed meaning of history has already been revealed.⁵²⁹

Finally, Metz worries that Pannenberg's totalizing

and Society, p. 162).

⁵²⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 162.

⁵²⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 162.

⁵²⁹"Wolfhart Pannenberg's influential ontology of history and meaning...is strongly oriented towards Hegel." In it, "the idea of a meaning of history is not a category of practical reason, but (following idealistic traditions) a category of reflection" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 157).

tendency, in positing a totality of meaning to history, produces apathy among Christians in the same way as evolutionary logic does among modern persons generally. If the totality of history's meaning has already been revealed, might not this yet be another reason for Christians to disengage themselves from the world, socially and politically? Might not historical meaning be viewed as "'hopelessly' total,"⁵³⁰ with all the wrinkles and contradictions of historical life ironed out, therefore inducing Christians to remain passive in the face of historical suffering?⁵³¹

Metz's Critique of Moltmann. We recall that Metz's point of departure for his critique of modern soteriologies generally is his belief that "a conceptual and argumentative mediation and reconciliation between real and effective redemption, on the one hand, and the human history of suffering on the other, ... [seems] to be excluded."⁵³² He thinks it is conceptually and argumentatively not possible to reconcile humanity's history of suffering and the history of redemption. Inevitably, the suffering of real persons within real historical situations is subordinated to a larger overarching totality. Historical suffering becomes only a

⁵³⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 162.

⁵³¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 162.

⁵³²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 132.

part of a greater whole. This was precisely Metz's worry in the case of Pannenberg, who tended to equate humanity's history of suffering with that negativity, in the form of concrete suffering, found within the historical process dialectically understood.

Metz fears that Moltmann engages in the same sort of theoretical reconciliation by identifying humanity's history of suffering with that negativity found within the "dialectics of the Trinitarian history of God."⁵³³ Here, historical suffering "becomes 'suffering between God and God'."⁵³⁴ Suffering is taken up into the Trinitarian history of God

⁵³³ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 132. Metz criticizes Trinitarian soteriologies generally, not only Moltmann's. Others mentioned are those developed by Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel, Karl Rahner (on the unity of the immanent and the economic trinity), Hans Küng, and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Metz thinks Urs von Balthasar offers "the most impressive and forceful considerations" on the topic. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 132.

⁵³⁴ Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 131-132. See also Metz, "Unterwegs," pp. 220, where he expresses the doubt that one can know about suffering within God. His preference is to speak only of suffering by God. He fears that the former betrays the importance of human suffering by leading to "a gnostic immortalizing of suffering within God." He is concerned also that Moltmann's Christology does not express clearly enough the fact that knowledge of Christ is a practical knowledge gained through the concrete praxis of suffering solidarity. In another place, Metz writes: "Christ must always be thought of in such a way that he is never merely thought of. Christology does not simply lecture about following Christ but feeds itself, for its own truth's sake, on the practice of following Christ. Essentially it expresses a practical knowledge of following Christ" (J.B. Metz, Followers of Christ. The Religious Life and the Church [London: Burns and Oates, 1978], pp. 39-40. German original: Zeit der Orden? Zur Mystik und Politik der Nachfolge [Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1977]).

through God's self-emptying (kenosis) on the Cross of Jesus.⁵³⁵
 The suffering of the Son and the suffering of the world thus find meaning within the inner workings of the Trinity.

Metz is concerned that Moltmann's Trinitarian soteriology, like Pannenberg's theology of history, may diminish the importance of historical suffering. It may divert attention away from the fact of the negativity and non-identity of concrete suffering in the way it employs a "dialectically mediated concept of suffering"⁵³⁶ which interprets the history of suffering within the context of a Trinitarian dynamism. Meaning is depicted as uninterrupted and secured for all persons in all situations.⁵³⁷

Metz argues, to the contrary, that it is not possible to reconcile redemption and the history of suffering by means of such "subtle and speculative"⁵³⁸ argumentation. "Purely argumentative"⁵³⁹ soteriologies do not work because whenever redemption and suffering are theoretically reconciled there takes place a dialectical bypassing of the concrete

⁵³⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 132.

⁵³⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 132.

⁵³⁷Whereas Pannenberg identifies the non-identity of humanity's concrete history of suffering with that "negativity found in a dialectical understanding of the historical process" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 132), Moltmann equates humanity's history of suffering with that negativity found in the Trinitarian history of God.

⁵³⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 132.

⁵³⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 124.

historicity of human suffering.⁵⁴⁰

The reason, therefore, that Metz is so adamantly against the attempt to harmonize redemption and suffering, theoretically, is because of his desire not to ignore humanity's concrete history of suffering, particularly the suffering which took place within the Jewish Holocaust. The suffering of Auschwitz, for example, makes impossible further attempts at theoretical reconciliation of redemption and suffering. All attempts at reconciliation, past and present, are to be rejected because inevitably they ignore the "testimony of the Jewish history of suffering"⁵⁴¹ by trying to answer the theodicy question with their backs to Auschwitz. Metz thus asks:

Who, if anyone at all, has the right to give [an answer to the theodicy question]...? As far as I am concerned, only the Jew threatened by death with all the children in Auschwitz has the right to say it - only he alone. There is no other 'identification' of God - neither as sublime as for instance in J. Moltmann nor as reserved and modest as in the case of D. Sölle - here, as far as I am concerned, no Christian-theological identification of God is possible. If at all, this can be done only by the Jew imprisoned together with his God in the abyss - it can be done only by him who himself finds himself in that hell 'where God and humankind full of terror look into each other's eyes' (Elie Wiesel). Only he, I think, can alone speak of a 'God on the gallows,' not we Christians outside of Auschwitz who sent the Jew into such a situation of

⁵⁴⁰ Metz believes that only memory and narrative can adequately mediate redemption and the history of suffering. Only a memorative and narrative soteriology, not a more theoretical and speculative one, can do justice to the fact of Christ's redemptive presence within the midst of humanity's concrete history of suffering. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 133.

⁵⁴¹ Metz, "Facing the Jews," p. 30.

despair or at least left him in it. Here, for me, there is no 'sense' to which we could testify without the Jew. Without the Jews in the hell of Auschwitz, we are condemned to Non-sense, to God-lessness.⁵⁴²

There is then a "quasi-salvation historical dependence"⁵⁴³ of Christianity on the Jewish history of suffering, in that post-Auschwitz Christians are now dependent on the Jews for their witness as to where God is in the midst of suffering. Theoretical harmonization of God and suffering is no longer possible apart from the Jews and Auschwitz, apart from the experience of the apparent complete absence of God in the face of the terror, suffering, and death of the Holocaust.⁵⁴⁴

The only way open for post-Auschwitz theology to bring redemption and suffering together is by means of narrative and practical soteriologies, not by argumentative and theoretical ones. Such soteriology would be based on the recognition that knowledge of Christ's salvation is attained, most clearly, in acts of discipleship and in the remembered stories of discipleship,⁵⁴⁵ that is, in the praxis of the

⁵⁴²Metz, "Facing the Jews," pp. 29-30.

⁵⁴³Metz, "Facing the Jews," p. 30.

⁵⁴⁴Metz thinks theology is dependent on the Jewish experience of suffering for a resolution of the theodicy question. The Jewish history of suffering points to the fact that suffering is itself the locus for the experience of God, especially as it is an experience of God "on the gallows" (Metz, "Facing the Jews," p. 29).

⁵⁴⁵For a description of Christian discipleship after Auschwitz see Metz, "Facing the Jews," pp. 31-33. As a "Jewish-formed synoptic manner of believing" (Metz, "Facing the Jews," p. 32), discipleship takes on the characteristic of "being on the way." It involves the willingness to fight

suffering imitation of Christ. By putting emphasis on the narration of knowledge gained through concrete discipleship, future soteriologies could avoid making further dangerous and presumptuous noetic assertions about the overall workings of God's historical activities, assertions which inadvertently serve only to silence the inherent risk, danger, and threat involved in imitating the suffering of Christ on behalf of the poor within the horizon of apocalyptic expectation.⁵⁴⁶ Such assertions only threaten to make superfluous the hope-filled yearning for the interruption of God's future as the promised future of humanity's history of suffering.

Metz's Critique of Rahner. Finally, we turn to Metz's critique of Rahner's soteriology, which he thinks takes shape within the context of a transcendental-idealistic theological paradigm.⁵⁴⁷ As a student and longtime friend of Rahner's, his

against political and social prejudices and against "the apotheosis of hatred and banality in the world" (Metz, "Facing the Jews," p. 33).

⁵⁴⁶For a discussion of the importance of "danger" within Christian discipleship, see Metz, "Unterwegs," pp. 225 ff..

⁵⁴⁷Metz argues that the Transcendental-idealistic paradigm is one of three models operating within modern Catholicism. The other two are the neo-Scholastic, and post-idealistic. He sees his fundamental theology as an effort to give formal expression to this post-idealistic model which he thinks is emerging within the third-world churches today. See "Competing Models," in "Unterwegs," pp. 209-212, especially pp. 230 and 231, n. 3, where he gives specific criteria for what constitutes a theological model.

For a description of the transcendental experience which is at the heart of transcendental theology, see Karl

critique is offered with respect and admiration for Rahner as a person and a theologian. He commends Rahner for breathing new life into the age old doctrines of the church, bringing them into creative and productive confrontation with a modern society increasingly devoid of religious sensibility.⁵⁴⁸ In fact, Metz sees his own theological program as evolving in dialectical tension with Rahner's. He says: "The questions of a political theology of the subject have partially been evoked by Rahner's theology, but they have remained captive in contradiction in it."⁵⁴⁹

Metz's theology, therefore, is a "safeguarding as well

Rahner, "Man as Transcendent Being," in Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity. trans. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), pp. 31-35. Rahner writes: Transcendental experience is "not the experience of some definite, particular objective thing which is experienced alongside of other objects. It is rather a basic mode of being which is prior to and permeates every objective experience. We must emphasize again and again that the transcendence meant here is not the thematically conceptualized 'concept' of transcendence in which transcendence is reflected upon objectively. It is rather the a priori openness of the subject to being as such, which is present precisely when a person experiences himself as involved in the multiplicity of cares and concerns and fears and hopes of his everyday world" (Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 35).

⁵⁴⁸Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 211. See also Metz, Den Glauben lernen und lehren, where Metz praises Rahner for retrieving and breathing new life into the doctrines of the church with a view to restoring the contemporary relevancy of the Catholic tradition. He praises him for being an advocate and protector of the church while trying to renew it. Metz says his own theology aims more at a radical transformation of Christianity and the church than does Rahner's. He is concerned more with transformation than with restoration.

⁵⁴⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 64.

as a critical productive revision of the transcendental paradigm."⁵⁵⁰ While Rahner's theology is a critical corrective to neo-scholasticism, Metz's "post-idealistic theology"⁵⁵¹ is a critical corrective to Rahner's. Theology, Metz asserts, remains free from "the suspicion of being tautological, [only] as long as it [is]...a corrective,...as long as it [is]...engaged in controversy with a theological opponent."⁵⁵² Metz is thus bold enough to "go emphatically against" Rahner's teaching, while at the same time remaining open to learning from it.⁵⁵³

To avoid the impression that his political theology has developed in total opposition to Rahner's, an assertion which he rejects,⁵⁵⁴ Metz aims his critique at a "form of

⁵⁵⁰Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 211. Out of continued respect and admiration for Rahner and his theology, Metz often holds back from direct criticism, posing his concerns in the form of critical questions. Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 211, and Faith in History and Society, p. 159.

⁵⁵¹See Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 211, & 230, n. 4, and Faith in History and Society, pp. 53-54, where he characterizes his own theology as an attempt to develop an understanding of theological reason different from that developed by idealism.

⁵⁵²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 13, n. 15. Metz thinks Rahner's theology ran into crisis when it lost its neo-scholastic opponent, when neo-scholasticism collapsed in exhaustion into "the strong arms of transcendental theology" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 13, n. 15).

⁵⁵³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 55.

⁵⁵⁴In private conversation with Metz and his assistants Peter Rottländer and Ottmar John (Münster, July 12, 1986), I was counselled not to contrast Metz and Rahner along the lines of the bourgeois and post-bourgeois distinction. Nowhere, Metz said, does he call Rahner's theology bourgeois. Rather,

transcendental Christianity."⁵⁵⁵ He thinks this type of Christianity is based on idealistic "philosophical and theological assumptions and assertions"⁵⁵⁶ which cripple its ability to deal with major challenges confronting the church today.⁵⁵⁷ As I will show, he is especially concerned about the theory of anonymous Christianity and the debilitating effect it might have on Christian praxis.

Metz lists three challenges in relation to which transcendental theology tends to lose countenance: 1. the Marxist ideology critique along with its emphasis on persons as historical agents, 2. Auschwitz, and 3. the shift from a Eurocentric to third-world polycentric church of the poor. I will look at these in more detail and then discuss why, according to Metz, transcendental theology is badly equipped to respond to them.

First, Metz finds transcendental Christianity lacking in its ability to meet two facets of Marxist criticism. On the one hand, there is the Marxist ideology critique which

Rahner's theology encompasses all three theological models: neo-Scholastic, Transcendental, and post-Idealistic. According to Metz, Rahner's theology is a bridge between all three and, in fact, contains significant post-bourgeois elements.

⁵⁵⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 160.

⁵⁵⁶Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 212.

⁵⁵⁷Metz thinks that these crises are forcing Christians to define their form of personhood over and against a personhood shaped by a growing world-wide consumerist culture. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 156.

asks the question of the relationship between knowledge and human interest within Christian theology. Marxism admonishes Christianity to look at the socio-political agendas which are hidden in its theologies. On the other hand, there is the Marxist assertion that the world is a human historical project.⁵⁵⁸ This invites Christianity to rid itself of its other-worldly tendencies and to offer its message in the service of humanity's historical project. It calls upon Christianity to take seriously its claim to uniqueness as an historical religion, to affirm persons as agents of history, and to attack systems of understanding which attribute the agency of history to a larger totality. It challenges theology to question its basic assumption that there are really two histories: one sacred and one profane.

Second, Metz finds transcendental Christianity lacking in its ability to meet the challenge which Auschwitz poses to modern theology and culture.⁵⁵⁹ Metz thinks Auschwitz is special because it forces the question of how Christianity and modern culture generally understand the role of history and the past. It forces the question of how an event such as the extermination of millions of innocent people could play such a negligible role in the religious, social, and political

⁵⁵⁸Metz, "Unterwegs," pp. 212-217.

⁵⁵⁹Metz, "Unterwegs," pp. 217-220.

determinations of the present.⁵⁶⁰ Auschwitz also points to the detrimental role that idealistic philosophical assumptions play within modern theology. In particular, it ought to call into question modern theology's appropriation of the Enlightenment understanding of history: that history is indomitable in its forward moving progress yet encased within the timelessness of a larger cosmos. It is this understanding of history, Metz suggests, that has allowed Auschwitz, and the past generally, to be forgotten. By interpreting history within the categories of teleology and ontology,⁵⁶¹ idealism has destroyed the modern person's capacity to remember and to remain in solidarity with the suffering of the past. And it has destroyed Christianity's own peculiar understanding of history as catastrophic, yet apocalyptically redemptive.

Third, Metz finds transcendental Christianity lacking in its ability to deal with the challenge posed by the emergence of "a socially divided and culturally polycentric world."⁵⁶² No longer is it possible to see the poor as mere recipients of charity stemming from first-world churches. Rather, the third-world poor now form a majority within

⁵⁶⁰Metz credits Rahner for most of what he is able to do theologically. Yet he admits that it has dawned on him lately "that even in...(his) theology Auschwitz was not mentioned" (Metz, "Facing the Jews," p. 27).

⁵⁶¹Notions of history which are idealistic assume, in one form or another, what Metz calls a "triumphalism of (either) being or becoming" (Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 218).

⁵⁶²Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 220.

Catholicism,⁵⁶³ a fact which ought to challenge Christians to reformulate their faith in terms of a suffering resistance against ongoing and growing exploitation, oppression, and racism. Theology is now called upon to view itself through the eyes of the poor and to recognize its complicity within the continuing story of human suffering. Modern Catholicism, especially, is admonished to evolve a "politically sensitive theology of conversion and repentance,"⁵⁶⁴ away from a bourgeois self-legitimizing church towards a church of solidarity with the oppressed based on the imitation of Christ. It is called upon to accept the guilt associated with its Eurocentric past, with its history of oppression and domination, and become, for the first time, an authentically polycentric world church of universal justice and solidarity.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶³Metz points to a 1980 Franciscan mission study which reports that, in 1900, seventy-seven percent of all Catholics lived in the west, and only twenty-three percent in the southern countries. In 1980, fifty-eight percent were living in the third-world, and only forty-two percent in Europe and North America. This supports Metz's conviction that the Catholic Church no longer has a third-world church but is a third-world church. J.B. Metz, "Im Aufbruch zu einer kulturell polyzentrischen Weltkirche," Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft, special printing, 1986, p. 140.

⁵⁶⁴Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 222.

⁵⁶⁵Rahner would undoubtedly agree with the point Metz is making here. Metz thinks, however, that Rahner's theology is handicapped in its response to this challenge because it is based on a transcendental experience which is too easily undisturbed by historical happenings.

Given these challenges to theology generally, and to transcendental theology in particular, Metz looks in detail as to why transcendental theology's response has been so weak. He suggests that it has been especially weakened in its response to these left-over Enlightenment challenges because of its theory of anonymous Christianity. The problem with this theory, Metz suggests, is that it falsely assumes, very much like Pannenberg's dialectical theory of history and Moltmann's trinitarian history of God, that humanity's history of suffering and Christ's redemption can be reconciled theoretically. In other words, transcendental anthropology is one more instance of a theology which has been seduced into thinking that an idealistic resolution of the tension between Christian salvation and human suffering is possible. It is indicative of the theological tendency to overlook the importance of humanity's concrete history of suffering, in particular, to overlook how humanity's historical struggle for identity as a subject before God is of central importance in the formation of religious identity. Christian identity, Metz argues, is not given once and for all within the ontological structures of existence. Rather, it emerges each day in the midst of the praxis of the imitation of Christ in the form of suffering solidarity with the poor and oppressed.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁶See "Religion in the historical struggle for man," in Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 70. Metz asserts that the religious subject before God is not so much a fact, transcendently given, but is forged out within history through a dynamic process of conversion, following, and

Metz is therefore especially critical of the theory of anonymous Christianity for the way it understands the process by which people comes to know God. Epistemologically, he distinguishes between two ways of knowing: "an idealistic theory of knowledge,"⁵⁶⁷ and a "practical knowledge."⁵⁶⁸ The notion of "transcendental faith,"⁵⁶⁹ he argues, is based on the former. It is based on the idealistic assumption that "truth is...correlative with pure reason or theory or...absolute reflection."⁵⁷⁰ This assumption, Metz argues, is based on a notion of anticipation which Rahner uses to try to answer "Kant's question about the conditions governing the possibility of human knowledge."⁵⁷¹ For Rahner, anticipation of God, in the form of a pre-grasp (Vorgriff), is the transcendental condition of the possibility of human knowledge

suffering solidarity. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 61.

⁵⁶⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 159.

⁵⁶⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 160.

⁵⁶⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 159.

⁵⁷⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 60. Metz criticizes Rahner for not taking the practical structure of Christology as his starting point. He recognizes Rahner's transcendental Christology as the most influential among modern Christologies, especially in the German-speaking countries. However, like modern Christologies generally, it does not take the "practical structure of Christology as (its)...point of departure. In this sense, (it)...is idealistic and characterized by a non-dialectical relationship between theory and praxis" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 79, n. 5).

⁵⁷¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 80, n. 2.

and behaviour.⁵⁷² It constitutes the basic transcendental structure of all persons, whether they recognize it or not. Everyone, therefore, as Metz puts it, is "condemned to transcendence" and is "'always already with God'."⁵⁷³

The difficulty with transcendentially fixing God in this "purely reflective way,"⁵⁷⁴ as the condition of the possibility of human knowledge and action,⁵⁷⁵ Metz suggests, is that it bypasses the role played by humanity's concrete history of suffering in religious identity formation. As Metz puts it, "the transcendental theology of the subject has the effect...of overlegitimizing the identity of the religious subject in view of the historical suffering of man."⁵⁷⁶ The

⁵⁷²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 65. Rahner defines Vorgriff as "a pre-apprehension...of 'being' as such," as "an unthematic but ever-present knowledge of the infinity of reality" which is the ground of all knowledge and conscious activity. Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 35. See also Gerald A. McCool, ed., A Rahner Reader, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 14-21.

⁵⁷³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 159.

⁵⁷⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 80-81, n. 22.

⁵⁷⁵Metz is objecting more to the implications of this theory than to the theory itself. He is reluctant to criticize the theory because he is not "sure that the level of what has to be criticized can as yet be reached by criticism and also because no viable alternative has been provided" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 159).

⁵⁷⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 65. The following is Rahner's response to Metz's critique. I am indebted to Professor Metz for pointing it out to me. Rahner says: "Metz's critique of my theology (which he calls transcendental theology) is the only criticism which I take very seriously. I agree in general with the positive contribution of Metz's book (Faith in History and Society).

worry, therefore, is that Rahner's transcendental-idealistic understanding of the subject assumes that there is a religious basis to human experience divorced from "every radical threat in the sphere of history."⁵⁷⁷ In positing the existence of a transcendental religious essence, it may have the effect of lessening Christian interest in finding an adequate "foothold in the turmoil of historical and social processes which are becoming more and more divorced from the subject."⁵⁷⁸

The theory of anonymous Christianity is therefore faulted for hampering the process by which Christians are

Insofar as the critique by Metz is correct, every concrete mystagogy must obviously from the very beginning consider the societal situation and the Christian praxis to which it addresses itself. If this is not sufficiently done in my theory of mystagogy and in its explanation in this book [to be cited], then this theory must be filled out. However it is not therefore false. For it has always been clear in my theology that a 'transcendental experience' (of God and of grace) is always mediated through a categorical experience in history, in interpersonal relationships, and in society. If one not only sees and takes seriously these necessary mediations of transcendental experience but also fills it out in a concrete way, then one already practices in an authentic way political theology, or, in other words, a practical fundamental theology. On the other hand, such a political theology is, if it truly wishes to concern itself with God, not possible without reflection on those essential characteristics of man which a transcendental theology discloses. Therefore, I believe that my theology and that of Metz are not necessarily contradictory. However, I gladly recognize that a concrete mystagogy must, to use Metz's language, be at the same time "mystical and political" (Karl Rahner, "Introduction," in James J. Bacik, Apologetics and the Eclipse of Mystery [Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980], pp. ix-x).

⁵⁷⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 63.

⁵⁷⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 65.

defined in terms of their concrete struggle to imitate Christ within humanity's concrete history of suffering. Transcendental anthropology detracts from the defining of Christian personhood in terms of suffering praxis by prematurely establishing Christian identity transcendently. It disguises the fact that authentic Christian identity emerges out of moments of conversion, struggle, and suffering, experiences which are central to living one's life within the horizon of apocalyptic danger and imminent expectation.

Metz goes so far as to suggest that behind the theory of anonymous Christianity, and its binding of Christian faith to an already given anthropological structure, lurks the hidden motive of vindicating Christianity "in the face of the growing historical threat to its identity."⁵⁷⁹ Put pejoratively, it is the most recent attempt to legitimize, a-historically, Christianity in the face of modern unbelief.⁵⁸⁰

The question remains, therefore, whether Christian identity can be defended in the face of modern unbelief by using a speculative "late metaphysics of anticipation."⁵⁸¹ Metz worries, for example, that the a-priori transcendental fixing of Christian identity leads, inevitably, to a

⁵⁷⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 160.

⁵⁸⁰Metz says: "The transcendentalization of the Christian subject may have been guided by an attempt to immunize and unburden" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 163).

⁵⁸¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 65.

privatistic defining of Christian subjectivity as an isolated monadic entity. This could contribute to the bourgeois privatization of Christianity by disguising the fact that the Christian subject exists in "co-existence with other subjects"⁵⁸² within the dangerous and disruptive context of apocalyptic expectation. As Metz says: "Experiences of solidarity with, antagonism towards, liberation from and anxiety about other subjects form an essential part of the constitution of the religious subject, not afterwards, but from the very beginning".⁵⁸³

Metz disagrees that Christian personhood is constituted by a transcendental experience removed from the struggles, dangers, and threats of history. Rather, it is constituted in and through them.⁵⁸⁴ It is forged out of a

⁵⁸²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 61.

⁵⁸³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 61.

⁵⁸⁴Rahner is clear about the mediated character of the transcendental knowing experience. He writes: "Man as subject...is a historical being in such a way that he is historical precisely as a transcendental subject; his subjective essence of unlimited transcendentality is mediated historically to him in his knowledge and in his free self-realization. Hence man realizes his transcendental subjectivity neither unhistorically in a merely interior experience of unchanging subjectivity, nor does he grasp this transcendental subjectivity by means of an unhistorical reflection and introspection" (Rahner, The Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 140). Transcendental experience is therefore not made actual through theoretical reflection apart from history but "in the concrete and practical knowledge and freedom of everyday life" (Rahner, The Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 456), that is, in interpersonal relationships. On the basis of this, Rahner argues for the complete unity between the love of God and neighbor and for the fact that every act of loving one's neighbor is, at least

dangerous praxis of suffering solidarity: a "praxis...of hope in solidarity in the God of Jesus as a God of the living and the dead who calls all men to be subjects in his presence."⁵⁸⁵ The authentic Christian self emerges in the midst of social and political struggles to allow all persons to become subjects in solidarity with each other before God.⁵⁸⁶

In conclusion, Metz disapproves of the way transcendental-idealistic Christianity understands Christian personhood primarily within the horizon of religious anthropology. He "cannot accept uncritically as valid the predominance of anthropology in theology as opposed to history

implicitly, an experience of God. Rahner, The Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 456.

Metz is familiar with these assertions. However, what he worries about, on a more general level, is Rahner's use of a metaphysical anthropology to articulate the essence of Christian identity. He is really questioning the adequacy of speculative thought to generalize what is essentially an historical experience, the experience of Christian faith. He thinks Rahner does not recognize the dangers associated with trying to capture the essence of Christian faith within speculative categories. One danger, in particular, stands out: the danger of overlooking the historical nature of faith and, as historical, its endangered quality. Christian faith is always, for Metz, historical faith in the making and the re-making and is best conveyed not through ideas but through the praxis of discipleship transmitted to others in the form of narratives.

⁵⁸⁵ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 73.

⁵⁸⁶ Metz believes that Christianity is indispensable for the process by which all persons become subjects. He points to Pannenberg's insights concerning the relationship between historical anthropology and the history of religion. Pannenberg's thesis is that only in relationship to God are persons able to become subjects of their own history. Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 69 and 82, n. 26.

and society."⁵⁸⁷ He thinks the transcendentalization of the Christian subject inadvertently negates the more biblical understanding of Christian personhood defined by a praxis of suffering solidarity taking place within the danger-filled horizon of apocalyptic expectation.⁵⁸⁸ Christian identity thus cannot, according to Metz, be "transmitted theologically in a purely speculative way. It can only be transmitted in narrative - as a narrative and practical Christianity."⁵⁸⁹ "Full and explicit (!) knowledge of faith," he believes, is not a speculative, but a practical knowledge.⁵⁹⁰ It is not conveyable, as the theory of anonymous Christianity comes dangerously close to suggesting, as an arcane knowledge, knowable only to a few "who possess the 'high gift of the wise'."⁵⁹¹ If there is such an arcane knowledge then Metz suggests it is not the "arcanum of a philosophical gnosis - an élitist idealism - but...the arcanum of a practical

⁵⁸⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 227.

⁵⁸⁸For a discussion of the role that danger plays in Christian discipleship, see Metz, "Unterwegs," pp. 224 ff..

⁵⁸⁹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 165.

⁵⁹⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 160.

⁵⁹¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 159. Metz acknowledges that Rahner's "entire theological disposition makes him turn away from an élitist attitude perhaps more than any other theologian" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 159). However, Metz still points out that in the areas of aesthetics, logic, and ethics, Rahner does believe in an élitist knowledge known only to a few. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 160 and 167, n. 11.

knowledge"⁵⁹² forged out of the dangerous imitation of Christ's suffering on behalf of others.⁵⁹³

e. Summary

Thus far, I have outlined Metz's critique of the bourgeois notion of history. I tried to show why he thinks this notion, as a central feature of bourgeois subjectivity, is destructive of Christian self-understanding and action. It is so because it is based on an unique type of bourgeois metaphysic called evolutionary logic. Second, I outlined his concern that this bourgeois notion of history poses a special danger to Christianity because it mirrors the timelessness of this metaphysic. On the unconscious level, the bourgeois mentality thinks of history as trapped within the timelessness of nature. On the conscious level, theories of history are developed which deny this entrapment. These idealistic theories then become theoretical mechanisms used by modernity to combat the despair generated by evolutionary timelessness.

⁵⁹²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 160.

⁵⁹³Even though Metz challenges Rahner's theory of anonymous Christianity, for having élitist elements, he does not think that Rahner intended this. In fact, he says that this theory "had been determined by precisely the opposite intention" and that "Rahner has a distinctly proletarian aversion to everything élitist or esoteric" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 227). Metz praises Rahner's theology for being a "biographical dogmatic theology" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 226). He thinks its basic intention is to give expression to the experiences of ordinary people, Christians and non-Christians alike.

In this process, the bourgeois mentality is blinded to humanity's concrete history as a history of suffering, guilt, and failed responsibility.

More importantly, Metz thinks the bourgeois tendency to think of history in terms of an overarching totality has been inadvertently appropriated by modern Christianity. This appropriation has given rise to theologies of history which likewise fail to recognize humanity's history as a history of suffering. Through elaborate theoretical schemes, these theologies reconcile, too quickly, concrete historical suffering and God's providential guidance in history. Theologies of history which claim to understand the overall meaning and goal of history are to be rejected because they tend to depreciate the importance of suffering in constituting history, Christian personhood, and Christian praxis. As an alternative, Metz proposes an apocalyptic understanding of history as a history of suffering within which Christians ought to understand themselves and their discipleship. Christ's history of suffering defines history as a time of suffering, catastrophes, and the imminent expectation of God's end-time interruption. By understanding history as a history of suffering, Metz thinks Christians can better understand themselves and their praxis in terms of suffering solidarity with the poor and oppressed. Living as a Christian within history means living within the framework of imminent expectation, not within the framework of evolutionary

timelessness. This expectation, he hopes, will generate a new revolutionary consciousness which will give rise to a more radical living out of the Gospel mandate of love.⁵⁹⁴

I turn now to the second concept which Metz thinks is operative within bourgeois subjectivity: technical rationality. It too is a central factor in Christianity's captivity to the bourgeois mentality. Metz denounces it chiefly because it fosters an anthropological model of domination which negates Christianity's model of suffering solidarity.

2. Bourgeois Reason

a. Technical Reason and Evolutionary Timelessness

Metz denounces the prominent place of technical reason within modern consciousness because it erodes Christianity's capacity to live out the Gospel mandate of love in history and society. It is destructive to Christianity because, like the bourgeois notion of history, it also is grounded in the

⁵⁹⁴Metz writes: "Revolutionary consciousness in the grip of evolutionary timelessness: Marx, who praised revolutions as the locomotives of world history. Walter Benjamin has suggested that it may be quite different from this and that revolutions are really the hand of the human race, travelling in this train, on the emergency brake" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 172). Metz agrees with Benjamin that perhaps revolutions are required to stop modernity's road to self-destruction. Both agree that the world needs a revolution in consciousness and self-understanding so it can break the grip of evolutionary timelessness and the apathy it causes. Metz thinks Christian apocalypticism, with its notion of time as imminent expectation, can break persons free from this modern apathy.

bourgeois metaphysic of evolutionary logic. The modern worship of technical reason arises from the attempt to compensate for the fatalism and apathy gnawing at the souls of modern persons.⁵⁹⁵ It is the uniquely modern way of gaining control over one's perceived entrapment within nature's timeless time. Persons think they are in control when they are able, increasingly so, to dominate, manipulate, and transform nature. Technical reason is the most effective way to do this.

Furthermore, modern Christians have uncritically appropriated this bourgeois reverence for technical reason, and, in doing so, have failed to recognize three dangers associated with it. First, they do not recognize how the dominance of technical reason, as a new authority, threatens the unique Christian understanding of religious authority based on tradition. Second, Christians fail to recognize that technical reason is one side of the larger separation of reason into private and public. Public life is dominated by technical reason, private life by private moral reason. The problem, according to Metz, is that religion has been

⁵⁹⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 170. Metz writes: "Man's understanding of reality, which guides his scientific and technical control of nature and from which the cult of the makeable draws its strength, is marked by an idea of time as a continuous process which is empty and evolving towards infinity" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 171). Or again: "evolutionary logic has...become an acceptance of technical rationality" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 171).

relegated exclusively to the realm of private moral reason. And third, Christians do not recognize how the pervasive influence of technical reason contributes to an anthropological model of domination. This model contradicts Christianity's own anthropological model of solidarity. I will deal with each in turn.

b. Technical Reason as the New Bourgeois Authority

Metz argues that even though the Enlightenment liberated persons from the coercive authority of the Church, history, and tradition, it brought to prominence an equally coercive form of authority: the authority of knowledge in the form of "calculating reason."⁵⁹⁶ This form of reason became the new authority for modern persons because it contributed to the smooth functioning of an economy based on the values of success, domination, and monopoly. Metz states: "Modern scientific knowledge is marked by the model of a dominative knowledge of nature, and in this view man understands himself anthropologically above all as the subject exercising control over nature."⁵⁹⁷

Metz attacks the one-sided dominance of this pragmatic reason within modern life because, as divorced from traditional values, it is essentially uncritical. He thinks

⁵⁹⁶ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 40

⁵⁹⁷ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 111.

the modern vision fails to recognize that traditional values are an indispensable "constitutive part of critical reason."⁵⁹⁸ What is not recognized is that pragmatic reason needs the normative values conveyed by tradition. Without them, the dominance of technical reason leads to the denial of human freedom rather than to its furtherance. Without tradition, technical reason remains uncritical and conformist towards market place values which intend ever greater exploitation and domination of others and nature.

The solution Metz offers is that Christianity abandon its uncritical appropriation of the bourgeois authority of technical reason and focus on its own type of authority which is informed by a tradition, a tradition whose values are "freedom and justice on the one hand and suffering on the other."⁵⁹⁹ This is not the authority of a bourgeois technical reason which aims at the control and subjugation of others and nature for the sake of market place efficiency. It is rather the authority of living a life of suffering solidarity aimed at attaining freedom and justice for the poor and oppressed.

What has taken hold within the Church is not this authority of suffering discipleship but the authority of bourgeois administrative competency. Church authority has become more and more the authority of knowledge and

⁵⁹⁸ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 40.

⁵⁹⁹ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 40.

bureaucratic skill, especially at times when the church is under attack. Authentic Christian authority, on the other hand, is based on religious and not bureaucratic competency. It is based on the faithful conveyance of a tradition whose values are love, solidarity, suffering, mourning, joy, etc., not on a tradition whose chief value is the more refined application of technical reason. As Metz poignantly puts it, church authority ought to be "authority based on being authority rather than having authority."⁶⁰⁰ It ought to be authority grounded in the concrete praxis of suffering solidarity with the poor and the oppressed and not the authority of finely tuned ecclesiastical pronouncements.

c. Bourgeois Separation of Public and Private Reason

Metz's second criticism of technical reason is that it is divorced from moral reason. He thinks that its rise to ascendancy within the Enlightenment paralleled the sharp separation between public and moral reason. To the bourgeois mentality, moral reason had relevance only to private life. Public reason, on the other hand, in the form of technical competency, had relevance only to public life. This sharp separation resulted in one dimension of reason losing the other as its critical corrective. Once technical reason became separated from the resources of moral reason, for

⁶⁰⁰Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 41.

example, technical reason became the chief agent behind the unbridled control and subjugation of nature for the sake of the market place economy. No longer did it serve, as it previously had done, as an instrument of social criticism and change.⁶⁰¹ Moral reason itself was diminished in the process. Once separated from public life, it lost its ability to give moral guidance to social and political processes. As a private affair, it no longer could foster freedom and change within the larger society. The dialectical relationship between private and public reason, which had prevailed prior to the Enlightenment, was destroyed, and with it the power of moral reason to prevent the unbridled subjugation of the world by technical rationality.⁶⁰²

This rigid twinning of reason into private and public poses a real threat to Christianity. When appropriated uncritically, it distorts Christian self-understanding and

⁶⁰¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 43.

⁶⁰²Metz reflects on how his own thinking has changed on the issue of moral praxis in terms of Kant. What he now realizes, because of Marx, is that Kant's notion of moral praxis is naive because such a notion is neither socially neutral nor politically innocent. Kant's notion of moral praxis, including the categorical imperative on which it is based, pertains solely to an already socially established subject. The coming of age that Kant calls for, via the exercise of moral praxis, does not consider the fact that there exists social structures and relationships which prevent persons from coming of age. As well, it does not recognize the hidden agenda behind the exercise of one's practical reason, that is, the attainment of a higher social and economic status, or the maintenance of the one already held. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 42.

praxis in relationship to the world. Above all, it results in religion being confined to the private realm of bourgeois life. Christian praxis becomes private moral praxis, devoid of social or political relevance. As the officially sanctioned realm of private morality, Christianity becomes uncritical of both itself and society. It fails to recognize that private moral praxis is never entirely neutral, socially and politically. It is always associated with agendas of social and political self-justification and self-preservation.⁶⁰³

d. Technical Reason and the Human Individuation Process

Metz is most critical of technical reason for the role it plays in the way modern persons understand themselves as

⁶⁰³Metz suggests that the authority of technical rationality, in its ability to reduce everything to the level of a marketable object, functions in the same way as the authority of metaphysical reason once did. Like the authority of metaphysical reason, technical reason is an authority wielded in the form of an abstract principle. As such, it is used to gain and legitimize social and political dominance. A key difference is that the authority of technical reason is now in the hands of the bourgeois citizen, while the authority of metaphysical reason was in the hands of church authorities. Metz thus admonishes Christianity not to be blind to the legitimizing function technical rationality plays in the hands of the bourgeois citizen. He warns: "If this is forgotten and reason, praxis and the subject are used in the abstract sense in theology, without also taking into consideration the middle-class society of exchange that is expressed in these three concepts, the consequence might be that the middle-class may imperceptibly be given those theological, religious and ecclesiastical honours which were denied to it in the beginning because a better instinct prevailed and which will now help it at this late stage to justify itself" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 44).

creatures of domination and control. The essence of bourgeois identity, he believes, is shaped by the dominance of technical reason. He writes:

At the beginning of what we call 'the Modern Age,' the limits of which we are now reaching with ever-increasing clarity, there unfolds - embryonically and overlaid with many religious and cultural symbols - this anthropology of domination. In it man understands himself as a dominating, subjugating individual over against nature; his knowledge becomes, above all, knowledge via domination, and his praxis is one of exerting power over nature. In this dominating subjugation, in this activity of exploitation and reification, in his seizing power over nature, man's identity is formed. Man is by subjugating.⁶⁰⁴

The authority of technical reason must be resisted because, as a principle of subjugation, it threatens human freedom, world wide. It endangers freedom, especially, because it has permeated for a long time "the psychic foundation of our total socio-cultural life. It has become the secret regulating principle of all interpersonal relationships."⁶⁰⁵ As such, it is destroying not only the environment but also our relationships with one another and ourselves. It is at the root of prejudice against foreign minorities, races, and foreign cultures. It is also the motivating impetus behind colonialism, past and present.

⁶⁰⁴ Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 35. Metz thinks that the real "background to this process of subjugation, exploitation, and reification of nature that marks our history of progress" is the attempt to flee death. The anthropology of domination is generated by the fear of a death made ever more apparent by immersion within evolutionary logic. Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 38.

⁶⁰⁵ Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 35.

Colonialism was, and continues to be, based on the principle of subjugation. Hence, technical rationality creates an anthropology of domination. It creates an egoistic, dominating type of personality whose effects are personal, interpersonal, and international in scope. It creates a self-identity 'over against' rather than 'in solidarity with' others.⁶⁰⁶

Metz fears that Christianity has lent legitimization to this bourgeois identity of domination and control rather than reprimanding it. For example, missionary efforts followed quickly on the heels of European colonization, offering religious sanctification, rather than opposing its slaughter and exploitation.⁶⁰⁷ As legitimizing agent, Christianity lost sight of its own anthropological model based on solidarity rather than exploitation. This model values ways of knowing and behaving which are not exploitive and dominating. For example, the Christian model gives cognitive and critical meaning to experiences other than those valued by technical reason. It values the messianic experiences of suffering, pain, mourning, death, fear, gratitude, tenderness,

⁶⁰⁶Metz thinks the anthropology of domination has taken hold in western capitalist as well as socialist-oriented countries. Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 36.

⁶⁰⁷Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 36.

sympathy, friendliness, love, and joy.⁶⁰⁸ And it recognizes that these experiences have cognitive and critical meaning within both public and private life.

However, under the influence of the bourgeois ethos, and Christianity's acceptance of its limited role as the cultural agent of private morality, Christianity lost sight of the social and cultural applicability of these uniquely Christian experiences. Instead, it stands by while these values become restricted to the realm of private moral reason and are made almost entirely irrelevant to socio-political life. It accepts, passively, the relegation of these non-dominating values to the "realm of the private and the irrational"⁶⁰⁹ by modern culture.

Metz would like to establish these "messianic virtues of Christianity" over against the bourgeois virtues which are dominated by the cognitive and moral priority of technical reason.⁶¹⁰ He would like messianic Christianity to reinstate, within Christianity as a whole and within culture generally, an alternative form of reason which gives cognitive and critical meaning to suffering and the memory of suffering. He thinks messianic reasoning is more intent on receiving than

⁶⁰⁸ Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 111, and The Emergent Church, p. 35. See The Emergent Church, pp. 37-41 for an extended discussion of Christian attitudes towards death, suffering, love, mourning, and fear.

⁶⁰⁹ Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 35.

⁶¹⁰ Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 4.

dominating and controlling and, as such, can offer a new "sensitive-intuitive access to reality."⁶¹¹ Messianic Christianity could restore an appreciation for the "cognitive and practical function" of human suffering.⁶¹² I will explain further.

Messianic Christianity, because of its emphasis on suffering solidarity, offers an alternative way of understanding praxis, history, and knowledge. It understands these through the medium of suffering. Concerning knowledge, it points to a "kind of anti-knowledge ex memoria passionis,"⁶¹³ the kind of knowledge which arises in the midst of suffering and suffering solidarity with others. It also points to a praxis different from that engendered by technical competency. It is a praxis which is not simply action, but suffering as well. There exists, as well, a "pathic or suffering structure...[to] human praxis."⁶¹⁴ And finally, messianic Christianity points to an understanding of history as an "anti-history," in which history is understood within the horizon of the memory of suffering. History is no longer a history of conquest and domination but a history of suffering. It is interpreted from below rather than from

⁶¹¹Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 35.

⁶¹²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 110.

⁶¹³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 111.

⁶¹⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 57.

above, from the perspective of those who have been conquered and defeated and not from the perspective of the victors.⁶¹⁵

e. Summary

Metz thus points to the negative consequences of Christianity's uncritical appropriation of the Enlightenment notion of reason. Christianity failed to recognize the dangers which accompanied the rise to prominence of the bourgeois form of authority in the form of technical reason. It failed to recognize that behind the Enlightenment's critique of authority lurked the bourgeois citizen's own form of authority with its dangers and shortcomings. This new authority poses a real threat to Christian self-understanding and praxis because it rejects tradition as a part of critical reason. Without tradition (a Christian tradition which conveys the values of freedom, justice and suffering), reason remains uncritical and conformist to the pragmatic values of the market place. Without tradition, by which the values of the Gospel are conveyed to the present, Christian authority simply mirrors the authority of technical reason which is accepted by the bourgeois culture at large. Church authority becomes the authority of bureaucratic competency, not the authority derived from living out the Gospel mandate of love.

In addition, Metz thinks Christianity has uncritically

⁶¹⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 111.

assimilated the bourgeois distinction between private and public reason. In doing so, it has accepted the relegation of Christian values to the private realm. Christian values of love, justice, and suffering become private virtues irrelevant to the public sphere of life.

And finally, he thinks Christianity has failed to criticize and offer constructive proposals to move beyond an individuation process dominated by the priority of technical reason and its values of exploitation and domination. Rather than promoting an "anthropological revolution,"⁶¹⁶ wherein human individuation takes place on the basis of solidarity with others, it gives religious legitimation to the bourgeois anthropology of domination.

3. Natural Religion

a. Introduction

Finally, I move to Metz's critique of the third notion operative with bourgeois subjectivity: natural religion. It is seen as destructive of authentic Christian self-understanding and practice because, like bourgeois history and technical reason, it is essentially a-historical. It too diminishes the importance of the critical and transformative power of the past within Christian and secular self-understanding and praxis. Whereas bourgeois historicism

⁶¹⁶Metz, "Anthropological Revolution," The Emergent Church, pp. 42 ff..

reduces past events to museum relics, and bourgeois pragmatic reason abandons tradition entirely, bourgeois natural religion subordinates history to the immediacy of inner feeling. It locates the essence of Christianity within the privatized realm of personal morality and inner religious experience.

Though Metz does not say so explicitly, I believe he assumes that natural religion has a tendency to be a-historical for the same reason that the bourgeois notions of reason and history tend to be. It too has arisen as a way of compensating for the bourgeois experience of being trapped within nature's evolutionary timelessness. We saw earlier how he explained the emergence of idealistic notions of history as a way of compensating for history's entrapment within nature. History is made meaningful by framing it within the context of an overarching totality. We also saw how he explained the rise to dominance of technical reason as a way of gaining control over a world trapped within nature's death grip. He now understands the emergence of natural religion in the same way. In order to compensate for the meaninglessness caused by history's immersion within nature, the theory is put forth that all persons are essentially religious: that everyone has a religious core untouchable by the plights of history. Evolutionary logic, therefore, is the metaphysical basis of the bourgeois notion of religion as well.

b. Natural Religion and Bourgeois Privatization

Metz traces the historical origin of the notion of natural religion to the phenomenon of bourgeois privatization and its distinction between public and private life. He believes that privatization is "the most important phenomenon in the crisis of the Enlightenment"⁶¹⁷ and the one which has had the most far-reaching effect on Christian self-expression and understanding. Privatization concerns the way the bourgeois subject is understood in relationship to society.

Prepared for by the late Middle Ages and the breakdown of Church-State unity during the Reformation,⁶¹⁸ a new distinction arose in the Enlightenment between public and

⁶¹⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 34.

⁶¹⁸Metz notes that even though the Reformation may have produced a "pre-middle-class subject," it certainly did not produce the later "phenomenon of middle-class, privatistic subjectivity" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 36). In other words, Luther and the persons of his time were not yet defined by market place values, nor had they reduced their religion to a matter of private choice.

Metz is disturbed most by the way the bourgeois citizen has become totally defined in terms of the private. When he or she is seen as a public person, it is almost always in terms of consumerist values and objectives. In contrast, Metz wants to bring about a new balance between the private and social which avoids both this privatistic reduction of the individual on the one hand and a takeover of interpersonal values by the exchange principle on the other.

private life.⁶¹⁹ Public life was almost totally defined by market place values, while private life became the arena of individual freedoms and values not contributive to the newly evolved bourgeois society of exchange. While the principle of exchange defined the foundations and limits of public life, private life was confined to such economically marginalized concerns as religion, art, family, ethnic customs etc..

What concerns Metz is that this public-private dichotomization resulted in religion being relegated to the realm of the private. As a private matter, religion could no longer serve as the sovereign expression of social life⁶²⁰ (defining existence inter-subjectively) or as a primary need of persons. Rather, for the first time, it became a matter of private choice. To the bourgeois mentality, choosing a religion became no different than choosing forms of art or customs. Metz puts it poignantly when he says that what Enlightenment maturity brought was "the bourgeois unapproachability toward religion. Religion does not lay claim to the bourgeois; instead the bourgeois lays claim to

⁶¹⁹Both Faith in History and Society and The Emergent Church make clear that Metz is not against this distinction per se. He refers to it, at times, as a "good aspect of the Enlightenment phenomenon of privatization" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 35), or as "one of the fundamental conditions for a humane society" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 35). See also Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 44.

⁶²⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 34.

religion."⁶²¹

The result of this privatization is that religion became impotent within the public sphere and was reduced to the status of a legitimizing tool in the hands of the bourgeois subject. No longer could it exercise its messianic and apocalyptic function of social criticism and transformation. Instead, it became a legitimizing agent of social conformity.⁶²²

Metz also notes that the emergence of natural religion coincided with the demise of metaphysical religion. With the relegation of religion to the private realm, religion was forced to define itself within this marginalized arena of private life to which it had been allocated. It was aided in doing so by the Enlightenment's negation of metaphysics as the foundation of religious assertions. Metaphysical religion was attacked on two fronts. On the one front, the philosophers of the German Enlightenment, led by Kant, showed that objective knowledge of transcendent realities was not possible. And on the other, exponents of the French Enlightenment showed how metaphysical assertions served to

⁶²¹Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 83.

⁶²²See Metz's article, "Messianic or Bourgeois Religion," The Emergent Church, pp. 1-16. Here he contrasts the messianic religion of the bible, which disrupts and calls for a metanoia, with a bourgeois Christianity which uses religion as a neutralizing and legitimizing agent of social conformity.

legitimize the status quo.⁶²³

To hold its own against these attacks, religion sought to define itself anthropocentrically. To be credible, its statements about God became statements about human nature. The language of metaphysics became the language of religious anthropology. The result was a new religion grounded in human reason and considered to be "in accordance with all men's needs and...[justifiable] on the basis of the history of mankind."⁶²⁴ Religion became a "religio naturalis - a natural religion or a religion of reason."⁶²⁵

c. Natural Religion and Modern Theology

According to Metz, this Enlightenment form of religion was appropriated by liberal theology without its knowing it.⁶²⁶ It is implicitly present, for example, in Schleiermacher's depiction of religion as a feeling of absolute dependence, as well as in Tillich's locating of religion within the numinous depth of existence.⁶²⁷ Generally speaking, natural religion

⁶²³Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 44.

⁶²⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 45.

⁶²⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 45.

⁶²⁶By "liberal theology" is meant "a trend in protestant theology during the 19th and 20th centuries, which aimed to show that Christianity is rational and expedient and reconcilable with the human desire for autonomy. Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, Dictionary of Theology, pp. 275-276.

⁶²⁷Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 45.

pervaded liberal theology as a religion of inner feeling, showing no great discomfort with its relegation to the private sphere and remaining fairly uncritical of the definitions of reality, meaning, and truth offered by the surrounding bourgeois society of exchange.⁶²⁸ Restricted to the religious dimensions of individual existence, natural religion thus evolved as the Enlightenment's answer to the question of how traditional religion could still be believed by modern rational persons. Religion could still be valid because it accorded with private reason. And it was reasonable because it asserted that all persons had a core-dimension of religiosity.⁶²⁹

Metz thinks liberal theologies were blind in appropriating this notion of natural religion because they failed to recognize the legitimizing role it played within the hands of the middle-class subject. They failed to recognize the existence of hidden political and ecclesiastical agendas at work within it. Natural religion was therefore no better nor worse than metaphysical religion had been. Whereas

⁶²⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 45.

⁶²⁹See Chopp's discussion of Gustavo Gutiérrez's critique of Enlightenment "progressive religion," which she says is similar to Metz's critique of natural religion. Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 73. She points also to Gutiérrez's book, Power of the Poor in History, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), pp. 90-94, for a discussion of modern religion and progressivist theology. Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, pp. 161, n. 7, & 163, ns. 35, 36, 37.

metaphysical religion had legitimized ecclesiastical authoritarianism, natural religion legitimized the bourgeois citizen and the market place values that defined his or her existence. Metz concludes: natural religion is an "extremely privatized religion...specially prepared for the domestic use of the propertied middle-class citizen....It gives greater height and depth to what already appears even without it."⁶³⁰

Natural religion ought to be rejected for two further reasons. First, because it is a religion of inner feeling, "it is impervious to experiences and testimonies of...[biblical]...religion."⁶³¹ For example, it misunderstands conversion as an invisible "'purely inward' process"⁶³² essentially unrelated to social and political life. It fails to recognize that, according to the Gospels, conversion raises a crisis for one's established system of needs, and so finally impacts on the social and political life which serves those needs.⁶³³ Natural religion does not allow conversion to damage and disrupt these individual and social self-interests. It therefore prevents conversion from bringing about "a

⁶³⁰Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 45.

⁶³¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 45.

⁶³²Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 3.

⁶³³Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 3.

fundamental revision of one's habitual way of life."⁶³⁴

Finally, natural religion ought to be rejected because, as the dialectical theologians Barth and Bonhoeffer intuited,⁶³⁵ it is a "deeply middle-class" religion which, in many cases, is added to the social constitution of the subject as its legitimizing agent. The moral praxis operative in it, for example, is not at all neutral. The moral praxis of natural religion is a social praxis in disguise. It functions to maintain and strengthen the already existing structures of society on which the bourgeois citizen depends for his or her social position and power. For non-bourgeois persons, who remain outside the propertied class, it offers no form of social praxis which would radically challenge and transform the existing structures. It offers only a private moral praxis aimed at Enlightenment, not social or political empowerment.⁶³⁶

⁶³⁴Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 3. Metz admits that "conversion of the heart is indeed the threshold to the messianic future" (Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 3). However, he points out, as well, that the biblical witness interprets conversion as always having social manifestations. Conversion always reaches down into the direction people's lives are taking and, therefore, is equally an outward and socio-political process of transformation.

⁶³⁵Metz points to T.R. Peters' book, Die Präsenz des Politischen in der Theologie D. Bonhoeffers (Mainz and Munich, 1976), pp. 79 ff. and 195 ff., where one finds an exploration of how Bonhoeffer's concept of "religionless Christianity" hints at the necessity of a post-bourgeois Christian religion. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 48, n. 13.

⁶³⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 53.

D. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has outlined Metz's most recent attempt to free Christianity from a non-Christian form of consciousness. He believes the present crisis of Christianity is caused by its uncritical assimilation of the modern way of thinking and acting. To remedy this, he tries to understand the inner workings of the modern subject. He probes to the roots of modern subjectivity and finds there an unthematic way of experiencing the world which he refers to as evolutionary logic. This logic, as the unique modern metaphysic, shapes the way history, reason, and religion are understood. Its most significant effect is that it fosters within these notions a de-valuing of the past. When assimilated into Christianity, these notions destroy the uniquely Christian form of praxis which is a praxis of suffering in solidarity with the poor and oppressed motivated by apocalyptic expectation.

I discussed first how Metz thinks the bourgeois notion of history is incompatible with Christianity's because it lacks an appreciation of the past, particularly past suffering.⁶³⁷ In an attempt to compensate for the despair which results from the belief that history is trapped within

⁶³⁷For Metz, the appropriation of our own suffering, and being in solidarity with the suffering of others, depends on the capacity to remember, via dangerous and liberating stories, both Christ's own history of suffering and resurrection, as well as the suffering of others (past, present, and future).

nature, the bourgeois mentality thinks of history idealistically, conceiving of it within the context of an overarching totality. It assumes that history mirrors the same inexorable process and permanence present in nature. Metz's critique is that this interpretation of history is un-Christian and destroys motivation to actively shape history towards the Gospel ideals of justice and freedom.

The modern understanding of history also goes counter to the apocalyptic insight that history is a time of imminent expectation, catastrophe, and interruption. History, understood apocalyptically, is not trapped by the nature-time of an evolutionary continuum but is groaning in expectation of God's consumation.

Metz's aim is therefore to revive the apocalyptic understanding of time in order to prevent the erosion of Christian discipleship by the apathy generated by evolutionary assumptions. He thinks that living with an "apocalyptic feeling for life"⁶³⁸ will cause Christians to experience radically the shortness of time before the end-coming of Christ. This will cause them to experience the radical necessity to "display a practical solidarity with the least of the brethren."⁶³⁹

⁶³⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 176.

⁶³⁹Metz says that the mandate to display radical solidarity with the least of the brethren is clear from "the apocalyptical chapters at the end of the gospel of St. Matthew" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 177).

I discussed also how Metz thinks modern theories of emancipation and Christian soteriologies are similarly influenced by this bourgeois understanding of time.⁶⁴⁰ Generally speaking, they reflect it in their understanding of history as immersed within a larger totality conceived of either teleologically or ontologically. The modern understanding of history is therefore mythological⁶⁴¹ in the sense that some larger totality or alibi-subject assumes responsibility for human suffering. Human responsibility and guilt are thus removed.

The modern idealistic understanding of history therefore negates the apocalyptic understanding of history as a non-evolutionary history of suffering. It acknowledges that history has moments of suffering, but denies that it is suffering. Suffering and the memory of suffering are stripped of their power to criticize the one-dimensional linear notions of socio-historical progress. The praxis of suffering on behalf of others is denied as the key component of Christian self-definition.

I looked as well at Metz's critique of bourgeois

⁶⁴⁰Metz comments that the influence of the timeless understanding of time within theology has enabled "theology to regard itself as a kind of constant reflection that is institutionally protected and cannot be interrupted by any imminent expectation, without pressure of activity or surprises and experienced in rendering harmless expectations that are open to disappointment, but are nonetheless genuine" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 177).

⁶⁴¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108.

technical reason, which is the new bourgeois authority intent on the subjugation and exploitation of nature for the sake of market place efficiency. Technical reason is an uncritical and a-moral form of reason driven to prominence by the unconscious fear and apathy generated by bourgeois evolutionary logic. It is uncritical and a-moral because it rejects history and tradition. In this rejection, it loses its ability to give modern persons moral guidance in social and political concerns.

Metz criticizes technical reason for three reasons. First, he denounces it because it rejects suffering and the memory of suffering as having cognitive and practical value.⁶⁴² It fails to recognize that suffering is an important form of human knowing which is based on receiving rather than dominating. It therefore can open the way for a more "sensitive-intuitive access to reality."⁶⁴³ Second, he rejects technical reason because it fails to recognize that suffering is a distinct form of acting in the world, a form of acting which establishes a relationship of solidarity with others rather than domination and control over them. And finally, he rejects technical reason because of its contribution to an individuation process in which individuals understand themselves as creatures of control and domination. Suffering,

⁶⁴²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 110.

⁶⁴³Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 35.

as a form of knowledge and acting, challenges this process and allows persons to define themselves as being in solidarity with the suffering of others in the present, past and future.

The final section of the chapter looked at Metz's attack on the bourgeois understanding of natural religion. As a privatized religion of inner feeling, natural religion mirrors the historical forgetfulness of modern evolutionary logic. Like historicism and technical reason, natural religion fails to recognize the critical and moral significance of the past. It fails to recognize the religious and socio-political value of suffering and the memory of suffering. Whereas the idealistic notion of history posits an 'outer totality' which destroys the Christian apocalyptic valuing of suffering, the bourgeois notion of natural religion creates an 'inner totality' whose effect is the same. Natural religion posits the existence of an universally present innate moral reason which, when thought of as the essence of Christianity, leaves little room for Christianity's apocalyptic valuing of suffering. Once again, the cognitive and practical significance of suffering is lost.

Before I move to the concluding chapter of this dissertation, it is important to state clearly what the main theological platform is from which Metz launches his attack on the bourgeois mentality and its notions of history, reason, and religion. Metz's chief point of departure is the life and death of Jesus Christ interpreted from an eschatological

perspective. Christ's life is interpreted as an occasion of a life lived in solidarity with the poor and oppressed (past, present, and future), a life of self-sacrifice motivated by the anticipation of God's promised future of universal justice. Christ's history of freedom cannot therefore be understood apart from his descent into hell and his coming into solidarity with the dead.⁶⁴⁴ His life of solidarity with the poor calls Christians, likewise, to enter into suffering solidarity with sufferers of the past, present, and future. It calls Christians to accept the suffering of their own finitude and death, and the suffering of all persons of all times, as an indispensable means by which to participate in the redemptive process. To ignore this call to suffering solidarity results in the "apocalyptic sting"⁶⁴⁵ being taken out of Christian soteriology. Suffering on behalf of the poor therefore constitutes the essential criterion for participation in Christ's history of freedom as a history of suffering. Freedom in Christ is "the freedom to suffer the suffering of others."⁶⁴⁶ Redemption is therefore realized in the praxis of living in solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

⁶⁴⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 129.

⁶⁴⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 129 & 175.

⁶⁴⁶Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 91.

CONCLUSION

This conclusion is divided into two parts. The first restates the original question of the dissertation along with the answers it gives. This involves a recapitulation of the thesis that each stage of Metz's development is best understood as a moment of his ongoing critique of religious apathy. The second spells out the contribution this study makes to a discussion concerning the existence and nature of the unity governing Metz's literary corpus. It examines several interpreters of Metz to see, first, whether they explicitly or implicitly recognize a controlling unity within his writings, second, what they take this unity to be, and third, how their findings compare with those of this study. In each case, the weaknesses and strengths of the various interpretations are looked at along with how this dissertation provides new insights.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁷This conclusion does not attempt to offer an exhaustive account of criticisms levelled at Metz's constructive proposals for the development of a post-bourgeois Christianity. It does, however, deal with those criticisms which point to significant weaknesses in his critique of religious apathy. For prominent works critical of Political Theology up to the writing of Faith in History and Society in

A. RECAPITULATION OF THE DISSERTATION'S OBJECTIVES
AND SUMMARIZATION OF ITS FINDINGS

In this dissertation, I ask the question whether there exists a controlling unity within Metz's writings. The answer I give is affirmative. The preceding analysis argues that Metz's corpus is united by the attempt to understand and correct the causes of Christian apathy. In spite of significant changes of direction, which utilize different conceptual tools at different times, his aim remains the same. It is to unravel the inner thought-world of modern Christians in order to criticize elements within the form and content of their thinking which make them apathetic in the face of human suffering.

To demonstrate the adequacy of the assertion that there is such a controlling unity, I looked at three distinct stages of development within Metz's thought. Devoting a chapter to each, I argued that each is best understood as a distinct moment within Metz's critique of religious apathy. Each is found similar to the next in its attempt to criticize the conceptual parameters within which Christianity understands itself. At each stage, Metz worries that these conceptual parameters marginalize the importance of actions of discipleship in history and society and therefore contribute to Christian apathy. Each stage, as well, is found

1977, see Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 79, n. 2, part 5.

different from the next in its appropriation of new conceptual tools and abandonment of others. Let me briefly summarize these three moments of Metz's critique of religious apathy.

The first moment unrolls in Metz's early theology, where he is working within the conceptual parameters of transcendental theology. Here, he finds Thomas Aquinas' theology to be an articulation, for the first time in history, of the new liberating form of consciousness made possible by God's incarnational acceptance of the world in Jesus Christ. This consciousness, which is anthropocentric in character, breaks free from the cosmocentric definition of the self and the world implicit within Greek cosmocentrism. As a thought-form, it understands persons and the world in light of the liberating power of the Incarnation, not in light of an eternal cosmos. No longer are persons understood as numinous objects which reflect the divinity of the cosmos, nor as higher animals locked within the endless and recurring process of nature (and therefore only relatively free). They are now understood as free subjects, inter-subjectively constituted, and agents of their own history. The world is also perceived differently. No longer is it a numinous and divinized reality, but is now understood within the horizon of human subjectivity as the indispensable arena in which the free transcendental subjectivity of persons interprets and actualizes itself. History, and not cosmos, becomes the horizon within which persons understand the world.

Metz thinks this new Thomistic thought-form, with its new way of conceiving of persons and the world, is the necessary conceptual prism through which the Gospel light must shine in order for its message of love to be realized. Christians continue to be apathetic and unloving as long as they continue to interpret themselves and the world unconsciously within the context of Greek cosmology. It is Thomas who offers for the first time a new, more authentically Christian, horizon within which to understand persons and the world. Within it, persons are recognized as being essentially free in a world conceived of as history. Through love of neighbor, persons become more fully who they are as partners with God.

Hence, whereas Greek cosmocentrism stifles the recognition and realization of Christian freedom through love, anthropocentrism makes it possible. Opposing Greek cosmocentrism and pointing to Thomas' anthropocentric breakthrough, therefore, constitutes Metz's first step in clearing the way for a fuller realization of Christian love in the world. It is the first moment of his life-long attempt to understand and eliminate the causes of Christian apathy. Later in his career, he comes to the awareness that what he was trying to do during this early period was to do theology in the face of Auschwitz and not with his back to it. He was trying to answer the question of why Christians remained apathetic in the face of the Holocaust suffering of the past,

and why they continue to remain so in the face of ongoing third-world poverty and oppression.⁶⁴⁸

The second moment of Metz's critique of religious apathy concerns his appropriation of two new theological foci: hominization and eschatology. With these, he tries to develop a more adequate theological platform from which to continue his attack on Greek cosmocentrism. As well, his criticism of the role played by cosmocentric vestiges within modern theology becomes more differentiated.

Having moved beyond the parameters of transcendental theology, Metz now looks to God's promised future for the imaginative power to break Christianity free from its captivity to Greek cosmocentrism, particularly the Greek notions of self and history. These notions, Metz argues, contribute to a lack of social, political, and historical engagement on the part of modern Christianity. His proposed alternative is that Christian eschatology replace Greek cosmocentrism as the chief interpretive horizon for understanding both history and the self. For example, in terms of history, eschatology's focus on the future can bring

⁶⁴⁸Metz insinuates that his growing awareness of Christian apathy in the face of the Holocaust was the reason why he steered away from transcendental theology and tried to develop a political theology. Concerning the reason why he changed, he writes: "Today, I believe I can answer this question, although it took a long time for the answer to become clear to me. I became aware that, for me, being a Christian meant: being a Christian in the face of Auschwitz, in the face of the Holocaust" (Metz, "From a Mysticism of the Elite to a Mysticism of the People," p. 2).

about an understanding of history as open and free. It can supply the imaginative power to visualize a future which is both radically different from, yet continuous with, the present. Above all, it can summon Christians to try to approximate its promised content of peace, freedom, justice, and reconciliation in the present and therefore motivate actions of love to fight the apathy choking modern Christendom.⁶⁴⁹

Though Metz does not say so explicitly, he implies that theology's goal should be to bring about a new eschatological thought-form to replace the dominant Greek cosmocentric one which is all too prevalent in church and society. This eschatological consciousness could aid in bringing about notions of historical freedom and socio-political awareness rather than notions of historical

⁶⁴⁹ Metz believes Christian eschatology is the mother of modernity's orientation to the future. Persons recognize that history is not trapped within the cage of an eternal cosmos because of the new way of thinking about history and the future initiated by Christian eschatology. Metz writes: "The orientation of the modern era to the future and the understanding of the world as history, which results from this orientation, is based upon the biblical belief in the promises of God" (Metz, Theology, p. 87).

This is a different thesis from that propounded by Metz in his early theology. There, he developed a secularization theology which argued that secularization had its origins in God's incarnational acceptance of the world. In this second stage of development, he speaks about hominization rather than secularization. As with secularization, hominization is grounded in God as well. It originates in the freedom which is released into the world by God's eschatological promises. God's promised future is the condition of the possibility of persons feeling themselves free to shape history and the future.

entrapment and human atomization. Living within the light of God's eschatological promises, persons would recognize the freedom given to them by God and begin shaping their own history. Above all, it could offer new motivation for Christian actions aimed at socio-political critique and transformation.

Hence, by appropriating the symbols of Christian eschatology, Metz begins to develop a politically sensitive theology which aims at motivating Christian action in the world. At the same time, he challenges Christian theology to examine how it fosters notions of the self and moral action which prevent full Christian participation in history and society. He especially criticizes scholastic, neo-scholastic, and modern theology for the way they privatize the Christian message by restricting its relevance to the individual.

At this point in his career, Metz thinks he has found the key to religious apathy. Its cause lies in the privatization of the Christian message and the Christian person. From here on, his critique of religious apathy is a critique of privatization.

Metz's attention is directed to scholastic, neo-scholastic, and modern theology which he addresses under the two labels: metaphysical and modern. By metaphysical, he means both scholastic and neo-scholastic theology. And by modern, he means theology in its present transcendental, existential and personalist forms. His chief problem with

metaphysical theology is that it is captive of a metaphysic of being which plays a major role in pacifying Christians in the face of suffering. He rejects this metaphysic because it undermines the motivation to engage the world by interpreting history and the future within the horizon of an unfree and un-interruptable cosmic eternity. By subordinating history to cosmos, it is incapable of understanding history eschatologically, that is, as a freedom-filled time of anticipation of God's promised future. It is incapable of doing so because it thinks of history as static, closed, and trapped in an eternal cosmos. As such, it is incapable of recognizing history as open to the radically new.⁶⁵⁰

Metz's difficulty with modern theology is that it also pacifies Christians in the face of suffering by uncritically appropriating, from the Enlightenment, a-political and privatized understandings of the self and praxis. That is, modern theology uncritically thinks of the self as an isolated monadic subjectivity, and of praxis as the private religious decision of that subjectivity. From this, two unfortunate consequences follow. First, modern theology fails fully to recognize the dialectical unity (albeit unity-in-difference)

⁶⁵⁰In like manner, the metaphysic of being understands the future in light of a static and closed cosmos. It thinks of the future as a correlate of the present and therefore unable to embody anything new. Put simply, scholastic and neo-scholastic theology debilitate Christianity because its metaphysic is unable to recognize God's promised future as the essence of history.

between the I-thou and I-God relationships witnessed to in the New Testament. And second, it fails fully to recognize the inter-subjective nature of the Christian act of faith. It neglects the fact that standing before God and being with others in solidarity are mutually interdependent moments of the Christian act of faith.

The third and most recent moment of Metz's critique of religious apathy appears in his critique of modern bourgeois consciousness. He is now less concerned with the effect of cosmocentric vestiges on metaphysical and modern theology than he is worried about modern Christianity's uncritical appropriation of certain notions operating within bourgeois consciousness. As a whole, he thinks bourgeois consciousness has gradually come to be taken for Christian consciousness. The problem which therefore has to be rectified is Christianity's uncritical appropriation of this type of consciousness and the fatalism and apathy which it produces.⁶⁵¹

He offers examples of this blind appropriation by looking at Catholic apologetic efforts surrounding Vatican I and II. These theologies uncritically assimilated the Enlightenment notions of reason and emancipation,

⁶⁵¹The bourgeois sense of being immersed within the unending time of cosmic eternity, within "timeless-time" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 170) creates a deep and pervasive sense of fatalism and apathy. This, Metz thinks, is the driving force behind the frenzied activity of bourgeois life.

understanding them abstractly as unrelated to tradition and memory. This separation, which from a Christian perspective is separation from the knowledge gained through the suffering of the Cross, resulted in reason being understood as primarily technical reason, and historical emancipation⁶⁵² as undialectical, one-dimensional linear progress.⁶⁵³

Metz thinks that three notions, operative in modern consciousness, contribute especially to Christian apathy: the modern notions of history, reason, and religion. Each debilitates Christian engagement of the world because each is grounded in modern fatalism and apathy.⁶⁵⁴ Each, in its own

⁶⁵²Metz understands emancipation as "a kind of epoch-constituting catchword for our contemporary experience of the world. It is a universal, almost historico-philosophical category for characterizing that modern world, with its processes of liberation and enlightenment" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 119).

⁶⁵³Metz proposes that the church draw its strength from the "eschatological reservation" (the not-yet character of God's promised future) in order to criticize "all ideologies of a linear and one-dimensional emancipation" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 91). We recall Metz's conviction that theories of emancipation based on evolution, which presuppose immersion within a larger natural evolutionary process, tend to ignore the fact that advancements of freedom go hand in hand with new conflicts, disasters, and losses of freedom. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 91.

⁶⁵⁴The uniquely modern notions of history, reason, and religion attempt to compensate for the modern "experience of fragile identity," which is itself produced by the implicit certitude that human life is "caught up in the waves of an anonymous process of evolution sweeping pitilessly over everyone" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 6). All three notions are based on the unique bourgeois metaphysic called evolutionary logic.

The modern notion of history, for example, is significantly shaped by the assumption about timelessness which this modern metaphysic makes. On the unconscious level,

way, is an attempt to compensate for the implicit modern assumption that all of life is "at the mercy of a darkly speckled universe and enclosed in an endless continuum of time."⁶⁵⁵

the bourgeois mentality thinks of history as trapped within the timelessness of nature. On the conscious level, however, theories of history are developed which deny this entrapment. Hence, modern theories of history are, unconsciously, theoretical mechanisms used to combat the despair generated by evolutionary timelessness.

The modern notion of reason, as technical reason, also arises from the modern attempt to compensate for the fatalism and apathy which gnaws at the souls of modern persons. Technical reason is the uniquely modern way of gaining control over one's perceived entrapment within nature's timeless-time. Persons think they are in control when they are able, increasingly so, to dominate, manipulate, and transform nature. Technical reason emerges as the most effective way to do this.

And finally, the modern notion of religion, as natural religion, also serves to compensate for the meaningless generated by humanity's perception that it is immersed in the timelessness of nature. The comforting theory is put forth that all persons are essentially religious: that everyone has a religious core untouchable by the plights of history. Evolutionary logic, therefore, is the metaphysical basis of the bourgeois notion of religion as well.

⁶⁵⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 6. It ought to be recognized that Metz's critique of modern consciousness is not so much argued as stated. For example, the references he makes to such persons as Bloch, Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, Weber and Marcuse, to support his thesis, do not entirely perform their expected function. This is because he does not explore the respective contexts and aims of these thinkers, nor does he address how their theories are similar or different from his own. One would think that since his analysis of modern consciousness plays such a central role in his critique of Christian apathy, he would feel obliged to elaborate and defend it at length. By neglecting to do so, he leaves himself open to the accusation that he is uncritically appropriating, as the basis of his critique of modernity, a rather abstract neo-Marxist analysis, without recognizing its limitations or the limitations of his own borrowing. For example, he could be criticized for going too far in his rejection of the distorted forms of public rationality and societal praxis present within bourgeois

Metz rebukes at length Christianity's appropriation of modern theories of history because they threaten to take the place of the more authentically Christian understanding of history which is apocalyptic in nature. Modern theories of history are predominantly idealistic in nature, be they of ontological or teleological character. By positing an essence to history, however conceived, the bourgeois mentality tries to escape the implications of its own unconscious recognition that history is trapped within nature and therefore meaningless and unfree. In addition, these notions of history allow modern persons to think of themselves as somehow not responsible for historical suffering. Suffering is explained away as a natural part of nature's overall process within which history is immersed.⁶⁵⁶

culture. In doing so, is he not therefore cutting the branch on which he is standing? Does not the rejection of central elements of bourgeois culture leave Christianity without the possibility of making contact with the more creative aspects of bourgeois consciousness and its public rationality? Where, in other words, is the space to be found for a meaningful exchange between post-bourgeois Christianity and present bourgeois society?

⁶⁵⁶We recall that Metz's critique of Marxist, neo-Marxist, and Positivist notions of history was based on this assertion: that "the slightest trace of senseless suffering in the world of human experience gives the lie to all affirmative ontology and all teleology and is clearly revealed as a modern mythology" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 108).

Within Metz's corpus, the term "idealistic" is used in an extremely undifferentiated manner and seems to be used interchangeably with the terms "non-dialectical" and "abstract." Used in this manner, it refers to the tendency on the part of modern theories of emancipation to fall victim to "the spell of emancipative totality" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 122), wherein an overarching totality

Metz disapproves of the way the modern ways of thinking about history have been received by modern Christian soteriologies, where they threaten to create the same apathy among Christians as is present among secular persons. Because Christian soteriologies tend to reconcile too quickly concrete historical suffering with some larger redemptive totality, they have the effect of making Christians relatively content and undisturbed by the suffering, dangers, and threats which make up history. Above all, they detract from what Metz thinks ought to be the major motivating horizon for Christian action in the world: that of apocalyptic expectation. They destroy, especially, two related apocalyptic insights: 1. that history is a history of suffering, and 2. that Christian discipleship within history ought to take the form of a

or alibi subject assumes responsibility for the movement and direction of history. This alibi subject quickly becomes "an irrational mechanism of exoneration or guilt repression" for the human responsibility for suffering (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 127).

Simply stated, Metz uses the term "idealistic" in a pejorative sense to characterize all theories which try to explain the modern history of freedom without giving due attention to concrete history, that is, to history as "the history of human suffering." This history of suffering, Metz asserts, "is not limited to a social history of repression and a political history of violence" but equally concerns the history of "the suffering of finitude, of mortality, [and] of that inner corroding nihilism of created being" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 124). That is, modern emancipative theories do not pay sufficient attention to the "non-sense of history" and are therefore idealistic in nature. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 130.

"messianic praxis of discipleship"⁶⁵⁷ which involves sacrifice and suffering on behalf of the poor and oppressed.

Metz reprimands the bourgeois notion of reason, as primarily technical reason, for also serving, along with modern theories of history, as a compensatory mechanism for the historical impotence felt by modern persons. Technical reason becomes the new authority of modern life because it controls, manipulates, and dominates. Metz is especially concerned that the authoritative status of this technical reason has been uncritically accepted by a great many Christians. In yielding to this aspect of modernity, they have forgotten about their own authoritative type of rationality which is constituted by suffering solidarity and the memory of suffering. Christian rationality concerns receiving rather than controlling and manipulating, and its authority arises from the praxis of suffering discipleship and the knowledge of God and the self discovered therein.

Finally, Metz rejects the notion of natural religion which operates within modern consciousness, particularly because of the hidden agenda which lies behind it. Natural religion came about, he believes, in order to make religion more appealing to modern persons who no longer accept the tenets of past metaphysical religion. Where objective metaphysical religion failed, perhaps subjective

⁶⁵⁷Metz, The Emergent Church, p. 27.

anthropocentric religion would succeed. He suggests that modern Christianity perhaps accepted this anthropocentric shift too quickly and uncritically. In doing so, it failed to recognize its negative effect, most importantly, the way natural religion makes Christians apathetic. Christians have become increasingly apathetic in the face of historical suffering because anthropocentric theology teaches them that one's religious essence is permanently established regardless of historical happenings, that Christian personhood is established a-historically. The negative consequence of this perception is that history is now viewed as merely the arena within which Christians live out their lives. It is no longer the medium through which one becomes a religious subject before God, as was presumably the case with the early Christians.

This dissertation argues that the above three stages of Metz's theological development constitute three moments of his critique of religious apathy. Each is an attempt to understand and to correct non-Christian horizons of understanding and their accompanying ideas, which have the effect of marginalizing the importance of Christian action in the world and robbing it of its motivation.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁸The first moment is Metz's critique of the Christian appropriation of Greek cosmocentrism and its understanding of persons and the world. Christians who understand themselves as unfree entities, immersed within a numinous and divinized world, lose their motivation to fight against ongoing human suffering. The second is his critique of metaphysical and modern theology and its misguided use of a

B. DISTINCTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE OF THIS STUDY
IN RELATIONSHIP TO THREE OTHER STUDIES
WHICH DEAL WITH THE ISSUE OF THE UNITY
OF METZ'S CORPUS

Having outlined the above unity, I wish now to argue for the distinctiveness and relevance of this study. What follows is a discussion of the writings of three authors who have dealt with the question of the unity of Metz's corpus. I will try to demonstrate how this dissertation proposes an understanding of the unity of Metz's theological enterprise that goes beyond what they have already offered. I will look, in particular, at the works of Roger Dick Johns, Rebecca Chopp, and James William Savolainen, all of whom have given an overview of Metz's theological project from its beginning.⁶⁵⁹ Three questions will be addressed. The first is

metaphysic of being. Modern theology, using a metaphysic of being, loses sight of God's promised future as the motivating horizon for Christian action in the world. Christians feel themselves trapped within a timeless, a-historical reality which robs them of motivation to fight against historical suffering and oppression. And the third moment is Metz's critique of modern theology's unwitting appropriation of an evolutionary consciousness and its notions of history, reason, and religion. History subordinated to evolution, reason reduced to technical reason, and religion understood as private, contribute to a sense of Christian impotence within history, and therefore a feeling of apathy in the face of suffering.

⁶⁵⁹In 1984, Patricia A. Schoelles wrote a Ph.D. dissertation under the supervision of Stanley Hauervas entitled: "Discipleship and Social Ethics: A Study in the Light of the Works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Johann B. Metz" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1984). In it, she tried to show that neither Metz nor Bonhoeffer develop the notion of discipleship to its full potential. Nor do they use it "consistently as a fundamental or necessary symbol of Christian identity with important implications for Christian social ethics" (Schoelles, "Discipleship and Social Ethics,"

whether these commentators, explicitly or implicitly, recognize a controlling unity within Metz's corpus. The second asks what they take this unity to be. And the third tests the adequacy of their assertions in light of the findings of this dissertation.

1. Roger Dick Johns

The first commentator I wish to look at is Roger Dick Johns. In Man in the World: The Theology of Johannes Baptist Metz, Johns offers a critical analysis of Metz's writings from 1959 to 1972.⁶⁶⁰ By placing his thought within the larger intellectual context of transcendental Thomism, Johns claims to have found the permanent ground on which Metz's theology

p. 210). Though her dissertation shows that, and how, Metz's social ethic is capable of further development, it will not be dealt with in this analysis for several reasons. First, it does not recognize a controlling unity in Metz's theology, either explicitly or implicitly. And second, it does not offer an analysis of Metz's early theology prior to his writing of Theology of the World. It therefore does not recognize the importance of his early work, Christliche Anthropozentrik, in introducing the method of analysis he uses throughout his career.

⁶⁶⁰Man in the World was submitted in 1973 as a Ph.D. dissertation at Duke University under the supervision of Frederick Herzog and has since become an important North American source of information about Metz and political theology. See Roger Dick Johns, Man in the World: The Theology of Johann Baptist Metz, American Academy of Religion Dissertation Series No. 16, ed. H. Ganse Little (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1976).

resides.⁶⁶¹

Johns defines transcendental Thomism as a movement within modern Catholicism which tries to move theology beyond the impasse of scholasticism's⁶⁶² tendency to understand human spirituality in abstraction from the person's involvement in the social, political, and historical spheres of life.⁶⁶³ Transcendental Thomism is therefore guided by two convictions. The first is that the "anthropocentric shift" within human consciousness began with Thomas Aquinas and not with Kant. This makes Aquinas' anthropocentrism the real motivating impetus behind modern thought. The second is that modern theology has yet to assimilate, critically, the insights of Kant. It has yet "to develop Kant's transcendental insights beyond the agnostic limitations and idealistic tendencies" on which earlier Catholic criticism focused.⁶⁶⁴

According to Johns, Metz's theology stands in continuity with the objectives of two generations of transcendental Thomists. To the first generation belong the writings of Maurice Blondel and Joseph Maréchal; to the second, those of Emerich Coreth and Karl Rahner, Metz's two

⁶⁶¹"Transcendental Thomism refers to a movement begun by Maréchal, lasting roughly from 1930-1960, 'of scholars who were trying to work creatively within a Thomistic framework'" (Johns, Man in the World, p. 25).

⁶⁶²Johns, Man in the World, p. v.

⁶⁶³Johns, Man in the World, p. 1.

⁶⁶⁴Johns, Man in the World, p. v.

thesis advisors. Though recognizing that Blondel and Maréchal have no direct influence on Metz's theology, Johns thinks they are nevertheless a part of the modern Catholic intellectual horizon out of which Metz's theology arises. Blondel and Maréchal began the attempt, on the part of twentieth century Catholic thought, to appropriate the transcendental, critical, and practical insights of Kantian philosophy in order to correct scholastic theology's pre-critical view of humanity's place in the world.⁶⁶⁵ They opposed two elements, in particular, within the scholastic metaphysical tradition: its acceptance of a spirit-matter dichotomy, and its metaphysical understanding of the person-world relationship, which was in tension with the biblical view of persons as psycho-somatic unities.

Johns believes that Metz's theology is continuous with this anti-scholastic project in that it also attempts to develop an "understanding of man's place in the world which differs from that of scholastic thought."⁶⁶⁶ It participates in the modern Catholic movement away from the scholastic spiritualizing of persons by developing a theology focused on the "socio-political reality of man's incarnate existence in the world."⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁵Johns, Man in the World, p. 17.

⁶⁶⁶Johns, Man in the World, p. 2.

⁶⁶⁷Johns, Man in the World, p. 2.

In addition to arguing that Metz's theology is continuous with these broad contours of transcendental theology, Johns also believes that Metz's theology emerges as a reaction to one of the leading proponents of transcendental Thomism: Karl Rahner. Johns has few good things to say about Rahner's attempt to refashion creatively the scholastic tradition. He thinks his theology regresses from earlier efforts to bring scholasticism and Kantian critical philosophy into productive dialogue. By trying to interpret "man's being-in-the-world in terms of traditional scholastic categories," Rahner departs from "the goal of bringing the insights of critical, modern philosophy into Catholic thought."⁶⁶⁸ Instead, he revives the spirit-matter dichotomy implicit within scholastic metaphysics and develops spiritualized understandings of matter and world.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁸Johns, Man in the World, p. 53.

⁶⁶⁹Johns writes: "His anthropology centers in a spiritual subjectivism in which the world is the context for man's spiritual existence. He views man as 'the 'spiritual subject' who comes to himself in knowledge and freedom' (Schriften zur Theologie, IV, 474). In a lexicon article he defines anthropology as 'the transcendental subjectivity of religion'. He views the modern era in terms of 'the process of man's grasping himself as subject'. 'Transcendental subjectivity' is a useful phrase for describing the theology of Karl Rahner. It defines his spiritualized anthropology and indicates that the material world is not taken seriously."

"Rahner's views on spirit and matter, history and Heilsgeschichte, spiritual world and the world as environment indicate that his position has not changed significantly in his later work. In spite of the attempt to avoid a dualistic understanding of man's relation to the world, on each of these three levels there is a dualistic distinction between spirit and non-spirit. Although Rahner can speak of 'the worldliness of God' in the incarnation of Jesus (Schriften zur Theologie,

This brings us to the question of whether Johns recognizes a controlling unity within Metz's theology. Though he does not deal with this topic explicitly, it is clear he assumes unity to exist on two levels. On the first level, he assumes that Metz's theology is united by its attempt to correct the spiritualizing tendencies of scholasticism. In this sense, it is continuous with the two generations of transcendental Thomists discussed above. It takes shape as an ongoing corrective to scholasticism's tendency to lessen the importance of the material world and to focus on the spiritual nature of the self. On a second level, he assumes that Metz's theology is unified in its attempt to correct, and offer a critical alternative to, the spiritualizing scholastic remnants present within the theology of his teacher and friend, Karl Rahner.

The fact that Johns assumes the presence of this controlling unity can be demonstrated by looking at his analysis of the three levels of development encountered in Metz's theology.⁶⁷⁰ He sees each level as part of Metz's sustained attempt to correct the spiritualizing tendencies of scholasticism, particularly as these are found in Rahner's

VI, 189, 194), neither God nor man becomes truly worldly in his theology" (Johns, Man in the World, pp. 43-44).

⁶⁷⁰Johns refers to these three levels of development on pages vi, vii, 124, and 179. He examines these levels in Chapters III, IV, and V. Chapter III is entitled "Metz's Appropriation of the Transcendental Tradition," Chapter IV, "Theology of the World," and Chapter V, "Political Theology."

theology. The three levels of development he points to are: 1. early anthropocentrism and corrections to Rahner's theology, 2. development of a theology of the world, and 3. development of a political theology. I will quickly summarize each stage to show how Johns assumes the presence of this unifying thread in Metz's writings.

Metz's early theology is best understood, Johns suggests, as a reaction to the scholastic spiritualizing elements within Rahner's theology. He tries to show this by looking at Metz's two doctoral dissertations, as well as his editorial revisions of Rahner's Spirit in the World and Hearer of the Word. In Metz's dissertation on Aquinas, titled Christiliche Anthropozentrik, and especially in his revisions of Rahner's works, Johns sees clear evidence of Metz's attempt to correct weaknesses in Rahner's theological anthropology. He concludes that whereas Rahner's concept of transcendence tends towards a "radical spiritualization of man"⁶⁷¹ and a depreciation of the world,⁶⁷² Metz develops an anthropology which understands persons inter-subjectively and the world as a socio-historical reality. At one and the same time, he

⁶⁷¹Johns, Man in the World, p. vi.

⁶⁷²Concerning Rahner, Johns writes: "Man's being-in-the-world is given little consideration for its own sake. In Rahner's theology, matter, history, and the material world are to be overcome by spirit, absolute Being and God" (Johns, Man in the World, p. 79).

thinks Metz tries to avoid the "solipsistic materialism"⁶⁷³ of Heidegger's existentialism, which views transcendence only in finite terms, and the abstract other-worldly spiritualism of Rahner's transcendental theology, wherein the being-in-the-world of the human self has little significance on its own.⁶⁷⁴ Metz's critical corrective to these scholastic remnants in Rahner's theology, therefore, is to demonstrate how one's relationship with God is always mediated by one's inescapable relationship with others as well as one's concrete existence in the world. Metz develops "an understanding of man's relation to God" which "is co-constituted a-priorily with shared being in a shared world."⁶⁷⁵ This early critique of Rahner therefore forms the basis for Metz's later theology of the world and political theology.⁶⁷⁶

The second level of Metz's development, according to Johns, is a continuation of the first. Here, Metz begins constructing an alternative theological model to that of earlier scholasticism and Rahner's transcendental theology.⁶⁷⁷ In particular, he opposes "the metaphysical dualism and the rejection of the material world" which he thinks is present

⁶⁷³Johns, Man in the World, p. 80.

⁶⁷⁴Johns, Man in the World, pp. 79-81.

⁶⁷⁵Johns, Man in the World, p. 80.

⁶⁷⁶Johns, Man in the World, p. 80.

⁶⁷⁷Johns, Man in the World, p. 88.

in the theologies of his two teachers, Rahner and Coreth. In contrast, he develops an understanding of the world as a social and historical reality and an understanding of persons as constituted by their interpersonal and intersubjective freedom.⁶⁷⁸ His position now is that "man can only be free to attain his essential humanity as psycho-corporeal unity in intersubjective community with other men like himself."⁶⁷⁹ He avoids "ontological theorizing and metaphysical speculation,"⁶⁸⁰ and, in doing so, takes a first step towards the construction of a theology of the world which understands persons in terms of freedom, corporeality, and intersubjectivity. Freedom becomes the essential spiritual reality of Christian persons, actualized in and through the world as a social reality.⁶⁸¹ Johns therefore argues that Metz's theology of the world is a second attempt to correct and offer alternatives to a-historical tendencies within scholasticism and its continuing influence on Rahner's theology.

The third level of Metz's theological development, Johns thinks, is a second constructive step in his attempt to develop a this-worldly theology which is not burdened by

⁶⁷⁸Johns, Man in the World, p. 110.

⁶⁷⁹Johns, Man in the World, p. 111.

⁶⁸⁰Johns, Man in the World, p. 111.

⁶⁸¹Johns, Man in the World, p. 95.

scholastic abstraction and spiritualism. Metz now develops a "practical hermeneutical method"⁶⁸² which corresponds to the earlier "worldly focus of his theology."⁶⁸³ Drawing on Kant's focus on practical reason, he calls for a "'conversion to practice'" as the primary concern of a new political theology.⁶⁸⁴ He thinks the basic hermeneutical problem for theology is to relate theory and practice, or faith and social practice. Freedom ought to be understood in terms of social and political emancipation.

Johns characterizes this phase of Metz's theology as the development of a political hermeneutic⁶⁸⁵ which tries to be

⁶⁸²Johns, Man in the World, p. 111.

⁶⁸³Johns, Man in the World, p. 112.

⁶⁸⁴Johns, Man in the World, p. 130.

⁶⁸⁵Johns thinks that Metz's theology (up to 1973) is deficient because it lacks a concrete ecclesiology, or theological praxiology to go along with its critical and practical intention. Johns, Man in the World, p. 179. Johns therefore proposes that "the practical priority of Metz's theology needs to be taken through the Marxist critique so that it means 'social,' instead of 'ethical,' as it did for Kant" (Johns, Man in the World, p. 181). Johns thinks Metz lacks a concrete way of relating his theoretical reflections to particular social and political concerns in the world. His theology, in other words, is in danger of remaining a purely theoretical theorizing about social and political praxis while its real applicability remains confined to the realm of private and individual moral praxis.

In 1977, in Faith in History and Society, Metz did, of course, respond to this concern by Johns and others. He criticized Kant, and his own earlier theology, for not differentiating between moral and social praxis. From then on, his theology distinguished between moral and social praxis and placed social praxis and moral praxis, as the cornerstones of his political theology. Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 53-54.

"critical, practical social, political, theological, ecumenical and dialogical."⁶⁸⁶ In its persistent attempt to correct the abstractions and spiritualizing tendencies of scholasticism and transcendental theology, Metz's theology now

⁶⁸⁶Johns, Man in the World, p. 148. Here is where Johns thinks Metz runs into trouble. As with contemporary Catholic theology generally (à la Blondel, Maréchal, and Rahner), the ontologism and spiritualism of neo-Thomistic anthropology clings to Metz's attempt to build a political theology, preventing it from evolving into a fully adequate "critical, socio-political methodology" (Johns, Man in the World, pp. 112 and 129). Johns calls this the "second half of Metz's mature theology" (Johns, Man in the World, p. 121). It is interesting to note that when John tries to define what is meant by a "political hermeneutic," he quotes Dorothy Sölle (Johns, Man in the World, p. 121), who defines it as "a theological approach in which politics is understood as the inclusive and decisive arena in which Christian truth must be translated into practise" (Johns, Man in the World, p. 122).

Johns thinks Metz's political theology remains too theoretical, taking the Enlightenment critique too seriously and the Marxist critique not seriously enough. Johns, Man in the World, p. 148. Johns writes: "While Metz has been bold in his attempt to reshape the theoretical basis for contemporary Catholic theology, his inclinations run somewhat differently regarding the actual practice and government of the church. Like Rahner, when he speaks of practice in the church, he still speaks theoretically" (Johns, Man in the World, p. 148). What Metz lacks is "critical, social thought" as the basis of a "clearly structured hermeneutical method" (Johns, Man in the World, p. 149). In other words, he needs yet to develop a concrete model of the church as an institution of critical freedom. Johns, Man in the World, p. 157 as well as p. 181.

I think this critique was appropriate in 1973, given political theology's stage of development at that time. What Metz has written since, however, concerning the importance of third-world basis communities as signs of the emergence of a new church, which combines mysticism and politics, makes Johns' criticism outdated. His dissertation, including his concern for a "theological praxiology" (Johns, Man in the World, p. 178), pre-dates two of Metz's most important and mature works: Faith in History and Society (1977) and The Emergent Church (1980). Each of these works attempts to envisage a new form of Christian personhood along with a new form of Christian discipleship in the world.

becomes more explicitly a theology of contradiction and challenge. It becomes a critical theology which challenges the institutional church to become the bearer of critically responsible social action,⁶⁸⁷ to contradict paternalistic and hierarchical types of authority, and to be the agent for new ecumenical discussions.

To recapitulate, Johns recognizes three levels of development within Metz's theology, as well as a controlling unity. Each level is interpreted as a part of Metz's unbroken attempt to develop a fully anthropocentric theology in response to the modern turn to the subject. This is Metz's constructive side. In addition, each level takes shape in reaction to the spiritualism and abstraction found in scholasticism, and scholastic remnants in modern Catholic theology, particularly the theology of Karl Rahner. Each level is therefore a stage in Metz's journey away from the abstract and a-historical ways in which scholastic and transcendental theologies define "man's place in the world" (Johns).⁶⁸⁸ This is Metz's critical side.

⁶⁸⁷Johns, Man in the World, p. 144.

⁶⁸⁸"His basic project," Johns writes, "has been moving from transcendental theology to Political Theology" (Johns, Man in the World, p. 179). Johns clearly demarcates three levels of development within Metz's theology, even though he does not do so systematically and explicitly. To recapitulate, they are as follows. The first level is Metz's attempt to develop "a critical position with regard to the spiritualizing and ontologizing tendencies" within Rahner's theology. Johns, Man in the World, p. 2. Here Metz is concerned about the issues of anthropocentricity and secularization. He tries to develop an understanding in which

Here is not the place to debate the amazing statements made by Johns concerning the achievement of Rahner's theology. Our question is rather: How does this present dissertation foster an understanding of Metz's theology that goes beyond that which Johns proposed? It does so, I believe, in three ways.

In the first instance, I have tried to demonstrate that Metz's theology is best understood not simply as a reaction to scholasticism and scholastic remnants in modern Catholic theology but as a critique of religious apathy. In this sense, I interpret Metz's theology within a larger than Catholic context. Of course, I agree with Johns and demonstrate at considerable length myself, especially in Chapters II and III, that Metz's theology is an attempt to

the fully incarnate presence of Christian persons in the world as history is taken seriously. The second level is a natural outgrowth of the first. Metz tries to construct a theology of secularization which takes seriously the "socio-political implications of the Christian faith" (Johns, Man in the World, p. 2). This is his attempt to correct the spirit-world dualism which lurks beneath the surface of Rahner's theology by developing an understanding of the world as a social and historical reality, and persons as constituted by their intersubjective freedom. The third level is his creation of a Political Theology, which Johns thinks is a natural extension of Metz's earlier this-worldly focus of theology. Metz realizes that in order to develop a this-worldly theology, he must address the Kantian and Marxist critiques which dominate the modern intellectual landscape. Political theology develops a political hermeneutic or critical method which the church can use to effectively engage the world. It attempts to develop a theological method, in the form of a political hermeneutic, for understanding the Christian's place in the world, different from that developed by either scholasticism or Rahner's transcendental theology. Johns, Man in the World, p. 182.

purge Catholic theology of undesirable influences, particularly the influence of Greek cosmocentrism and its notion of an isolated and unfree self locked within a cosmic eternity. But, in addition, I argue that Metz's theology is best understood as unified by a concern which is relevant beyond the Catholic theological audience. I suggest that Metz's theology is united by the concern that modern Christianity, as a whole, is in crisis because it continues to assimilate Greek-hellenistic horizons of understanding at the expense of Jewish ones,⁶⁸⁹ and that the consequence of this for all of modern Christendom is apathy in the face of human suffering.

I have argued, therefore, that there is a deeper and more personal motivation behind Metz's theology than simply its attempt to move modern Catholic theology beyond the impasse of scholasticism, and that this is what unifies Metz's theology over the past thirty years. I tried to show the presence of a thread of continuity within his writings which Metz himself only recently has become aware of. He refers to this thread as the "post-Auschwitz" context of his theology. In 1972, Johns demonstrated no awareness of this context, perhaps because Metz, in his writings to that point, displayed no awareness of it himself. Only since 1981 has Metz

⁶⁸⁹Metz, "Politische Theologie," in Theologie der Befreiung und Marxismus, ed. Peter Rottländer, p. 180, and "Unterwegs," p. 212.

recognized and written about the biographical nature of his theology, interpreting it as an attempt to account for why there was, and continues to be, Christian silence in the face of Holocaust and third-world suffering. He now understands his theology to be, from the beginning, an attempt to track Christian apathy to its hidden lair within Greek and modern ways of being in the world. This dissertation tries to trace the presence of this central concern through the three stages of his theological development and concludes that it indeed forms the unifying basis of his theological production to the present.

The second way this study proposes an understanding of Metz's theology distinct from that offered by Johns is by pointing to a unity of approach as well as intention. Not only is Metz's theology unified by its intention to answer the question of Christian apathy but it is one, as well, in its method of analysis. At each stage, Metz analyses a particular form of consciousness which negatively influences Christianity, and tries to identify both its form and content. For example, in Chapter II, I studied the distinction Metz drew between the thought-form and thought-content of Aquinas' theology. His conviction was that Christianity should not allow itself to continue to be trapped within a Greek way of

being in the world (a cosmocentric thought-form⁶⁹⁰), but rather should adopt a more fully Christian way of being in the world by way of an anthropocentric thought-form, a thought-form initiated by the Jesus-event and made philosophically explicit, for the first time, in the theology of Aquinas. Whereas Greek consciousness gives rise to an understanding of persons as objects trapped within an eternal cosmos, Christian consciousness gives rise to an understanding of persons as essentially free subjects within a world understood as history. Whereas the former understands God's presence as mediated through a divinized nature, the latter sees God's presence mediated through love of neighbor. Whereas the former creates apathy, the latter makes love the vehicle both for coming to know God and for realizing one's full human potential.

In stage two of his development, Metz continues to attack Christianity's unwitting appropriation of this cosmocentric thought-form, especially vestiges of it which find their way into scholastic, neo-scholastic and modern theology. He now intimates that this thought-form gives rise to a particular philosophical content (thought-content) which he calls a "metaphysic of being." This metaphysic constitutes the philosophical substratum of much of scholastic, neo-

⁶⁹⁰Thought-form is "the encompassing horizon in which everything for the first time receives its mental image." It is "the unifying, uniform arche out of which all material multiplicity originates" (Metz, CA, p. 31).

scholastic, transcendental, personalist, and existentialist theologies. Its effects are similar to those pointed to in his earlier critique. The use of a metaphysic of being results in continued atomization of the human self, subordination of history to cosmos, and the neutralizing of God's promised future as the motivating horizon for Christian action. Christians continue to understand themselves and their morality privatistically and the world a-historically, with the result being the present negation of Christian freedom within history and a perpetuation of Christian apathy in the face of suffering.

Finally, in his recent theology, Metz attacks the modern form of consciousness (thought-form) which he calls evolutionary consciousness. By blindly accepting this unthematic horizon of understanding as their own, Christians unconsciously experience despair and apathy. This modern evolutionary "feeling for life"⁶⁹¹ is not so different from the Greeks'. It constitutes an a priori horizon of understanding in which persons are unconsciously convinced their lives are "at the mercy of darkly speckled universe and enclosed in an endless continuum of time."⁶⁹² Just as the historical consciousness of Greek cosmocentrism subordinates history to cosmos, defines knowledge in terms of speculative

⁶⁹¹Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 6.

⁶⁹²Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 6.

contemplation (via a metaphysic of being), and grounds religion in nature, modern consciousness subordinates history to natural evolution, defines knowledge in terms of technical rationality, and grounds religion in human nature. In both instances, the freedom which the Gospel gives Christians to engage and transform history is subverted. The blind assimilation of these thought-forms therefore robs Christians of hope and motivation to live in solidarity with the less than fortunate of the world.

Hence, the second contribution the present dissertation makes is to show that Metz's theology is unified not only by its ceaseless attack on Christian apathy but, as well, by its locating the source of this apathy in non-Christian types of historical consciousness which debilitate Christian action in the world. His theology becomes a sustained attack on ways of being in the world (thought-forms) which give rise to implicit certitudes about the self and the world (thought-contents) which shape Christian action. Hence, the roots of Christian apathy are found in those implicit axioms which modern persons and Christians share about the self, history, reason, and religion. These ideas, of which Christians are so completely convinced that they are unaware of them, silently inject doses of despair and apathy, robbing persons of the hope and expectancy required to motivate actions of sacrificial love in history and society.

And finally, the third way this dissertation offers

a distinctive view of Metz's theology is by deflating the importance of Metz's critique of Rahner as a unifying thread in his writings. Though Metz's early theology does take shape in reaction to spiritualizing tendencies found in Rahner's theology, his later theology, and his theological project as a whole, is best understood as a thought-experiment in post-Auschwitz and post-idealistic theology.⁶⁹³ It is a critique of the privatizing and a-historical tendencies in most of modern theology, as well as a thought-experiment in socially critical and transformative theology.

Though there is not space here to discuss the complex and standing relationship between political and transcendental theology, suffice it to say that Metz's theology is best understood as continuing to evolve in critical dialectical tension with that of Rahner's theology, not in opposition to it. It attempts to criticize and correct⁶⁹⁴ elements in Rahner's theology which too readily leave themselves open to misinterpretation and misuse.⁶⁹⁵ It is guided, therefore, by a critical revisionist intention. It wants to safeguard as well

⁶⁹³Metz describes his theology as an attempt "to do theology on the other side of idealism" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 53).

⁶⁹⁴Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 13, n. 15.

⁶⁹⁵Metz worries especially about Rahner's theory of anonymous Christianity and the way it can be misinterpreted as legitimizing a privatized and a-historical understanding of religious identity. Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 159-161.

as critically revise the transcendental theological paradigm.⁶⁹⁶

Johns' study is therefore not so much mistaken as it is incomplete concerning its analysis of the Metz-Rahner relationship. It focuses too much on what is only one side of the dialectical relationship between the two: on how Metz's theology remains the same in its reaction to the alleged spiritualizing tendencies of transcendental theology.⁶⁹⁷ It fails to recognize how Metz also tries to preserve and build on the post-idealistic elements in Rahner's theology, giving particular attention to the way Rahner has developed a "narrative, biographical dogmatic theology" which gives theological expression to the religious experiences of ordinary Christians.⁶⁹⁸ Thus, Rahner is for Metz as much a constant mentor, even after his death, as he is a theologian with problematic epistemological tendencies.⁶⁹⁹ He still wants to learn from Rahner even though at times he is compelled to

⁶⁹⁶Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 211.

⁶⁹⁷The most that Johns thinks Metz has appropriated from Rahner is a "creative attitude toward the scholastic tradition" (Johns, Man in the World, p. 79).

⁶⁹⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 224.

⁶⁹⁹Metz's main worry, concerning Rahner's theory of anonymous Christianity, is that it is based on an epistemological idealism which assumes that truth is correlative with pure reason, and therefore that some persons are better equipped (intellectually) than others to know the truths of the faith. See Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 158-161.

go directly against him.

This dissertation therefore brings the discussion about the unity of Metz's theology a step beyond Johns' conclusions in three ways. First, it argues that the primary unifying theme which ties Metz's theology together is the attempt to address the question of Christian apathy. This question arises out of Metz's experiences of Christian apathy in the face of the Holocaust suffering and continuing third-world suffering. Second, it proposes that Metz's theology is united also in the way it attempts to answer this question. At each stage, he focuses on the form and content of the historical consciousness which constitutes the horizon within which Christians understand themselves, the Gospel, and history and society. He does this in order to understand how apathy is created and why it continues. And third, it suggests that Metz's theology is related to Rahner's in a way that cannot be equated with a simple negation. Rather, his theology continues to develop in dialectical tension to the theology of his former teacher and friend.⁷⁰⁰

2. James William Savolainen

I turn now to a second interpreter of Metz's theology: James William Savolainen. Following the same procedure as above, I will ask three questions: first, whether explicitly

⁷⁰⁰Metz, "Unterwegs," p. 211.

or implicitly he recognizes a controlling unity within Metz's corpus; second, what this controlling unity is; and third, how adequate his findings are in light of this dissertation's assertion that Metz's critique of religious apathy is the single most important unifying theme in his theology.

In a 1982 Th.D. dissertation entitled "Theology in the Shadow of Marx," Savolainen focuses on "two contemporary theological currents that attempt to establish an internal relationship to Marxist theory": the political theology of J.B. Metz and the liberation theology of Hugo Assmann.⁷⁰¹ In reference to Metz, Savolainen argues that the Marxist theory-practice relationship is "the explicit hermeneutical nucleus" around which Metz develops his political theology, especially as he comes to understand this relationship through the materialistic utopianism of Ernst Bloch and the Frankfurt school's understanding of "praxis."⁷⁰² Given this basic

⁷⁰¹James William Savolainen, "Theology in the Shadow of Marx: The Theory-Praxis Relationship in the Political Theology of Johann Baptist Metz and in the Liberation Theology of Hugo Assmann" (Th.D. diss., The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1982), p. 3.

⁷⁰²Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 5. Savolainen thinks that "praxiologists of the 'young Marx' line of interpretation, including members of the Frankfurt School tradition," fail to recognize how between 1842 and 1846 Marx completed his long march out of idealism. This means that after 1846 Marx no longer understood the theory-practice relationship in terms of critique. He now thematized it in terms of a "coherent and comprehensive social theory and in a scientific method of analysis guided by that theory" (Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 251).

Savolainen implicates Metz in the tendency to separate the theory-practice relationship from Marx's scientific theory of history. Hence, Metz, like the Frankfurt school thinkers,

conviction, he examines the "internal logic" and "structural interconnections" of these two theologies in order to judge, from a Marxist point of view⁷⁰³, the adequacy of their appropriation of the theory-practice dialectic.⁷⁰⁴

Savolainen designates three "phases" of development in Metz's theology: 1. the formal anthropocentrism of his early phase, where Metz is working within the parameters of transcendental Thomism, 2. the eschatological theology of history of his second phase, which has a critical-practical

remains tied to the idealism from which Marx himself successfully escaped. Instead of developing a detailed analysis of political economy and class structure, Metz offers only a philosophical and theological critique of culture. Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 450, n. 340.

⁷⁰³Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 11. "The present work is not a theological study, but rather a study of theology that is intended to be a Marxist analysis and critique of two important religious ideologies that nourish groups of progressive Latin American Christians today" (Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 13).

⁷⁰⁴Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 8. Savolainen's study is divided into three chapters. Each examines how the theory-practice relationship is understood within the writings of Karl Marx, J.B. Metz, and Hugo Assmann, respectively.

Savolainen's general appraisal of Metz's appropriation is that it is too much focused on apologetic and hermeneutical interests and therefore remains too theoretical. It fails to develop a concrete political ethic to guide progressive and revolutionary Christian action (Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 452) because it does not recognize the necessity of a Marxist social analysis, an analysis scientifically oriented and directed towards social and political transformation. Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 6. Savolainen says that political theology, as a "theological hermeneutics of society" lacks "the socio-analytical instruments...required for resolving issues of political strategy and tactics" (Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 452).

intention (a first phase of political theology), and 3. the practical fundamental theology of his third phase, which takes shape as a theology of the subject (a second phase of political theology).⁷⁰⁵

What is relevant to my own study, which asks the question of a controlling unity within Metz's writings, is that Savolainen thinks Metz's writings are united by a single theme. Assuming more than arguing for its presence, he thinks to find it in Metz's sustained attempt to develop a Christian apologetic in front of modern consciousness.⁷⁰⁶ He identifies two different apologetic strategies. The first is Metz's development of "an apologetic thesis of secularization."⁷⁰⁷ Here Metz tries to demonstrate the importance of Christianity to modern secular culture. The second is his attempt to fashion a political theology which functions as a Christian apologetic in front of the Marxist critique of religion.⁷⁰⁸ Each apologetic effort tries to relate Christianity to the dominant mode of consciousness present

⁷⁰⁵Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp. 10 and 252.

⁷⁰⁶Savolainen writes: "As has been repeatedly stated in our analysis of Metz's theology, the apologetic intention predominates in his work" (Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 323). See pp. 304, 323, 324, 345, 346 for other references which refer to this unity of apologetic intention.

⁷⁰⁷Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 269.

⁷⁰⁸Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 299.

within contemporary European society.⁷⁰⁹ Stages of development emerge as he changes his interpretation of what constitutes this modern consciousness and, therefore, of what constitutes an effective apologetic strategy.

To trace the development of Metz's apologetic efforts, and to expose the theoretical origins of each stage, Savolainen focuses on three of Metz's major works: Christliche Anthropozentrik (1962), Theology of the World (1968), and Faith in History and Society (1977). In relationship to each work, and at each phase of development, Savolainen initiates a three-fold critical analysis. He tries to determine what elements constitute the conceptual core of each phase, how this conceptual core relates to the dialectical unity of the theory-practice relationship, and how successful this effort is in internally assimilating the Marxist theory-practice relationship.⁷¹⁰ The results of Savolainen's three-fold analysis are as follows.

The conceptual core of Metz's first phase of theological development is found in his "reception and re-working of the Kantian transcendental method."⁷¹¹ In order to develop an apologetic response to modern secularization, Metz fashions a theology of secularization whose central assertion

⁷⁰⁹Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 323.

⁷¹⁰Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp. 251-252.

⁷¹¹Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 276.

is that "the Enlightenment's turn to a-priori subjectivity" is based on an anthropocentric thought-form initiated by revelation and given methodological articulation, for the first time, in the theology of Thomas Aquinas.⁷¹²

Savolainen recognizes no direct theological appropriation of the Marxist theory-practice relationship at this phase of Metz's development. This is because Metz is operating entirely within the arena of "Kantian pure theoretical reason."⁷¹³ However, he thinks a concept of practice is "latently present" in Metz's thought, because of the way he understands persons as self-determined through concrete actions in the world.⁷¹⁴ This conviction creates a tension in Metz's thought which eventually "facilitates his emigration to the New World of 'praxis'."⁷¹⁵

From the standpoint of Marx's definition of the theory-practice relationship, Savolainen thinks Metz is far too confined within the arena of neo-Kantian epistemology, to be able to develop an appreciation for the constitutive role played by social practice in human cognition. He faults Metz for absolutizing a "subjective idealistic anthropology"⁷¹⁶ and

⁷¹²Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 273.

⁷¹³Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 277.

⁷¹⁴Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp. 174-175, n. 69.

⁷¹⁵Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 277.

⁷¹⁶Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 280.

for having an abstract understanding of history.⁷¹⁷ In thinking of history in terms of a theology of history,⁷¹⁸ Metz remains unaware of how thought-forms and thought-contents are shaped by concrete historical existence, and, in particular, of how the anthropocentric thought-form with which he is concerned has itself developed "out of the contradictions of emergent European capitalism as a force of ideological struggle against heteronomous feudal authoritarianism."⁷¹⁹ Metz's apologetic strategy is therefore still too much determined by transcendental Thomism for it to be open to a rethinking of the theory-practice relationship.

The conceptual core of Metz's second phase of theological development consists of four key elements: the future, the subject as agent, ideology critique, and the theory-practice relationship.⁷²⁰ The appropriation of these elements constitutes Metz's first attempt to develop an explicit Christian apologetic in front of the Marxist critique of religion. His apologetic strategy shifts from trying to base modern secular consciousness on the anthropocentrism of Christian revelation to basing the modern openness to the future on the horizon of hope made possible by God's

⁷¹⁷Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 281.

⁷¹⁸Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 279.

⁷¹⁹Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 280.

⁷²⁰Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 310, n. 127.

eschatological promises. A brief discussion of each of the above four elements will show how, according to Savolainen, this stage of Metz's theology is a second attempt at fashioning a Christian apologetic in front of a modern consciousness dominated by Marxist concerns.

The first constitutive element is the primacy of the future, which becomes for Metz "the all-encompassing horizon for theological reflection."⁷²¹ There are two reasons for the future assuming this pivotal role within Metz's theology at this time. The first is his conviction, nurtured in him by Bloch and others, that the future has become, since the Enlightenment, a central feature of modern historical consciousness.⁷²² The second is his belief that the roots of this future-oriented modern age lie in the future-oriented promises contained in Christian eschatology.⁷²³

The second core element is Metz's revised understanding of the human self. He now defines the self in terms of socially transformative actions which anticipate the radically new future promised by God. Persons are no longer creatures who merely contemplate the world.⁷²⁴ They are agents of historical change. The primacy of God's promised future

⁷²¹Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 312.

⁷²²Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 313.

⁷²³Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 316.

⁷²⁴Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 319.

requires the primacy of transformative actions within history. The future of universal peace and justice is only realized through actions which transform history and society.

An eschatological understanding of the future is the third core element in Metz's early political theology. To help Christianity escape the Marxist ideology critique, he points to the unique character of the Christian eschatological future as an absolute future. As absolute, as radically new and different, it judges every other future as provisional, incomplete, and always in danger of ideologically legitimizing particular interest groups and political platforms.

The fourth and most important core element concerns Metz's appropriation of the theory-practice relationship as the foundation of his new political theology. Though adopting more of a Kantian than a Marxist model,⁷²⁵ this relationship is the central axis around which Metz's early political theology revolves.⁷²⁶ It stands as the basis of a now more "practice-oriented theory of history"⁷²⁷ and a more historically determined anthropocentrism which gives priority to human agency in history.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁵Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp. 345-346.

⁷²⁶Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 346.

⁷²⁷Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 302.

⁷²⁸Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp. 300 ff.. "The free subjectivity of the subject is now seen as not merely transcendental self-reflection, but above all as the active involvement of human beings in transforming nature and

Savolainen thinks each of these core elements indicates a re-reading of modern culture and a resultant change in apologetic strategy. Due to his relationship with Ernst Bloch, and his participation in Marxist Christian dialogue, Metz abandons his neo-Kantian reading of contemporary culture, understood in terms of secularization, as well as his attempt to develop a theology of secularization. He now understands modernity in terms of humanity's newly found openness to the future and its belief in the capacity of human actions to change history. Replacing secularization with hominization, Metz tries to "reestablish the connection between faith and social practice"⁷²⁹ by showing that religion is not simply a superstructure which legitimizes select power structures and social practices, but offers a horizon of hope, in the form of God's eschatological promises, to motivate and guide Christian actions towards socio-political transformation.⁷³⁰

Metz's understanding of the theory-practice relationship at this stage, Savolainen thinks, is "decisively determined by his rehabilitation of Kant's philosophy of pure

in creating their own history" (Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 303).

⁷²⁹Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 333.

⁷³⁰Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp. 338-339.

practical reason."⁷³¹ Although the motivation for this rehabilitation comes from his exposure to "Marxism and para-Marxist schools of thought,"⁷³² he fails to develop anything more than an tenuous relationship to Marx's understanding of the theory-practice dialectic. There is formal agreement with Marx, for example on the importance of the future in setting in motion actions aimed at social transformation, but material differences remain decisive.⁷³³ The same holds true for his understanding of praxis. Though both Metz and Marx agree that praxis is the medium for the discovery of truth, their understanding of it is so different that in many respects they hold "diametrically opposed"⁷³⁴ views. In both cases, Savolainen thinks Metz has only "formally approximated the conceptual structure of Marx's thought while inserting into it theological content."⁷³⁵

Savolainen concludes that Metz's success in appropriating the theory-practice relationship, at this phase, is seriously limited by its attempt at a "precipitous amalgamation of two contradictory philosophical outlooks."⁷³⁶

⁷³¹Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 345.

⁷³²Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 341.

⁷³³Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 356.

⁷³⁴Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 368.

⁷³⁵Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 368.

⁷³⁶Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 392.

He tries unsuccessfully, and somewhat naively,⁷³⁷ to develop, as the basis of his theology, an understanding of the theory-practice relationship whose theoretical origins lie in both Kant and Marx. He tries to understand this relationship in terms of a "Kantian inspired epistemology and its philosophical model of pure practical reason" as well as in terms of a para-Marxist understanding of praxis, inherited from the Frankfurt School tradition and Bloch's materialistic philosophy of the future.⁷³⁸

Because Metz's understanding of this relationship differs widely from that held by Marx, Metz's attempt to use it in developing an apologetic in the face of modern sensibilities dominated by the Marxist critique of religion is seriously debilitated.⁷³⁹ Savolainen thinks Metz's attempt

⁷³⁷Savolainen writes: "The internal strains which afflict the apologetic strategy of Metz's initial elaboration of political theology were due to a great extent to his insufficient grasp of the difficulties and complexities that are involved in the theory-practice problem" (Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 392).

⁷³⁸Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 373.

⁷³⁹We recall that Savolainen's critique is from a non-theological perspective, that is, from the perspective of a study of what the young Marx wrote about the theory-practice relationship.

Savolainen outlines five ways in which Metz thinks he has made political theology immune from ideological suspicion: "(1) its 'conscience of the future' is not otherworldly, but rather constitutes the homeland of hope for the future of present history; (2) its hope is irrevocably linked to transformative praxis; (3) this praxis, and not 'pure theory,' is the social medium in which truth is appropriated and verified; (4) contrary to ideologies like Marxism that project their utopias onto the future by prolonging in existing particulars, political theology is a negative theology of the

is flawed in three main ways. First, by grounding the impetus for social praxis within the abstract realm of God's promised future, Metz mystifies what is for Marx the concrete historical impetus behind social aspirations and ideals. This impetus originates, for Marx, not in some absolute future outside of history but from within "the contradictions of the social practice of the masses and millennia of historical development."⁷⁴⁰ Second, Metz attempts to found the modern orientation to the future on revelation rather than on history. In doing so, he grounds the thought-forms of historical epochs, including the modern one, in a mystery which is in principle inexplicable.⁷⁴¹ And third, Metz unwittingly enthrones the bourgeois subject as the free agent of modernity. Without realizing it, he thinks of the subject abstractly along the lines of classical German idealism as an individual moral agent, rather than concretely as a socio-political agent who is free to invest capital and to purchase the labour power of the working class.⁷⁴² Each flaw debilitates

future whose imperatives lack all empirically derived contents and, consequently, can offer no concrete program for political action and (5) it stands critically above every possible 'subject' of history, whether it be defined as race, nation or class, for political theory serves only the interests of the universal and absolute future of all people rather than sectorial interests" (Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp. 381-382).

⁷⁴⁰Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 224.

⁷⁴¹Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 384.

⁷⁴²Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 384.

Metz's "second apologetic strategy"⁷⁴³ to relate Christianity meaningfully to modern historical consciousness and its orientation to the future.

The conceptual core of Metz's third phase of theological development⁷⁴⁴ concerns his attempt to refine political theology as a Christian apologetic in the front of the Marxist ideology critique. This involves further developing a uniquely Christian understanding of praxis, while at the same time avoiding theological appropriation of an understanding of praxis held by two major contemporary meta-theories of religion: the bourgeois evolutionary interpretation of the world, and that of dialectical materialism.⁷⁴⁵ To succumb to these understandings of religious praxis would result in the aborting of Christianity's own unique understanding of praxis as a process of conversion to a life of discipleship. This discipleship is expressed in socio-critical action, evoked through subversive memories communicated in Christian narrative.⁷⁴⁶ The process of

⁷⁴³Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 382.

⁷⁴⁴Savolainen restricts his analysis to Chapter IV of Metz's Faith in History and Society because it is here that Metz most clearly attempts a second sketch of political theology and, as well, introduces a more differentiated notion of praxis. Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp. 406-407.

⁷⁴⁵Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 409.

⁷⁴⁶Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 409.

conversion, or "faith-praxis,"⁷⁴⁷ is what now constitutes, for Metz, Christian personhood per se.

Savolainen thinks Metz's understanding of the theory-practice relationship, at this phase, is still influenced by Kant more than by Marx. Even though Metz expands his understanding of praxis to include both moral and social praxis, correcting his earlier tendency to interpret "Marx's social praxis in terms of Kant's moral praxis,"⁷⁴⁸ his understanding of it, like that of Kant's, is still "constructed by a method of abstraction that eliminates all empirical, social and historical determinants...[from] the process of constructing universalizable maxims for moral judgement."⁷⁴⁹ In other words, his understanding of Christian praxis, as both moral and social, is still governed by ethical determinations which "cannot be accounted for by...social determinants."⁷⁵⁰ The moral determinants of Christian social praxis are thus grounded in the collective Christian memory of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, or, simply put, in God's will. As such, they are completely self-sufficient, self-grounded, a priori, and absolute. This becomes the case in spite of Metz's assertion that God's will

⁷⁴⁷Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 416.

⁷⁴⁸Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 411.

⁷⁴⁹Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 411.

⁷⁵⁰Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp. 412-413.

is always mediated through a religious moral praxis of conversion and discipleship. Thus, Metz is still more a Kantian than a Marxist because he subordinates praxis to a priori theory,⁷⁵¹ regardless of assertions to the contrary.⁷⁵²

Savolainen's critical assessment of Metz's recent theology, from the standpoint of Marx's understanding of the theory-practice relationship, is therefore predictable. His critique is four-fold. First, he thinks that petty bourgeois interests lie behind Metz's political theology. For this, he gives two reasons: on the one hand, Metz rejects any particular class of historical subjects (including the middle-class and working class subject) as the true subjects of history, and on the other hand, he believes that God alone is the real subject of history. Positing a non-historical subject as the agent of history reveals that the real subject behind Metz's mystical-political practice is the petty bourgeoisie.⁷⁵³ Second, he thinks Metz's theology is

⁷⁵¹Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 424.

⁷⁵²Savolainen concludes: "Therefore, the precise character of Metz's external relationship to Marx is that of contradiction. Political theology's 'primacy of praxis' is not only saying something other than Marx's definition of that primacy, nor is it a theoretical contribution that could be added as a 'supplement' to Marx's thought to make it more broad, but rather it is fundamentally and irreconcilably opposed to the Marxist theory-practice dialectic. Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp 426-427.

⁷⁵³Savolainen writes: "We conclude, therefore, that just as Metz uncovered the secret enthronement of a concrete class subject (the bourgeoisie) in the abstract 'free subject' of Enlightenment philosophies and progressive contemporary theologies with the help of a Marxist-inspired socio-

thoroughly idealistic, in spite of its claims to the contrary. It is so because of its persistent adherence to an un-derived, universal and unconditional truth (revelation) which precludes and is logically prior to any concrete social praxis.⁷⁵⁴ The "'realization', 'actualization', 'incarnation' or 'breaking through'" of God's promised future, which Savolainen refers to as an abstract, theoretical mystery, is clearly prior to social praxis and not vice versa.⁷⁵⁵ There is, therefore, no

historical analysis, so also his 'divine universal subject,' when subjected to Marxist class analysis, reveals the unmistakable characteristics of the petty bourgeoisie. Here we have the 'concrete social subject' of Metz's political theology, the class essence of the subjects of mystical-political praxis who, through conversion to discipleship, correspond to his concept of God. The articulation of universal and unconditional interests in political theology serves as an ideological reproduction of the specific needs and class interests of the petty bourgeoisie in monopoly capitalism on the level of Christian symbols and myths" (Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 434).

⁷⁵⁴Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 437. Savolainen writes: "His manoeuver with a 'differentiated' understanding of praxis (first Kant, then Marx) has failed to convince us that he has really transgressed the frontiers of idealism: praxis has the primacy over theory to the extent that praxis is not merely the social praxis of Marx, but rather that it derives its universal and supra-class interests from the revelation that is communicated in the stories of the Bible. This revelation is an unconditional truth that is neither produced by nor dissolved in the determinants of social practice. Consciousness, whether it be rational (Kant) or mystical (Metz), has the primacy over social being, ideals are ultimately determinative of material practice, the ought is split from the is in which it is to be eventually 'incarnated' and the whole is prior to and independent of its parts" (Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 439).

⁷⁵⁵Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 443. Savolainen thinks social praxis ought to be "the (real) source and criterion for theological truth claims" (Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 437).

dialectical relating of theory and praxis at all on Metz's part. Theory, in the form of a "socially non-derivable truth," is prior to praxis, even if this truth is always "mystically appropriated in religious praxis."⁷⁵⁶ His third criticism therefore follows from the first two. It is that Metz's political theology "represents, under the cover of universal interests, the needs and interests of...[the petty-bourgeois] class as it exists today under the condition of state-monopoly capitalism."⁷⁵⁷ In the final analysis, political theology is "a particular expression of petty bourgeois ideology."⁷⁵⁸ And his final criticism is that "the idealistic, undialectical and petty bourgeois essence"⁷⁵⁹ of political theology leads Metz to develop a social critique which focuses on the "philosophical or theological critique of culture," rather than on the political economy and class structure of modern society.⁷⁶⁰ The overall result is a practical deficit within political theology which is dangerous because it diverts energies of the working poor away from their specific class interests, focusing their attention on

⁷⁵⁶Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 440.

⁷⁵⁷Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 445.

⁷⁵⁸Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 445.

⁷⁵⁹Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 450.

⁷⁶⁰Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 450, n. 340.

what Savolainen calls a utopian illusion,⁷⁶¹ the illusion that the church could become a classless enclave in the midst of the social contradictions of real life.⁷⁶² Not only does Metz's theology fail to assimilate Marx's understanding of the theory-practice relationship, therefore, at this or any other stage of its development, but it threatens to create an "innerworldly otherworldliness" which could become the very 'opium' of the masses which it wants to eradicate.⁷⁶³ Metz's recent apologetic effort in the face of the Marxist ideology critique is, therefore, according to Savolainen, a colossal failure.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶¹Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 451.

⁷⁶²Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 452.

⁷⁶³Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, pp. 551-552.

⁷⁶⁴An insightful analysis and provocative critique of Metz's theology, from quite a different perspective than Savolainen's, can be found in John Cobb's book, Process Theology as Political Theology (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1982). Because Cobb does not address the issue of a controlling unity within Metz's theology, it will not be dealt with at length in this thesis. However, allow me to offer the following observations. Cobb and Metz differ, chiefly, over the task of theology. Metz thinks its task is to offer a practical interpretation of the Gospel while Cobb thinks it is to give greater conceptual clarity to basic Christian affirmations. Cobb, Process Theology, p. 45. Cobb cogently argues that theology should engage in the conceptual and discursive questioning of the meaning and truth of Christian images, and of how these images correlate or do not correlate to reality. Cobb, Process Theology, pp. 72-73. Cobb thinks Metz's attempt to make theology "subject to the primacy of praxis" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 50) causes him too quickly to dismiss theoretical reason as a resource for combatting apathy and motivating Christian actions. The crisis of Christianity arises, therefore, for Cobb, not so much from the fact that it ignores its practical

The above analysis of Metz's three phases of development indicates that Savolainen does find a unifying thread in Metz's theology. Although he assumes its presence more than argues it, he intimates that this continuity resides in Metz's attempt to develop a Christian apologetic in front of modern consciousness. He interprets Metz's early theology, for example, as an attempt to ground modern consciousness, characterized by secularization, in God's incarnational acceptance of the world. God's acceptance of

core, as Metz believes, but because it lacks conceptual clarity concerning its major tenets, particularly its notions of God and history. Metz is reprimanded, therefore, for rejecting, too quickly, overviews of history, larger explanatory contexts, or meta-theories, in favour of a narrative and practical Christianity. Cobb thinks he is wrong in assuming that faith opposes the overview quest simply because some, if not most, overviews have proven inadequate. Cobb, Process Theology, p. 139. What is required, instead, Cobb believes, is a new and more adequate overview of history. He thinks beginnings in this direction have been made by Alfred North Whitehead in his book The Adventures of Ideas. Cobb, Process Theology, p. 143.

I think it is true that Metz has no explicitly developed theoretical overview of history. But I also think Cobb overlooks an important point. Metz does interpret history from a larger theoretical perspective, from an apocalyptic rather than an evolutionary perspective. He interprets history apocalyptically as a time of suffering and imminent expectation, trying to draw out the implications of Ernst Käsemann's conviction that the Jewish-Christian apocalyptic vision is the mother of Christian theology. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 175. The chief consequence of this type of theology of history, Metz hopes, is that Christians will be motivated to live in solidarity with the poor. Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 177. On the other hand, Metz worries that when history is interpreted within the context of a larger explanatory framework the result is "a casuistic cover-up... (of) suffering" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 128). History, as a history of concrete suffering, is lost sight of.

the world's secularity gives rise to the anthropocentric form of consciousness on which modern consciousness is based. Metz's second phase is likewise an attempt to show that modern consciousness, now characterized by its orientation to the future, is rooted in God's eschatological promises. And the most recent phase yields an attempt to relate modern consciousness, now understood primarily in terms of the modern appropriation of the Marxist dialectical relating of theory and practice, to an eschatological Christianity which understands discipleship in terms of a socio-political following of Jesus.

Metz's theology, therefore, is interpreted as two attempts to relate Christianity to modernity. The first tries to relate secularization to Thomistic Christianity. The second, beginning around 1966 and extending to the present, tries to assimilate theologically the Kantian and Marxist insight into the importance of the theory-practice relationship. Metz does this in order to counter the two-fold Marxist critique that Christianity undermines human engagement of history, and that, as a superstructure, it legitimizes select power structures and social practices.

The point of this analysis, thus far, is not to enter into debate with Savolainen concerning how well he understands Metz's theological appropriation of Marx's understanding of the theory-practice relationship. It is rather to demonstrate how, in the course of his study, he assumes the presence of

a unifying theme, and to question the adequacy of this assumption in light of my assertion that Metz's theology is united by his critique of religious apathy. Before commenting on the adequacy of Savolainen's findings, concerning the unity of Metz's writings, let me say how I think he has provided a deepened understanding of Metz's theology.

Savolainen's study ought to be commended for the following reasons. First, it demonstrates the contextual nature of Metz's theology by placing it within the context of the Marxist-Christian dialogue taking place in Europe in the early and mid 1960's. It correctly recognizes the way political theology has been at the forefront of theology's attempt to answer the Marxist critique of religion as ideology. Second, it shows that Metz's particular attempt to answer this critique takes shape in the form of a political theology which tries to assimilate internally some features of the Marxist understanding of the theory-practice relationship. Although Savolainen recognizes that this concern was only latently present in Metz's early theology, he is correct in pointing out how it becomes a central theme of his later political theology which strives to make itself "subject to the primacy of praxis."⁷⁶⁵ And third, Savolainen exposes differences between Metz's understanding and implementation of the theory-practice relationship and Marx's.

⁷⁶⁵Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 50.

Whereas Metz internally assimilates the priority of practice into theology under the inspiration of Marx, yet conceives of it and implements it more along the lines of the Kant of pure practical reason, Marx thinks of it in terms of a social, political, and economic analysis of class relationships which eventually leads to revolutionary transformation. Inasmuch as Metz is concerned about a transformation of consciousness, as a pre-requisite to social and political transformation, he remains far from the priority given by Marx to the dialectics of matter (economic and political) as the agent of change.

How then does the present dissertation provide an understanding of Metz's theology that goes beyond that offered by Savolainen? It does so, I believe, in two ways. First, it cautions against accepting, without qualification, Savolainen's assumption that Metz's reception of the theory-practice relationship is "the explicit hermeneutical nucleus" of Metz's theological production."⁷⁶⁶ It argues, rather, that Metz's critique of religious apathy is the single most important unifying theme within his theology. It agrees with Savolainen that Metz's appropriation of the theory-practice relationship is an important component of his theology. Its presence is especially apparent after 1964, the year he wrote "The Future of Faith in a Hominized World," the second chapter of Theology of the World. Prior to this, he was less

⁷⁶⁶Savolainen, Theology in the Shadow of Marx, p. 5.

explicitly concerned with practice, though, as we saw in Chapter II of this study, his early critique of cosmocentrism intended to clear away notions about the self and the world which inhibit Christian engagement of the world. His concern, therefore, even early on, was with practice.⁷⁶⁷ He was concerned with a Christian mind-set which fostered apathy and disengagement from the world.

What Savolainen does not mention, therefore, is the presence of a less explicit interpretive center in Metz's theology which Metz himself has only recently become aware of. In recent biographical reflections, Metz has intimated that the unifying core of his theology has been his concern to understand and to correct the causes of Christian apathy. The present dissertation bases itself on this insight. It tries to show how this concern with apathy is the motivating horizon out of which each stage of his theology emerges. It argues, therefore, that his theology is best understood in the context of this larger, less explicit, interpretive horizon, and that his attempt to appropriate theologically the theory-practice relationship ought to be understood in light of it. A concern to counter apathy is the reason why

⁷⁶⁷Suffice it to say, however, that this theme was only latently present within his early anthropocentric theology in the same way it was present within Rahner's early theology and transcendental Thomism generally. It was present to the extent that both adhered to the Thomistic dictum that love of neighbor and love of God are mutually interdependent moments of Christian life.

Metz appropriates the theory-praxis relationship in the first place.

This study does not deny that Metz's attempt to respond to the Marxist critique, by theologically appropriating the priority of practice, is an important interpretive key for understanding his theology. It argues, however, that it is not the motivating force behind his theological production. It disagrees with Savolainen's assumption that the concerns of Marx and Metz are the same. It argues instead that Metz's theological quest is motivated by personal and theological concerns, particularly his concern about the causes of Christian apathy. To address these concerns, he creatively assimilates the insights of Kant and Marx (concerning the importance of human actions in knowing and believing) and offers an analysis and critique of the horizons of understanding within which modern Christianity understands itself. His agenda, therefore, is throughout theological and pastoral. It tries to purge modern Christians of the seeds of apathy present in the form of Greek and modern ways of being in and understanding the world. Modern consciousness is rejected as thoroughly as Greek consciousness because both privatize the individual and reduce humanity to a thing within nature. Persons despair and become apathetic in the face of suffering because they understand themselves and the world as locked within nature's larger totality (whether understood as an eternal cosmos or a timeless

evolutionary process). Metz's theology, therefore, intends to free Christians for a life of active discipleship.

A second way this dissertation offers a distinctive view of Metz's theology is by demonstrating in greater detail and accuracy the nature of Metz's most recent theology. I agree with Savolainen that the first two stages of Metz's theology are unified by their attempt to relate Christianity to modern consciousness, and that, as his understanding of modern consciousness changes, so does his apologetic strategy. As we saw in Chapters II and III of this dissertation, Metz's early anthropocentric theology and early political theology are united by their attempt to ground modern consciousness in Christian revelation: first in God's incarnational acceptance, and second, in God's future-oriented promises.

However, this dissertation interprets Metz's most recent theology more as a critical negation of modern consciousness, of which Marxism is a part, than as a consistent attempt to develop an apologetic front with it. Its findings indicate that Savolainen insufficiently appreciates the force and extent of Metz's recent rejection of modern consciousness, of which Marxism is a part. For example, Metz criticizes neo-Marxism, classical Marxism, and positivism, for the way they understand history as an inexorable process guided by an abstract alibi subject (the proletariat, for example). Each unconsciously assumes that history mirrors the inexorability of nature's evolutionary

process and that it is therefore uninterrupted in its forward movement. The result is that suffering, which Metz thinks constitutes history, is made relative. History becomes an unfortunate part of nature's process, with the result being that concrete individual suffering is made less important than the overall process itself.

This study shows, therefore, that Metz's recent theology is not as centrally concerned with developing an apologetic front with modern consciousness as Savolainen implies. Savolainen tends to assume that Metz understands modern consciousness primarily in terms of the Marxist critique of religion and its understanding of practice, and that the Marxist critique forms the chief horizon of concern out of which his theology emerges. What Savolainen fails to recognize is that Metz is as critical of Marxism as he is of Christianity for being blind to its appropriation of modern fatalistic assumptions about history and the world. Both implicitly assume, in spite of their theories of history which assert the opposite, that humanity is hopelessly trapped within timeless nature. They are captured by the unconsciously held modern certitude that history is ultimately meaningless because nature is the timeless womb in which human life begins and ends.

Savolainen is not therefore entirely correct in his interpretation of Metz's recent theology as a second attempt to develop an apologetic strategy in the face of modern

consciousness, particularity in the face of the Marxist critique of religion. Metz's recent theology is rather a wholesale critique of modern consciousness, including Marxism, and particularly its understanding of history. This is not to deny that the Marxist notion of practice is still important to him. Its influence is present in his recent insistence that praxis must be understood as both moral and social praxis.⁷⁶⁸ But the assumption needs to be questioned that this forms the motivating horizon of his theological production. It ought to be noted, for example, that it is only by interpreting Metz's recent theology as an attempt to assimilate internally the Marxist theory-practice relationship that Savolainen can then judge his theology as a failure. It fails by not translating Marx's own understanding of practice directly into theological terms. My own study argues that the assumption on which this criticism is based is not entirely correct. The primary intention of Metz's recent theology is not to adopt the Marxist understanding of practice, but to develop a distinctively Christian understanding of practice based on a hope generated by imminent expectation. Metz intends to show how the practice of an apocalyptic Christianity, not the practice of Marxism, can become the central feature of a post-idealistic and post-bourgeois Christianity.

⁷⁶⁸Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 54.

3. Rebecca S. Chopp

Finally, I turn to a third commentator of Metz's who, as recently as 1986, has offered a clear and concise appraisal of his theology from beginning to present.⁷⁶⁹ In her book, The Praxis of Suffering. An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies,⁷⁷⁰ Rebecca S. Chopp addresses the issue of a controlling unity within Metz's theology more directly than Johns or Savolainen do. Interpreting Metz's political theology as an important contribution to the liberation paradigm shift within modern theology,⁷⁷¹ she designates three stages of development within his thought, each of which reflects the development of a more historically concrete understanding of persons and the contemporary situation.⁷⁷² These stages are secularity, eschatology, and a deconstruction

⁷⁶⁹Chopp's study of Metz's theology is couched within the larger context of her comparative analysis of Jürgen Moltmann, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and José Miguez Bonino

⁷⁷⁰Rebecca S. Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering. An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies (New York: Orbis Books, 1986).

⁷⁷¹"Metz's fundamental contribution to the paradigm shift of liberation theology is his reformulation of anthropology and its relationship to Christianity. Metz's work makes a formal contribution to liberation theology by exploring the conditions of possibility for a new, social anthropology: his work makes a material contribution by criticizing the present reality of the bourgeois subject and finding within Christianity the memory and hope of a new subject of freedom" (Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 64).

⁷⁷²Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 64.

of the subject, respectively.⁷⁷³

What is important to my own analysis is that Chopp thinks these three stages are governed by an overall controlling unity. They are unified in terms of a "basic structure"⁷⁷⁴ which houses three of Metz's main concerns around which each stage of his theology develops. These concerns are as follows. The first is his concern to define the historical consciousness of the human subject. At each stage, Metz tries to develop a concrete social anthropology by defining the "formal conditions of human subjectivity."⁷⁷⁵ The second is his attempt, through the use of different Christian symbols, to show how the consciousness of this subject is related to God. His conviction throughout is that Christian revelation is the unrecognized basis of the "reality and identity of the free human subject."⁷⁷⁶ And the third is his attempt to define Christianity's explicit witness in the world, given the social anthropology and the understanding of the contemporary situation which he arrives at at each stage. Chopp traces the presence of these core elements in each stage of Metz's theology in the following way.

⁷⁷³Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 65.

⁷⁷⁴Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, pp. 65, 69 and 71.

⁷⁷⁵Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 64.

⁷⁷⁶Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 64.

In the first stage,⁷⁷⁷ Metz defines the historical consciousness of the modern subject in terms of secularity. Modern consciousness is characterized by the awareness of being immersed within a de-divinized and de-mythologized world in which persons understand themselves as radically free in a world now understood as history.⁷⁷⁸

He next relates this modern consciousness to Christianity by offering a theologically positive interpretation of modern secularity, interpreting it as the child of the Incarnation. He argues that the impetus for the epochal shift from a cosmocentric universe to an anthropocentric one, on which modernity is based, is made possible by God's incarnational acceptance of the world. Modern persons understand the world in terms of history rather than in terms of nature, and themselves as free agents of history, because of the freedom which God's incarnational acceptance introduces into history. Chopp thinks that for Metz this experience of historical freedom, made possible by revelation, is an anonymous experience of God.

⁷⁷⁷Chopp does not look at Metz's two dissertations, nor at his editorial revisions of Rahner's Hearer of the Word and Spirit in the World. She implies that these are prior to his "constructive work on secularization," which she appears to be familiar with only through a reading of Metz's Theology of the World. She is not fully correct in this assumption. As I showed in Chapter II of this dissertation, Metz's work prior to Theology in the World contains the early formulations of his secularization thesis which he then later repeated and expanded in Theology of the World.

⁷⁷⁸Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 65.

Finally, Metz extrapolates from this basis what Christianity's explicit witness in the world ought to be. It ought to take the form of acceptance of modern secularity, given that "the experience of autonomy is, in a sense, the experience of God."⁷⁷⁹ The acceptance of secularity becomes, therefore, a fundamental expression of faith.⁷⁸⁰

Chopp thinks this three-fold basic structure is again present within Metz's second stage of theological development. Rather than understanding modern consciousness in terms of secularity, he now understands it in terms of its orientation and openness to the future. Modern persons are characterized by their "freedom to anticipate and work toward new possibilities."⁷⁸¹ The "formal referent for the freedom of the human subject"⁷⁸² is no longer secularity, but orientation to the future.

Again, Metz tries to give this understanding of modernity a theologically positive interpretation by showing how the biblical belief in the promises of God is the precondition of the modern orientation to the future. The lure of the future is really the lure of God,⁷⁸³ inasmuch as God is

⁷⁷⁹Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 66.

⁷⁸⁰Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 66.

⁷⁸¹Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 67.

⁷⁸²Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 68.

⁷⁸³Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 68.

the radically new towards which history progresses.⁷⁸⁴

Chopp recognizes that, unlike Stage One, Metz is now more keenly aware of the dangerous ambiguities of the present, leading him to recognize a distance between God's future and the freedom of the present. He therefore relates God's promised future and the present orientation to the future dialectically. Though there is an anonymous experience of God in the modern orientation to the future, God's particular future is qualitatively different from all futures envisioned by humans. As radically new, and not yet fully revealed, God's future provides a perspective from which to judge present history as always provisional and incomplete. Its relationship to the present is one of "non-identity" because it is neither totally within history nor totally apart from history.⁷⁸⁵

Given the distance between God and the freedom of the present, explicit Christian witness in the world takes the form of a two-fold social and political praxis. On the one hand, Christians are called to criticize everything in the present as provisional, calling for the radical transformation of society in light of God's promised future of peace and justice. On the other hand, they are free to affirm, and participate in the modern orientation to the future in the

⁷⁸⁴Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 67.

⁷⁸⁵Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 68.

form of a co-operative praxis of approximating God's future in the present. Both activities are occasions for the experience of God. "One experience is the anonymous experience of God in the transcendence or orientation toward the future; the other experience of God [is] in the constant critique of the world by the church."⁷⁸⁶

Out of this two-fold praxis of eschatological Christianity, political theology is born. On the one hand, it becomes a "theologia negativa from the future and hence a critique of all ideologies in the present."⁷⁸⁷ On the other hand, it offers a corrective to modern theologies of the personalist, transcendental, and existentialist types which fail to understand the socio-political nature of the human subject. It understands human personhood as being subject to the primacy of the two-fold praxis of social critique and the building of a more peaceful and just world.⁷⁸⁸

Chopp believes that in Stage Three of his theological development, the three-fold basic structure which guided Metz's earlier theology - defining historical consciousness, relating it to God, and defining Christian witness in the world - "undergoes a radical transformation."⁷⁸⁹ What she means

⁷⁸⁶Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 69.

⁷⁸⁷Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 69.

⁷⁸⁸Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 69.

⁷⁸⁹Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 71.

by this, though she is somewhat indecisive, is that the external form of this structure remains the same while its content changes.

Given to a "far more critical, even pessimistic reading of the present situation,"⁷⁹⁰ Metz no longer attempts to ground modern historical consciousness in Christian revelation, either incarnationally or eschatologically. Rather, he offers a criticism of modern consciousness and points to Christian apocalypticism as a resource for the development of a new form of consciousness. Nor is he content to define theology simply as critique at this stage.⁷⁹¹ Theology now becomes a "fundamental theology of the human subject,"⁷⁹² attempting to understand the demise of the subject in the modern era as well as pointing to what is necessary for the emergence of a new subject. A new subject is called for because the historical consciousness of the modern middle-class subject has been destroyed by the timelessness of an evolutionary logic. Evolutionary logic is the "irrational ideology" which covers "human history in a blanket of timelessness." In doing so, it destroys "the historical consciousness of the human subject."⁷⁹³ To the extent that it

⁷⁹⁰Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 71.

⁷⁹¹Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 74.

⁷⁹²Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 71.

⁷⁹³Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 72.

is a "fiction of time as empty infinity,"⁷⁹⁴ evolutionary logic causes persons to "forget...past acts for the sake of future conquests," to forget that "life [is]...constituted in relation to other subjects, with history, and with nature," and to forget that human life is corporeal, shaped by the passions, pains and ecstasies.⁷⁹⁵ In short, evolutionary logic destroys what has been the heart of Metz's theological project from the beginning: his attempt to define persons in terms of intersubjectivity, freedom, and corporeality,⁷⁹⁶ and to show that the origin of these characteristics lies in Christian revelation.

In his recent theology, Metz once again shows how historical consciousness is "dependent upon God and expressed in Christianity."⁷⁹⁷ However, contrary to his earlier attempts, he does not ground modern consciousness in Christian revelation. He has given up on modern consciousness because it is inherently destructive of an appreciation of history. Modern consciousness destroys the human appreciation for history and tradition, non-technical forms of reason, and religion as the source of social transformation. Instead, Metz points to a Christian form of consciousness which, though

⁷⁹⁴Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 72.

⁷⁹⁵Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 73.

⁷⁹⁶Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 72.

⁷⁹⁷Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 75.

not yet fully emerged, is based on apocalyptic expectation and a radical following of Jesus. He sees this as a life-saving alternative to modern consciousness.

Chopp thinks Metz is a little obscure at this point concerning the foundational relationship between God and the freedom of the subject.⁷⁹⁸ In Stage One, God was the condition of the possibility of secular freedom. In Stage Two, he was the basis of the freedom to shape, yet criticize, historical progress. Now, in Stage Three, having given up on the modern subject, and having distanced himself from transcendental theology, God becomes, rather vaguely, the basis of a new subject and a new freedom: the subject of suffering and the freedom to suffer.⁷⁹⁹ The relationship between God and the free subject is therefore obscured partly because Metz now rejects the transcendental a-priori grounding of human personhood. Metz criticizes this theory, which is most fully expressed in Rahner's theory of anonymous Christianity, for being "'an elitist idealistic gnoseology'."⁸⁰⁰ Rejecting this transcendental grounding, he finds himself unable or unwilling to "retrieve or invent a new, transformed transcendental

⁷⁹⁸Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 75.

⁷⁹⁹"Within the iron cage of modernity, the freedom to be a human subject (becomes)...the freedom to suffer" (Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 74).

⁸⁰⁰Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 75.

argument"⁸⁰¹ which, in the past, allowed him to believe in the "universal anonymous experience of God."⁸⁰² Instead, he simply asserts that Christian personhood, as well as the knowledge of God, emerges within the context of lives lived before God in history and society. Chopp thinks this is a weak assertion and leaves Metz, at least concerning the formal relationship between Christianity and human consciousness, in the difficult situation of demonstrating a direct connection between human consciousness and a foundational experience of God.⁸⁰³

⁸⁰¹Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 75.

⁸⁰²Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 75.

⁸⁰³I concede that Metz gives too little attention to the problems which arise when one rejects natural religion. As he recognizes, the demise of metaphysical religion was accompanied by the development of anthropocentric religion. Anthropocentric religion rejected metaphysical objectivism and tried to develop a metaphysical subjectivism. God was now spoken of as the mysterious, ineffable horizon within which the world and persons had their being. God became the transcendental ground of being. In Metz's later writings, he seems to reject most theologies which depict religious experience as a coming into touch with a transcendent depth of existence. He does so because he thinks they unconsciously hold to the implicit assumption that religious experience has an a-historical core.

The question Metz needs to be asked is this: If he rejects the modern attempt to speak about God in this anthropocentric way, how is he proposing we speak about God? Is he proposing we return to speaking about God objectivistically? Does he propose we return to a pre-Enlightenment religious objectivism? At times, he seems to come dangerously close to preferring an eschatological supernaturalism, which expects Christ's return any day, to judge and consummate creation. If it is true that he is proposing such a view, then it is difficult to go along with him. If, however, he is calling for a new, more historically engaged, anthropocentrism, free from the crudities of fundamentalist apocalyptic expectations, then I would like to know more about his proposals. What understanding of God and God's promised future does a post-bourgeois, post-idealistic,

For all the trouble Metz has in relating Christianity to historical consciousness on the formal level, Chopp thinks he basically succeeds in the way he relates the two thematically.⁸⁰⁴ Christianity, as a tradition of dangerous memories expressed in narratives, particularly the memory of Jesus' "resurrection by way of his crucifixion,"⁸⁰⁵ now represents the freedom of the human subject to suffer within history. Modern persons are free to the extent they are willing to participate in history as a history "of the dead and of those who suffer."⁸⁰⁶ Christianity makes this participation possible because "Jesus Christ represents the memories of suffering as anticipatory memories that place a claim on history."⁸⁰⁷ Christianity does not promote, therefore, the middle-class subject, constituted by forgetfulness of the past and domination of the present, but it represents the subject of suffering. Urging an anthropological revolution, Metz calls on Christianity to help bring about "a new historical consciousness of timefulness, of imminent expectation."⁸⁰⁸ With the resources of apocalyptic symbolism,

post-metaphysical, historically engaged Christian theology have?

⁸⁰⁴Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 75.

⁸⁰⁵Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 76.

⁸⁰⁶Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 76.

⁸⁰⁷Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 76.

⁸⁰⁸Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 77.

it offers modernity "an antidote to the poison of evolutionary logic."⁸⁰⁹

The explicit Christian witness which follows from this new form of consciousness is a radical discipleship aimed at interrupting and transforming the world.⁸¹⁰ Living within the horizon of imminent expectation, as well as within the context of the dangerous memory of Christ's unique history of freedom, as a history of suffering in solidarity with others, Christians are called to interrupt and transform the course of the middle-class subject, bourgeois religion, and modern theology.⁸¹¹ They are called to "a new way of being and doing in history" which involves active suffering as "a praxis of freedom."⁸¹² In short, they are called to imitate Christ. Chopp summarizes Metz's recent theology in the following way:

⁸⁰⁹Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 77.

⁸¹⁰"In the first stage of Metz's work Christians imitated Christ by accepting the world, and in the second stage they imitated Christ by criticizing the world. Now, in the third stage, Christians imitate Christ through the acceptance of suffering and through a praxis of interruption and conversion. This praxis of imitation is not just a matter of believing but a life of enactment, combining narrative and action in radical discipleship. Christian faith is no longer captive to understanding the world and letting it go its way; it is no longer isolated to criticizing the world and pointing out God's freedom. Thus Metz arrives at a new paradigm of Christianity: Christian faith now interrupts and transforms the world: it manifests God's grace, which is, according to Metz, a way of living differently" (Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 78).

⁸¹¹Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 77.

⁸¹²Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 78.

it attempts "to find a new historical consciousness of time that allows the subject to suffer. This historical consciousness is testified to in Christianity, and through its apocalyptic witness Christianity becomes a praxis of solidarity with those who suffer."⁸¹³

Chopp is to be commended for pointing to the presence of a three-fold basic structure within the three stages of Metz's theology, as well as for the clarity and precision with which she demonstrates this. She shows how on three different occasions Metz gathers together different theological and philosophical resources in his effort to understand modern consciousness, to relate this consciousness to Christian revelation, and to define Christian witness in light of this

⁸¹³Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 79. In a less severe manner than Savolainen, who criticizes Metz for being idealistic and for serving the interests of the petty bourgeoisie, Chopp, in the form of questions rather than direct criticism, questions Metz's lack of concern for concrete social and political transformation. Hence, she thinks the meaning of "politics" remains vague within his theology because he does not address the issue of precisely how a transformed consciousness, inspired by Christianity, can "restructure the social system of the first world or even the ecclesiastical structures of the church." (Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 79). Reminiscent of Johns' concern, which questioned why Metz does not develop a concrete Christian social ethic, Chopp asks why he does not deal with the issue of how Christians are to move from a "transformed consciousness to a changed world." She doubts, therefore, as Johns and Savolainen do, that Metz's theology does really "enter the fight of history - as social, economic, moral history" (Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, pp. 79-80). She gives to understand that perhaps "Metz's own conversion is...not yet complete" because he has not yet shown how the categories of solidarity, memory, and narrative "give rise to real social change" (Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 80).

relationship. These core elements, she thinks, are central to each stage of Metz's theological development and therefore indicate a unity of intention throughout Metz's theology. In pointing to this unity, she proposes an interpretation of Metz's theology that goes beyond that offered by Johns and Savolainen in several important ways.

Though Johns and Savolainen understand Metz's theology in light of significant controlling and unifying themes (its attempt to counter the scholastic and neo-scholastic way of spiritualizing of the human self and the world, and its attempt to develop an apologetic response to the Marxist critique, respectively), neither tries to understand it within the context of Metz's own central concern: his desire to address, and later to transform, the type of consciousness within which modern Christians find themselves trapped. Both studies therefore fall short of identifying, and therefore appreciating, the central horizon of concern in and through which Metz's theology takes shape. As Chopp indicates, and as this dissertation has attempted to show in greater detail, the core of Metz's theology is his struggle to understand and to transform the type of consciousness within which Christians, as well as modern persons, live. In doing so, he hopes to create the pre-conditions necessary for Christian faithfulness to the Gospel's call to a discipleship of worldly engagement.

Again, how does the present dissertation advance the

discussion concerning a controlling unity within Metz's theology beyond the interpretation offered by Chopp? Even though she indicates, more fully than Johns or Savolainen, that the focal point of Metz's theology is his attempt to relate Christianity to modern consciousness, at first positively and later in opposition to it, her analysis is not as thorough as one could wish. Perhaps limitations of time prevented her from offering a fuller elaboration of the interpretive core of Metz's theology. Her section on Metz, after all, is only a small part of a larger work comparing and contrasting liberation and political theologies.

The present dissertation brings the discussion of a controlling unity within Metz's theology a few steps beyond the interpretation offered by Chopp, in three ways. First, it offers a more detailed analysis, than the one found in Chopp, of what Metz is opposing at each stage of his theological development. Though Chopp mentions Metz's opposition to Greek cosmocentrism, she does not expand on how this opposition forms the background and impetus for all three moments of his theological production.⁸¹⁴ Second, even though she recognizes that his theology is unified by its attempt to understand and relate Christianity to modern consciousness,

⁸¹⁴Lack of mention of the ongoing influence of this theme within Metz's theology may be due to the fact that Chopp does not deal with Metz's early work, Christliche Anthropozentrik. She refers to it only in a footnote. Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 164, n. 3.

she is not sufficiently clear about the fact that he is also consistent in the method by which he carries out this analysis. At each stage, Metz distinguishes between the thought-form and thought-content operating within different types of consciousness. He applies this distinction especially to Greek and modern forms of consciousness in order to show their incompatibility with Christian consciousness. And third, this dissertation argues that what motivates Metz to relate Christianity to modern consciousness in the first place is his desire to understand and correct the root causes of Christian apathy. Chopp, though perhaps aware of this motivating horizon, interprets the unity of Metz's theology chiefly in terms of its structural continuity, placing little emphasis on the more personal and experiential horizons out of which his theology emerges. I will expand on each of these contributions.

My own study argues, among other things, that cosmocentrism is the single most important theological enemy against which Metz's theology takes shape, in all of its stages. It is that against which his early theology of secularization, his later eschatological theology, and even his more recent theology of imminent expectation develops. At each stage, Metz battles the presence, within modern Christianity, of both the thought-form and the thought-content of Greek cosmocentrism. Its form, we recall, expresses itself in the unconscious assumption that all things are immersed

within an ultimately unchanging, pre-given cosmos. This assumption is embedded in much of scholastic, neo-scholastic, and modern theology, giving rise to an unrecognized and unconscious feeling for life characterized by fear, despair, and fatalism. The result is that Christian hope is directed at the world beyond, and not at this world. Because this world is trapped within nature's processes, which have no goal or end, it is not possible to change significantly the world through human action. The result is that the world is abandoned as the hope-filled arena of Christian activity. Christians become apathetic to suffering because they believe that suffering is a natural part of the cosmic order. Nothing, therefore, can be done about it.⁸¹⁵

In addition, out of this cosmocentric way of being in

⁸¹⁵In Metz's early secularization theology, the appropriation of this cosmocentric consciousness is the reason why the Incarnation was never fully appreciated as a liberating event which frees the world to go its own way (See what Metz says about the "Necessary Conditions for the Proper Understanding of the Incarnation of God" in Theology of the World, pp. 22-25). In his later eschatological theology, he sees cosmocentrism as giving rise to a metaphysic of being which, when used by modern theology, precludes openness to God's future promises and defines Christian persons in terms of contemplative knowing rather than knowing arrived at through actions of discipleship. In his recent theology of imminent expectation, explicit concern about the dangers of cosmocentrism seem to have faded and been replaced by concern about the dangers of evolutionary logic, which lurks behind modern consciousness. However, at closer examination, modern consciousness, dominated by an evolutionary logic, is a mirror image of Greek cosmocentric consciousness, resulting in the same fatalism, apathy and disengagement from the world. Cosmocentrism lives on in the implicit modern assumption that history is trapped within nature's endless processes, and, therefore, that all human action is ultimately meaningless.

the world emerge particular notions of the self and the world which further deflate Christian motivation to engage the world. The self is conceived of as a sophisticated thing alongside other things trapped within an unchanging and eternal cosmos. Historical agency is not possible because real freedom is not possible within historical processes which are themselves trapped within cosmic eternity. Christians, who unwittingly live by these basic assumptions, have little reason to engage the world in the hope of changing it. The result is apathy.

Chopp places little emphasis on the fact that each stage of Metz's development functions as a corrective to these Greek cosmocentric notions of the self and the world. Though she recognizes Metz's search for a social anthropology as an unifying theme in his writings,⁸¹⁶ she places little emphasis on the fact that this cosmocentric problematic motivates his search for this social anthropology in the first place. The

⁸¹⁶In Stage One, Metz's social anthropology is "characterized by corporeality, intersubjectivity, and historical freedom" (Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 66). In Stage Two, Metz tries to develop "a more adequate understanding of the sociopolitical nature of the human subject" by pointing to the important relationship between reason and praxis and the intrinsic orientation of persons to the future. Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 69. In his recent theology, realizing that the social subject which he has been searching is being destroyed by the modern bourgeois subject (who is defined by pragmatic reason, market place values, and the principle of domination), he calls for the emergence of a new subject defined by non-pragmatic forms of reason, the ability to suffer in solidarity with others, and motivated to action, rather than apathy, by apocalyptic expectation. See Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering, p. 77.

present dissertation argues that Metz's attempt to understand and correct Christianity's unwitting appropriation of both the cosmocentric consciousness and the basic assumptions about the self and world which it produces is an unrecognized thread of continuity running through his writings.

The present dissertation goes one further step beyond Chopp's interpretation. It points to Metz's theology being unified not only by its focus on the central problematic of cosmocentrism but also by the consistency with which it implements the distinction between thought-form and thought-content as a method by which to analyze different types of consciousness. In this sense, it argues for the presence of a unity within Metz's theology that was not recognized by Chopp.

In Chapter II above, for example, it was shown how Metz first used the distinction between thought-form and thought-content to differentiate between Greek and Thomistic thought. He concluded that Greek thought is cosmocentric in form and anthropocentric in content, while Thomistic thought is anthropocentric in form and theocentric in content. He preferred Thomistic anthropocentrism because it gave rise to notions of the self and the world more compatible with the original intentions of Christian revelation. I devoted an entire chapter to Metz's early writings, especially Christliche Anthropozentrik, because I believe that the origins of this method of analysis, which have remained with

him to the present, are to be found there. Looking back at these early writings, in light of his recent political theology, one can recognize, therefore, a continuity both in his problematic (cosmocentrism), and in the approach he takes to understand and to try to solve this problem.

Chapter III of this dissertation showed further how Metz uses the distinction between thought-form and thought-content to differentiate between Greek cosmocentrism and modern anthropocentrism, which he believes is based on Thomistic anthropocentrism. Cosmocentrism is rejected because it gives rise to a metaphysic of being which understands persons as trapped within nature, and the world as trapped within the cosmos.⁸¹⁷ Modern anthropocentrism is preferred because it is based on a more liberative way of being in the world within which persons recognize themselves as free agents of history open to and oriented towards the future. Modern consciousness, with its notions of the self, the world, and the future (its thought-content) is really the child of eschatological Christianity. Historical freedom and orientation to the future are first made possible by the biblical promises of a radically new future.

⁸¹⁷Here the metaphysic of being and its notions of persons, the world, past, present, and future, constitute the thought-content. They are the products of a far more intangible cosmocentric feel for life which makes up thought-form of any particular era of history.

Chapter IV of this dissertation showed how this method of distinguishing between thought-form and thought-content was still present in his recent theology, though less explicitly so. Shifting his attention from Greek cosmocentrism to modern bourgeois consciousness, he finds the form of modern thought disturbingly similar to that of Greek thought. The unconscious Greek assumption about the status of human life, that it is trapped within a larger whole, is present with modern consciousness as well. Modern persons understand themselves as trapped in the evolutionary process of nature which has no end. As well, certain axiomatic assumptions emerge from this thought-form which are characteristic of modernity and particularly debilitating to Christianity: the assumptions concerning reason, history, and religion. Reason is thought of primarily as technical reason, history is seen as trapped within the indomitable processes of nature and therefore unfree, and religion is thought of only in terms of the private interior realm of individual morality. Against this, Metz opposes the thought-form of an apocalyptic consciousness with different notions of reason, history, and religion, not tainted by the despair and fatalism of the modern sense of timelessness. The apocalyptic feel for life is one of imminent expectation of the fulfillment of God's promises. This, in turn, serves as horizon of hope, rather than despair, within which persons act. The implicit assumptions which progressively emerge from this are that to

be human involves more than functioning at the mere level of technical reason, that history is a history of suffering, and that religion is essential for the eventual emergence of a free subject within history.

And finally, this dissertation makes a third contribution to the discussion of unity within Metz's theology. It argues that the structural continuity within Metz's theology, which Chopp skillfully identifies, is grounded in a more personal quest to understand and to begin solving the problem of Christian apathy. Metz's attempt to understand modern consciousness, to relate it to Christianity, and to extrapolate Christian witness from this relationship, is really an attempt to answer the question of Christian apathy. In his early theology, for example, the application of this three-fold structure gives rise to a theology of secularization which calls Christians actively to engage the world through love of neighbor. Christians are admonished to actualize their incarnational freedom through active participation in the secular project of making history. Incarnational acceptance becomes the antidote for the poison of Christian apathy which has its origins in Greek cosmocentrism. In Stage Two, the application of this three-fold structure gives rise to a theology centered around God's eschatological promises. Here, God's promises for a radically new future supply the necessary antidote to the poison of Christian apathy which originates in the Greek way of being

in the world (expressed primarily in a metaphysic of being). And in stage three, this three-fold structure gives rise to an eschatological Christianity with strong apocalyptic sensibilities. Apocalyptic expectation becomes the motivating horizon which dispells the apathy implicit within modern consciousness. Christians realize their freedom within history by suffering in solidarity with the poor. The apocalyptic consciousness of imminent expectation is offered as a new antidote to the apathy creeping at the root of modern life.

In these ways, therefore, Metz's theology is borne by his unbroken attempt to answer the question of Christian apathy. As Chapter I pointed out, this question originates in his own personal experiences of Christian apathy, particularly in relation to the Holocaust tragedy.

C. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The above has been a critical evaluation of the contributions made by Johns, Savolainen, and Chopp to the discussion concerning the unified nature of Metz's theology. It juxtaposes this dissertation's findings alongside theirs and draws essentially three conclusions. First, though each identifies a controlling unity within Metz's corpus - Johns, the anti-scholastic polemic; Savolainen, the appropriation of the Marxist theory-practice relationship; and Chopp, a three-fold basic structure in pursuit of a social anthropology -

none gives explicit recognition to the controlling unity which this dissertation argues is at the heart of Metz's theological production: his critique of religious apathy. Only recently has Metz himself become aware that his theology, from the beginning, has been guided by the attempt to answer the question of Christian apathy in the face of war-time atrocities, post-war forgetfulness, and present third-world oppression. This dissertation has tried to trace the presence of this theme throughout each stage of his theological development. Second, it argues that the reason why these commentators fail to identify this interpretive key is that they either do not fully appreciate the importance of Metz's recent biographical reflections for understanding his theology as a whole, as perhaps is the case with Savolainen and Chopp, or their studies pre-date Metz's own recent reflections about the post-Auschwitz context of his theology, as in the case of Johns.⁸¹⁸ Though Savolainen and Chopp interpret Metz's theology within the context of not unimportant unifying themes, they fail to recognize the larger and more encompassing horizon of concern within which his theology takes shape and is unified: his concern with the causes of

⁸¹⁸I realize that just because Johns did not have Metz's recent biographical reflections before him when he wrote Man in the World that he could have nevertheless recognized, from Metz's writings to that point, the importance of the theme of Christian apathy. However, from what Johns did write in Man in the World, it is clear that he had no such insight.

Christian apathy. Though Chopp recognizes that Metz's recent theology is shaped by this concern, she does not attempt to interpret his early and middle theology in light of it. And third, I have argued that though each of these three interpreters identifies Metz's attempt to understand modern consciousness as a central theme of each stage of his development, none recognizes how consistent Metz is in the method he uses. At each stage, he tries to understand Greek and modern consciousness in terms of their thought-form and thought-content in order to determine their compatibility with the form and content of authentic Christian consciousness. In Stages One and Two, his conviction is that the form and content of modern consciousness is expressive of the historical freedom originally intended by Christian revelation. The freedom initiated by the Incarnation and God's eschatological promises has finally come to expression in the modern belief in historical agency and hope-filled orientation to the future. In stage three, however, he thinks modern consciousness is destructive of this freedom. The modern way of being in the world, and its implicit certitudes about history, reason, and religion threaten to destroy the freedom of the human subject implicit in eschatological Christianity.

In conclusion, this dissertation hopes to make a three-fold contribution to the task of understanding Metz's theology. First, it questions whether the most adequate

interpretive key has yet been found to understand Metz's theological project. Though each of the above interpreters touches on important unifying themes, none adequately identifies the real unifying center of his theology. Second, it argues that the most adequate interpretive key for understanding his theology, a key which at the same time points to its unified nature, is found in his attempt to answer the question of Christian apathy. As we saw in Chapter I, this question emerges when Metz is still a young boy growing up in the midst of war-torn Germany, especially as he experiences silence among Christian family, friends, and community in the face of Holocaust suffering. And third, this study argues that when used this interpretive key offers a clearer understanding of how the various stages of Metz's theology constitute a unified whole. It offers a more personal and biographical understanding of what motivates and lies beneath the surface of this often abstract and complex theological project. Over the last thirty years, Metz has tried to understand and correct the causes of Christian apathy so that Christians can more fully live out the Gospel mandate of love in the world. His most recent theology indicates this intention most clearly. By trying to develop a post-Auschwitz theology, a theology which directly faces suffering within history, he tries to break free from theologies which unwittingly assimilate modernity's implicit assumptions about history, reason, and religion, assumptions which contribute

to Christian apathy in the face of suffering. He rejects modern certainties about the superior nature of technical rationality, the dominance of nature over history, and the innate, private, and a-political character of religion. Each feature, he thinks, is a product of a modern consciousness trapped in despair and fatalism. And it is this type of consciousness which he believed contributed to Christian silence in the face of Holocaust suffering and continues to contribute to first-world silence in the face of third-world agony.

His prescription for change is no less provocative and appealing than his analysis and critique are. He invites Christians to rediscover within their biblical and doctrinal heritage the authority that comes from living the Gospel life in solidarity with the poor, the motivating power to love stemming from living in the shadow of Christ's imminent return⁸¹⁹, and the practical implications of the fact that Christianity is a religion whose essence is grounded in a God

⁸¹⁹Cobb raises what I think are some important questions concerning the efficacy of revitalizing eschatological and apocalyptic symbolism as a healing agent for Christian apathy. He questions whether modern Christians can be expected to be motivated by promises whose fulfillments they find very unlikely? Are modern Christians still capable of believing in the consummatory End of history and, therefore, of being motivated by this belief? Even more to the point, is not this loss of belief in the consummatory End of history at the heart of the crisis of faith today, and the reason why there is so little interest in reflections on the overall meaning of history? Cobb, Process Theology, pp. 76 and 143-144.

who chooses to meet us in history, and not in nature. By re-discovering these priorities, Christians can learn to do more than simply paraphrase the bourgeois certitude about life's entrapment within nature, which breeds only despair and apathy, and begin actualizing, in the form of love and the acceptance of suffering, the Christian certitude that the time is short and that God's future is at hand.⁸²⁰

⁸²⁰"The Christian idea of imitation and the apocalyptical idea of imminent expectation belong together. It is not possible to imitate Jesus radically, that is, at the level of the roots of life, if 'the time is not shortened'. Jesus' call: 'Follow me!' and the call of Christians: 'Come, Lord Jesus!' are inseparable. Immitation in imminent expectation: this is an apocalyptical consciousness that does not cause, but rather accepts suffering - defying apathy and hatred" (Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 176).

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