

THE UNITY OF NATURE AND HISTORY IN PANNENBERG'S THEOLOGY

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UNITY OF NATURE AND HISTORY IN
WOLFHART PANNENBERG'S
THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR ETHICS

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is focused on the German theologian, Wolfhart Pannenberg's (b. 1928) systematic attempt to think of nature (the physical world) and history (especially the activities of human culture) as a unity. I argue that Pannenberg, through the idea of the image of God, has not only placed human culture at the center of natural history, but has taken the non-human world into history. Human existence is understood as sharing a common destiny in interdependence with the non-human world.

I attempt to show that it is especially through the doctrines of creation and Christology that Pannenberg seeks to ground the unity of the process of reality. I also argue that Pannenberg understands human openness in terms of a fundamental relationship to God. I try to show that Pannenberg conceives of creatures as destined to participate in the divine life of love. Participation in divine love entails loving the world.

The intention of this analysis of Pannenberg's thought is to argue that his conception of the unity of reality, which is based on divine love, provides a theological foundation for ecologically conscious ethics. Little work has been done on Pannenberg's foundation for ethics. Pannenberg himself has not explicitly outlined the possible contribution of his thought to the problem of ecological ethics.

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Finally, I wish to make note of the joy of studying the thought of Wolfhart Pannenberg. The breadth of his thought, the wisdom of his insights and his commitment to truth receive ample testimony in his writings.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>ATP</u>	<u>Anthropology in Theological Perspective.</u>
<u>BQ</u>	<u>Basic Questions in Theology.</u>
<u>BM</u>	<u>Die Bestimmung des Menschen: Menschsein, Erwählung und Geschichte.</u>
<u>CS</u>	<u>Christian Spirituality.</u>
<u>CW</u>	<u>Christentum in einer säkularisierten Welt.</u>
<u>EE</u>	<u>Ethik und Ekklesiologie</u>
<u>Ethics</u>	<u>Ethics.</u>
<u>ETN</u>	<u>"Kontingenz und Naturgesetz." In <u>Erwägungen zu einer Theologie der Natur.</u></u>
<u>GC</u>	<u>Grundzüge der Christologie.</u>
<u>GF</u>	<u>Grundfragen systematischer Theologie. 2 Vols.</u>
<u>IGHF</u>	<u>The Idea of God and Human Freedom.</u>
<u>IST</u>	<u>An Introduction to Systematic Theology.</u>
<u>JGM</u>	<u>Jesus--God and Man.</u>
<u>MG</u>	<u>Metaphysik und Gottesgedanke.</u>
<u>OG</u>	<u>Offenbarung als Geschichte.</u>
<u>RH</u>	<u>Revelation as History.</u>
<u>ST</u>	<u>Systematische Theologie. 3 Vols.</u>
<u>TKG</u>	<u>Theology and the Kingdom of God.</u>
<u>WM</u>	<u>Was ist der Mensch?</u>
<u>WT</u>	<u>Wissenschaftstheorie und Theology.</u>

Translations from German are mine except where quotations are noted as taken from the published English translations. Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

The Significance of the Unity of Nature and History in
Wolfhart Pannenberg's
Theological Foundation for Ethics

INTRODUCTION

Many are the songs and poems which celebrate nature's wondrous powers to draw us out of our selves and to bring us into an encounter with One who is not identifiable with nature. Nevertheless, the modern age has not been accustomed to hearing such voices, not, at any rate, when it has been going about its business. Yes in moments of romantic bliss and leisurely rest we have heard rumors and whispers. But we have connected these with the pre-scientific past. We have relegated these experiences and thoughts to weekends, holidays, and vacations--to our young, to our old, and to women. The business of the "civilized" west has cut itself off from metaphysics, goodness, and love. In so doing, it has cut itself off from seeing the wholeness of life, from joy, and most ironically from the true depth of the life of reason.

My aim in the following pages is to explore how the theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg (b. 1928) attempts to show the fundamental unity of all reality. I am especially interested in his attempt to show the inseparable character of what the modern West has taken as its business and what it has regarded as irrelevant to that business. As we

shall see, Pannenberg believes that consideration of God as the Creator and Redeemer with support of a theological anthropology leads to a perception of the wholeness of life. This is significant for conceiving the moral character of existence. In the modern world (die Neuzeit) both theologians and ethicists face the task of overcoming the separation of metaphysics from the realms of science, technology, and industry.

Wolfhart Pannenberg is clearly one of the leading European theologians of his generation and stands out among current theologians as one with wide ranging expertise and great analytical and systematic skills.¹ An examination of Pannenberg's theological foundation for ethics is especially relevant in the light of the ecological problematic, because he has systematically attempted to think of nature (the physical world) and history (especially the activities of human culture) as a unity.

In this dissertation I will explore how Pannenberg's understanding of God grounds the unity of nature and history. In the process I will indicate the significance of this understanding for grounding moral reason. I will try to indicate the possible contribution of his thought to the problematic relationship of humans to the natural

¹See John B. Cobb, Jr., "Foreword," in David P. Polk, On the Way to God: An Exploration into the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), xi-xii.

environment. The focus will of necessity remain on the theological foundation for ethics rather than ethics itself. This is because Pannenberg has decided to devote his career to addressing fundamental theological issues.²

The Trinitarian conception of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit is central to Pannenberg's conception of the unity of nature and history, and shapes the character of this unity. The dissertation has one chapter on creation, one on Christology, and one on theological anthropology. While I do not include a separate chapter on the Spirit, this aspect of Pannenberg's understanding of God is integral to understanding creation, redemption, and anthropology. In each chapter I examine the character of nature, of history and of their union, as well as the justification of this union.

In this dissertation I hope to provide a new approach to understanding one of the major German theologians of this century. Dissertations have been written on Pannenberg's philosophy of history and on his theology (explicitly on his Christology), but little work has

²Pannenberg acknowledges the need for a Christian contribution to a theory of justice, which he thinks must precede the development of specific moral codes. He has, however, determined that more fundamental theological issues (e.g., the truth of the Christian faith in God) must be dealt with first. See Pannenberg, "A Response to My American Friends," in The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 330f. and CS, 65f. & 70.

been done on his attempt to ground ethics in theology, nor specifically on his attempt to think of nature and history in a unity, and no work has been done on his philosophy of nature. Pannenberg himself suggests that his thought has provided for a positive contribution to the grounding of environmental ethics (ATP 74-79). But he himself has not yet given an explication of that contribution. In this dissertation I will ask whether he has indeed provided a foundation for an ecologically conscious morality.

The systematic character of Pannenberg's thought becomes very apparent when one considers the question of the unity of nature and history. He addresses himself to the classical modern dualism of nature and history in a variety of settings. The identification of God's revelation with history is a well known facet of Pannenberg's thought. And since others have already discussed Pannenberg's ideas of revelation and history at length I will not elaborate this point. Part of this identification is the connection of kerygma or meaning with historical events themselves. This is an aspect of the unity that Pannenberg has in mind. This could be pursued in his discussions of hermeneutics and epistemology, as well as his understanding of historiography and his philosophy of history. His writings cover a range from the philosophy of science to ecclesiology, and evidence and arguments for his conception of the unity of reality in God can be found anywhere and

everywhere in his work. I have chosen to focus on what I consider to be the most significant concepts (creation, Christology, and anthropology) to Pannenberg's foundation for ethics.

As Pannenberg insists, any foundation for ethics must be sufficiently true to claim the loyalty of reflective and rational beings. Such a foundation must correspond to all we know of reality and must be internally coherent. The intention of this dissertation is to demonstrate that Pannenberg's attempts to re-think the Christian faith in dialogue with modern secular conceptions of reality is in essence an argument for the essential unity of all experience, and that this unity is rooted in the re-discovery of the significance of the divine. This amounts to grounding ethics in the universally religious character of creaturely existence. Pannenberg explicitly notes the variance of his thought from that of the Kantian tradition, which rooted religion in the moral character of existence (ST 3:87-93 & 104-113).

The Problem: Religious and Secular Dualism

Modern Dualism

Our culture is in many ways fundamentally at odds

with the realm of nature in which it exists.³ Unfortunately, it is only the destructive consequences of our techno-scientific culture which have forced wide-scale recognition of the problematic character of this relationship of human culture to the non-human world. According to Pannenberg the problematic character of the modern relationship of humans to nature is closely connected with the anthropocentrism of the modern turn to the subject.⁴

Francis Bacon, one of the founders of modern scientific methodology, once said of the practice of science, "we will press nature to the rack until she divulges her secrets."⁵ The statement suggests that in the practice of science there is an extreme opposition between human activity and the non-human universe. Bacon considers knowl-

³See, for example, Holmes Rolston III, "Environmental Ethics: Values in and Duties to the Natural World," in Ecology, Economics, Ethics: The Broken Circle, ed. F. Herbert Bormann and Stephen R. Kellert (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 74f.

⁴IGHF 90. Cf. also ATP 74-79 and "Typen des Atheismus und ihre theologische Bedeutung," in GF 1:347-360. Miroslav Volf (Zukunft der Arbeit, Arbeit der Zukunft: Der Arbeitsbegriff bei Karl Marx und seine theologische Wertung (Grünwald: Kaiser, 1988), 117) refers to Pannenberg as a theologian who has recognized the anthropological focus of philosophical atheism. He points out that the basic question is whether or not one believes that God is the Creator of the world and of humans.

⁵Regarding the impact of Bacon on the domination of nature see William Leiss, The Domination of Nature (New York: George Braziller, 1972), 51-58 & 71.

edge to be equivalent to power over nature.⁶ Knowledge is power to shape nature for human use. This anthropomorphic dualism is also expressed by Descartes, who thought of the world as consisting of two opposed realities nature, which he characterized as mindless extension, and spirit, which he characterized as unextended mind. According to Pannenberg this dualism has served to inform both the distinction of human from non-human existence and the methodologies of modern sciences.⁷

But the opposition of spirit/history and matter/nature reaches back in various forms through history to Mani, certain forms of Christian asceticism, the gnostics,

⁶This dualism is also associated with the domination of women by men. Bacon associates women with nature and regards both as analogous types of slaves to men (Cf. Kurt Koch, "Der Mensch und seine Mit-Welt als Schöpfungsebenbild Gottes: Schöpfungstheologische Aspekte der menschlichen Verantwortung für die Natur," Catholica: Vierteljahresschrift für Kontroverstheologie 42/1 (1988): 36-37). Koch cites Pannenberg as noting the ethical significance of overcoming the dualistic separation of science and theology from each other.

⁷WT 76. Cf. also Pannenberg, "Geist und Energie: Zur Phänomenologie Teilhards de Chardin," Acta Teilhardiana 8 (1971): 6. Pannenberg points out the significance of this separation of reason and phenomena for the thought of Kant. He also connects this with the grounding of ethics in reason ("Theologische Motive im Denken Immanuel Kants," Theologische Literaturzeitung 89, 12 (1964): 897-906. Cf. also Louis Dupré, "The Dissolution of the Union of Nature and Grace at the Dawn of the Modern Age," in The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 96 and Jürgen Moltmann, God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1985), 250-252.

Parmenides, and is found in non-western cultures as well.⁸ Nonetheless, certain dominant forms of western thought from the Enlightenment forward have added a new twist to this dualism. The idea of spirit has been humanized and even rejected. Marx's inversion of Hegel's dialectic of the spirit into dialectical and atheist materialism can be regarded as one of the more sophisticated theoretical elaborations of the new materialism.⁹ Industrial capitalist versions of modern material culture have certainly shown themselves to be highly complex and vigorous forms of philosophical materialism.

Jürgen Moltmann points out that Franz von Baader (1765-1841) already warned that "the non-spiritual view of nature which Descartes especially brought into vogue was bound to result in the non-natural view of the mind and spirit, and the godless view of both."¹⁰ The point is that, on the one hand, the idea of God no longer plays a role either in knowledge of humans or in knowledge of the

⁸Buddhism, Advaita Hinduism, and Confucianism each could offer numerous examples of negative regard for physical reality.

⁹Moltmann, God in Creation, 45.

¹⁰Moltmann (Ibid., 27) cites Baader, Über den Zwiespalt des religiösen Glaubens und Wissens, 2nd. ed. (Darmstadt, 1958), 49. Pannenberg notes that this had far-reaching consequences for theology. It separated the Creator from the creation. See "Gott und die Natur: Zur Geschichte der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Theologie und Naturwissenschaft," Theologie und Philosophie 58, 4 (1983): 486f.

world and that, on the other hand, humans are radically separated from nature. These are two aspects of one view of reality.

In this view the world is construed as a mathematical-mechanical reality.¹¹ It has no inherent inner rationality, but is very much open to rational manipulation. It has no purpose or meaning on its own, but receives these through the practical uses to which humans subject it. Humans are viewed as fundamentally rational beings for whom nature is but the stage upon which the drama of human history is played. God is not a significant factor in the understanding of either humans or non-human nature. Spirit comes to be identified with the rational mind. The apologetic efforts of modern theology to fit its notions of nature, humans, and God to the dominant secular and scientific conceptions of reality have not been able to win a strong public voice in secular society.¹²

Post-Enlightenment western thought has sought a natural and rational as opposed to religious and authoritative ground for morality. Religion and metaphysics came to be regarded as private matters that were neither cogni-

¹¹Cf. Ernst Troeltsch, Historismus und Seine Probleme, Vol. 3, Gesammelte Schriften, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922), 9.

¹²Cf. Koch, 35f.

tive nor verifiable. Unfortunately the rational ground of morality and authoritative moral norms soon fell to the criticisms of historical relativity. The upshot, according to Pannenberg, is that morality, like religion, is relegated to the realm of personal conviction.¹³ Neither religion nor morality is seen in its depth and fullness. This phenomenon is part of the opposition of modern thought to religion and metaphysics. Value and meaning no longer adhere to facts and events.

Modern culture views nature through the lens of the scientific, technological, and industrial achievements of the mind. Human activity is directed at the methodological manipulation of the physical universe. The progress of human culture (or history) is opposed to the untamed wild (or nature). Nature is the chaos over which human reason progressively asserts itself. The story of this progress is seen as the content of history. History is stretching forth its mighty grasp and threatens to make an end of or tame, at least, Leviathan. But now we begin to see that as we destroy the wild we also destroy ourselves. We have begun to discover that we are on the rack with nature.

It will become clear in the course of the dissertation, that Pannenberg's goals as a theologian, include

¹³Pannenberg, "Christliche Rechtsbegründung," in Handbuch der christlichen Ethik, vol. 2, ed. Anselm Hertz et al. (Freiburg: Herder & Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1978), 330.

overcoming the philosophical separation of spirit and nature. The argument presented in the dissertation is that Pannenberg explicitly attempts to address this issue, and that this effort has ramifications for how nature is viewed and utilized.

The Scientific Presupposition of Atheism

The principle of inertia served as the cornerstone of the mechanistic explanation of the universe. The principle of inertia can be defined as "a force of preservation within" all bodies (Newton). Once this principle was combined with the notion that all "bodies always are in some form of movement which they transfer to each other by pressure and push" (Descartes) there is no longer a need to resort to a divine first cause. A mechanical explanation of the universe had been achieved.¹⁴

With the development of a fully mechanistic view of the cosmos, physics had cut itself off from the idea of a Creator. The universe was conceived as a closed system of matter and process (IGHF 105). According to Pannenberg, this methodologically atheistic physics served as the presupposition of an atheistic anthropology. He points out that it was Ludwig Feuerbach who took the decisive step of

¹⁴All the quotations in this paragraph are from Pannenberg, "The Doctrine of Creation and Modern Science," Zygon 23, 1 (March, 1988): 5.

developing an anthropology that had no need of God to account for the religious understanding of human existence.

What Feuerbach did was to account for the religious aspect of human nature on the basis of the young Hegel's view that humans are eternal beings. He argued that the idea of God and religion are the products of self-alienation, which is the result of the self becoming the object of its own consciousness. In this way the finite individual becomes conscious of his or her infinite essence. This infinite essence is, however, mistakenly understood by traditional theology as something other than the infinite self-consciousness of the human species, when it is understood as God. The methodological atheism of physics thus serves as a necessary presupposition for philosophical atheism.¹⁵ The atheistic account of the spirit is interconnected with the atheistic account of nature. In this way Pannenberg traces the development of

¹⁵"Until Feuerbach atheism was forwarded merely as a claim. Feuerbach, however, through his genetic theory of religion provided the proof of atheism. The scientific view of the world provided . . . only the premise. That everything could be explained without reference to God . . . demands that religion too could be explained without reference to God. Only thereby is the position of atheism completed." ("Bis zu Feuerbach ist der Atheismus eigentlich nur als Behauptung aufgetreten. Feuerbach jedoch hat durch seine genetische Theorie der Religion den Beweis des Atheismus geliefert. Eben dafür war das naturwissenschaftliche Weltbild . . . nur die Voraussetzung. Daß man alles ohne Gott erklären kann . . . das erforderte, daß man auch die Religion selbst ohne Gott erklären konnte. Erst damit ist die Position des Atheismus vollendet") (GF 1:348 & cf. ST 3:575).

modern anthropological atheism to its roots in the development of an account of the physical universe that had no need for recourse to a divine Creator. The conclusion of Pannenberg's historical account of atheism coheres with the argument of Moltmann and Baader that atheism and the dualism of mind and nature belong together. The argument of these theologians is that because nature and history are correlate realities, when nature became detached from spiritual meaning, history followed.

Pannenberg does not try to defend theological orthodoxy from the criticism of modern atheist thought, but acknowledges that various secular points of view have made the traditional doctrine of God obsolete. Secular modern culture considers as irrelevant both Christianity and its claims regarding the divine reality to which it wishes to witness. Pannenberg actually confronts Christians and theologians with arguments taken from science and atheism to show that some of its orthodox doctrines are not valid, and are considered impossible or antiquated in modern culture.

This two-fold criticism--of both modern culture and traditional theology--becomes the ground for Pannenberg's positive efforts to reconstruct Christian talk of God in the light of modern science. Pannenberg also criticizes the human sciences and natural sciences as offering less than adequate views of reality. These modern views of

reality have ignored the most fundamental reality, according to Pannenberg. They have ignored the createdness of reality and the God who is Creator. Pannenberg does not expect scientists and philosophers to consider again the claims of Christianity without first becoming convinced of their rationality. Pannenberg's self-chosen task as a theologian, in the light of his understanding of modern culture, is to provide reasonable grounds for scientists, philosophers, and anthropologists, among others, to take God into their considerations. In this way he aims to make a contribution to other sciences, as well as, to theology (WT 9 & 17f. & CS 77).

The practice of science has focused on natural and repeatable phenomena. The study of history, which is really the study of events which cannot be directly observed, and which are in their details unrepeatable, could be (and has at times been) excluded from science by a narrow or positivist definition of science. Thus truth has at times been reduced to truths that can be directly observed and repeated. Yet even this narrowly defined science is at times deprived of any hold on truth; for the observer has come to be regarded as a completely conventional and relative being (WT Part 1). The consequence is that the modern West has lost not only metaphysics but also its own past and future as well. The modern experience and knowledge of reality, as mediated by the natural sciences,

has been cut off from history, beauty, goodness, hope, and spirit; everything, in short, that is not cognitively present in some verifiable and repeatable form. And even this hold on physical reality has at times been threatened by more extreme forms of skepticism. Truth, in other words, is not often regarded as a serious category outside of the so-called pure sciences.

In the little volume Christianity in a Secularized World Pannenberg gives an account of his understanding of modern western culture and the task of Christian theology in such a world. Pannenberg argues that while modern culture has made significant progress beyond the medieval Christian world out of which it arose, it nonetheless has a limited conception of reality. The Christian church and its theologians are called upon to address this problematic:

The opportunity of Christianity and its theology is to integrate the reduced understanding of reality on the part of secular culture and its picture of human nature into a greater whole, to offer the reduced rationality of secular culture a greater breadth of reason, which would also include the horizon of the bond between humankind and God.¹⁶

¹⁶Pannenberg, Christianity in a Secularized World, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 57. "Die Chance des Christentums und seiner Theologie ist vielmehr [im Vergleich mit ein irrationeller flucht aus der modernen Welt so wie die exotische Religionen bieten], das reduzierte Wirklichkeitsverständnis der säkularen Kultur und ihres Menschenbildes in ein grösseres Ganzes zu integrieren, der reduzierten Rationalität der säkularen Kultur gegenüber eine grössere Weite der Vernunft selbst offenzuhalten, zu der auch der Horizont der Gottesbildung des Menschen gehört." Christentum in einer säkularisierten Welt, 75.

I think it is fair to suggest that the booklet describes a task which Pannenberg has taken up in his theological enterprise. Pannenberg goes so far as to argue that any natural scientific, philosophical, or human scientific approach to understanding the reality of the world, when done apart from acknowledgement of God as Creator, can only realize approximations of knowledge of the real world. Thus theology has the task of dialoguing with the sciences regarding the nature of the world. Theology must bring the knowledge of God as Creator to the contemporary scientific discussion of the nature of reality.¹⁷

The Solution: Reconceiving God and World

The Unifying Unity of Reality

As we shall see, Stanley Grenz is right when he states that Pannenberg's theology is founded on the assertion that God is the all-determining reality, and that the implication of this is that theology must be able to show

¹⁷"This means that, in the dialogue with the sciences, theology has the task of concretely pointing out those ignored dimensions through which the phenomena which are examined by the sciences are connected with God." ("Das bedeutet, daß die Theologie im Dialog mit den Wissenschaften die Aufgabe hat, in den von ihnen untersuchten Phänomenen die dabei ausgeblendete Dimension konkret aufzuweisen, durch die diese Phänomene mit Gott als dem Schöpfer der Welt verbunden sind.") (CW 68).

that all reality is illuminated and best understood when it is seen from this point of view: "the idea of God, if it corresponds to an actual reality, must be able to illumine not only human existence but also experience of the world as a whole, providing the unity of all reality."¹⁸ It is fundamental to Pannenberg's task to show the unity of reality as this unity is grounded in God. For if theology is not able to do so then it can make no reasonable claim that there is a God who is the Creator and the Redeemer, who will in fact draw all reality into the kingdom of his love. If there is no unity, there is no God, certainly no God in terms of an all-determining reality, no God as understood in the notions of creation and redemption, no God as understood through the interplay of Greek and Hebrew thought, which has guided western theology and philosophy.

This unity that Pannenberg seeks should not, however, be understood as at our disposal. As God is not directly available to us, so also the unity of all reality--universal history--is not directly available. It must nonetheless show itself, however indirectly, in our experience and knowledge of reality. Pannenberg's account of his own conversion to Christianity is relevant here. He states

¹⁸Stanley J. Grenz, Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg (New York: Oxford University, 1990), 8. Emphasis mine. Cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 62-64. Niebuhr also claims that the idea of God encompasses all reality.

that on a walk home "an extraordinary event occurred in which I found myself absorbed into the light of the setting sun and for one eternal moment dissolved in the light surrounding me."¹⁹ He continues with the remark that he spent many years discovering the significance of what had happened to him. He believes that such experiences require rational reflection in the context of what we know about reality--scientifically and historically, as well as philosophically and theologically. Pannenberg connects all experiences and intuitions of unity and wholeness as rooted in God. He also maintains that the idea of wholeness is fundamental to the perception of individual things.

In his contribution to Erwägungen zu einer Theologie der Natur Pannenberg points out that whoever speaks of the world as the creation of God is concerned with the same reality that the physical sciences make the object of their study: "It is precisely nature as investigated by the natural sciences that must be claimed by theology as the creation of God."²⁰ Pannenberg observes that too often theology has regarded the notion of creation as relevant only for the consideration of the beginning of history or for the subjectivity of religious feeling, as in "God has

¹⁹Pannenberg, "An Autobiographical Sketch," in Theology of Pannenberg: American Critiques, 12.

²⁰"Gerade die von der Naturwissenschaft erforschte Natur müßte von der Theologie als Schöpfung Gottes in Anspruch genommen werden" ETN 35.

created me." Creation, as Pannenberg uses the word, refers to the whole process of reality, from its beginnings to its ultimate end. His view is that if theology cannot on solid grounds think of nature in relationship to God then its talk of creation and creator is mere lip service (ETN 34f.). That God be taken seriously as God in the modern context necessitates that God be shown to be the source and end not only of humans but of all of nature. The fact that human history itself emerges naturally means that either both nature and history or neither of them are related to God.²¹

Pannenberg's aim in his systematic theology is to present a:

coherent interpretation of God, humans and world . . . , one that in relationship to empirical scientific study of the world and human life, as well as the reflective knowledge of philosophy, allows itself to be justified as true, and thus also allows itself to be claimed as

²¹"If theology wishes to take account of the divinity of God then it must not only think of God as the determining power of human history but of nature as well. This requirement follows from the fact that human history itself occurs only naturally. Thus either both history and nature or neither of them have something to do with God." ("Will die Theologie das Gottsein Gottes bedenken, so muß sie Gott als die nicht nur die menschliche Geschichte, sondern auch die Natur bestimmende Macht denken. Diese Forderung ergibt sich auch daraus, daß es in der menschlichen Geschichte selbst nur natürlich zugehen kann, so daß entweder Geschichte und Natur oder keine von beiden etwas mit Gott zu tun haben") (ETN 36).

true in relation to alternate religious and non-religious interpretations of the world.²²

The theologian must be able to make a rationally convincing claim to the truth of Christian doctrine regarding God, world and human existence.

Recent philosophical thought, according to Pannenberg, has recognized that the positivists' definitions of scientific statements cannot be met by even the best efforts of modern science. Subjective and conventional elements creep into the simplest of claims. Pannenberg's contribution to this discussion attempts to show that any attempt to judge metaphysics as unscientific fails to understand the nature of science. Ultimately, argues Pannenberg, the pursuit of a true understanding of reality cannot justifiably be delimited to the methodologies of the "pure" sciences (WT Part 1). The philosophy of science has failed to show the truth of its claim that metaphysics must be radically distinguished from the pursuit of true knowledge of reality. The pure sciences do not escape the conventionality and subjectivity of other branches of knowledge. However, Pannenberg takes the argument in the oppo-

²²He hopes to achieve a "zusammenhängende Interpretation von Gott, Mensch und Welt . . . , die sich im Verhältnis zum Erfahrungswissen von der Welt und dem menschlichen Leben, sowie zum Reflexionswissen der Philosophie, mit guten Gründen als wahr vertreten läßt, darum auch im Verhältnis zu alternativen religiösen und nicht-religiösen Weltinterpretationen als wahr behauptet werden kann" (ST 2:11).

site direction to that of the radical relativism of skeptical thought. He argues that truth, albeit in approximations, is available to the theologian as well as to the physicist, and that scientific theory also has metaphysical aspects.²³ Pannenberg argues that "whatever is true must finally be consistent with all other truth, so that truth is only one, but all-embracing, closely related to the concept of the one God" (IST 6).

Pannenberg argues that during the past one hundred years physics has developed new notions such as the view that events rather than solid bodies constitute the basic stuff of the universe, the contingency and irreversibility of these events, and a universal field within which events occur. This produces an understanding of reality that calls into question the classical modern understanding of inertia. It is no longer possible to regard solid bodies as self-persistent.²⁴ Pannenberg argues that it has become possible to show that physical reality as it is understood by the natural sciences allows for connection with a Creator. According to Pannenberg this removes the mechanistic and atheistic premise on which modern philosophical atheism was founded.

²³Grenz, Reason for Hope, 102f.

²⁴Pannenberg, "Theological Questions to Scientists," Zygon 16,1 (1981): 68-72, "Doctrine of Creation and Science," 4-18, and ST 2:66-69 & 99ff. Cf. also Pannenberg, "Geist und Energie," 6-9.

As to the Hegelian assumption regarding the eternity of the human spirit, upon which Feuerbach relied, it too is no longer self-evident. The mind or soul or spirit is far sooner reduced by modern science to an epiphenomenon of the body. The religious aspects of human experience can no longer be regarded as misinterpretations of fundamental anthropological experience (an eternal spirit). The foundations of philosophical atheism in the tradition of Feuerbach have been destroyed by science. Pannenberg is forced to address the notion of the reduction of spirit to an epiphenomenon of the body. He does so by arguing that the character of human existence and all reality is more fully understood when it is regarded as fundamentally religious. This argument is historical, philosophical, anthropological, and theological. Pannenberg also attempts to make connections between these types of arguments and the views of the natural sciences.

That Pannenberg has been able to argue that there is a transition from empirical to philosophical questioning is itself a critique of the attempt of the philosophy of science to ghettoize the non-empirical sciences.²⁵ More than this, Pannenberg's claim coheres with the unity of personal experience of reality. There is no disjuncture between one's empirical questioning regarding the origins

²⁵Cf. Dupré, 97.

of life on earth and one's philosophical or religious reflection regarding the origins of existence. These are certainly different activities.

The step from nomological sciences to philosophical claims is not possible in terms of simple extrapolation from nomological description, but requires a reflection upon nomological language and its implications. This is connected with the inherent abstractness of this language.²⁶

Nonetheless, they remain linked within the quest for understanding of the unified existence of an individual. There is no need to operate with a schizophrenic separation of prayer on the one hand and scientific research on the other.²⁷ They are also linked in their anticipatory structure, and can serve to correct each other. This open-ended questioning reflects the characteristic openness of human existence. The unified goal of this questioning is truth, and according to Pannenberg truth is one. Thus the idea of truth further holds together the various forms of question-

²⁶"Der Schritt von gesetzeswissenschaften zu philosophischen Behauptungen ist nicht in geradliniger Verlängerung nomologischer Deskription möglich, sondern erfordert eine Reflexion auf die gesetzeswissenschaftliche Sprache und ihre Implikationen. Das hängt mit der eigentümlichen Abstraktheit dieser Sprache zusammen" (WT 72).

²⁷Sigurd Martin Daecke, "Das »Interdisziplinäre Gespräch« von 1972 bis 1978: Eine Zusammenfassung," in Gott--Geist--Materie: Theologie und Naturwissenschaft in Gespräch, ed. Hermann Diehlztingen und Lutz Mohaupt (Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1980), 131 refers to Faraday's separation of these two realms of his own life.

ing and hypothesizing. Truth is the unknown goal toward which the open-endedness of human existence is directed.

All of this further implies that the realm of human culture and its history is closely linked with the natural world within which it exists. Questions of truth regarding the nature of the physical world are linked to the philosophical and religious questions as to the meaning of these realities. The questions of truth and meaning draw everything into themselves. No answer to these questions can ignore any aspect of reality. The natural world too has a history, as do both the empirical and religio-philosophical questioning of humans. These histories converge on the anticipated truth and meaning of all aspects of existence. Pannenberg understands this as the goal of existence, and argues that it is best understood through the relationship of God to the world.

Personal experiences are not a sufficient basis for claiming the truth of the loving God to whom they point. Pannenberg has recognized the need to bring the claims of the Christian faith into the arena of competing claims regarding the nature of reality (cf. IST 4-7). Only in facing the test of coherence with our knowledge of reality can the claim to the truth of God and creation be made with any legitimacy. "Rightly understood the revelation of God

is first taken into consideration when all other truth and knowledge is arranged on its basis and is taken into it."²⁸

While Pannenberg's work has sought to bring a Christian conception of reality into dialogue with secular conceptions of reality, his efforts are not in the service of proving the truth claims of orthodoxy. Pannenberg's focus is on truth rather than on orthodoxy. The idea of God as it has been transmitted in the history of a particular religious tradition is treated as an hypothesis that needs testing and clarifying in the light of what we now know about reality.²⁹ The discussion of Pannenberg's concept of God (Chapter 1) will make clear that Pannenberg is no apologist for orthodoxy. He is interested in arriving at a comprehensive and coherent account of reality, and he is convinced that this is best possible in the context of a

²⁸"Recht verstanden ist die Offenbarung Gottes als Offenbarung Gottes erst dann bedacht, wenn alle sonstige Wahrheit und Erkenntnis auf sie hingeordnet und in sie aufgenommen wird" (GF 1:12).

²⁹ETN 42. That Ted Peters labels Pannenberg's theology as "apologetic" depends on a definitional narrowing of the term. Peters ignores that aspect of traditional apologetics which defends orthodox faith. He does so in order to focus solely on rational argumentation regarding the truth of faith ("Truth in History: Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Pannenberg's Apologetic Method," Journal of Religion 55 (1975): 36-38). That Pannenberg corrects orthodox positions on the basis of modern perceptions of reality confirms that his methodology is not a traditional apologetic. Rather, it is rooted in a scientific methodology which proposes hypotheses and then tests them.

belief in the God of Israel as understood through the Christian tradition.

We shall see that Pannenberg argues that God is the source of conceiving the wholeness, and therefore the meaning, of reality. Each event and thing has meaning that is found only in terms of its relationships to all other things and events, and this is completely available only in the perspective of the whole. Each thing is what it is in terms of its relationships, and meaning is thus not external to itself. Each event and thing has its own relationship to the whole of reality, and this whole is grounded by God. Meaning is not that which arises out of the human use of things. This point will be treated further in the first chapter. For the present it is important to note that according to Pannenberg, the rejection of religion and metaphysics is at the root of both the problems associated with the opposition of human activity to the non-human world and the isolation of morality from public life. This isolation compounds the problematic character of the relationship of humans to the natural world.

Theology and Anthropology

One of the significant results of the anthropologization of the arguments for and against the existence of God is that both the natural world and the Kingdom of God are removed from the center of theological

concerns. Pannenberg recognizes this and attempts to recover the significance of the Kingdom of God as a central theme of theology (IGHF 16). Pannenberg does this by beginning with the anthropologized situation of philosophy and of theology. His arguments imply a fundamental modification of these modern presuppositions. Pannenberg's theological anthropology implies no less than a turn to God, and in this is entailed a turn to the world, which is no longer valued simply in anthropomorphic terms.

Stanley Grenz points out that Pannenberg follows more recent Christian thought in thinking of humans as a unity of body and soul. He adds that Pannenberg builds on the findings of contemporary philosophical anthropology.³⁰ We shall see that Pannenberg argues that philosophical anthropology is in need of broadening its understanding of existence by taking account of the divine Spirit which is the source of both body and soul and of their unity. He argues that the wholeness of human existence is rooted in God, whom he understands primarily in terms of love, goodness, and faithfulness, but also as all-determining.

Kurt Koch has also recognized that Pannenberg's theological efforts to overcome the split and opposition, which Koch calls an Apartheid between scientific and theological conceptions of reality, is fundamental to the

³⁰Grenz, Reason for Hope, 91.

development of a new understanding of the human relationship to the natural world.³¹ He also agrees with Pannenberg that the anthropocentrism of modernity is at the root of this problem. This anthropocentrism is both pervasive and powerfully dominant. Koch suggests that this becomes evident in all use of the term Umwelt (environment), which he regards as revealing the anthropocentricity of the speaker. The world is viewed as the stage for human history. Koch concludes with Klaus M. Meyer-Abich that unless the anthropocentrism is first overcome, all talk of environmental ethics remains a smoke screen behind which nothing is effectively done to protect nature. He concludes that environmentalism is in reality an expression of concern regarding human well-being and that nature is protected only in as much this protection serves humans. Ultimately environmentalism remains trapped in the anthropocentrism of the modern notion of progress.³² While I agree with Koch regarding the anthropocentrism of some environmental thought, my argument is that for Pannenberg both the centrality of humans and the conception of the world as Umwelt are in themselves neither avoidable nor evil. It will nonetheless become clear that Pannenberg's high and positive regard of humans is not equivalent to the

³¹Koch, 29f. & 32.

³²Koch, 32f.

anthropocentrism of classical modernity.

The strongly "anti-dualist" trend of much "ecothology" requires that an important distinction be made here. Bronislaw Szerszynski points out that many writers have argued that Christian metaphysical dualism--regarding God as wholly other--is the root of the ecological crisis.³³ These writers attempt to develop a new "identitarian" metaphysics. That is to say that they regard all appearances of separate things and creatures to be merely appearances. They hold that all reality is one all-encompassing meta-self. Szerszynski opposes this type of thinking with various critical arguments and proposes that metaphysical dualism does not necessarily lead to an ecological crisis. However, he does admit that the "industrial objectification of nature" is historically dependent upon this type of dualism.³⁴ Thus Szerszynski argues that one has either an identitarian or a dualist metaphysics.

Pannenberg's attempt to conceive the wholeness of existence as rooted in the nearness of God to creation fits neither of Szerszynski's categories. The unity of nature and history is a rejection of dualism, but it is not the identification of the two with each other. Pannenberg

³³Szerszynski, "The Metaphysics of Environmental Concern--A Critique of Ecotheological Antidualism," Studies in Christian Ethics 6,2 (1993): 67-70.

³⁴Ibid., 74.

makes clear distinctions and recognizes the existence of real oppositions within history, but seeks to go more deeply to the unity that underlies the possibility of making distinctions. Szerszynski argues that because selves are the products of relationships it is nonsense to argue that all things are really one huge Self.³⁵ If Pannenberg were to respond to Szerszynski he would point out that the capacity of selves to differentiate other selves and objects depends upon the recognition (albeit a dim recognition) of a fundamental unity of reality.

Conclusion

The argument of this dissertation is that Wolfhart Pannenberg has noted the disastrous result of modern opposition of history and nature, and has attempted to address the problem in his presentation of a Christian understanding of reality. The argument is that a healthful relationship of history to nature must be rooted in an understanding of reality that transcends the self-interests of modern individualist culture without negating the special place of humans in the world. Much of the dissertation presents Pannenberg's attempts to do just this on the basis of his systematic conception of God as Creator and Redeemer, and humans as central figures in the aims of creation and redemption. His conception of God's love incorporates all

³⁵Ibid., 70.

reality in the process towards the eschatological achievement of the aim of creation and redemption.

My thesis has several intertwined themes. First, I argue that Pannenberg's thought is a thoroughgoing attempt to think of humans and the non-human world as together taken up into a divinely grounded unity that includes all histories, whether they be human, organic, geological, or stellar. I use the categories history and nature to represent the two aspects of existence which modern thought and practice have opposed to each other. I use the unity of nature and history to refer to Pannenberg's effort to overcome this modern split. The terms are taken from Pannenberg's writings. Second, I hold that Pannenberg places the eschatological Kingdom of God at the center of his interpretation of reality. Universal history is the key category by which to understand reality, and this history is the process of realizing the eschatological Kingdom of God. Third, the ideas of creation and redemption together with that of the coming Kingdom of God are expressions of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit. Fourth, this is at the same time the foundation of Pannenberg's theological enterprise and his ethics. I focus on divine love as Pannenberg's foundation for ethics. Finally, I try to show that divine love provides theological ethics with a sound foundation from which to engage the particular modern problematic of ecology.

Chapter 1

God the Creator

Wolfhart Pannenberg's understanding of creation is distinguished by its Trinitarian and eschatological foci. The connection of eschatology with the doctrine of creation gives his understanding of creation a process character with an orientation to the future. The explication of creation in terms of the Trinity gives each detail within the general eschatological form its place in relation to the love of the Creator. Father, Son, and Spirit create the universe in one mighty act that is only fully seen from the point of view of the eschaton, which is the perfect realization of the inner-Trinitarian love. On the way to the realization of the Kingdom of God, the Trinity works immanently in all reality.

In this chapter I will elaborate Pannenberg's understanding of creation through an analysis of his discussions of the Trinity and of eschatology. My analysis is guided by the question of the relationship of nature and history. The question I shall try to answer is how does Pannenberg's understanding of a Trinitarian and eschatological doctrine of creation serve to overcome the dualism of nature and spirit?

Although I concentrate specifically on these two aspects of Pannenberg's understanding of creation, I will

need to develop some of the basic background concepts involved. Pannenberg seeks direction in the Jewish context within which Christianity developed. The notions of history and revelation are fundamental, as is the radical monotheism of Israel's faith. Finally, some questions regarding pantheism, anthropocentrism, evil, and moral consequences will be treated.

God: Ancient Israel and Modern Atheism

Monotheism, History, and Revelation

According to Pannenberg, the context for the Trinitarian Christian conception of God is provided by the history of ancient Israel. Here are found the roots of the notion that there is one God, Jahweh, who is above all gods, and that these so-called gods are merely the creations of the human imagination. There is only one God in whom is to be sought the determining power that governs all reality. But this conception of the oneness of the deity and the corresponding nothingness of the gods is a realization that marks a significant progression in Israel's history.

Israel comes to know Jahweh through the experience of reality as a process between promise and fulfillment.¹

¹In 1959 ("Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte") Pannenberg used the process of promise and fulfillment to describe the idea of history. Later he corrects this by pointing out that the promises are themselves transformed by unforeseen events, and thus their fulfillment can only be "affirmed in a way that deviates from their original

Through the years Jahweh punishes offenses against the covenant codes--the curses come upon covenant breakers; he forgives and heals the repentant people, renewing the covenant for the sake of the Patriarchs; he sends prophets, establishes kings, and turns enemies away. In the process the people come to know the love, holiness, faithfulness, jealousy, and power of Jahweh. They also come to know the weakness of human love and faithfulness. And in this context they came to know the faithfulness of Jahweh in re-establishing covenant, in offering healing, and in overcoming human frailty.

From the biblical record it is apparent that the Patriarchs, the Judges, and the early kings did not share this radical monotheism (e.g., Gen 31:19). Early Israel did not have access to the fuller knowledge that the sixth century B.C. prophets attained (e.g., Is 66: 1-2). Jahweh's relationship with the people of Israel is a process. The relationship has a history in which the more recent is no longer the same as the more distant past. Various sorts

literal meaning." This taken from Pannenberg's "Response to the Discussion," Theology as History (New Frontiers in Theology, Vol. 3), ed. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 259. The idea of Überlieferungsgeschichte is seen as fundamentally informing the conception of promise and fulfillment. The change came already before the publication of Pannenberg et al., Offenbarung als Geschichte (Göttingen, 1961)--the English trans. is Revelation as History, trans. David Granskou (New York: Macmillan, 1968), and is elaborated in "Kerygma und Geschichte," in GF 1:79-90. See Polk, On the Way to God, 61.

of encounters drew forth new and ever more complete expressions of faith in Jahweh. Many early biblical references testify to a continued belief in the reality and power of other gods long after the encounters with Jahweh during the exodus from Egypt, the desert wanderings, and the conquest of Canaan. That the monotheistic faith of Israel was achieved in the process of a history of God's relationship with the people is no longer controversial. Whatever Abram believed, it is clear that the understanding of God that developed in the process of ancient Israel's history made an end of both polytheism and monarchialism.²

In the modern world it must also be noted that this understanding of God allows for no dualism of nature and spirit. Jahweh was known as the God who rules nature as well as history. The understanding of Jahweh as the creator God is only possible if it is accompanied with a faith in the absolute character of God's rule in history. Pannenberg states that "in tracing both the order and the origin of the cosmos to the God of salvation history [Heilsgeschichte] the unlimited character of the power which manifests itself in his action in history is made

²For a fuller account of the development of monotheism see, for example, Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, vol. 1, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (London: SCM Press, 1975), 203-212. See also Pannenberg, GF 1:268-271 & 308f.

clear."³ Jahweh is the one and the only God who rules in Israel's history, and he is the one who has brought the cosmos into existence and his is the power that renews the world and keeps all things from returning to chaos and nothingness.

The jealous holiness of Jahweh and its exclusive claim upon the people of Israel led to the understanding that the creation of the cosmos, the renewal and maintenance of the world, and the course of history--all history--are the activities of only one God--Jahweh. The radical monotheism of Israel brought the various aspects of religious life into a unity of worship and service given to one God. No longer was it legitimate to seek the good will of various fragmented powers in the various compartments of human experience. Life within the covenant of Jahweh with Israel did not allow for the isolation of religious life from agricultural practice, for example. The covenant stipulations covered all aspects of life, and the blessings and curses attached to the covenant no less so. The misuse of the land could be punished by political exile. Drought would result from the mistreatment of the poor. Land and sky were not isolated from human concourse. A reading of the Old Testament shows that the lives of shep-herd and

³"Durch Zurückführung auch der kosmischen Ordnung und ihres Ursprunges auf den Gott der Heilsgeschichte wurde die Unumschränktheit der in seinem geschichtlichem Handeln sich manifestierenden Macht dargetan" (ST 2:25).

king were equally considered to be under the one rule of Jahweh (e.g., Lev 25 & 26; Dt 10 & 11; Amos 5).

Pannenberg argues that the driving motive for appropriating the cosmological functions of El and Baal is to be found in the holy jealousy of Jahweh, as expressed in Exodus 20:3, the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods. . ." and "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Dt 6:5) (ST 2:25). Love is the character of the ultimate relationship of creature with Creator. The biblical statements about God's love and election of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) form the basis of God's continuing love for the people of Israel. At the heart of the response to God is love. Obedience to God in the context of the covenant is the form which love takes. As we shall see, Pannenberg's focus on the unity of the Trinity as well as on the participation of creation in this unity also suggests that love be understood as the central category for understanding the creation--redemption--fulfillment process.

Pannenberg is not, however, simply trying to derive the idea of God from an analysis of ancient Hebrew faith. Rather, the idea of God is treated as a hypothesis which needs to be tested for its truth (ETN 42). The connection of nature and history is sought in the idea of the all-determining Creator. Pannenberg relies especially on a

conception of God as the one who acts in history and a conception of history that includes all of reality. These ideas are rooted in the faith of ancient Israel, and are expressed in the creation texts of Genesis 1-3 as well as in the prophets who draw all of reality, including the future, together under the creative and free action of God. The unity of God in his action in history (economy of God), which was experienced by Israel in a promise-fulfillment character--in God's trustworthiness--grounds Israel's conception of the unity of all history (ETN 46).

The experience that the fulfillment of promises was mostly inexact and involved a re-interpretation of the past (the promissory events), pointed beyond the fulfillment of the promises to a more ultimate fulfillment of God's actions in history. In the developments of post-exilic apocalypticism, it became clear that God's actions could be understood in the perspective of an ultimate and eschatological future. Thus, the meaning and determination of history and all its particularities were understood from this eschatological perspective (ETN 46f.). Pannenberg is concerned to show that this universal history includes nature.

"The universe is equally in nature and history the field of Jahweh's action."⁴ Pannenberg detects in the

⁴"Das Universum ist in Natur und Geschichte gleichermaßen das »Handlungsfeld« Jahwes" (ST 2:26).

Hebrew Bible a notion of creation which is defined both from the perspective of origins and from that of history. Close connections are made between God's creation of the world and God's saving acts on behalf of the covenant people (Is 43-48). Jahweh comes to be regarded as the only God, as one who acts out of the boundless freedom of divine power. There is no room for a dualist understanding of creation--the physical world is not created by some demiurge. The material universe and the human spirit both belong to the one creation of the one Creator (ST 2:29). Jahweh brings all that exists into being and it continues to exist on the basis of his continued interest in the welfare of the creation. Jahweh the Creator of all reality is also the God of all history, Israel's as well as that of all nations. Biblical roots for Pannenberg's understanding of God are found, for example, in a prayer of the early Christian community (Acts 4: 24-30). In one compact prayer God is acknowledged as Creator, as Sovereign over kings and rulers (i.e., human history), and as Redeemer.

Pannenberg connects the understanding of human and natural history in God the Creator. God grounds the unity that is apparent in both human and natural history. And God's future rule is that which gives the final context and unity by which the diverse and unrepeatable events of all reality are seen to be a history of God's creation and redemption, which culminates in the manifestation of his

power and glory. This is seen in one of the more common ways in which Pannenberg refers to God--"die alles bestimmende Macht" or "Realität" or "Wirklichkeit" (the all-determining power or reality). This phrase should be understood in the context of the Judeo-Christian concept of God as the one and only God who is the Creator, Redeemer, and Perfecter of all reality. It conveys that God is the source and end of all existence and that God is to be reckoned with in all that happens. The phrase is also intended to refer to human experiences of dependence that Pannenberg regards as fundamental and universal (ST 2:224-228).

The universality of God means that all events and realities are determined by God. This means, further, that the activity of God in history is to be sought in the day to day events of history (GF 1:77). Because a) God is the creator of all reality, b) creatures are given an independent existence, and c) God remains faithful to creatures in spite of the sinful character of their actions, Pannenberg understands all events to be an indirect self-revelation of God (RH ix). This means that history in its totality is the self-revelation of God (RH 17). The realization of the ultimate eschatological goal of history coincides with God's full and final self-revelation. History reveals the faithfulness of God as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. This will be more fully explicated in the following sections of the chapter.

The Question of Truth

The question of the truth of the Christian faith is significant in the context of the claim that God is the all-determining reality. It is the question regarding the Christian faith's

power to encompass all reality--even that of modern science, the technological control of nature, and the forms of individual life--and to claim them all as evidence for the content of the Christian message. The question about the truth of the Christian message has to do with whether it can still disclose to us today the unity of the reality in which we live, as it once did in the ancient world.⁵

For Pannenberg questions of truth are ultimately questions of the absolute truth, which can only be one Truth.

According to Pannenberg the Hebrew notion of emeth (truth) is fundamentally historical. It is the ever repeated reliability and faithfulness of persons in relationships. It is oriented to the future--truth will show itself in future faithfulness (BQ 2:3). Pannenberg argues that emeth takes up and refines the central aspect of truth that the Greek notion of aletheia had in view.

The Greek dualism between true being and changing sense-appearances is superseded in the biblical understanding of truth. Here, true being is thought of not as timeless but instead as historical, and it proves its stability through a history whose future is always open (BQ 2:9).

The truth is not reached in abstraction from the flux of history, but is disclosed in new ways at new junctures in

⁵BQ 2:1. Cf. also the introduction to WT 7-26.

history. Thus both the historical and the abiding aspects of truth are included in the concept of emeth (BQ 2:9f.).

Pannenberg argues that the Hebrew notion of truth has continued to shape western thought. He sees this in the context of the problem of how true knowledge of non-human reality is possible and how this possibility is related to the knowledge of God. Pannenberg argues that Nicolas of Cusa's conception of thought as a creative productivity underlies the construction of hypotheses, which is fundamental to modern scientific thinking. Knowledge is attained through the creative subjectivity, which construes hypothetical models of reality, which are then experimentally tested. In Cusa's view of this attainment of knowledge, the problem of explaining the adequation of creative reflection to the world is answered by the conception of the image of God. God is the Creator of the world and humans are the creators of an intellectual world, and are thus the likeness of God. Since humans are the image of God, their ideas will reflect the things created by God (BQ 2:15-17).

The unity of creative subjectivity and external reality is a central aspect of the unity of nature and history. For history is the unrepeatable sequence of creative human activity. It is a category of the human mind/spirit. It tells the story of human culture, as well as the story of the non-human world within which it lives. Nature, the

non-human world, is the fundamental external reality within which humans live, about which they think, and upon which they act. Apart from the consideration of a greater unifying reality, it has become problematic to consider these inner and outer realities as a unity. According to Pannenberg's analysis of the epistemological process only the Creator can be the true ground of both subject and object, and can thus be their unity. God is the one truth which is the source of both humans and the world that we examine and come to know. I have used this somewhat dualist way of speaking intentionally. It is not part of the ordinary experience of modern people to think in terms of a unity. Our secular culture tends to separate the inner (human) world and the outer (non-human) world. Pannenberg's theological construal of the world argues that these "two" worlds are really the one world of the Creator God, and that this is evident through a consideration of epistemology.

One of the aims of Pannenberg's Theology and the Philosophy of Science is to establish that it is not possible to make a sharp distinction between the historical sciences on the one hand and the natural sciences on the other hand. Pannenberg argues that all the hypotheses and results of scientific investigation are anticipatory because all knowledge is yet incomplete and must remain so

as long as the future remains unknown or open (WT 72f. & 43f.).

The substance of Pannenberg's claim that the natural sciences, like the human sciences, are historical and limited, is found in recent arguments in the philosophy of science. These discussions have served to show the weaknesses of positivism and logical positivism. They have shown the inescapably historical character of all scientific investigation. At the same time they have broken the barriers that existed between the natural and the "metaphysical" sciences. Pannenberg argues that it can no longer be argued that because the human sciences are inexact they have no valid claims to truth. For such a judgment would also fall upon the natural sciences. Although modern physics, to take as an example the science regarded by some as the most successful of all modern sciences, is remarkably accurate in its descriptions of the real world, it must acknowledge minute discrepancies between its general laws and individual instances of the realities these laws intend to describe. More than that, in quantum physics it has been argued that the free decisions of experimenters as to the measuring instruments used for particular experiments leads to mutually exclusive results. According to the physicist A. M. Klaus Müller, there is, in other words, an inescapable element of contingency in the results of experimental science. Müller

states that "physics, at this level of reflection, therefore, no longer simply describes properties of existing objects, but only the results of experiments."⁶

As long as the question of truth remains significant to scientific inquiry, in spite of the anticipatory nature of their results, the state of affairs involved in the distinction between these anticipatory results and the actual realities described can be explained by referring to the traditional metaphysical distinction between essence and appearance. Pannenberg, however, redefines "essence" in a historical manner. This means that one must draw a distinction between the way in which a particular object appears in a particular time and place and what the object will finally prove to be when it is wholly known (WT 44). This is an indication of the connection that Pannenberg makes between metaphysical reflection and scientific inquiry. It reflects, at the level of epistemology (the adequation of human thought to the natural world), the unity in God of nature and history.

⁶"Die Physik auf dieser Reflexionsstufe beschreibt daher nicht mehr einfach Eigenschaften von seienden Objekten, sondern einzig die Resultate von Experimenten." Müller, "Über philosophischen Umgang mit exakter Forschung und seine Notwendigkeit," in Erwägungen zu einer Theologie der Natur, 23.

The Being and Coming of God

Some of the results of Pannenberg's interaction with various atheist positions warrant a brief discussion, for in this interchange Pannenberg seeks to show the correspondence of his understanding of God (which he draws largely out of the biblical tradition) with modern perceptions of reality. This is an important task for any theologian who wishes to claim the universality of God's rule. For when theologians make such claims they are making claims about the same world that other thinkers also claim to understand.

Pannenberg points out that atheists such as Feuerbach argue that "the experience of freedom excludes belief in the existence" of a God who is "understood as an omniscient and omnipotent being complete and perfect at the beginning of the created world" (IGHF 93). Pannenberg agrees with the atheist criticism that such notions of God (he regards them as characteristic of much of medieval theology) cannot be reconciled with the experience of human freedom. Pannenberg's constructive response is to reformulate the notion of God by placing these characteristics of God in the future. God is identified with the power of a sure future. Pannenberg develops an understanding of God that distinguishes between the immanent and the economic reality of the Trinity. This distinction allows Pannenberg to regard the reality of God both as a process of becoming

perfect and as eternally perfect (ST 1:354f.). "What turns out to be true in the future [regarding God] will then be evident as having been true all along" (TKG 63). The absolute power of God's love is eternally realized within the inner-Trinitarian relationship of Father, Son and Spirit. However, this characteristic of God, in its relation to the created universe, is only fulfilled in the universe through the process of its mediation and realization through Christ and the Spirit.⁷

The fundamental difference between Pannenberg's notion of God and that of the medieval theologians is that Pannenberg replaces the notion of an eternally perfect and unchanging Deity with the idea of a God who is eternally faithful to his creatures. Pannenberg no longer speaks of God as unmoved and unchanging. The monarchy of the Father as well as the unity of the Trinity are determined by the realization of God's rule in creation through the work of the Son and the Spirit (ST 1:354ff.). But the work of the Son and the Spirit is to reveal the God who is in eternity (ST 1:359). This, he argues, makes it possible to hold without contradiction both that God is eternal and that God's relationship with the creation involves a contingent

⁷Cf. Pannenberg, "Probleme einer trinitarischen Gotteslehre," in Weisheit Gottes--Weisheit der Welt, ed. W. Baier (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987), 333. Pannenberg is critical of Moltmann's notion of the monarchy of the Father. Pannenberg's own Trinitarian theology seeks to understand the three Persons of the Trinity in relational equality.

history. It is thus in the relationship of the economic to the immanent Trinity that one can speak of God becoming something that he previously was not:

If eternity and time first coincide in the eschatological completion of history, then from the point of view of the history of God on the way to that completion there is room for a becoming in God himself, that is in the relationship of immanent and economic Trinity. And in this context it is then also possible to say, regarding God, that when he became human in his Son he himself became something that in the past he was not.⁸

Pannenberg can state this even more strongly. God freely decides, in entering into a history with his creation, to allow himself to be determined by this history. As E. Frank Tupper puts it, Pannenberg speaks of God's being only in terms of his relationship to history.⁹ The being and deity of God are intertwined with his rule, which is the expression of his power in history.¹⁰

Pannenberg also points out that history is determined from its ultimate completion, which is the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God, however, represents most perfectly the determination of reality by the power of the

⁸"Wenn Ewigkeit und Zeit erst in der eschatologischen Vollendung der Geschichte koinzidieren, dann ist unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Geschichte Gottes auf jene Vollendung hin Raum für ein Werden in Gott selbst, nämlich im Verhältnis von immanenter und ökonomischer Trinität, und in diesem Rahmen ist es dann auch möglich, von Gott zu sagen, daß er selber etwas wurde, was er zuvor nicht war, als er in seinem Sohne Mensch wurde" (ST 1:472f.).

⁹E. Frank Tupper, The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg (Philadelphia: Westminster P., 1971), 193f. & 199.

¹⁰Grenz, Reason for Hope, 50.

all-determining God.¹¹ I suggest that the circularity of this conception of the relationship of God and creation may be clarified by a careful distinction of perspective. If one attempts to consider reality from the perspective of God, then all is determined by God. If one distinguishes from this the perspective of the historical experience of God's determination of reality, then it becomes clear that humans, through the freedom they have as independent creatures, participate in the determination of reality, which is to say, they have a determining role in the expression of God's power in history.¹² In other words, God determines the creation to be interdependent with himself. Pannenberg's distinction of immanent and economic Trinity

¹¹See Michael Schulz, "Zur Hegelkritik Wolfhart Pannenberg's und zur Kritik am »Antizipationsgedanken« Pannenberg's im Sinne Hegels," Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift 43, 2 (1992): 208f.

¹²Cf. Polk, On the Way to God, 270-280 & 287. Polk argues that Pannenberg does not allow for human self-determination. He cites a recorded conversation with Pannenberg (10-21-82) in which Pannenberg states the following: "If the human person is a creature of God, so [sic] everything that belongs to that creature, including its self-creative, self-determining potential, is already an effect of the work of the Creator" (the conversation is cited in On the Way to God, 313n.262). Polk is open to the criticism that he fails to note the change in perspective when speaking of divine and human determination. In this context one should perhaps interpret Pannenberg in a manner similar to Mary Potter Engel's interpretation of Calvin (John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology (Atlanta: Scholar's P., 1988), 1-10). Potter notes that seeming contradictions in Calvin's assertions regarding predestination on one hand and human responsibility on the other hand are attributable to changes in perspective from divine to human (139-144).

appears to be intended, at least in part, to deal with this difficulty. It enables one to hold both that God is already and has always been God and that God will one day become ruler of reality in such a way that present doubts regarding that rule (and goodness) are overcome.¹³

In this context Pannenberg asks his now well known question: "God does not yet exist, but will come to be?" (Gott ist noch nicht, sondern wird erst sein?) (GF 1:393). Later formulations of this thought, which primarily speak of God as the power of the future, seem somewhat less radical. But even here the intention is to highlight the idea that the perceived (by creatures) reality of God is dependent upon the manifestation of God's power to bring the creation to perfection.¹⁴ Pannenberg states that Jesus' death and resurrection exemplify the nature of God's relationship to history. The death of Jesus calls into question both the truth of Jesus' role as God's agent and the power of God. The resurrection of Jesus retroactively confirms what was true of both all along. In a like manner the eschatological realization of God's rule will confirm what has always been true about God (ST 1:359). The claims that God is love and is Creator remain open until sin, hatred, and evil are overcome by God's rule.

¹³Pannenberg, "Der Gott der Hoffnung," in GF 1:393.

¹⁴See Pannenberg, "Probleme einer trinitarischen Gotteslehre," 338f.

While Pannenberg here clearly considers the reality of God in terms of the process of reality or history, there is also one point at which Pannenberg parts company with process theologians. He refuses to incorporate time into the idea of God.¹⁵ Regarding God's being, Pannenberg states, "what turns out to be true in the future will then be evident as having been true all along" (TKG 63).¹⁶ John O'Donnell argues that Pannenberg understands the immanent Trinity completely in terms of the economy of the Son's activity in the world.¹⁷ He interprets Pannenberg to hold that "there is no immanent Trinity standing behind the economic Trinity. There is no eternal essence lying behind the manifestations. Rather the essence comes to appearance in the action."¹⁸ Unfortunately, O'Donnell has taken a comment of Pannenberg's out of its context. He refers to Pannenberg's Systematische Theologie (1:387), where Pannenberg states that the essence of a thing comes into appearance in its existence (Dasein). O'Donnell interprets this to signify an identity of essence and appearance in the Daseinsmoment. In so doing O'Donnell misses an impor-

¹⁵See Tupper, The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, 204f.

¹⁶Cf. John O'Donnell, "Pannenberg's Doctrine of God," Gregorianum 72, 1 (1991): 84-90.

¹⁷Ibid., 87 & 90.

¹⁸Ibid., 88.

tant qualification in the sentence he quotes: "In it (the particular moment of existence) the essence of a thing merely comes into appearance."¹⁹ I emphasize the "nur" because it makes clear Pannenberg's intention. God's essence is never, during the course of history, fully revealed in the appearances of his power in individual events. According to Pannenberg, God's self-revelation in history is always indirect. This becomes completely clear when on the following page Pannenberg states explicitly that God's essence comes into appearance (Erscheinung) in history in only anticipatory ways.²⁰ Nonetheless, O'Donnell rightly sees that Pannenberg regards God's being or essence as coming, and that God's appearances are fundamentally identifiable with God's being.²¹ What God is eternally will come fully to appearance in the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, the (incomplete) appearance of God in

¹⁹"In ihm (dem einzelnen Daseinsmoment) kommt das Wesen der Sache nur zur Erscheinung." O'Donnell omits the "nur."

²⁰"The singular appearance is distinct from the essence. . . . If the appearances are to be conceived as a series, then their totality is only determined through the anticipation of the entire sequence. . . ." ("Die einzelne Erscheinung ist vom Wesen verschieden. . . . Sind die Erscheinungen als eine Reihe aufzufassen, so ist deren Totalität nur durch Antizipation ihrer ganzen Abfolge . . . bestimmt" (ST 1:388). In the case of God, it is always the same reality which appears in history. But it appears as the all-determining reality which both transcends history and is its future unity. See also Ethics 191.

²¹O'Donnell, 91.

history is, nonetheless, the true appearance of this future reality. When God's rule has become fully realized then the true character of all the anticipatory appearances of his rule will be known.

O'Donnell also argues that Pannenberg makes the same error in judgment regarding the idea of God that process thinkers make, which according to O'Donnell, is the sacrifice of divine omnipotence and omniscience in order to save creaturely freedom.²² Pannenberg need not have accepted the atheist outcome of certain medieval ideas of God's omnipotence and omniscience, which excluded the possibility of human freedom. However, when O'Donnell states that "in a strict sense, we cannot speak of any foreknowledge in God", he has already taken a step in Pannenberg's direction.²³ O'Donnell fails to see that Pannenberg's location of the realization of the rule of God in the future is not a removal of God's rule from the present. God's power is present as the ultimate future. Pannenberg conceives the relationship of time and eternity in the context of the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinity. I suggest that it is in this context that we need to consider Pannenberg's remarks regarding the futurity of God's existence. The dependence of God's future on the

²²Ibid., 95.

²³Ibid.

freedom of creatures is related to the becoming of God that Pannenberg locates in the relationship of the economic to the immanent Trinity. God (economic) is not manifest to creatures as God (immanent) in power and authority except from the perspective of the future full participation of creatures in the Kingdom of God. We do not yet see face to face (1 Cor 13:12). This does not mean, as O'Donnell supposes, that according to Pannenberg God is not present at the origin of the universe.²⁴

Jerry Norris Beam argues that if "God is simultaneously present to all times" then God would "know the future as actual before it occurs."²⁵ However, the real

²⁴It appears that for O'Donnell the real problem is that Pannenberg's thought does not provide for an authoritative church, one which possesses "the guarantee of the church's certitude to stand in the truth" (97).

Pannenberg argues that God has a history of his becoming the one God of all people. This is a history in time. Nonetheless, God remains the same from eternity to eternity (OG 97). In the end God will reveal that it was always the one true God who appeared in the events of history (OG 98).

²⁵Jerry Norris Beam ("A critical assessment of Wolfhart Pannenberg's relation to Process Thought," Ph.D. Baylor University, 1985, 23n.27) argues that Pannenberg, to be fully consistent, should become a process thinker, that he should fully incorporate time into his notion of deity, and that he should no longer speak of God as acting powerfully (100-115, 145f.). Beam believes that Pannenberg's argument that God is free and powerful and that God is in this way the ground of creaturely freedom is self-contradictory. If there is an end to history, says Beam, then there can be no freedom within history. Pannenberg should drop eschatology. Pannenberg should talk about God as one does about finite humans (117). Beam neglects Pannenberg's efforts to ground human freedom in God's freedom. He simply states that Pannenberg's notions of God and human freedom are contradictory on the basis of the assumption that if one's ontology is not completely shaped by the

point about the simultaneity of God's presence is that God encompasses time, but is more than time and space. Pannenberg speaks of God's continuing presence (fortdauernde Gegenwart) (ST 2:63). God does not know the future as actual before it occurs. Rather, as the future occurs God is present to it. God is present to all times as their mutual future wholeness (TKG 63). In Pannenberg's formulation the past is not lost to God, but past, present, and future are together grounded in the eternal act of creation (ST 2:58). God's faithfulness, not divine aseity, is characteristic of God's presence to all time. Humans experience history as fragmented and multitudinous times and places. Time and space are a unified reality in the presence of the faithfulness of the redeeming Creator. God's creative activity is immediately present to each creaturely moment.²⁶ In this context he also notes that the unity of God's creative activity comes into question. This is addressed by the connection of the eschatological Kingdom with creation. Creation is from the coming Kingdom.

open-endedness of Whitehead's ontology, then it must be a deterministic conception of divine omnipotence (38f., 156 cf. also 164, 179, 186f.).

²⁶Pannenberg speaks of "the immediacy of the divine creative activity to each creaturely moment" ("die Unmittelbarkeit des göttlichen Schöpfungshandelns zu jeder geschöpflichen Gegenwart") (ST 2:167).

The distinction of Pannenberg's notion of God from a medieval one is a significant point which if missed can result in a serious misinterpretation of Pannenberg's thought. If one fails to note that Pannenberg has effectively eliminated the notion of God's unchangeableness from his theology and that it has been replaced with an understanding of the eternal faithfulness of God, then it may be possible to suggest that Pannenberg's God needed to create a universe in order to realize his absolute monarchy.²⁷ This misinterpretation becomes even more distorted insofar as one fails to note that Pannenberg defines the content of God's eternal faithfulness as creative love (ST 1:473). However, Pannenberg's attempt to maintain both the all-determining power of God and the rootedness of human freedom in God's determination of human existence is most clearly formulated within a Trinitarian conception of God and creation, at the heart of which is God's faithful love.

The Trinity and Creation

Freedom in Self-Differentiating Acknowledgment

The doctrine of creation regards the free activity of God as the source of the existence of the universe. However, this is not to say that the world is needed by God in order for God to be active. God is eternally active

²⁷Cf. the claim of Beam, "A critical assessment," 114.

within the inner-Trinitarian dynamic of love (ST 2:18).

The correlate of the non-necessity of God's action, says Pannenberg, is that the universe is contingent, it does not exist necessarily (ST 2:15).

In creating the world (Welt, here understood as everything that exists in time and space, and this understood as a unified reality)²⁸ the inner relationship of the persons of God is turned outward. In other words:

the activity of the one God in His relationship to the world is not something completely other than that of His Trinitarian life. Rather in this relationship [to the world] the Trinitarian life itself turns outward, moves outside itself and becomes the determining ground of the relationship between Creator and creation.²⁹

This understanding of the act of creation already expresses that the relation between God and the creation is (or is intended to be) characterized by the love and unity of the persons of the Trinity with each other. It regards the creation as one reality, unified in the creative act of divine love. It also expresses both the distinction of the

²⁸All parts of the universe are primarily understood from the point of view of their wholeness as a world, and not from the point of view of the often conflicting diversity of the parts. Cf. Stanley Grenz, Reason for Hope, 83.

²⁹"Das Handeln des einen Gottes im Weltverhältnis ist nicht ein völlig anderes als in seinem trinitarischen Leben, sondern in ihm wendet sich dieses trinitarische Leben selber nach außen, tritt aus sich heraus und wird zum Bestimmungsgrund der Beziehungen zwischen Schöpfer und Geschöpf" (ST 2:19).

creation from the Creator and the (intended) unity of creation with its Creator.

Pannenberg more specifically understands the initial differentiation of the created universe from God in terms of the relationship of the Father to the Son. The eternal Son, says Pannenberg, responds to the love of the Father with an eternal self-differentiation (Selbstunterscheidung) from the Father.³⁰ The character of this self-differentiation is an acknowledgment by the Son of the Father as God. This self-differentiation is the starting point for the otherness of the creation from the Father. The independent existence of creatures is rooted in this differentiation. Pannenberg sees the relationship of Father and Son reflected especially in the relationship of humans to the Father. However, the entire universe participates in this relationship, for it is the ground of the possibility of its existence (ST 2:37, 360f.). Pannenberg consistently highlights the special place of humans in creation, but does not allow for a dualism of nature and spirit. The opposition of the human and the non-human worlds is not possible on these grounds.

³⁰Stanley Grenz, Reason for Hope, 46-54, has a useful discussion of Pannenberg's Trinitarian conception of God. To enter into the various levels of argumentation Pannenberg engages in would take this dissertation too far afield. My purpose is to show how Pannenberg grounds the unity of nature and history through his central theological positions.

Pannenberg points out that Hegel's conception of the inner-Trinitarian relationship (and the dependence of creation on this relationship) is grounded on logical necessity. The necessity of the self-expression of God in the creation of a world is connected with the principle of Anderssein (being different) which serves as the generative force or productive principle in Hegel's conception of reality. God necessarily brings forth a world that stands in difference to the divine reality. This bringing forth of a world is seen by Hegel as an unfolding (Entfaltung) of the idea of the absolute subject. The creation of the world necessarily follows upon the absolute subject taking seriously the principle of differentness (Andersheit) (ST 2:43).

Pannenberg modifies Hegel's conception of the Trinity in conceiving the Son's act of self-differentiation as a free act, and not the necessary Entfaltung (in the Anderssein of the Son from the Father) of the idea of the Absolute Subject.

In this way creation is the free act of God--as the expression of the freedom of the Son in his self-differentiation from the Father and of the freedom of the fatherly Good, which in the Son affirms the possibility and existence of a creation that is separate from himself, as well as in that [freedom] of the Spirit, who binds together both in free accord.³¹

³¹"So ist die Schöpfung freier Akt Gottes als Ausdruck der Freiheit des Sohnes in seiner Selbstunterscheidung vom Vater und der Freiheit väterlicher Güte, die im Sohn auch die Möglichkeit und das Dasein einer von ihm unterschiedenen Schöpfung bejaht, sowie auch des Geistes, der beide in freier Übereinstimmung verbindet" (ST

The world is not the necessary and finite result of God's infinite otherness. God freely brings a world into existence.³² Pannenberg can say that creation is "an utterly non-necessary product of a completely free action." This means that the existence of the world is completely contingent and that God's actions are completely free.³³

Pannenberg points out that this correction of Hegel's concept of the idea and its necessary unfolding has implications for the understanding of reason. Reason remains historical but has only an anticipatory relationship to the totality of reality. Pannenberg replaces the necessity of Hegel's Begriff (idea or notion) with a Vorgriff (anticipation) of the truth which will only be known when history is complete.³⁴ The relativity of reason corresponds to both the contingency of God's activity and

2:45).

³²Cf. Charles Villa-Vicencio, "History in the Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr and Wolfhart Pannenberg" (Ph.D. Drew, 1975), 35. Villa-Vicencio writes: "To Hegel the otherness of God must by necessity assert itself in finiteness. Yet against a charge of Neo-Platonist emanation, Pannenberg affirms Hegel's consistent distinction between creation and emanation, the basis of which distinction is found in the fact that God is a subject. There is no mere reflection of the absolute idea but a free bringing into being of a natural world."

³³Pannenberg, "Theology and Science," Princeton Seminary Bulletin 13,3 (Nov., 1992): 301 and cf. GF 1:337.

³⁴Pannenberg, "Glaube und Vernunft," in GF 1:248-250. See also Michael Schulz, "Zur Hegelkritik Pannenburgs," 210.

to the determination of the Creator to make humans free creatures. Full knowledge of the Creator would overwhelm the independence of reason as we now experience it.

In this conception of the Trinity, the Son distinguishes himself from God the Father and in doing so he becomes the source of everything that is distinct from the Father.

The eternal act of the Son's self-differentiation from the Father would then contain the possibility of the separate existence of creatures. As the self-distinction of the Son from the Father is to be regarded as an act of freedom, so the contingency in the production of creatures would be in continuity with such freedom. In this way one could think of the Son as a generative principle of otherness, from which ever new creatures would come forth (IST 42).

Creation is rooted in the character of the relationship of the Son to the Father. This is a relationship in which the Son's self-differentiation from the Father has the character of a freely given deference to the Father as Father. This acknowledgement of the Father by the Son is best understood by the symbol of love and as mediated by the Spirit (cf. Philippians 2:1-11).

It should be noted that while Pannenberg uses biblical symbols which emerged in a patriarchal society, these symbols point to a reality that transcends the limitations of patriarchal notions of reality. In a matriarchy one might better use the symbols Mother and Daughter. But all such symbols are marred by the limitations associated with the inadequacy of human understanding. Both the male and

the female terms need to be corrected by pointing out their symbolic character. They need to be corrected by removing the biases that adhere to them in various historical settings. Neither maleness nor femaleness are essential to the symbols. What appears to me to be essential to Pannenberg's use of Father and Son is the free deferential devotion and love of a child for the parent. Definitely excluded is any notion of biological or sexual propagation. The Son in his self-differentiating love for the Father is in eternity both one with the Father and the source of finite reality. He is this through the Spirit.

In freely differentiating himself from the Father, the Son acts in accord with the Father. There is no tenor of disunity in the relationship. The Spirit provides the unity which makes the differentiation possible (ST 2:47). In the same way the creation receives its independent existence as a free act of the Trinity. It receives its independence in the form of a free creaturely existence over against the Creator. And just as in the relationship of the Son to the Father, this freedom is not (necessarily) in discord with the Trinity. God determines creaturely existence to be free existence, to be independent. The independence of the creature corresponds to the independence of the Son.

That there are a multitude of forms of existence within the created order is part of the self-differen-

tiation of finite creatures and is grounded in the independence of the Son. This does not necessarily nor ultimately contradict the unity of creaturely existence. The differentiation of creatures from each other is experienced through their underlying unity with each other. The strife and conflict that too often characterize creaturely relations is a consequence of loss of communion with God (ST 2:46). Having lost this communion the unity of creaturely life in the Spirit is also lost from view. Communion with God through participation in the Spirit is only possible on the basis of agreement of creaturely self-differentiation with the self-differentiation of the Son. The Son's independence from God is most fundamentally constituted by his recognition of the Father as God and his harmony with the Father (ST 2:49).

Creaturely independence includes a capacity for misuse of freedom. Sin is the name for such misuse. One of the themes of eschatology and redemption is that God not only aims to overcome sin but has the power to do so (ST 2:75f.). God is all-determining and could determine creatures in an almighty way, but chooses rather to enter into a history with humans. "God could rule almightily over us without our participation. He could handle humans as things. But inasmuch as God enters into a history with humans in order to reveal himself to them, he accepts them

as a you (Du)."³⁵ This, says Pannenberg, amounts to the condescension of God to act in less than almighty ways for the purpose of allowing humans independent personhood. The characteristic of faithfulness here is connected with both the notions of omnipotence and condescending self-revelation. Independent human persons choose not to recognize God as Lord and Creator, and yet God chooses to remain Creator and to allow humans to continue to exist as persons. The faithfulness of God is at the root of the preservation of creation and the redeeming self-revelation of God. The upshot of human abuse of creaturely freedom, on the one hand, and God's condescending faithfulness (expressed in both the preservation of creation and in God's self-revelation), on the other hand, is the process that we experience as the history of the universe.

What Pannenberg means by the understanding of reality as history is based in his understanding of God and of the relationship of God to reality. God is the Creator "who acts freely and unrestrictedly not only in laying the foundations of the universe but also in the subsequent

³⁵"Gott kann zwar allmächtig ohne uns über uns verfügen, die Menschen als Sachen behandeln. Aber insofern Gott eine Geschichte mit den Menschen eingeht, um sich ihnen zu offenbaren, nimmt er sie als Du." Pannenberg, "Person," in Religion Geschichte und Gegenwart, 3rd. ed., Vol. V (Tübingen: 1961), 232.

course of events."³⁶ This means that God's continuous creation of reality is characterized by contingency, for God's acts depend upon nothing except God's love. It is not possible for us to predict the future on the basis of models of causality using our knowledge of the past and the present. God continues to act freely in history, introducing new and unexpected realities. The emergence of "regularities and persistent forms of created reality" gives expression to God's identity and faithfulness.³⁷ "The continuity of this creation can be characterized as the continuity of a history of God being engaged in with his creation," the end of which is perfect participation of creatures in the inner-Trinitarian love.³⁸

History is the relationship that God enters into with the creation, for only in a gradual process, apart from overwhelming power, is it possible for God to determine all things toward their ultimate goal and at the same time to preserve creaturely independence. History encompasses all that occurs in the span between the fecund promise of creation and its ultimate fulfillment in the eschatological Kingdom of God. Within this span God acts

³⁶Pannenberg, "Theological Questions to Scientists," 71.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 72.

in unexpected and new ways.³⁹ The fulfillment need not coincide exactly with the promise. For the fulfillment allows for the independent actions of creatures (GF 1:9). History moves irreversibly forward, and God's fulfillment remains faithful to the promise by taking up the promise and revealing it in a new light.

All history finds its unity in the fact that all reality is the creative work of God. Pannenberg emphatically parts company with the efforts of Barth, Bultmann and others who would isolate the history of God's activity (Heilsgeschichte) from the mundane events of (secular) history (Geschichte).⁴⁰ Pannenberg traces the separation of natural and supernatural realities, which underlies the separation of Heilsgeschichte and Geschichte, to the attempts of the medieval theologians to relate Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy in a systematic account of reality. It is true, says Pannenberg, that in Thomas Aquinas' thought nature was understood as determined by the supernatural. In seeking to harmonize Christian theology and Aristotelian physics Thomas distinguished two epistemological realms. However, Thomas' distinction of natural and supernatural realms of perception proved suffi-

³⁹Pannenberg, "Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte," in GF 1:24.

⁴⁰Ibid., 22-78.

cient to ground the further separation of the realm of nature from that of the supernatural (GF 1:20).

Pannenberg is not attempting to return to an understanding of reality in which nature is understood in Greek terms or alternately in a new synthesis of Greek and Christian views of nature. His view is that Greek notions of reality have become obsolete. He is critical of both the idea of eternal ideas and the concept of an unmoved mover, both of which were variously taken up by Christian theologians.⁴¹ In contrast, he regards the Judeo-Christian understanding of God as the Creator of all reality--who is active in history, redeeming and remaining faithful to creation, who establishes the possibility of conceiving the unity of reality--as fundamental to the process of understanding all reality. This is true, says Pannenberg, for the historian as well as the scientist (GF 1:77f.). In the context of this dissertation it is important to point out that Pannenberg claims that the Christian understanding of creation can be tested and shows itself true in the context of modern conceptions of reality. Furthermore, the

⁴¹Pannenberg, "Christentum und Platonismus: Die kritische Platonrezeption Augustins in ihrer Bedeutung für das gegenwärtige christliche Denken," Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 96 (1985): 151 & 159-161 & GF 1:343-345.

Christian conception of creation provides a corrective to the nature-history dualism of modern thought.⁴²

In the passages I have cited in this section, Pannenberg mostly uses the word Geschöpf when he speaks of the independent existence of creatures. In summary we can say that it is clear that he especially has human creatures in mind. It has also become apparent that he does not have humans in mind apart from the rest of creation. Humans are one with created reality, and humans best represent the independence of existence over against God and are best capable of bringing to expression creaturely recognition of God as God. Such expression, I suggest, is most fully achieved in full consciousness of the representative character of this activity. That humans are most able consciously to acknowledge God as God does not signify a separation of humanity from the rest of creation. Rather, it signifies the unity of humans with the universe in a recognition of its creatureliness.

⁴²According to Stanley Grenz, Pannenberg conceives of the religions as attempting to provide a unified understanding of reality (Reason for Hope 36). See Pannenberg's ST 1:133-205, where his discussion of religion focuses on the relationship of humans with God (or powers). Cf. John O'Donnell, "Pannenberg's Doctrine of God," 82.

Love

Creation can be thought of as moving toward the end of participation in the companionship (Gemeinschaft) of the Father and Son through the Spirit. Pannenberg wishes to make the positive point that the appearance in history of the relationship of the Father and Son in the person of Jesus represents the actual mode of drawing the diversity of creatures into this divine relationship. The Father's love for the Son is eternal, and the Son is the primary object of the Father's love.

The love of the Father directs itself not only toward the Son, but also toward each one of His creatures. But the turning of the Father to the uniqueness of each of His creatures is always mediated through the Son. . . . Because the eternal Son appears among the creatures they become the object of the Father's love.⁴³

It is not that the love of the Father for creatures corresponds with the love for the Son, but that the creatures are drawn into this eternal love. They come to participate in the relationship of Father and Son.

Just as the love of Father and Son for each other is mediated by the Spirit so the Spirit's work is bound up with the Son's mediation between creatures and the Father. The participation of creatures in the love of the Father

⁴³"Die Liebe des Vaters richtet sich nicht nur auf den Sohn, sondern auch auf jedes einzelne seiner Geschöpfe. Aber die Hinwendung des Vaters zur Besonderheit eines jeden seiner Geschöpfe ist immer schon durch den Sohn vermittelt. . . . Weil in den Geschöpfen der ewige Sohn in Erscheinung tritt, werden sie Gegenstand der Liebe des Vaters" (ST 2:36).

for the Son amounts to the transcending of the finite realities of existence. It is a transcendence of one's own finitude to "participate in God".⁴⁴ Pannenberg argues that the aim of God's creative activity is the development of independent creatures. This independence, however, is closely connected with participation in God. Apart from participation in the love of God as mediated by the Son and the Spirit existence has no powers of persistence or of the self-transcendence that is so central to human existence (ST 2:47f.).

The Future of Creation

Unity and Independence

Pannenberg argues that creaturely life is a process of increasing complexity and increasing capacity for self-transcendence. This process is also characterized as the expression of an increasing participation in the life of the Spirit. The goal of this evolutionary process is the realization of self-differentiation from God. Self-differentiation is dependent upon participation in the unifying Spirit of God (ST 2:48f.). Thus, the goal of creation is a complete realization of the independent life within unity that the Trinity itself enjoys. Creaturely existence (imperfectly) mirrors the self-differentiation of

⁴⁴Pannenberg refers to this as "die eigene Endlichkeit transzendierende Teilhabe an Gott" (ST 2:47f.).

the Son from the Father and the unity of both through the Spirit. The goal of the process of creation is the perfect participation of creatures in this differentiated unity of Father, Son, and Spirit.

The independent existence of creatures is not to be swallowed up in an ultimate undifferentiated oneness. Pannenberg affirms that through that aspect of creation which is not only preservation but also the introduction of new and unexpected realities, God cares for each individual member of creation (ST 2:63-70):

Every creature is an end in itself in the creative action of God, and this is also true for his governing of the world. However, the way in which God keeps in view the good of the individual creature, namely in consideration also for the care due to all other creatures, can be very different from what the individual creature pursues as its own good fortune.⁴⁵

This is the point at which protests could arise regarding the nature of God's loving care for the world. Pannenberg answers that the Christian answer to this problem is the resurrection hope. Christian faith goes beyond trust in God for daily care to a hope that anticipates a final answer to all the absurdity of evil, suffering, and death. It is the ultimate realization of God's rule as expressed in

⁴⁵"Jedes Geschöpf ist für sich selber Zweck im Schöpfungshandeln Gottes und so auch für seine Weltregierung. Doch die Weise, wie Gott das Wohl des einzelnen Geschöpfes im Blicke hat, nämlich unter Berücksichtigung auch der den übrigen Geschöpfen gebührenden Fürsorge, kann sehr verschieden sein davon, was das einzelne Geschöpf selber als sein Glück erstrebt" (ST 2:70f.).

the image of the coming Kingdom of God that will prove the justice and love of God's handling of history (ST 2:72). According to this hope every aspect of reality in the totality of its history will be included, and each individual will receive justice from God. In the biblical visions of God's Kingdom the animals and plants, the sun, moon, and stars are included in this hope (Is. 11 & Rev. 21).

Pannenberg notes that the presence of evil contradicts the claims of theology regarding God's preservation and immanent involvement in the world. However, at the heart of the expectation regarding God's reign over the world is the expectation that "even the consequences of creaturely failure through turning away from the Creator will ultimately serve the intentions (Absichten) of God for His creation: The art of God's government proves itself in that it ever again succeeds even in bringing good out of evil."⁴⁶ This remains the Christian hope until its justification in the eschatological "transformation and perfection of the world into the Kingdom of God" (ST 2:76).

The hope for an eschatological completion (which will justify God and will overcome all evil) is fundamental to Pannenberg's understanding of creation. Creation is

⁴⁶Pannenberg states that "sogar die Folgen geschöpflichen Versagens durch Abwendung des Geschöpfes von seinem Schöpfer letztlich den «Absichten» Gottes mit seiner Schöpfung dienen müssen: Die Regierungskunst Gottes bewährt sich darin, daß sie immer wieder sogar aus Bösem Gutes hervorzubringen vermag" (ST 2:76).

characterized as determining reality from its future completion.⁴⁷ Creation is not primarily understood as an event associated with the primordial establishment of the universe. It is understood as a process which has its determining source in the ultimate unity of all reality with the Creator. The activity of God "should be envisioned in terms of a continuous creative activity, corresponding to the unity of one single, eternal act of creation that comprises the entire history of the universe."⁴⁸

The idea that creation is associated only with the beginning of the cosmos and that the universe can be understood by analogy to a machine (i.e., that all events can be understood by means of causality) is, according to Pannenberg, contrary to the biblical belief in creation. If creation were understood as an act that was completed at the beginning of time, then all subsequent events would have to be understood in terms of the causal forces of previous events. It appears to me that Pannenberg's intention is to think of the relationship of God to all events in cosmic history in more direct terms than such a one-time conception of creation allows for.

The divine act of creation does not occur in time-- rather, as an act that is eternal and simultaneous to

⁴⁷See especially chapters 4 & 5 of Pannenberg's MG for his argument in support of the ontological priority of the future.

⁴⁸Pannenberg, "Theology and Science," 302.

all time, it encompasses the entire world-process--but, this world-process itself has a beginning in time, because it takes its course in time. In this statement eternity is elucidated as simultaneity to all time.⁴⁹

This facilitates the argument of Pannenberg that reality is one creation of God.

According to Pannenberg, time is itself part of the created process. Creation is an act outside of and encompassing time and matter. Time and matter are inseparable. From the point of view of the eternal act of creation every time and place is present in one unified reality. From the point of view of humans there are anticipatory experiences of this eternal simultaneity. The expansion of consciousness to experience a process, albeit a short one, as a unified event is analogous to the relationship of God to created reality (ETN 61). Pannenberg describes this as a participation in eternity, and likewise finds such an anticipation in the activity of human understanding. Understanding draws knowledge together in preliminary wholes, which are derived from the anticipation of the whole which is only available from the end of the process.

⁴⁹"Nicht der göttliche Schöpfungsakt geschieht in der Zeit,--er umfaßt vielmehr als ein ewiger, aller Zeit gleichzeitiger Akt den gesamten Weltprozeß; aber dieser Weltprozeß selbst hat einen zeitlichen Anfang, weil er in der Zeit verläuft. In diesem Satz ist Ewigkeit als Gleichzeitigkeit zu aller Zeit erläutert" (ETN 60).

Finally, it should be noted that there is neither panentheism nor pantheism in Pannenberg's thought.⁵⁰ God is not in time. Only the object of God's action exists under the limitations of processes in time. "The free source of a durable creation must be conceived as the expression of an intention grounded in the eternity of the Creator and toward a reality that is other than Himself."⁵¹ The universe, humans included, is other than God and is intended by God to remain other, even in the eschatological unity of God's rule.

Determinism of the Future?

Pannenberg is critical of Alfred N. Whitehead's notion that God does not so much create the world as redeem it.⁵² He states that there is a dualism of matter and

⁵⁰Pannenberg speaks of the Trinity as eternal and as the source of creation. Although he insists that we develop our theology from the point of view of the incarnation of the Son in Jesus, he regards the incarnation as the result of the eternal self-differentiating love of the Son for the Father. In other words, God's Trinitarian life is interdependent with creation through the incarnation only in so far as the Trinity has determined it to be so. Cf. Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, 20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 182-184.

⁵¹"Der freie Ursprung einer dauerhaften Schöpfung muß als Ausdruck einer in der Ewigkeit des Schöpfers begründeten Intention auf eine von ihm verschiedene Wirklichkeit hin gedacht werden" (ST 2:35 & cf. 20f.).

⁵²Pannenberg, "Atom, Duration, Form: Difficulties with Process Philosophy," trans. John C. Robertson Jr. and Gérard Vallée, Process Studies 14, 1 (Spring, 1984): 24f.

spirit at the root of Whitehead's conception of God and world. God is neither conceived of as creating the physical universe ex nihilo nor as acting freely with divine power. Matter is thought of as self-originating, as independent of God.⁵³ Some process thinkers have in turn criticized Pannenberg for not allowing for the freedom of creatures.⁵⁴ They argue that a God who acts with such power as Pannenberg describes negates the freedom of creatures. The problem appears to me to lie in the active definition of freedom. Lewis Ford, for example, defines freedom as "freedom from God."⁵⁵ Pannenberg certainly does understand humans as having freedom to turn from the divine source and goal of their existence, but he would character-

⁵³St 2:29f. Pannenberg refers to Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper, 1960), 528f. He quotes from p. 526 of this work: "He [God] does not create the world, he saves it. . ." (30n46). Pannenberg also refers to L.S. Ford, The Lure of God: A Biblical Background for Process Theism (Philadelphia: 1978), 20ff., Ford, "An Alternative to creatio ex nihilo," Religious Studies 19 (1983): 205-213, and J. Cobb, God and the World: The One Who Calls (1969), 42-66. Pannenberg acknowledges Cobb's attempt to "correct" this problem by "subordinating the principle of creativity to God as the supreme entity." However, Pannenberg indicates his dissatisfaction with this sort of correction, which he claims would have "far-reaching consequences for the network of concepts in Whitehead's philosophical system" (Pannenberg, Ethics 180, EE 171).

⁵⁴See Lewis S. Ford, "God as the Subjectivity of the Future," Encounter 41 (1980): 290 and Pannenberg and Ford, "A Dialogue About Process Philosophy," Encounter 38, 4 (Autumn, 1977): 319.

⁵⁵Ford, "The Nature of the Power of the Future," in The Theology of Pannenberg: American Critiques, 85.

ize this as the ultimate loss of freedom.⁵⁶ For Pannenberg true freedom is not a possession, but is given by God and is best realized in communion with God.

Pannenberg points out that Whitehead's process thought attributes to God the task of giving events (creatures) the ideal ("initial aim") towards which they create themselves. Whitehead's God has powers to lure and to convince, but not to create. Pannenberg argues that in regard to the idea of creation, Whitehead's God is further removed from the biblical notion than is Plato's demiurge.⁵⁷ On the other hand, Pannenberg does note the affinity of Whitehead's ideas of the luring and convincing of God with biblical notions of divine patience and love. Pannenberg concludes, in distinction from his interpretation of Whitehead, that these ideas, in the biblical tradition, always already presuppose that God is the one Creator of all reality. Pannenberg wishes to grant no quarter to the ontological dualism he perceives in Whitehead's thought.

⁵⁶Pannenberg, "Response to American Friends," 325. Pannenberg answers that freedom of decision normally relates to finite objects, and that God is never fully known. Those who seek freedom from God may well not know what they are turning from. The nature of reality is that creatures are intended to "participate in communion with the eternal God." They are capable of turning from this communion, and falling under the judgment of God. Ted Peters agrees that Pannenberg's future ontology provides the true ground of human freedom ("Pannenberg's Eschatological Ethics," in The Theology of Pannenberg: American Critiques, 254f.).

⁵⁷ST 2:30 & "Gott und die Natur," 491.

"Events" do not come to be (achieve concrescence) apart from the creative and determinative love of God. According to Pannenberg, patient and loving redemption of creatures is rooted in the powerful act of love by which the Creator grants creatures their independent existence.

Lewis Ford argues that it is unnecessary to presuppose either an end to history (which Pannenberg especially connects with the power of God) or of a whole within which parts can be perceived in relation to one another. He argues that "the power of the present must unify both the power of the past ("flesh") with the power of the future ("spirit")."⁵⁸ Here again it appears that process thought has only a limited capacity to provide either hope or answer for the individual who is crushed under the brutal realities of history. The claims that "straightforward apocalyptic hope is an idle dream" and that God's forever future reign provides "the opportunity for realization here and now, however fragmentary" appears to disregard those whose hopes for "here and now"--and very lives as well--are cruelly annihilated in the course of history.⁵⁹ The power of the past is the causal efficiency of past events and that of the future is the luring power of its possibilities. These possibilities are provided by God. The

⁵⁸Lewis S. Ford, "A Whiteheadian Basis for Pannenberg's Theology," Encounter 38, 4 (Autumn, 1977): 315.

⁵⁹Ibid.

power of the present is located in the subjectivity of individual events. This formulation of reality is grounded in Whitehead's atomism, which considers "the ultimate elements of reality in terms of single occasions contingently following each other" (TKG 66). Pannenberg agrees that reality should be thought of in terms of events that are contingent rather than causally determined from the past, but counters that this conception of reality already presupposes a whole within which the various temporal events can be understood.⁶⁰ According to Pannenberg, individual events are only understandable in contexts. Some conception of reality as a whole--as in Einstein's conception of the universe as a field--ultimately provides a cosmology which does justice to this logical necessity.⁶¹ The realization of final wholeness is more fully expressed by Pannenberg with reference to the biblical conception of communion with God in the context of the eschatological Kingdom (cf. ST 2:30).

A further criticism of Pannenberg's thought by the process thinkers is that his notion of a God who has created ex nihilo runs into the difficulty of accounting

⁶⁰Pannenberg and Ford, "A Dialogue," 323, Pannenberg, "Atom, Duration, Form," 22f. and Ethics 190f.

⁶¹W. Pannenberg and L.S. Ford, "A Dialogue," 318.

for evil.⁶² Pannenberg responds by pointing out that the difficulty with the process answer to evil (limiting the power of God) is that God can no longer be depended upon to overcome evil. Other powers must be assumed to stand over against God. Pannenberg prefers the difficulty of not having a way of accounting for evil in a world created ex nihilo by a loving God to that of a dualist metaphysics (ST 2:31). He finds it more compelling to admit that the problem of evil is beyond the capacity of humans to comprehend than to accept a limitation of God--a limitation that implies the existence of other powers that are in some way equal to and independent of God.

The real difficulty of some forms of process theol-

⁶²Cf. John B. Cobb Jr., "Pannenberg and Process Theology," in Theology of Pannenberg: American Critiques, 70 & 73f. Cobb claims that process thinkers are sensitive to women and to the suffering and oppression of others, and that Pannenberg, on the other hand, is only concerned with eschatology. I suggest that Cobb has failed to recognize the eschatological grounding of Pannenberg's ethical thought. Pannenberg makes this point in "A Response to My American Friends," 330f. In the same volume see also Ted Peters, "Pannenberg's Eschatological Ethics," 241 & 243f. Peters' argument directly contradicts Cobb's undocumented claim, and Pannenberg agrees with Peters' analysis ("Response to My Friends" 331).

David Polk, On the Way to God, 287 & 293 makes a similar error in interpreting Pannenberg. He thinks that Pannenberg's notion of the Kingdom allows for no judgment of evil.

ogy is that they offer no hope beyond death.⁶³ Death effectively eliminates the future. The individual is sacrificed to the eternal process. Furthermore, if individual occasions are responsible for the creation of atomistically conceived moments of reality, then the individual (ironically) loses intimate connection with the material universe. This is so because no individual has real and direct contact with more than a minute portion of reality. Individuals are dependent upon others to provide such contact. Only if God is regarded as creating the world and if each one is immediately related to God as the source of her or his existence, is the individual, through the mediation of God, intimately related to all of reality. This is so, Pannenberg argues, because God is the unifying unity of the world. Apart from God there is no world, no whole that allows one to make anything of the individual members of the world.⁶⁴ It appears that the process thinker is left with hope and love that do not carry individuals to a future beyond death. It would seem that love, when it loses both its eschatological power to transcend death, as well as its determinative power in the creation

⁶³J.N. Beam's (op. cit.) work provides a clear example of this problem. Ted Peters argues that John Cobb's process theology is able to offer nothing more than meaning to the individual who suffers evil. No hope is given for the realization of perfect communion with God (Peters, "Pannenberg's Eschatological Ethics" 244f.).

⁶⁴See the following section, "Whole and Part."

of the world, becomes an abstraction. The Whiteheadian process thinker would need to show how love can be thought to have intimate contact with the world and personal contact with individuals who seem to have no future beyond death.

From this discussion it has become clear that Pannenberg thinks of God as the determining power of the future. God is regarded as all-determining in the sense of creating out of the future unity of creation with God. Although some process thinkers have argued that this concept of God eliminates creaturely freedom, Pannenberg incorporates Whiteheadian notions that focus on human freedom. Pannenberg's idea of the determination of all things from the future is not a deterministic causality in reverse.

Pannenberg also reflects on the possible correspondence of his theological-philosophical claims regarding God's all-determining and future power to the current scientific understanding of reality. For example, Pannenberg notes the correspondence of the idea that God is the unity and ground of reality with the notion that divisions in space or in time presuppose an infinite and undivided field within which divisions can exist. In modern physics time and space are not regarded as separate realities.

Their unity is expressed in the notion of field.⁶⁵ Pannenberg argues that there is a fundamental correspondence between the biblical notion of God as creative and empowering Spirit and the modern field concept which "suggests the idea of dynamic movement, of force, together with spatial and temporal extension, but without requiring a material element"⁶⁶. He argues that it is possible to imagine God "in terms of the comprehensive field of eternity, comprising time and space through its futurity in relation to all potential events."⁶⁷ God is here viewed as the ground and unity of all existence. And existence is viewed as a process that has its unity in a future which represents the full realization of participation in the unity of Father and Son through the Spirit.

Pannenberg differentiates his notion of the determinative power of the future from the closed character of teleology (ST 2:20f.). In Aristotelian teleology the end unfolds as the necessary result of the beginning. Determinative power comes to be located in the "seed" of a thing. Pannenberg's position is different. It focuses on the determinative power of the end of a process on the stages of the process.

⁶⁵"Theology and Science," 305f.

⁶⁶Ibid., 307.

⁶⁷Ibid.

In a similar vein, Pannenberg argues that Teilhard de Chardin's understanding of the teleological Omega point is an extrapolation of the latter's concept of evolution. This is understood as the expression of the energy which is the inherent possession of bodies. Pannenberg argues that energy needs to be thought of in connection with the Omega, which is re-conceived by Pannenberg as the creative power of the future.⁶⁸

The idea that the goal of the process already guides the process is an important notion that Pannenberg shares with Whiteheadian process thought.⁶⁹ He has, however, modified the notion of process with the ideas of creation and ultimate whole, and with the field concept.⁷⁰

In the process of its growth the plant or animal is always this plant or this animal, although its specific nature indeed comes fully to light only in the result of its genesis. By way of anticipation it is in each instant already that which it only becomes in the process of its growth. . . . By anticipating its essential form in the process of its growth, a being's substantial identity is linked together with the notion of process.⁷¹

This means that what a thing is cannot be determined merely from the appearance of the thing at any stage of its process. The idea or substance of a thing is only known

⁶⁸"Geist und Energie," 9.

⁶⁹Cf. "Atom, Duration, Form," 27-29.

⁷⁰Cf. "Geist und Energie," 7 & 11n4.

⁷¹Pannenberg, "Atom, Duration, Form," 27f.

from the point of view of the end of its process. According to Pannenberg, it is not evolutionary causes that guide reality to the Omega point. The eschatological rule of God is the efficient cause of the coming unity of reality (MG 76f.). The end of the totality of reality, Pannenberg says, remains open, even though it has become a determining reality through the proleptic appearance of the Son's relationship with the Father in the destiny of Jesus of Nazareth.

Whole and Part

Pannenberg argues that the relationship of the categories part and whole has a fundamental significance for the human and the natural sciences. In the natural sciences the category of the whole underlies general notions such as body or point, as well as more specific notions like atom and molecule. A whole is a unit composed of parts and is itself a part or element of larger wholes. The concept of whole is also implicit in descriptions of systems, for example in formulas.⁷² In the human sciences the category of the whole is central. Humans are themselves individual wholes and "every individual appearance

⁷²Pannenberg, "The Significance of the Categories of "Part" and "Whole" for the Epistemology of Theology," Journal of Religion 66, 4 (Oct., 1986): 373f. Pannenberg is arguing that the concept of the whole is implicit in scientific explanation of the world. He recognizes that it is not in the foreground of "scientific description of natural processes" (374).

occurs within a context that itself is unique and that itself forms (in a certain sense) a whole in which the individual appearance has a specific, unexchangeable place."⁷³

Pannenberg argues that "various levels of meaning-totalities are to be differentiated" and that these "are again related to one another as parts and wholes."⁷⁴ For example, words have meaning on their own, but in the context of a sentence their meaning becomes specific to their relations to the other words of the sentence. Likewise a sentence can have a context which shapes its meaning. Taken together sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and volumes combine to form a "meaning-totality" that must be taken into account in the determination of the significance of any part of that whole. A similar structure of whole-part relationships exists in the determination of the meaning of individual events. Each event must be understood within its particular social system (semantics), is relatable to ever widening contexts, and is ultimately relatable to the totality of history. In history "the significance of individual appearances changes with time," for the whole which

⁷³Ibid., 375.

⁷⁴Ibid.

serves to determine the meaning of the part is a process which, as a whole, will only come into view at its end.⁷⁵

Pannenberg argues that the individual experience and communication of meaning is first possible because there is a whole that gives the individual meaning. The notion of meaning is preliminarily determined by the relationship of whole and part. In this relationship the part is not understandable apart from its context within the whole, and the whole context of reality is determinative here.⁷⁶ For meaning does not first of all appear in the realm of human existence. The uniqueness of human existence is the capability and the drivenness of human beings beyond the scope of finite experience and knowledge to seek for coherent structures of meaning--ultimately for one system of meaning which includes and transcends all particular human experience.

Pannenberg elaborates his understanding of this in relation to Ernst Troeltsch and Jürgen Habermas who seek the source of meaning in the "mechanisms of the process of communication" (WT 116). According to Pannenberg, Troeltsch fails to realize that the dialectical relation-

⁷⁵Ibid., 377.

⁷⁶Pannenberg argues against Jürgen Habermas's conception that a Sinntotalität arises out of individual communicative action (WT 101-104 & 133).

ship between the anticipations of partners in communication requires a prior consciousness of a unity of meaning. Pannenberg points out that Troeltsch's understanding of the willingness to communicate and the possibility for agreement which underlies such willingness implies that there is an anticipation of a future position which would grant the positions of the dialogue partners enduring value. If there is no hope for such a solution, then the dialogue would either lose the character of a genuine dialogue, or simply never begin. The final solution represents a larger whole which is able to take previous differences into itself. Such solutions are not predetermined unities, but are open to the process of dialogue and need only be partially realized in any agreement that is achieved. Pannenberg adds:

The meaning whole that is present in such agreement, however, has "metaphysical" dimensions in every case: It integrates at least virtually the meaning structures of the possibilities of experience and action of those individuals who participate in the communication process, and thereby constitutes the unity of the social sphere of life. Thus Troeltsch was right in allowing the question of the "objectivity" of historical knowledge to lead him to the question of the relationship of the particular to the whole of reality as such.⁷⁷

⁷⁷"Die in solchem Einverständnis präsente Sinntotalität hat aber in jedem Falle »metaphysische« Dimensionen: Sie integriert zumindest virtuell die Bedeutungsstrukturen der Erfahrungen und Handlungsmöglichkeiten der am Kommunikationsprozeß beteiligten Individuen und konstituiert damit die Einheit der sozialen Lebenswelt. Troeltsch hat sich darum mit Recht von der Frage nach der "Objektivität" geschichtlicher Erkenntnis auf die Frage nach dem Verhältnis des Einzelnen zum Ganzen in der Wirklichkeit überhaupt führen lassen" (WT 116).

Pannenberg argues that this leads Troeltsch to consider the relationship of the individual to the whole and that he then sees that the relationship of parts to the whole implies a unity that goes beyond the realm of psychology and sociology. He agrees with Troeltsch that this points towards a metalogical level at which every particular requires an explication that depends upon a common determination.⁷⁸ Pannenberg agrees with Troeltsch's understanding that reflection on the process of communicative action and the question of meaning drives beyond the limits of the two social sciences in question, and that it overcomes the Cartesian opposition of nature and spirit as well as the opposition of the human and natural sciences.⁷⁹

⁷⁸WT 116f. Pannenberg uses Troeltsch's term (Troeltsch, Historismus und seine Probleme, 678).

⁷⁹WT 117. Pannenberg again refers to Troeltsch, Historismus 107.

Pannenberg prefers the eschatological focus of Ernst Troeltsch's ethics to the conventionalism of Habermas's focus on the individual. For Troeltsch the eschatological Kingdom of God represents the ultimate good to which all preliminary goods and goals must submit (WT 111). However, says Pannenberg, Troeltsch's notion of Zweck (goal) combined with his neglect of the presence of the Kingdom of God in Jesus' history, prevents Troeltsch from overcoming the relativism of his position (Cf. Ernst Troeltsch, Historismus und seine Überwindung (Berlin: Pan Verlag Rolf Heise, 1924), 60, 68 & 82 and see my chapter on Christology). For Troeltsch the Kingdom of God is completely beyond the horizon of the future. Troeltsch, according to Pannenberg, fails to recognize the constitutive significance of the future for the meaning of historical reality (WT 115). Cf. also GF 1:252-254.

Pannenberg agrees with Habermas regarding the function of an anticipation of a still open future for the hermeneutical process of understanding. But he argues that Habermas has failed to recognize that this open future is a totality of meaning that goes beyond a particular society.

Society

is not the ultimate embodiment of reality and meaning [the position Pannenberg attributes to Habermas], but itself, in each concrete form, requires grounding and correcting through an absolute confidence of meaning, which transcends both the conflicts between individuals and culture [Habermas' aim], as well as, the antithesis between humanity and the natural world.⁸⁰

Pannenberg continues that this all-encompassing horizon of meaning is what the religions of the world have aimed to provide. Such a context of meaning provides for the foundation of societies by furnishing meaning and order that is not merely conventional or arbitrary. Religions have provided means of understanding the relationship of the individual to society and for making that relationship meaningful. This is because religion points beyond the limitations of particular concrete realizations of social order. They provide, in other words, a vision that can serve a critical function. Religion gives the individual a

⁸⁰Diese [die Gesellschaft] ist nicht der Inbegriff von Wirklichkeit und Sinn überhaupt, sondern bedarf ihrerseits in ihrer jeweiligen konkreten Gestalt der Verankerung und Korrektur durch ein absolutes Sinnvertrauen, das sowohl die Konflikte zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft als auch den Gegensatz zwischen Mensch und Naturwelt übergreift" (WT 203f.). Emphasis mine.

way of meaningfully relating to society even when society has become oppressive and arbitrary.

Pannenberg argues that Wilhelm Dilthey's concept of structure provides a way of understanding the relationship of the individual to the whole of reality.⁸¹ The concept of structure shows that the while the whole is not merely the sum of its parts, neither is this additional element completely mysterious. The concept of structure refers to the manner in which the whole provides the locations of the parts and relates them, not merely to each other, but to each other in the context of their individual relationship to the whole. Pannenberg argues that meaning and structures of meaning do not first of all appear in the human realm and are not limited to the realm of organic life. In his analysis humans are unique because of their capacity to experience structures of meaning (Sinnzusammenhänge) which transcend in an unlimited way the reality of individual existence (Dasein) (WT 131-133). In other words, an individual is able to experience his or her life as meaningful precisely in experiencing the relatedness of individual existence to a structure of reality that transcends the individual, culture, and nature, and hence is capable of providing meaning to all reality.

⁸¹Pannenberg refers to Wilhelm Dilthey, Gesammelte Schriften VII, 230.

Pannenberg regards reality as a process which moves through time from a beginning to an end. In natural processes (such as are described by the natural sciences) the end of the process (its results) are determinative for understanding the process. Pannenberg argues that this is also true for those realities that are the focus of the human sciences. The whole within which the parts of any process are understood is accessible only through the end of the process. And since many of the processes we try to understand are unfinished, and remain unfinished as long as the future remains open, the end is only available by means of anticipations (WT 150-152).

The whole and the end of temporal processes is not available to us except by means of (anticipatory) extrapolations. However, the open character of history makes it impossible to determine the ultimate end of anything by means of extrapolation from what is known of the past and the present. The process is open to the appearance of unforeseen, new realities. These new realities, argues Pannenberg, are never fully explainable on the basis of the past alone. The parts, because of the unity of individual existence, bear within themselves a Vorgriff (an anticipation) of the end. This anticipation of the end of reality plays a fundamental role in all human understanding (Erklärung): for the end that is anticipated is a meaningful structure that includes the self within the

whole of reality (WT 162f.). Thus, according to Pannenberg, the proleptic presence of ultimate truth is a necessary requirement in order to claim that any present understanding of reality is an anticipation and approximation of that truth.⁸²

Pannenberg notes that this totality of meaning (Sinntotalität), like the question of truth, depends upon correspondence to reality, coherence with all that is known, and the consensus of competent observers (ST 1:18-36). Both natural and human sciences are directed toward the expression, as near as is possible, to a systematic understanding of the whole of reality, and this logically and without contradictions.⁸³ These systematic claims to

⁸²Philip Clayton, "Anticipation and Theological Method," in Theology of Pannenberg: American Critiques, esp. 131 & 141. Clayton argues that Pannenberg's notion of anticipation or prolepsis needs further philosophical clarification. This is a foundational concept for Pannenberg, and it is somewhat controversial, as Clayton shows. Pannenberg's interaction with process thinkers is also relevant here. However, while the notion of anticipation is important to the question of the unity of nature and history, it is not possible to address many of the issues associated with this position.

⁸³Cf. WT 220. Pannenberg defines the concept of Erklärung as the foundation of both human and natural sciences. It is the theoretical and systematic function of "ordering the parts in the whole of a framework of meaning." ("Es ist das die systemtheoretisch zu beschreibende Funktion der Einordnung von Teilen in das Ganze eines Sinntwurfs") (WT 154).

truth must be open to revision. They are anticipatory claims.⁸⁴

The whole refers to the world or the universe or universal history. It is not God, for it is not self-constituted. Rather, it presupposes a unifying ground which is "distinct from the totality of the finite" which this whole represents.⁸⁵ Pannenberg conceives God as distinct but not absolutely distinct from the world. God is the source of both the unity that can be understood as a whole and the individual creatures that make up this totality of reality. Pannenberg points out that this conception of God as the "unifying unity of the world" must preserve the distinctness of God from the world.⁸⁶ God is

⁸⁴Pannenberg also picks up the argument regarding the significance of the proleptically present end of history (here in the form of the totality of history) in dialogue with the recent discussion of hermeneutics. Pannenberg argues that Gadamer's description of the "task of interpretation as a fusion [Horizontverschmelzung] of the horizons of understanding of author and interpreter presupposes the totality of history as its final frame of reference." ("So habe ich selbst . . . zu zeigen versucht, daß die Aufgabe der Interpretation als Horizontverschmelzung der Verstehungshorizonte von Autor und Ausleger die Totalität der Geschichte als ihren letzten Bezugsrahmen voraussetzt." To this Pannenberg adds that every experience of meaning implies a totality of meaning (Sinntotalität) which is only available as an anticipation of a future reality (WT 286 & see GF 1: 142-149). See also Pannenberg, "History and Meaning in Lonergan's Approach to Theological Method," Irish Quarterly Review 40 (1973): 112-114.

⁸⁵"Part and Whole," 378.

⁸⁶Ibid., 380.

neither the sum nor the highest instance of reality. God is the source of all reality as well as of its unity.

Exactly how God is understood as the "unifying unity" which will only come fully into view at the end of the process of creation, while also overcoming the often brutal realities of individual existence, is answered by the Son in the person of Jesus. The perfection of the unity is not a reality that is available within history apart from Jesus of Nazareth's resurrection. The unity remains a future reality, but towards that reality all creation moves. Pannenberg argues that God determines reality from the future unity of His Kingdom. Within the limitations of reality "it remains true that the actual process of history devours individuals and empires rather than bringing them to harmonious completion as parts of a meaning-whole."⁸⁷ The independent existence of creatures is finite. Creaturely transcendence of this finitude depends upon the special work of the Spirit. Just as the Spirit is the unity of Father and Son so it creates the unity of creation and redeeming Creator. The incarnation of the Son in Jesus of Nazareth brings the goal of creation into the historical process itself. The Spirit of God brings the ultimate purpose of existence near to each indi-

⁸⁷"Theology and Science," 381.

vidual by revealing the unifying power of love, and this in the resurrection of Jesus.

Pannenberg argues against all attempts to get beyond this proleptic and anticipatory presence of the whole. Pannenberg characterizes his own position as insisting upon the recognition of the anticipatory and therefore necessarily abstract character of

all knowledge of the whole in a world that has not yet been completed and reconciled to the whole. To this corresponds the consciousness of the difference of the world from God--a difference that, to be sure, must not be hardened into a dualism since this would result in making God himself finite; yet one that, as the condition of the unity of any creature with God, will not be transcended and eliminated even in the eschaton.⁸⁸

Pannenberg is careful to preserve the individual's significance as an end in itself. And he does so without sacrificing the unity of reality. His understanding of the Trinity in its differentiation of persons within a unity is the model for conceiving the relationship of the world to its Creator.

Nature and History

Contingence and Regularity

According to Pannenberg the inexact or preliminary character of the formulation of natural laws is rooted in the nature of reality (ETN 38f.). The lawfulness (Gesetzmäßigkeit) of nature is limited by the contingency

⁸⁸Ibid., 385.

of natural events.⁸⁹ This is the result of the unique and irreversible character of nature's processes. The application of natural laws is necessarily relative to time and space.

Pannenberg argues that this corresponds to the idea of creation, which itself implies that all of reality is contingent upon the free action of God (ETN 40). This, says Pannenberg, also corresponds to ancient Israel's experience of God's actions in their history. It corresponds to the idea of prayer. History is not predetermined, but is open to the appearance of new and unexpected realities which are the creative work of God. Pannenberg's point is that in the observations of both the natural sciences and the religious traditions, reality is characterized by contingency, and that this corresponds to the idea of a God who is God of all reality. The contingency that Pannenberg has in mind is the unexplainable element, in terms of causality, in the appearance of new realities in history. When something new appears in the world, something that cannot be explained simply in terms of past events, something which from that time on displays a dependable continuity, then the creative work of God has become visible. This creative and contingent activity is the basis of the

⁸⁹ETN 59. Pannenberg defines contingency as that which in its individuality has not necessarily arisen from the past (ETN 75n11).

durability of new realities. Pannenberg describes the appearance of new forms of orderliness as the creative action of divine love (ETN 58).

Years later in his Systematische Theologie Pannenberg makes the point regarding contingency more confidently and with more support. The dialogue between physics and theology has progressed and Pannenberg is able to point to some agreement regarding the notion that contingency is a phenomenon at the boundary of the nomological (natural) sciences. There is agreement that the laws of physics as well as the reality--"the open process character of natural events"--which these laws seek to describe are contingent (ST 2:88). Pannenberg points out that contingency appears only as a lack of determination in events and realities. Thus it is not possible for science to develop nomological descriptions of contingency. It represents the starting point for philosophical and theological reflection regarding the nature of physical reality. From a theological point of view, the philosophical concept of contingency can be regarded as the creative activity of the God of love.

Pannenberg argues that the contingency of reality does not conflict with the constancy of form in which events occur (ETN 44f.). Natural laws are abstracted from

the individual realities they describe.⁹⁰ They are based on static observations of contingent events. Thus the scientist works in a situation in which the validity of the general laws and hypotheses of science are dependent upon the contingency of both the events themselves as well as the decisions of the experimenter (ETN 56f.).

Not only the contingent character of reality, its regularities too must be definable as the work of God. The dependence of regularity upon contingency must be verifiable from within a natural scientific description of the world. Only in this way will it be possible to regard God as the Creator of the world--in both its contingency and in its regularities (ST 2:88f.). We have seen that Pannenberg connects the contingency of reality with the creative freedom of God. He also connects the basic regularities of nature--which allow for the rise of life in ever new and more complex forms--with God's trustworthiness in preserving creation. Finally, he connects the cosmic process and the one-way irreversibility of time with the God of history (i.e., with the biblical notion of the God who makes promises and fulfills them) (ST 2:89f.). This linking of theology and science takes place at the level of philo-

⁹⁰Pannenberg has the support of Erwin Schrödinger and other physicists in arguing that the regularity of nature is grounded on contingency (Schrödinger uses Zufall or chance). (ST 2:84f.) Pannenberg refers to Schrödinger, Was ist ein Naturgesetz? Beiträge zum naturwissenschaftlichen Weltbild (1962), 10.

sophical and theological reflection and would never lead to evidence of God's existence that would be acceptable to the natural sciences. The function of such reflection is to show the coherence of a scientific description of the world with a Christian description of the world as the creation of the God we read about in the Bible (ST 2:90).

If one regards the laws of nature as themselves grounded on contingency and functional within open systems--i.e., these laws describe realities that did not always exist and will at some point in time cease to exist, and that therefore the laws are historically relative--then it is no longer nonsense to admit that God can act in ways that brings about new and unexpected realities. On the other hand the natural laws describe the existence of regularities that make the independent existence of creatures possible. Thus these regularities express the faithfulness of God towards the creation (ST 2:92).

One consequence of the view that the universe had a beginning is that unless one wishes to regard the natural laws discovered by science in terms of eternal ideas, of which the natural universe then is a slightly imperfect copy, one must regard these laws as themselves part of the changing cosmos. Pannenberg tries to follow this line of thinking in arguing that God's faithfulness or trustworthiness is the ground of the regularities that natural laws describe. The regularities that do occur in nature do so

in the context of a contingent universe in which all events have an element of contingency. Even causality, argues Pannenberg, cannot simply be accepted as we normally think of it. He agrees with Hume's analysis that causality does not so much describe the power of A to bring about B (in the context of an hypothesis "if A then B"), as it describes a relationship between A and B. This reliable relationship, says Pannenberg, must have had a first occurrence at some point within time. Only after the first occurrence of B after A did this relationship become a regularity, describable by laws. Therefore, it should be thought of as depending upon B. "In this sense the event relationship between them both is constituted from B backwards."⁹¹ Pannenberg also intends this as an argument in support of the ontological priority of the future, but is here arguing that the relative or contingent nature of reality, even in its regularities, is not self-explanatory. It leads beyond itself to philosophical and religious questioning.

The unity of history and nature is found in the trustworthiness of God, which provides for the continuity and wholeness within which it is possible to distinguish (einteilen) relationships between individual realities (ETN 69). Pannenberg characterizes the trustworthiness of God

⁹¹"In diesem Sinne konstituiert sich der Ereigniszusammenhang zwischen beiden von B her nach rückwärts" (ETN 67).

as the sameness of God in that God remains true to his earlier works ("in seinem Festhalten an seinem früheren Werken") (ETN 72). This gives reality its form and unity.⁹²

Anthropocentrism?

Pannenberg points out that apart from humans the world can, therefore, be described in terms of natural laws. Its continuity is lawful (Gesetzlich) rather than historical. Both human and natural worlds have the character of a unique and irreversible process. Both are historical processes in this sense. However, the non-human world has no awareness of this historicity. Pannenberg suggests that one can perhaps speak of an historical form of relationship that bridges the evolution of organic life from non-organic forms of reality, and that this is connected with an increasing significance of individual existence with the more complex forms of organic life (ETN 70f.). Furthermore, humans too are part of the processes of nature. Pannenberg concludes that this universal

⁹²"The establishment of such relationships--through ever renewed reverting from the later to the earlier--bears the stamp of a personal power, not the mark of a merely structural regularity. Thus, and perhaps only thus, does the unity of events, through the preservation of their contingency, become understood." ("Die Herstellung solchen Zusammenhanges aber durch immer erneuten Rückgriff vom Späteren auf Früheres trägt den Stempel einer persönlichen Macht, nicht den einer bloßen Gesetzesstruktur, und so--vielleicht nur so--wird die Einheit des Geschehens unter Wahrung seiner Kontingenz verständlich" (ETN 72).

process has a history that must be understood in anthropocentric terms. "It is only in this sense that it is possible to speak of a history of nature: not of a history of nature in itself, without humans, but rather of a history of nature towards humans."⁹³ But this history does not have its unity in or through humans. The unity of all history is grounded only in the experience of the divine ground of all reality (ETN 71).

History and nature are united only in God "who has ordered the contingent succession of forms [of existence] towards humans, so that this succession is ascertainable from him backwards as a meaningful correlation of events, and will be formed and completed through his knowing and acting."⁹⁴ It is not through human perception and mastery of nature that the world process receives its history. God is the one who provides the continuity and regularity that allows for regular relationships to exist. In this way it is possible for new events to shed light on earlier events

⁹³"In diesem Sinne erst läßt sich von einer Geschichte der Natur sprechen, nicht von einer Geschichte der Natur für sich, ohne den Menschen, sondern von einer Geschichte der Natur auf den Menschen hin" (ETN 71).

⁹⁴"Dieser Weg [der Weg der Geschichtsstiftung] hat seine Einheit erst recht nur unter der Voraussetzung Gottes, der die kontingente Abfolge der Gestalten auf den Menschen hin geordnet hat, so daß sie von ihm her rückwärts als sinnvoller Geschehenszusammenhang erfaßbar wird und durch sein Erkennen und Handeln gestaltet und vollendet wird" (ETN 71).

and relationships. Thus a larger context of events is grounded.

This understanding of history is theocentric, but it continues to regard humans as the most significant creatures:

It is first with the emergence of humans and with the appropriation of nature through humans that the world process as a whole, working backwards from humans, achieves its coherence in its self. This happens through human knowledge of nature as well as through the dominion over nature which is connected with it.⁹⁵

This statement reflects Pannenberg's positive regard for the scientific investigation of reality. It could perhaps be misunderstood as a justification of the continued abusive domination of nature. However, this statement must be read in the larger context of the essay in which it occurs and of Pannenberg's other works. The central point of this essay, the overcoming of the dualism of nature and spirit, is a significant step in providing grounds for countering the negative consequences of this dualism. Furthermore, Pannenberg's understanding of dominion is anything but a justification for the abusive use of nature. Thus the statement affirms the role of human dominion in taking all non-human reality into the central theme of

⁹⁵"Erst mit der Entstehung des Menschen und mit der Aneignung der Natur durch den Menschen erlangt der Weltprozeß als ganzer, rückwirkend vom Menschen her, seinen Zusammenhang in sich selbst. Das geschieht durch die menschliche Erkenntnis der Natur ebenso wie durch die damit zusammenhängende Herrschaft über sie" (ETN 71).

creation: the creaturely realization of the inner-Trinitarian love. This certainly results in a reconception of the idea of dominion.

In the essay "Theology and Science" Pannenberg's theological reflections on modern conceptions of the universe culminates in his reflection on the anthropic principle.⁹⁶ Here he argues that the

process of cosmic expansion looks like the instrument of the Creator to produce the conditions for the emergence of increasingly complex and increasingly independent creatures--all the way to the self-organization of organic life and to the emergence of human beings at the end of the evolutionary process.⁹⁷

In the "Big Bang" model of the universe the continuing expansion of the universe after the initial explosive expansion created the necessary space and allowed for the cooling off that is essential for the emergence of a multitude of life forms. This is one of the basic factors that contributes to the theory that the development of the universe appears to be governed by a final cause--the emergence of intelligent life. Pannenberg admits the

⁹⁶The anthropic principle argues that minute changes in the nature of the universe would have made the evolution of sentient organic life impossible. This appears to suggest that human consciousness is the goal of evolution.

⁹⁷"Theology and Science," 309.

speculative nature of these hypotheses.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, he is able to point to a remarkable correspondence between several variations of this modern view and his interpretation of the biblical account of reality.⁹⁹ From minute aspects of the conditions of the Big Bang, to many other incidents in natural history, virtually negligible differences would have made the emergence of human life impossible. This suggests to Pannenberg, looking back reflectively from the perspective of human history, a purposiveness to the entire process. Previous events and their meaning are taken up into a more complete view of reality. This reflective activity of Pannenberg itself corresponds with the backwards working purposiveness that Pannenberg perceives in the Christian expectation of communion with God. In other words, Pannenberg, the 20th century theologian, can be seen as participating reflectively in the process of taking nature into the religious (ultimate) meaning of history. Pannenberg's argument is that the future has an ontological priority, which is seen in the re-interpretation of past events in the light of

⁹⁸ST 2:93f. & "Theology and Science," 309f. Physicist Stephen Hawking in A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes (New York: Bantam, 1988) acknowledges the generally accepted validity of the anthropic principle in its weak form (124f.). Pannenberg's theological reflections are based on the weak form of the principle.

⁹⁹Pannenberg, "Doctrine of Creation and Science," 3-21.

later and more universal horizons. He also argues that this can be shown to correspond with significant aspects of the anthropic principle.

I would argue that this implies that the meaning of nature cannot be exhausted, and may be entirely missed, by the abusive practices of modern culture. In other words, if nature is conceived primarily in the utilitarian and often arbitrary manner of modern materialist culture, then its broader significance--even for human history--cannot be perceived. Pannenberg's contention is that this broader significance most clearly becomes available in the context of a theological conception of universal history.

Pannenberg regards reality as determined from the point of view of a future communion of creation with God. This companionship finds its fullest expression in the relationship of humans with God through Jesus of Nazareth. Pannenberg intends to bring to expression the notion that the process character of reality is grounded in the Trinitarian character of the act of creation: the Father creates, the Son redeems, and the Spirit brings eschatological completion (ST 2:20 and cf. 34f.). The act of creation is understood to encompass all reality, from its beginning to its end. And it proceeds from the eschatological realization of perfect communion of creatures with the Creator.

Pannenberg's emphasis on the role of the Spirit in creation also focuses on humanity: "The Lord God . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath [nephesh] of life. . . ." (Gen 2:7). Pannenberg is careful to point out that this does not relate primarily to mind or intelligence. The work of the spirit is to create a living soul, and soul signifies the living being. This living being is a creature which is alive through its dependence upon God who is the source both in terms of origin and continuation of this existence.¹⁰⁰ In a manner that distinguishes human beings from the other creatures, the Spirit uniquely makes humans into living beings.

Pannenberg follows the biblical tradition in claiming that the fulfillment of creaturely existence is to praise God, and that this is especially to be fulfilled by humans (Rev. 19:1ff., John 17:4, ST 2:73f.). He argues that this focus on humans is the conclusion to be drawn from both the modern scientific and the biblical understanding of the sequential emergence of forms of life, culminating with the emergence of human life.¹⁰¹ If Pannen-

¹⁰⁰IST 43. Stanley Grenz points out that this is one of the significant differences between Pannenberg and Hegel. Pannenberg understands Spirit in terms of the Hebrew ruah, not in terms of German Idealism (Reason for Hope 91 & 108f.). Cf. ST 1:403-16 for Pannenberg's critique of Spirit as nous, and also ST 2:104 for a summary of this.

¹⁰¹"Theology and Science," 307f.

berg indeed intends to overcome the modern dualism (and he does claim this as his intention), how can he also wish to show a correspondence between his presentation of a Christian conception of reality and that of the modern sciences, which emerged in the context of Cartesian dualism?

To show such a correspondence would be a problem if the modern sciences themselves continued to operate under the assumption of the dualism of nature and spirit. However, the strength of Pannenberg's efforts to overcome this dualism from the point of view of theology and philosophy is augmented by the fact that modern science has itself begun to reject such dualism. Even the anthropic principle, which at first glance appears to mark the conceited height of anthropocentrism, upon reflection may show itself to negate the opposition of spirit and nature. For it seems that if one understands humans to be at the pinnacle of an evolutionary process, one certainly cannot then radically distinguish humans from the rest of the creatures and realities that make up the process. Humans together with all non-human reality make up one process. Humans are seen in their dependence upon the process, and this means dependent upon all parts of the whole which the process is. What gives the anthropic interpretation of the universe the persuasive power it possesses is the narrowness of the window of possibility for the evolution of reality as we

know it. This narrowness implies that each part of the whole is significant to the existence of the whole. And this further implies that each part must be regarded as an end in itself. It also implies that each part cannot be regarded as an end apart from likewise valuing all the other parts. That there is differentiation amongst the parts does not negate the fundamental significance of each part.

To this analysis of Pannenberg's notion of creaturely unity I would add that, in addition to the biblical focus on humans, it must also be noted that the Bible contains curious remarks like Jesus' statement that "the very stones would cry out" the praises withheld by the people (Luke 19:40). That the heavens (Ps 19:1ff.) and the earth (Ps 98:4) participate in declaring the praises of Jahweh implies a continuity of purpose, and even of existence, between what we normally regard as two very different types of being: inorganic and human. Modern science and the Bible regard humans as the highest level of organic life. Yet there is a unity of existence in the origin, continuation, and purpose of existence. This is consistent with the way in which Pannenberg regards humans as the apex of the creaturely world. Humans have the capacity to express most consciously, freely, and with greatest creativity the praises of God. Humans have a language with which they can praise the Creator on behalf and alongside of the whole

creation. That St. Francis of Assisi names other creatures his sisters and brothers and admonishes them to praise their Creator and Redeemer is not merely a charming notion of a somewhat strange but saintly character. It expresses a fundamental truth about the character of reality.

Moral Implications

Pannenberg also points out the significance of the moral implications of this understanding of God's relationship to the world. Before spelling out these consequences I will briefly highlight the main points of his understanding of creation. First, creation is a threefold (origin, preservation and immanent divine self-involvement, and perfection), unified process. It is the work of the Trinity, with each person contributing to the process. The Father brings a world into existence out of nothing. The Son redeems the world. The Spirit brings everything to its fulfillment. Second, the relationship of this world to the Father is cast in terms of the relationship of the Son to the Father through the Spirit. Creatures have their value in a manner like to that of the Son. Participation of creatures in the oneness of the Trinity depends upon their participation in the Son's loving acknowledgment of the Father as God. Creatures are independent and are free either to acknowledge or not to acknowledge the Father as God. Loving acknowledgement and participation are one, and praise is the form of acknowledgement.

Acknowledgement of God involves the acknowledgement of the multitude of other members of the creation each standing independently within the relationship of the one creation to its ultimate goal--participation in the Son's relationship with the Father (ST 2:373f.). Inasmuch as creatures fail to acknowledge God they also fail to acknowledge the independent good of others. In other words, they use other creatures and things to serve their own less than ultimate ends. This could also be stated in reverse order, although it is the acknowledgement and love of God which remains prior. Inasmuch as a creature uses others as a means apart from these others' independent intrinsic relationship to God, the creature fails to acknowledge God. These formulations express the two-fold nature of love (Mark 12:29-34) as it is seen through its application in 1 John 3:11-24 and 4:7-13: The one "who does not love [his or her neighbor] does not know God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

It needs to be pointed out that acknowledgement of God as God, as found in Pannenberg, is understood only in terms of the acknowledgement by the Son of the Father as Father. This self-differentiation is a humble act of love and devotion. It is not the acknowledgment of the demons who shudder in fear but neither love nor obey (James 2:19). The eternal Son's loving acknowledgement of the Father is the central and founding reality.

Pannenberg regards "mutually acknowledging" love as the foundation of the positive laws that make community life possible. In love "God's future gains power over individuals and enables them to fulfill their destiny in relation to one another. Here the creative freedom of the imagination is alive" (Ethics 54). Pannenberg suggests that the "imagination of love" motivates "truly rational behavior" in the quest of love to overcome concrete social problems (Ethics 54f.). Through the development of creative solutions new forms of community can be founded. In this way loving acknowledgment functions as the root of laws which enable, rather than oppress, members of a community. Pannenberg appears to point beyond the human world to include the non-human world as part of the universal community of God's creation in which this imaginative power of love is active (Ethics 56). Whether or not such inclusive wholeness is his intention in this particular essay is not crucial. As we have seen, and will see further, there are many other works in which Pannenberg is explicit regarding his intention to include all reality in the eschatological creation of God and, hence, in the religious and moral aspects of human destiny.

Thus, in Pannenberg's understanding it is not eternally valid laws or ordinances of creation that ground morality and law. It is the eschatological power of love which always seeks to bring redemptive and freeing pos-

sibilities to concrete situations, and which grounds social norms. According to Pannenberg, only the faithfulness of divine love "is the basis for permanence and reliability" (Ethics 31). Creative and eschatological love is the foundation of ethics, but it is always an ethic in transition towards and submission to the realization of the eschatological Kingdom of God. Pannenberg insists that, within history, there are no legal and political realizations of love which can be permanently institutionalized.

The discussions of the priority of meaning and of the whole for the individual are significant for the consideration of political morality. Pannenberg argues that if one considers meaning as the production of individual action and communication, as does Habermas for example, then there is no possibility for the criticism of political systems, for these must then also be considered to be the expressions of individuals and groups of individuals. In this case political systems would never be more than the expression of those who happen to have more power than others. Political systems of norms must then be ultimately experienced as oppressive and capricious. Each political system, says Pannenberg, requires legitimation through "Weltbilder." These visions of the world as a meaningful whole provide the legitimation as well as the opportunity for criticism of any particular social order. The fact that the truth of worldviews remains controversial and open

to revision does not alter the fact of their priority over individual constructions and experiences of meaning (WT 103-105). Such worldviews must aim to integrate all of reality in order to overcome individual capriciousness. This is, however, always only possible in a preliminary (vorgängige) manner.

Pannenberg favorably cites Jürgen Moltmann's interpretation of the universal historical perspective. For both Moltmann and Pannenberg the "still outstanding end of all things" is understood as the salvific opening of the future to the whole of the mortal world. The individual, society, and nature (non-human reality) are included in this salvation. Pannenberg agrees with Moltmann's political application of this understanding of the end of history:

Since the anticipation of the end of history is also "as the anticipation of the salvation of the whole . . . future-opening for the mortal body, for society, and for nature," then it also includes, as Moltmann rightly emphasizes, the political theme of "freeing the whole of the enslaved creature," which becomes for him the starting point for a "political hermeneutic."¹⁰²

¹⁰²"Da die Antizipation des Endes der Geschichte zugleich »als Antizipation der Erlösung des Ganzen . . . zukunftsöffnend für den sterblichen Leib, für die Gesellschaft und für die Natur« ist, schließt sie, wie Moltmann mit Recht betont, auch die politische Thematik der »Befreiung der ganzen geknechteten Kreatur« ein, die bei ihm zum Ausgangspunkt einer »politischen Hermeneutik« wird" (WT 287). Pannenberg's quotations of Jürgen Moltmann are taken from M. Moltmann, Perspektiven der Theologie (1968), 135.

Pannenberg does not explicitly take up a political hermeneutic. He does however, agree with Moltmann's political application of the anticipated salvific and unifying end of history to all creatures. Pannenberg expresses concern that a specifically political hermeneutic will lose sight of its own limitations and become a tool of oppression.¹⁰³

The significant point here for my thesis is that Pannenberg sees religion and/or quasi-religious systems of thought as providing for a horizon of meaning that goes beyond the conflicts between individuals and between human culture and the non-human world. Religion provides a horizon of meaning which seeks to overcome all the conflicts between the various aspects of reality. All systems, processes, events and individuals are included in the horizon of meaning provided by religion. This is not to say that every religion and philosophy or every particu-

¹⁰³Pannenberg is leery of "rational" and "definitive programs." He argues that revolutionary objectives quickly turn conservative, for they too easily identify themselves with the highest good, and thus insulate themselves from all criticism. This critique of political theology should be understood in the context of Pannenberg's commitment to the improvement of life in the world (TKG 114). Cf. Ethics 134f. where Pannenberg connects the hopes of Christian eschatology with the Old Testament prophets' politically concrete expectations for a reign of peace. Also see Pannenberg, "Christianity, Marxism, and Liberation Theology," Christian Scholar's Review 18, 3 (1989): 215-226. He argues that Marxist and Leninist economic analysis is simplistic and is firmly rooted in an ideological program.

lar form of any one of these fulfills this function equally. Pannenberg's argument is that the Judeo-Christian understanding of creative and redemptive divine love best fulfills this function.

Pannenberg has also argued the contextual--historical, social, and beyond that universal--nature of all scientific endeavors. At one important level the context is that of the worldview or paradigm. Each attempt to express a systematic analysis of some aspect of reality moves within paradigmatic models for understanding reality as a whole. Some of these attempts push beyond the limits of operative paradigms and result in the need to revise the paradigms in question.¹⁰⁴ Pannenberg's own efforts, it appears to me, are aimed at just such a revision; namely, to overthrow the modern opposition of nature and spirit which has played such a significant role in post-Enlightenment thought.

This has significant moral implications. A new, more comprehensive view of reality along the lines suggested by Pannenberg would include the consideration of religious and moral aspects of experience as inescapably real and as inseparable from those pursuits of scientific curiosity which are directed at the physical universe. A

¹⁰⁴WT 57ff. & 221. In these pages Pannenberg analyses T. S. Kuhn's work on the idea of paradigm change.

paradigmatic model for a systematic integration of experience which includes these "spiritual" realities and which does not permit a dualism of spirit and nature implies that human actions in and upon the physical world are subject to a demand for correspondence to these spiritual realities. The compartmentalization of life into mutually exclusive and even opposed aspects does not correspond to the unity and wholeness which the scientific endeavor, in any field whatsoever, both presupposes and strives for. The anticipatory vision of the whole truth provides for the necessary openness to criticize all temporal failings to measure up to that vision. It also provides, in the form of experienced wholeness, the ground for human curiosity to pursue systematic understanding.

It is clear that the conception of systematic and reflective understanding that is operative in Pannenberg's thought is informed by a special theological notion of unity. The systematic understanding that Pannenberg refers to is connected with a divine unity that includes all reality in itself and is identified with truth. All attempts to develop systematic structures of understanding, say in a particular field of knowledge, which attempt to integrate various bits of information into a meaningful structure, are efforts that can be combined with parallel efforts in other fields of knowledge. These models of reality can be further integrated in ever larger wholes

until all that is known and experienced of reality is included.

Pannenberg's vision of unity moves in this direction and beyond the best achievements of humans toward a unity which, not only in knowledge but in reality, will include absolutely everything, subsuming all contradictions that have arisen along the way. Pannenberg's argument is that this ultimate unity is already a fundamental element of experience, and that it makes knowledge possible. Differentiation presupposes unity. Knowledge, even partial knowledge, of particular aspects of reality, presupposes a unity of experience and reality within which such knowledge can arise.

Pannenberg's system is an open-ended understanding of reality. It allows room for an open future that is determined neither by the past nor by logical necessity. It leaves room for the creative freedom of God and of humans. Pannenberg's idea of unity is founded upon the Judeo-Christian idea of a God who creates all reality in love. Love is the power which is both the presently experienced unity of reality and the determinative power of the future realization of this unity. The future is open because divine love has determined humans to be capable of participating in love's creative work.

There is also a significant implication here for the methodology of the natural sciences. A. M. Klaus

Müller points out that Pannenberg's argument--that the element of contingency which is present in both the practice of science and in the real world--results in a need for further evolution of the philosophy and practice of the empirical sciences. This, says Müller, is necessary not merely for the sake of further advancing knowledge or satisfying scientific curiosity, but because it is dangerous to continue to ignore the repercussions of a technical and physically standardized approach to the world.¹⁰⁵ Müller then cites the example of modern medicine, which treats individual humans as a category of physics. Medicinal practice today consequently ignores what it is that makes individuals human. There is, therefore, a critical element in Pannenberg's argument that the world as a whole is an irreproducible process, and that contingency is a fundamental element of this process. Pannenberg's argument implies the need for a critical reflection on the fundamental assumptions and practices of the modern natural sciences and the technological branches of human activity that are dependent upon these sciences. The mechanical positivist conceptions of the universe ignore the individual and process character of real objects/events in time and space. This has had certain negative consequences in specific applications such as medicine,

¹⁰⁵Müller, "Über philosophischen Umgang," p. 24.

agriculture, and industry, where some of the "repercussions" of our technology have had extremely negative effects.

But the critical force of Pannenberg's argument regarding contingency is not sufficiently felt until the source of contingency is considered. We have seen that Pannenberg regards contingency as rooted in the free and loving creativity of God. Pannenberg understands the contingent process of reality to be created from the goal of unity with the love of God. Each creature is loved and valued by God from this point of view. New creatures come (contingently) into existence as part of the whole toward which all creation is moving. The perspective of divine love and valuation needs to inform the generalizing character of the natural sciences. Pannenberg's understanding of reality calls for love to characterize the relationships of humans with each other and with each creature. The quest for general laws that govern existence must be humanized by love for individual creatures.

Pannenberg's argument has implications regarding the application of the results of experimentation to the alteration of the natural world and in the production of goods for public consumption.¹⁰⁶ I believe that experiences of the past several hundred years, in which the

¹⁰⁶Pannenberg does not spell out these implications.

results of science have been rushed into production, show the truth of Pannenberg's observation. Scientists have not always known enough about their discoveries to be aware of all the repercussions and implications of these gains in knowledge. Certainly it must be acknowledged that financial interests, fear, vengeance, greed, and other human vices have played a major role in the practical application of scientific knowledge.¹⁰⁷ However, I suggest that our awareness of this must not obscure the fact that the positivist opposition of scientific methodology to non-human nature itself bears responsibility for the existence of a blindness to the limitations of modern science. Scientists have begun to recognize that all our knowledge remains very limited. This is especially true of the complex and far-reaching interrelationships that compose the world of living creatures.¹⁰⁸

David McKenzie agrees that Pannenberg's argument implies a fundamental and critical acknowledgement of the limitations of scientific methodology. He concludes that "Pannenberg asks for a critical approach even to the

¹⁰⁷See Gene E. Likens, "Toxic Winds: Whose Responsibility?," in Ecology, Economics, Ethics, 148 & 150. Likens provides several examples that show how concern for personal financial gain produces a willingness to pollute the environment.

¹⁰⁸See, for example, Edward O. Wilson, "Biodiversity, Prosperity, and Value," in Ecology, Economics, Ethics, 10.

revered natural laws of modern science."¹⁰⁹ Pannenberg's argument is that there is no perfect knowledge of any reality. The fact that reality is a process and that the process is unfinished and its end unknown, requires the acknowledgement of the incompleteness of the endeavor to become aware of the entire context within which any one event or reality is to be understood. This also indicates that the end of the process, if one accepts Pannenberg's arguments regarding the goal of history, can serve a critical and a motivational function (TKG 80f.). In other words, in light of the concepts of creation and world and the ultimate goal of unity with divine love, broader questions of relationships, interdependence, and value must be addressed at various levels of scientific inquiry. These types of questions become even more significant when the large scale application of new discoveries is considered.

Conclusion

Although Pannenberg's understanding of the Trinity and of creation is characterized by careful reasoning and argumentation within the context of a thorough familiarity

¹⁰⁹David McKenzie, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Religious Philosophy (Washington: U. P. of America, 1980), 88. In this context McKenzie shows the connection of Pannenberg's argument regarding the possible truth of the resurrection. "If one can avoid absolutizing them [the natural laws], then from the side of science the incompatibility between the Resurrection and natural science is also removed" (Ibid.).

with the theological and philosophical tradition, it would be a mistake to think of it as rationalistic. Pannenberg is aware of the limitations of metaphysics, but has not conceded to Heidegger and others that metaphysical thinking is no longer possible. His claim to truth is a claim that admits its historical relativity, but stands on the systematic coherence and correspondence to the experience of reality that the presentation is able to achieve. Pannenberg does not operate purely within the assumptions of a particular school of thought. He does not simply dismiss conflicting positions regarding the character of reality. He engages in a critical dialogue which he hopes is open to the discovery of truth beyond the limitations of any one dogma. Through this open and critical dialogue he hopes to establish the truth of the Christian claim regarding existence and God. This in turn would establish moral thought.

Pannenberg's theology is Trinitarian, and as such it focuses on the inner-Trinitarian relationship of Father and Son as mediated by the Spirit. Creation, redemption, and fulfillment are conceived in terms of this relationship, which is characterized by the love of the Son for the Father. Just as both the Trinitarian process and the Trinity are one reality, so the creation is one totality. For only if the Creator is one is it possible to think of creation as a united and uniting process. Reality is a totality that entails a process spread out through time-

space, and within it are found a multitude of finite processes. What makes one reality of these multifarious processes is the unifying love of God, which is not only the origin but also the "final destiny and consummation" of all creation (Ethics 179 & EE 169f.). Each process is linked to all other processes and to the whole of reality in its immediate participation in the creative love of the Trinity. Pannenberg has described reality as fundamentally religious and moral, and he has sought to eliminate any dualism which would limit human responsibility to what is merely one aspect of a world that is only first known in its unity.

Chapter 2

God the Redeemer

In the Jew Jesus of Nazareth many Christians believe the eternal Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, has appeared in unity with the creaturely world. In other words, they believe that Jesus was in one person the unity of Creator and creature. He was God incarnate. "In the process of the transmission of his eschatological revelation, God is immanent in history and determines its unity from within, from the inner-historical event of Jesus' history, and thus proves himself as God, as the all-determining reality."¹ For Wolfhart Pannenberg this fundamental claim of the Christian tradition is central: "in Jesus Christ--and in him alone--the one God of the universe is present to save his creation from sin and decay" (IST 55). Pannenberg's Christology is the focus of this chapter.

As I have shown in the previous chapter, Pannenberg understands history as the process of God's creative immanence overcoming the failings of creatures and carrying

¹"Im Prozeß der Überlieferung seiner eschatologischen Offenbarung ist Gott der Geschichte immanent, bestimmt er ihre Ganzheit nun von innen, von dem innergeschichtlichen Ereignis der Geschichte Jesus her, und erweist sich so als Gott, als die alles bestimmende Wirklichkeit." Pannenberg, "Über historische und theologische Hermeneutik," in GF 1:139.

creation forward into its eschatological source--the Kingdom of God. The aim of creation is the unity of creatures with the Creator, and history is the process towards that goal. History is revelation. And if history and God, creation and Creator, are not opposed to one another, are not each the radical "other" to the other, but are interdependent and have intertwined destinies, then neither is any kind of creaturely reality radically other from the rest of creation, or from God. This chapter shows how Pannenberg understands Jesus of Nazareth as the incarnation of the "unifying unity" of all reality.

As in the understanding of creation, Pannenberg seeks direction in the Jewish context within which Christianity developed. The notions of history and revelation continue to be significant. The unity of nature and history, of matter and spirit, can be understood in the context of Pannenberg's rejection of Karl Barth's dialectical opposition of God and world, and in Pannenberg's corresponding depiction of revelation as history.² According

²Moltmann points out that Barth relies on ancient hierarchical conceptions of reality. According to Moltmann, Barth understands orders of domination to progress from heaven to soul, from soul to body, from man to earth and from man to woman. This contributes to the opposition of humans and nature (Moltmann, God in Creation, 252-255). It should also be noted that Pannenberg's understanding of revelation, despite his differences from Barth, is deeply informed by Barth's notions that revelation is one and is the self-revelation of God. Carl E. Braaten suggests that the difference between Pannenberg and Barth is focused on methodology rather than dogmatic content. Braaten suggests that the primary difference lies in Pannenberg's complaint that Barth ultimately relies on the subjective assertion

to Pannenberg the difference of his thought from Barth could also be depicted as a new appreciation of God as Creator of all reality, and a uniting of the notions of creation and redemption.³

The task of this chapter is to analyze how Pannenberg's elaboration of this central Christian claim contributes to the argument that the relationship of nature and history should not be construed dualistically. How, in other words, does the appearance of the eternal Son in history serve to overcome the modern dualism of nature and spirit? This question, rather than a complete treatment of Pannenberg's Christology, will guide the following discussion. This chapter will examine the following aspects of Pannenberg's understanding of Jesus the Messiah: the Hebrew context of the appearance of the Son, the message of the Kingdom, the resurrection, the unity of creation and redemption, and briefly, the Christian community.

that God's self-revelation in Jesus has nothing to do with a general anthropological expression such as religion ("The Place of Christianity Among the World Religions: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Theology of Religion and the History of Religions," in Theology of Pannenberg: American Critiques, 299). It is integral to Pannenberg's thought to argue the truth of the divine revelation in Jesus in the context of the modern sciences generally. Pannenberg, in other words, wishes to overcome the epistemological gulf between theology and the other sciences. This is based on a revision of the ideas of God and revelation (see chapter 1).

³Pannenberg states that in "Barth's systematics the key concept is that of the Son's eternal predestination and abandonment. The creation comes into the picture only secondarily . . ." (IST 68).

The Hebrew Context

A separate study would be required to investigate fully the hermeneutical and theological reasons for Pannenberg's stress upon the importance of taking full account of the Jewish context of Jesus' resurrection when attempting to understand the significance of the latter event for the meaning of history. I will merely indicate several of Pannenberg's major arguments. First, the Jewish experience of God's action in history had led to a unique understanding of both history itself and of the relationship of God to history. Jesus was a Jew and Jesus' destiny made him the ultimate, if proleptic, revelation of God's action in history. The particular nature of this revelation connects it intimately with its Jewish context. Second, Pannenberg is concerned to reject completely the separation of Heilsgeschichte from Geschichte. Theologians who make such a distinction place merely historical realities at the periphery of the events which constitute Heilsgeschichte. Pannenberg regards this as an unacceptable isolation of the Christian Traditionsgeschichte from secular history.

Israel's Concept of History

Pannenberg's understanding of Israel's concept of history and its influence on modern conceptions of history is argued in the context of a modern debate. Karl Löwith, one of Pannenberg's teachers, has argued that the modern

western linear conception of history has its roots largely in the faiths of ancient Israel and nascent Christianity.⁴ Pannenberg interprets Löwith both as rejecting the idea of progress, which Löwith regards as a secularization of the Christian faith in providence and of the Christian expectation of an eschatological telos of history, and as preferring the Greek view that history is the constant reoccurrence of a cycle of cultural rise and fall.⁵ Hans Blumenberg targets Löwith's argument that progress is the secularization of Hebrew and Christian beliefs, and argues to the contrary that the modern age grew out of a new secular self-affirmation of culture against the Christian tradition.⁶

Pannenberg suggests that Blumenberg's argument depends upon the idea of an original opposition of eschatology against history and that this can be traced to certain arguments of Bultmann and even of Löwith himself. Pannenberg argues that because the Old Testament view of history is the background for New Testament eschatology, the latter cannot dualistically be opposed to reality. In

⁴Löwith, Meaning in History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 1-20.

⁵CW 12. Löwith, Meaning of History, 1-20, 188-200.

⁶Blumenberg, The Legitimacy of the Modern Age, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 27-32, 72. See also Pannenberg's criticism of Blumenberg in "Christianity as the Legitimacy of the Modern Age," in IGHF 178-191.

other words, both apocalyptic eschatology and the linear notion of history grow out of the experiences of ancient Israel. "Eschatology as the future of history belongs to the understanding of reality as history" (CW 14).

Eschatology is a development of the Hebrew notion of history, and belongs to it fundamentally. Pannenberg argues that his revision of Löwith's argument, conceiving Christian eschatology as an extension of the Old Testament view of history as the activity of God on behalf of his people, is sufficient to defend it against Blumenberg's main argument, namely, that modern historical thinking does not have its roots in Christianity.

As to Blumenberg's assumption that progress and providence are heterogeneous notions, Pannenberg refers to Löwith's response to Blumenberg.⁷ Löwith argues that the idea of progress is only possible within the horizon of the Christian ideas of eschatology and Heilsgeschichte, which together open up the possibility of an orientation to the future. Löwith adds that the notion of humans as free creative beings is a thinkable development only in the context of the Judeo-Christian notion of the free Creator God. Just as progress replaces the promise-fulfillment character of eschatological hope, so man replaces God in the early modern notion of reality. Man is his own ground of free-

⁷Löwith, "Hans Blumenberg: Die Legitimität der Neuzeit," Philosophische Rundschau 15 (1968): 198.

dom, and human freedom is fundamental to progress. Thus, according to Löwith, the modern notion of historical progress is doubly rooted in Judeo-Christian notions.

For Löwith, however, there is an opposition of Heilsgeschehen and secular history, a dualism of faith and reality. Reality is characterized by the circularity of history, while faith, in its expectation of an eschaton, has a linear conception of reality. He regards these as irreconcilable views of reality. One is empirically grounded and the other is invisible, is inner.⁸ Pannenberg accepts Löwith's argument that the ideas of progress and human freedom are rooted in Christianity, with its Jewish background. He does not, however, accept Löwith's dualist portrayal of eschatology, nor the accompanying isolation of the ideas of salvation and hope (Heilsgeschehen und Heilserwartungen) from empirical reality. This is rooted in Pannenberg's view of the continuity from ancient Israel's view of history, to Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, and to the eschatological hopes of the Christian faith. Pannenberg also finds the historicity of our existence to be rooted in the nature of our physical existence. Anthropology is a discipline which can confirm the Hebrew-Christian understanding of existence as historical and as future oriented. In other words, Pannenberg argues that reality

⁸Löwith, Meaning in History, 190-195.

is not cyclical but is future oriented, just as faith and salvation are. Pannenberg argues this most pointedly in identifying revelation and history.

According to Pannenberg's conception of history the methods of modern historical consciousness can, therefore, be understood as themselves having evolved within a conception of reality that is rooted in the transmission of the Hebrew experience of God's promises and the hopes for their ultimate fulfillment. This implies, therefore, that the modern hermeneutical task of interpreting the texts of ancient Israel constitutes a reflection upon one's own roots.

The simplicity of this process, however, is broken by the historical and cultural distance (Lessing's ditch) between the ancient and the modern periods. Pannenberg argues that an awareness of a universal historical context can provide a horizon within which the connection of the present with ancient Christianity can be mediated. The truth of this depends on whether reality in its fundamental properties is to be understood as historical. Is it possible "to understand the history of nature and of humanity in their unity as the history of God?"⁹

⁹The question Pannenberg asks is "ob die Wirklichkeit selbst in ihren fundamentalen Aspekten als geschichtlich und die Geschichte der Natur und des Menschen in ihrer Einheit als Geschichte Gottes zu verstehen ist" (GF 1: 19).

The context of this quotation is a discussion of the question of the Protestant Reformation's Scripture Principle, and is focused on modern attempts to understand and apply early Christian concepts in a modern context. What makes this problem especially relevant to this dissertation is that Pannenberg's question points to the unity of nature and history in God as the justification of the application of historical consciousness to the hermeneutical enterprise. Pannenberg explains that the hermeneutical problem of bringing the horizons of text and interpreter together raises the question of universal history (GF 1:19). The reality of historical distance between ancient text and modern reader points to the need for some conception of history that bridges the historical distance inherent in the situation. The possibility of a modern reader understanding an ancient text suggests that history has a certain unity.

While Pannenberg draws on Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy of existence, Pannenberg argues that Gadamer has short-circuited his analysis by attempting to avoid the notion of universal history.¹⁰ He argues that

¹⁰See especially two essays in GF 1: "Hermeneutik und Universalgeschichte" and "Über historische und theologische Hermeneutik" (esp. pp. 142-151). Cf. Ted Peters, "Truth in History," 36-56. Also see my comments in the previous chapter (93n84) regarding Pannenberg's argument that universal history is the final horizon presupposed by the notion of fusion of horizons.

language is an insufficient category to account for human existence and for the connections between various "horizons" of experience within the total horizon of human history. Pannenberg argues that the application of the notion of universal history need not fall into the speculative claims that Hegel made. The notion of universal history or the idea of the whole of reality can take full account of the provisional character of all human knowing. He also argues that apart from anticipations of the whole of reality, even though these always remain provisional, it is impossible to do justice to the entire meaning context of any particular event. In other words, according to Pannenberg, an ultimate hermeneutical context is required by the question of meaning.

In this context Pannenberg expresses both appreciation and criticism for positions taken by Dilthey and Heidegger. He agrees with both that the wholeness of existence is always anticipatorily presupposed in all attempts to understand reality and goes beyond both in arguing that this anticipated wholeness cannot be the moment of one's death, but reaches out beyond death to a greater whole (GF 1:149). The ultimate reality that Pannenberg connects with this whole is God as revealed in Jesus' destiny (GF 1:153). It is in the resurrection of Jesus, according to Pannenberg, that the ultimate whole of existence is most fully anticipated, and appears prolepti-

cally. The horizon of understanding within which Pannenberg understands God and the whole of existence to be most fully present in history is that of Jesus' destiny as prolepsis of the goal of all reality.

Pannenberg points out that the notion of universal history has its roots in the Hebrew and Christian understanding that all of reality is understood as linear and as moving toward an end.

It is through Jewish apocalyptic and Christian theology of history that the subject of universal history has been transmitted to modern philosophy of history, and it is questionable if the subject of universal history could be understood as a unity apart from the biblical idea of God.¹¹

This statement needs to be interpreted in the context of his controversy with Löwith and Blumenberg, which I discussed above. Pannenberg's idea of an open-ended universal history draws together the arguments that Christian eschatology is not opposed to history and that reality is linearly future oriented, which he forwarded in the context of that debate. He suggests, further, that once modern thought had come to separate itself from its Judeo-Christian roots the concept of universal history was lost. Yet, the problem of the universal character of history did

¹¹"Durch jüdische Apokalyptik und christliche Geschichtstheologie ist das universalgeschichtliche Thema der neuzeitlichen Geschichtsphilosophie vererbt worden, und es ist fraglich, ob die Universalgeschichte ohne den biblischen Gottesgedanken überhaupt als eine Einheit verstanden werden kann" (GF 1:19).

not disappear. In fact, this question, according to Pannenberg, has become the "last horizon" of the modern natural sciences (GF 1:19). The pursuit, in physics, of a "grand unified theory" could perhaps serve as an example of this last horizon.

We see that Pannenberg points to both the hermeneutical problem of bridging Lessing's ditch and the situation of the empirical sciences as raising the question of the unity of nature and history within universal history. The notion of universal history, in other words, entails conceiving human and natural history in an overarching unity. Thus, we see that Pannenberg looks to ancient Israel, apocalyptic in early Judaism, and the eschatological hope of early Christianity, for the rise and definition of the concept of universal history.

Contrary to Löwith he argues that the Judeo-Christian concept of history remains essential to modern conceptions of reality. Against Blumenberg he notes the continuity of the modern age with its Christian roots, and furthermore, argues that only through taking up aspects of the Christian understanding of reality will modern thinkers be able more adequately to conceive of reality. Having accepted Dilthey's criticism of Hegel, that the absolute is not available in history, and agreeing with Gadamer that knowledge is always historical, Pannenberg renews the argument that the concept of universal history, and the idea of

God which makes the notion possible, is implicit in all understanding. He agrees with Heidegger that understanding reaches out in anticipation of a final whole within which to understand existence, but argues that this whole is to be found beyond the limits of death. Pannenberg presents an account of reality that is grounded in an anticipation of the unity of all reality in God.

His theological conception of universal history draws especially on the classical Hebrew prophets. But it takes distinctive shape in the context of the wide-ranging dialogue that I have briefly made reference to. Pannenberg's interpretation of the biblical texts takes place in the context of the tradition that has transmitted the text to him and his culture. The following section considers another modern argument about the reception of that tradition.

History and Myth

Pannenberg takes issue with Bultmann's conception of the relationship of myth to history and to the recording of actual events. Pannenberg's argument is important in the context of this dissertation because it shows his concern for the unity of event and meaning.¹² It also

¹²Helmut G. Harder and W. Taylor Stevenson, "The Continuity of History and Faith in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Toward an Erotics of Faith," Journal of Religion 51 (1971): 34f. & 47f. Harder and Stevenson point out that Pannenberg attempts to overcome the separation of event and meaning and associate this with reconciling the opposition of human and natural worlds.

reflects his intention to show that the relationship of God to history, while indirect, is open to rational and critical methods.

On the one hand, Pannenberg contrasts myth and history centered conceptions of the quest for meaning and a people's relationship to its god(s). Israel, he claims, is unique in the development of a view that meaning is not found in "nuances of a mythical prehistoric event."¹³ Pannenberg finds in ancient Israel a unique development. "Ever more decisively, precisely in historical change itself, it experienced the reality of its God."¹⁴ Experiencing meaning through cultic re-enactment of foundational mythologies is contrasted with experiencing meaning through the ever new and unpredictable actions of God in the history of Israel. The root of this distinctive experience of meaning is in the unique idea of a living God who by his actions is directing history towards a goal (GF 1:24f.). The mythical view of reality is overcome by an historical view, which is attained through the experience of God acting decisively in history.

¹³The translated phrase is: "Abschattungen eines mythischen Urgeschehens" (GF 1:24).

¹⁴"Demgegenüber ist es spezifisch für Israel, daß es . . . immer entschiedener gerade im geschichtlichen Wandel selbst die Wirklichkeit seines Gottes erfuhr" (GF 1:24).

On the other hand, in "Christentum und Mythos" Pannenberg attempts to counter dialectical theology's negative interpretation of myth.¹⁵ He accepts Malinowski's definition of myth as fundamentally related to a primeval event (Urereignis). Myth functions as "grounding and foundational history."¹⁶ Myth is conceived as a generative primeval event which is fundamentally connected with ritual performance in the present (GF 2:17). What Pannenberg gains by accepting this definition of myth is a ground upon which to criticize what he regards as the less carefully defined use of "myth" in Bultmann's demythologization program. According to Pannenberg, Bultmann's use of myth includes writings of various genres other than could be included in Malinowski's definition of myth. For Bultmann myth is a story told in human and mundane terms about the gods.¹⁷ Since Malinowski's definition was available to Bultmann, Pannenberg argues that he has grounds to seek

¹⁵This essay first appeared as "Späthorizonte des Mythos in biblischer und christlicher Überlieferung," in Terror und Spiel, Probleme der Mythenrezeption (Poetik und Hermeneutik IV), ed. H. Fuhrmann (1971), 473-525. It then appeared separately under the title Christentum und Mythos (1973). The page references here are to its most recent publication in Pannenberg's GF 2:13-65.

¹⁶Myth functions as "gründender, fundierender Geschichte" (GF 2:14). Emphasis is Pannenberg's. He refers to B. Malinowski, Myth in Primitive Psychology (1926).

¹⁷Pannenberg quotes Bultmann's phrase that myth speaks "vom Unweltlichen weltlich, von den Göttern menschlich" (GF 2:17f). The phrase is found in Bultmann's Kerygma und Mythos, Vol. 1 (Hamburg, 1948), 23.

other motives in Bultmann's use of an older and less well-defined category. Pannenberg suggests that this older category furthers Bultmann's theological agenda, which is defined by the latter's commitment to the dialectical program of radically separating the divine from mundane phenomena. For dialectical theology all mythological elements are regarded as negative because they speak of the Other in terms of the mundane.

Pannenberg is critical of this negative pre-evaluation of myth, for it shuts out from the modern world the meaning of the myths:

The stereotypical opposition, from Heyne to Bultmann, of the structure of allegedly 'mythical' ideas to the recognition of true causes, forces, and laws of nature, reveals that it concerns a counter idea to the modern conception of the world, which was grounded through [the work of] Galileo and Newton, and which today functions with the designation of 'classical' natural science. This counter idea of a mythical state of consciousness was originally certainly not to have a polemical but a hermeneutical function.¹⁸

Pannenberg wishes to make it possible to re-read the ancient myths without having the polemical pre-understanding of the dialectical theologians as a hindrance to

¹⁸"Die stereotypen Gegenüberstellungen der Struktur angeblich 'mythischer' Vorstellungen zur Erkenntnis der wahren Ursachen, Kräfte und Gesetze der Natur von Heyne bis Bultmann lassen erkennen, daß es sich hier um einen Gegenbegriff zum Weltverständnis der modernen, durch Galilei und Newton begründeten und heute als 'klassisch' bezeichneten Naturwissenschaft handelt. Dieser Gegenbegriff einer mythischen Bewußtseinsverfassung sollte allerdings ursprünglich keine polemische, sondern hermeneutische Funktion haben" (GF 2:21).

understanding the message of the myths. But beyond attempting to clear the way for a more unbiased reading of ancient myths, this represents a fundamental shift from dialectical theology's approach to the Bible. Pannenberg argues that the mythical elements of the New Testament, such as the notion of the Redeemer who descends from heaven in order to save humans, are examples of myths used in the service of accounting for historical events and their meaning (GF 2:60-65). The Heroic Redeemer myth, for example, is put to service in telling the story of an historical person, Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁹ It serves to tell that in this person the eternal Son of God became human, as well as to indicate the significance of this event. Pannenberg intends to overcome the separation of event and meaning which has characterized not only dialectical theology but also much of modern historiography.

The linear conception of history, as developed in ancient Israel, has an internal structure of meaning which takes its character from the manner in which the acts of God relate to each other.

Within a reality characterized by ever new workings of God, history emerges in that God issues promises and fulfills these promises. History is the span of events between promise and fulfillment, inasmuch as through

¹⁹"Der Mythos wurde . . . herabgesetzt zum Interpretament der Geschichte. . ." (GF 2:65).

the promise it receives an irreversible orientation toward its fulfillment.²⁰

This conception of history is later modified by Pannenberg. He recognizes that the promises of God do not always come out exactly as foretold:

Hopes are seldom fulfilled in the way in which they were originally imagined. Often they are completely disappointed. Sometimes they are surprisingly fulfilled, more or less differently than one would have expected. Nevertheless, the person who experiences such a surprising fulfillment perhaps still senses that his real hope was fulfilled beyond expectation in an unpredictable way (JGM 208).

The modification of the promise-fulfillment relationship does not change the fact that for ancient Israel and for Christians history is unrepeatable. Its events follow upon each other linearly and take place in the context of the expectancy created by the character of promise included in past acts of God (OG vii). Pannenberg refers readers to Deuteronomy 7:8f. in which the Exodus event is set in the context of promises made to the forefathers of the redeemed people. The passage is significant to Pannenberg because it also points to the deeper meaning of promise and fulfillment: these events have the ultimate goal of revealing

²⁰"Innerhalb der durch immer neues Wirken Gottes gekennzeichneten Wirklichkeit entsteht Geschichte dadurch, daß Gott Verheißungen ergehen läßt und diese Verheißungen erfüllt. Geschichte ist das zwischen Verheißung und Erfüllung hineingespannte Geschehen, indem es durch die Verheißung eine unumkehrbare Zielrichtung auf künftige Erfüllung hin erhält" (GF 1:25).

God to his people.²¹ God reveals himself as different from the powerless gods of nature. What these gods of natural realities, of moon and cycle cannot do--provide abundantly, give fertility, etc.--Jahweh is able to do.²²

But the recipients of this revelation are not only the people of Israel. The understanding of God and his actions expands to include all people. The claim that there is only one God and that the gods of Israel's neighbors are powerless creations of the human imagination has meaning beyond the borders of Israel. Ezekiel 36:36 makes it clear that "the nations . . . shall know" that Jahweh is the one who speaks and accomplishes what he has spoken. Israel's consciousness of the implications of monotheism and its experience of history becomes ever more encompassing.²³

²¹Ibid.

²²Pannenberg argues that Israel's faith did not so much develop on the basis of an original and natural knowledge of God, as on the basis of Jahweh's acts which overcame the estrangement of God from the world. Israel comes to know God "not as much through acceptance of an originally general knowledge of God in the sense of natural theology, as in the overcoming of the absence of God from the world through the acts of God in history." (Israel came to know God "weniger in der Annahme eines anfänglich-allgemeinen Wissens von Gott im Sinne natürlicher Theologie als in der Überwindung der Gottferne der Welt durch das Geschichtshandeln Gottes") (OG viii).

²³"Die Entwicklung der israelitischen Geschichtsschreibung aber ist dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Horizont des geschichtlichen Bewußtseins immer weiter, der von Verheißung und Erfüllung umspannte Verlauf immer umfassender wurde" (GF 1:25).

Apocalypticism and Messianic Expectation

On the basis of the Hebrew Bible Pannenberg defines history as "the reality of humans and their world . . . as the irreversible flow of always new events." He adds that in contrast to the modern anthropocentric notion of history, the Hebrew Bible regarded history as "the action of God in the contingency of events" and this as "constitutive for the connection and meaning of the flow of events." And most significantly for my purpose, Pannenberg further notes that in ancient Israel the concept of history did not lead to an "opposition of nature and history, as it has developed in modern western thought."²⁴ Pannenberg quotes Gerhard von Rad's remark that the "actuality of God's action" was constitutive for Israel's understanding of nature and history.²⁵ This unity of nature and history, according to Pannenberg's understanding of ancient Israel, belongs to the pre-exilic period of Israel's history. Various disasters such as the exile led to a tension between

²⁴The following are the phrases I have translated: "die Wirklichkeit des Menschen und seiner Welt . . . als unumkehrbare Abfolge je neuer Ereignisse;" "das Handeln Gottes in der Kontingenz der Ereignisse;" "konstitutiv für Zusammenhang und Sinn der Ereignisfolge;" and "Entgegensetzung von Natur und Geschichte, wie sie sich im abendländischen Denken der Neuzeit herausgebildet hat" (ST 2:86).

²⁵ST 2: 87. The quotation is from G. von Rad, "Aspekte alttestamentlichen Weltverständnisses," Evangelische Theologie 24 (1964): 65. The article is pp. 57-98. On p. 64 von Rad contrasts the concept of nature of ancient Israel with that of the modern West.

the belief in Jahweh's lordship over all reality and actual experience. This tension is finally overcome, or at least is taken into, the resurrection hope of Christian eschatology, which is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus (ST 2:87).

The tendency to a future oriented expectation of a definitive and universal acknowledging of God in exilic prophecy and the subsequent development of apocalyptic opened a universal perspective for the character and meaning of Jesus' destiny (OG vii). The notion of universal history first arose in the context of the exile and in the further post-exilic disappointments. Central to apocalyptic hopes was the expectation of the coming Kingdom of God, which includes the resurrection hope, the just judgment of the world, and the renewal of the creation. These hopes arose in the context of, at times extreme, national failure and disaster. The hopes signified an expected end of history as it is known, and in this expectation is rooted the notion of universal history (GF 1:152-153). The end includes the whole of reality, through all time and space.²⁶ The meaning and purpose of individual existence is here understood to be given in a context in which God judges the meaning of all human and natural history as one history. For it was no longer possible to conceive of jus-

²⁶Joel 2:10, for example, includes the sun, moon and stars in the events of the "Day of the Lord."

tice and peace within the confines of history and existence as available to mundane experience.

These universalized hopes received their ultimate signification through the destiny of Jesus, especially through his resurrection from the dead as the final validation of his claims regarding the nearness of the Kingdom of God. Here too, it must be noted, the fulfillment differed significantly from many people's expectations. Apocalyptic hopes for justice and peace have a strongly political orientation. The connections of the messianic expectations with the Davidic monarchy suggested a renewal of Jewish hegemony in the ancient near east. The title Messiah and its Greek translation, Christ, are closely connected with Israel's eschatological expectations (JGM 32). Jesus did not fulfill these expectations. Rather, his message made the final break between narrowly national hopes and truly universal expectations for the reign of God.

His message did this by taking the national hopes into a universal vision and transforming them in the process. Pannenberg argues that the Hebrew Bible, Jewish apocalyptic, and Jesus' message recognize the antagonism of human evil toward God, but do not admit of a dualistic conception of reality. Both Jewish and Christian faith, argues Pannenberg, are grounded in the notions of "creation and reconciliation of the world, this world in the course

of its historical time."²⁷ The easy opposition of hopes for a heavenly realm on one hand and mundane reality on the other hand do not belong either to apocalyptic or to the eschatological character of the Kingdom of God. According to Pannenberg, images such as renewal, transformation, resurrection, new creation, and new age should rather be interpreted in continuity with reality as we know it. They are certainly new and unexpected, not predictable on the basis of what we know, but they always, in Pannenberg's understanding, take the old into themselves through transformation.

Hans Dieter Betz argues to the contrary that the apocalypticist can allow history no revelatory character; the eschaton cannot signify the goal, but only the end of history. He only escapes a complete metaphysical dualism in that he understands God as the one who has the power to soon make a permanent end of the present evil aeon.²⁸

Betz grants that apocalyptic asks the question of the relationship of revelation to world history, but sees nothing but negative possibilities for the answer.²⁹ While Betz is

²⁷Pannenberg, "Response to the Discussion," in Robinson, et. al., eds., 246.

²⁸"Für den Apokalyptiker kann darum die Geschichte auch keinen Offenbarungscharakter annehmen; das Eschaton kann nicht das Ziel, sondern nur das Ende der Geschichte bedeuten. Er ist einem völligen metaphysischen Dualismus nur dadurch entgangen daß er Gott als den versteht, der dem gegenwärtigen bösen Äon bald für immer ein Ende zu setzen die Macht hat" (Betz, "Apokalyptik in der Theologie der Pannenberg-Gruppe," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche 65 (1968): 265).

²⁹Ibid., 269f.

at least partly right regarding the presence of dualism in apocalyptic thought, it should be noted that Pannenberg's conception of the inexact relationship of fulfillment to promise requires a more nuanced conception of the relationship of his theology to apocalyptic thought than Betz has allowed. The claim that Jesus' message regarding the Kingdom is the answer to the hopes of apocalypticism does not depend upon an exact correspondence of the message of Jesus to the apocalyptic hopes of ancient Judaism. Pannenberg himself points out that Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God did not conform to the expectations that had developed in Jewish apocalyptic. The question is, therefore, whether Pannenberg is correct in arguing that the both Jewish apocalyptic and the eschatological message of Jesus can be seen as developments of the Hebrew view of history. And in this Pannenberg appears to me to be justified.³⁰

³⁰Cf. Polk, On the Way to God, 151-182 for a detailed analysis of the criticism of Pannenberg's theological interpretation of Jewish apocalypticism. I agree with Polk that aspects of apocalyptic thought appear not to support or even to contradict Pannenberg's understanding of history. It is also quite true, as Polk argues, that we do not yet know enough about apocalyptic and its relationship to both the Hebrew Bible and Christian origins. However, in my judgment none of the arguments against Pannenberg's position are a threat to his admittedly Christian evaluation of the significance of Jewish apocalyptic for the rise of Christianity. Pannenberg's überlieferungsgeschichtliche perspective defines itself as a transmission which quite legitimately transforms the traditions it receives. This methodological issue appears to have been passed over by Pannenberg's critics. Polk himself points out that Pannenberg regards Jesus as significantly different than his apocalyptic predecessors (188f.).

Jesus and the Kingdom of God

God is the Loving Father

Pannenberg argues that Jesus' message of salvation comes in the context of a situation in which the people of Israel could no longer be certain of God's loving rule. The failure of the Hasmoneans was followed by a Roman hegemony which was often cruel, and was certainly not favorable to the national political aspirations of the messianic and apocalyptic hopes of the people. In addition to its seemingly obvious lack of presence in the political realm, God's rule appears to have turned against Israel. This is how Pannenberg interprets the message of judgment announced by John the Baptist. God does not look in favor upon the state of affairs in Judah. The message of the community at Qumran is also one of judgment and censorship. The temple and its priests are rejected. Pannenberg suggests that in the light of these voices it is possible to see the people of Israel as forming a community of the damned, an "Unheilskollektiv" (ST 2:366f. & 371). It is in this context that Jesus announces the gracious and loving presence of the Kingdom (Basileia) of God (Matt. 6:33). The message of judgment became the point of departure for Jesus' message of the nearness of the Kingdom of grace and love, albeit only for those who responded with complete trust in the future of God's rule (ST 2:367).

It is instructive that the gospel writers make a point of depicting Jesus bringing the gracious message of the Kingdom to the religious outcasts. Jesus shares meals with tax collectors and sinners (Luke 7:37-50; 19:2-10). Pannenberg regards this as among the most profound marks of the redeeming love of God (ST 2:372). When these are invited to share in the joy of redemption, they respond with appropriate openness and are transformed by the presence of the Kingdom.

The "extraordinary intimacy in Jesus' way of speaking about God as Father and in addressing him as Father" is regarded by Pannenberg as that part of the heart of Jesus' message and life which makes possible the later affirmation of the Christian community that Jesus is the eternal Son of God (IST 58). The heart of Jesus' message is that God is the loving Father of all creation. The intimacy and confident security which characterizes healthy and loving familial relationships is the central symbol of the intimacy of Jesus and God, which in turn is the central symbol of the message of the Kingdom.

But this message already presupposes that God is one, and that all reality is determined by him. Pannenberg contends that the message that God is our Father is a further explication of the understanding that there is only one God and that this God requires undivided devotion. The jealous love of Jahweh and the first commandment of the

Decalogue (Dt 6:4f.) are central (ST 2:370). That God is the eternal loving Father would have no meaning if this message were not about the Creator of all reality.

Pannenberg argues that Jesus sees as evidence of the nearness of the coming Kingdom that the love of God seeks to save the lost (e.g., tax collectors and sinners). Jesus connects this love with the goodness of the Creator: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). Pannenberg says of this passage: "redeeming love in the sending of Jesus for the announcement of the nearness of the Kingdom of God."³¹ Pannenberg argues further that Jesus' message began with the announcement of the nearness of the Kingdom of God. This was first of all, according to Pannenberg, a message of grace and love. But, participation in the Kingdom is dependent upon repentance (turning to God). When sinners and tax collectors, among others, do turn and receive the Kingdom and participate in its joy, then the creative love of God

nificantly different than his apocalyptic predecessors (188f.).

³¹"Zur rettenden Liebe wird diese Schöpfergüte in der Sendung Jesu zur Ankündigung der nahen Gottesherrschaft" (ST 2:371).

approaches its goal.³² It could be said, in other words, that the aim of God's love in the creation and redemption process is the creaturely joy of participation in the Kingdom of God.

The content of Jesus' message regarding the nearness of the Kingdom is the "loving and saving presence of God as it is reflected in the providence of the Creator for each of his creatures" (IST 59). The perfect realization of God's rule is future, but it is already present to those who believe (ST 2:370). Participation in this loving presence, that is, in the Kingdom itself, is open to all upon meeting its only condition: "ultimate trust" in and "exclusive concern" for God (IST 59). To those who open themselves to the message of the Kingdom--in the terms Jesus expresses in Matt. 6:3: Seek first his Kingdom--God's dominion becomes present reality (ST 2:370). They already have a share in the joy of the eschatological salvation

³²"Jesus did not teach about a participation in salvation without repentance. But his message did not begin with a demand for repentance. It began, rather, with the nearness of divine rule in the acceptance of which salvation is present and which includes repentance." ("Eine Teilhabe am Heil ohne Umkehr hat Jesus nicht gelehrt. Aber seine Botschaft begann nicht mit der Umkehrforderung, sondern mit der Nähe der Gottesherrschaft, in deren Annahme das Heil gegenwärtig ist, das die Umkehr einschließt") (ST 2:372n.22). Pannenberg argues that the point of Jesus message is the salvation of the lost ("Rettung des Verlorenen"). It is in the joy of participating in the Kingdom that the message of forgiving love finds its mark: "In dieser Freude findet die an ihr Ziel gelangte, vergebende Liebe ihren Ausdruck" (ST 2:372).

that is coming. Those who reject the Kingdom of God, and the love and justice that it intends, will be subject to the consequences of turning from participation in the life and joy of the Trinity. In other words, they become subject of the judgment of God, which falls upon all who turn from justice and love (ST 3:535-538).

This joy and salvation are portrayed in the image of an eschatological wedding feast.³³ The groom ensures that all the needs of each guest are cared for, and thus enables the guests to participate fully in his joy. Beyond this the redeemed creation comes to be portrayed as the eschatological bride of Christ. Creatures are joined to the Father through their unity with the Son. The realization of this unity is the occasion for a celebration that Jesus, and later his followers, describe in images drawn from the most joyous and personal of feasts known to them.

There is no ultimate opposition between the promised Kingdom and the natural (i.e., created) situation of humans. The message of the Kingdom is one in which peace and joy, not judgment and destruction, are the ultimate and true reality. Pannenberg rejects all supernatural dualism.

³³Pannenberg refers to Mark 2:19 and parallels: "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?" "The banquet fellowship, through participation therein, becomes an anticipation of the eschatological banquet of joy in the Kingdom of God." ("Die Gemeinschaft des Mahles wird durch seine Teilnahme zur Vorwegnahme des eschatologischen Freudenmahles im Reich Gottes") (ST 2:371).

"For a future that is only opposed to the presently existing world cannot be a 'promise' for it, but can only mean threat and destruction." This does not negate the freedom of creatures to turn finally away from, or even against, the destiny of creation. Pannenberg's point is that the world is created from and towards the eschatological Kingdom. Therefore, the Kingdom cannot be dialectically opposed to the world, as its crisis and judgment.³⁴ That the Kingdom will (and already does) purge away all sin and evil is not hereby denied (ST 3:656-659). This is part of the process of creation from the telos of participation in the love of God.

Pannenberg conceives of reality as unified. It is unified by the Creator who also redeems. There can be no final opposition between reality as we know it and the eschatological Kingdom. This is seen in the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus. History is the process of realizing the resurrection generally.³⁵ Of his own approach to

³⁴Pannenberg acknowledges the role of Barth in reintroducing the role of eschatology in theology. However, he argues that both Barth and Bultmann limited this to a metaphorical role in depicting the judgment of God against the world. He points out that when Barth turned to concentrate on divine grace (in the Church Dogmatics), the eschatology of the early work disappeared (ST 3:579 and cf. CS 90-92).

³⁵See below the section on resurrection. Also see Helmut Harder, "Continuity Between Method and Content in Contemporary Theology: The Achievement of Wolfhart Pannenberg," Toronto School of Theology, Th.D., 1971, pp. 130f. Harder argues that Pannenberg understands history as resurrection. There is no discontinuity, in other words, between the Kingdom of God (in which the general resurrec-

theology he states:

The new, eschatologically-oriented theology must liberate itself from such remnants of a reactionary supernaturalism, which are reactionary because they arise as a reaction against the problematic of the Enlightenment. Then it will perhaps be able to encounter with less prejudice talk of future, prolepsis, and totality, when presented purely phenomenally.³⁶

Pannenberg points out that the response of opening oneself to the rule of God is the response that Jesus calls for. It is a call to trust in the coming of the Kingdom. But it is also a participation in that Kingdom, for it is already present in Jesus. The message of judgment delivered by John the Baptist is preparatory for Jesus' message. Jesus makes this explicit in his encounter with the religious leaders of Jerusalem (Matt. 21:23-27). They had not listened to John the Baptist, and so neither were they ready to receive the message of grace (Matt. 11:16-24). Therefore, they must again hear the judgment that they are a community of the damned (Matt. 23). Openness to the Kingdom, to the love and grace of God, is itself dependent upon a recognition of the corruption and neediness of the human condition. The gospels depict the encounter of Jesus with the religious leaders of Israel as a conflict. Jesus is not recognized as a messenger of the

tion will be realized) and history.

³⁶Pannenberg, "Response to Discussion," in Robinson, et. al., eds., 262n72.

Kingdom. The reason for this appears to lie in the refusal of these leaders to accept the judgment of Qumran, John the Baptist, and ultimately Jesus, that their community had turned away from God. They saw no need to turn, to repent, and therefore they were able to receive neither the Messiah nor the proleptic presence of the Kingdom (JGM 61-63).

They were not prepared to perceive the significance of the special relationship of the Son and Father, as given in Jesus' life. They failed to recognize in Jesus the "unquestioning subordination" of the Son to the Father. They failed to participate in this self-effacing love. This is "a spontaneous and unbiased subordination that voluntarily arises from intimate acquaintance. . ." (IST 59). The ultimate trust and concern that are the condition of participation in the presence of the loving Creator, therefore, can be further characterized as a participation in the subordination of the Son to the Father. In this way "others before and after Jesus could and can participate in that form of relating to God as Father" (IST 60).

For Jesus this was the essence of his personal identity. It came naturally to him to relate to the Father in this way. This is not the case with other creatures. They must "turn to God from their earthly concerns and worries before they can live in that relationship" (IST 60). Does this reintroduce a dualism between the world and the Kingdom? No, for in Pannenberg's thought the Kingdom is

definitely not the Krisis of judgment. The Kingdom is not the ultimate condemnation of the world. Pannenberg does not say to turn from the world, but to turn from the worries and concerns which are focused on the world, that is, from concerns which are not based on trust in God and are not rooted in participation in the filial relationship of Jesus to the Father. It is not the world itself that one must turn from, but a wrong orientation of creatures to God and to the world that must be rejected. According to Pannenberg's way of conceiving the relationship of the Kingdom to the world to turn to the Kingdom means to turn to the (good of the) world (TKG 83f.). There is no ontological dualism between God and creation. But a creature's attitudes to God and world can falsely oppose the world and God.

The aim of Jesus' life and message is to facilitate the participation of creatures in his relationship with the Creator. This is a message of hope and love. And rather than standing in opposition to creaturely reality, it stands as the ultimate goal of creation.

Jesus' condemnation and death reflect the denial of his claim by the religious authorities. They deny and reject his message. His death, however, corresponds most deeply with the eternal self-differentiation of the Son from the Father. "The separation of the cross of Jesus from God was the utmost intensification of his self-

differentiation from the Father. In this respect Jesus' death on the cross is rightfully described as the 'essence of his earthly existence.'³⁷ Jesus sacrificed his life in the interest of the Kingdom and its proclamation. He completed his earthly life in perfect obedience to the purposes of God. This obedience is the natural expression of the Son's acknowledgment of God. It is a selfless concern not for creatures, but for the "glorification of God," and has the coming of the Kingdom as its goal. But the coming of the Kingdom of God to creatures entails the drawing near of God to creatures. Pannenberg argues that it is only in his perfect love for the Father that the Son selflessly loves and redeems creatures. It is the salvation of creatures that have turned away from the source and goal of life. "Precisely thereby is the way of the Son also the expression of God's love for humans."³⁸

The Resurrection and the End of History

The death of Jesus was the judgment of the religious rulers on his life and teaching. He was condemned as one who did not acknowledge God as God (Matt. 27:40-43).

³⁷"Die Gottesferne des Kreuzes Jesu war die äußerste Zuspitzung seiner Selbstunterscheidung vom Vater. Insofern ist der kreuzestod Jesu mit Recht als das 'Integral seiner irdischen Existenz' bezeichnet worden" (ST 2:418). The phrase is quoted from Eberhard Jüngel, Entsprechungen: Gott-Wahrheit-Mensch (1980), 283.

³⁸"Gerade dadurch ist der Weg des Sohnes auch Ausdruck der Liebe Gottes zu den Menschen" (ST 2:422).

When God raised Jesus from the dead he overruled the judgment of these rulers. Jesus' resurrection is the vindication of his life and teaching. This means, furthermore, that those who condemned Jesus are themselves guilty of not acknowledging God. Jesus, in other words, has died in their place (ST 2:417). The forgiveness and nearness of God comes to sinners through Jesus' willingness to undergo himself the punishment that is due to sinners--those who fail to acknowledge and love the Creator.

The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead is determinative in Pannenberg's theology. The resurrection of Jesus determines that Jesus is the Christ. It is the seal of divine approval on his life and teaching and especially on his death. The resurrection, in other words, is closely connected with Jesus of Nazareth. Not as an isolated event, but in intimate connection with the life, teaching, and death of Jesus, it is the foundation of the Christian faith (ST 2:385).

Resurrection (Auferstehung, Auferweckung) is a metaphor that draws on the image of waking from sleep. It depends upon the metaphorical language which speaks of death as "sleep" (ST 2:387f.). A third metaphor, "new life," refers to the qualitative transcendence of the life of the resurrected Jesus from that of normal creaturely experience. The new life is spiritual, but remains associated with a body. It is eternal and is closely connected

with the Kingdom of God. That death, resurrection, and new life are not available to the experience of the living itself implies that they are metaphorical forms of speech. This does not imply, however, that the metaphors of resurrection and new life do not refer to real events in the destiny of Jesus.

The concept of resurrection to a new and eternal life is bound up with the eschatological hopes of Jewish apocalyptic. Pannenberg argues that the apocalyptic context enabled the disciples to perceive the resurrected Jesus as resurrected. The risen Jesus had not simply been revived. The disciples were not subject to multiple group hallucinations. Nor was it an apparition that appeared to them (ST 2:390f.). On the other hand, Pannenberg points out that the resurrection of Jesus is inseparable from the anticipated ultimate and general resurrection of the dead expressed in apocalyptic hopes. This means that the resurrection of Jesus remains controversial until such an ultimate event occurs (ST 2:392f.). It also reveals the proleptic character of Jesus' life and resurrection:

The Christian Easter message agrees with the fundamentally proleptic character of the history of Jesus in that it, as the proclamation of a special event in the historical past, nonetheless always presupposes the universality of a yet future change and completion of

the reality of humans and their world.³⁹

Jesus' relationship with God, as characterized by his life and death, and his resurrection from the dead are regarded as the appearance of the end of history before history's end. As the proleptic appearance of the end of history and of the Kingdom of God, it is both the answer to the expectations of Jewish apocalyptic and the promise that the fulfillment is near.

Pannenberg maintains that the resurrection hopes of the first Christians are relevant to the hopes of modern people and that the claim that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead is believable. According to Pannenberg, the hope for resurrection, as understood in first century Jewish apocalypticism, resonates with the modern anthropological conception of human openness, which is an openness that reaches beyond the bounds of death (GF 1:222). He also holds that the structure of the proleptic character of the resurrection of Jesus finds parallels in the structure of all human relationships to the future.

Central to Pannenberg's claims is that
 "'historicity' need not signify that that which is claimed

³⁹"Dem proleptischen Grundzug der Geschichte Jesu entspricht die christliche Osterbotschaft, indem sie als Verkündigung eines besonderen Geschehens in geschichtlicher Vergangenheit doch immer schon die Allgemeinheit einer noch in der Zukunft liegenden Veränderung und Vollendung der Wirklichkeit des Menschen und seiner Welt voraussetzt" (ST 2:393).

as historical event be analogous or homogeneous with other known events."⁴⁰ The process of reality (history) is open to the appearance of new and unexpected events. Nonetheless, Pannenberg is clear that no final claim regarding the truth of the resurrection can be made until the resurrection is realized in fullness in the eschaton (ST 2:404f.).

The resurrection makes possible "a certain preliminary perception of the divine plan for history" (JGM 391). Pannenberg quotes Romans 1:3-4 as expressing the significance of the resurrection for the Christian understanding of Jesus: Jesus was "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead. . . ." Until the resurrection, argues Pannenberg, Jesus was not considered to be the anointed one of God. Pannenberg's argumentation rests on his perception of a current majority opinion that the understanding of Jesus as God incarnate arose out of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (IST 56). Pannenberg is arguing that the identification of Jesus with the eternal Son of God is to be made on the basis of the whole of his life. This whole is not available for any person until his or her death. In Jesus' case, however, the normal end of exist-

⁴⁰"'Historizität' muß nicht bedeuten, daß das als historisch Behauptete analog oder gleichartig mit sonst bekanntem Geschehen sei" (ST 2:403 and "Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte," in GF 1: 49ff.).

ence, death, is surpassed, is transcended. Jesus is resurrected from the dead.

This event, the post-Easter appearances, and the ascension combine to put the life and death of Jesus in a perspective, in a Sinnganzheit (meaning-whole), that totally transforms what is known about Jesus, but also what is known of the world. Particularly in the case of Jesus, his entire life, from conception to death is reinterpreted by the disciples in the light of the resurrection and the events that followed (ST 2:341-344, 352-354). The whole of Jesus' life comes to be understood as the appearance of the eternal Son of God in the history of Israel. Later experience pushes the early church to acknowledge that the meaning of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension goes far beyond the boundaries of any one people. The entire world and all its peoples are included in what is understood as nothing less than a "new creation." Pannenberg reinterprets this in the context of a process understanding of creation. The "new creation" here signifies the appearance of the ultimate goal of the process of creation, and all reality is reinterpreted in this light. After the resurrection of Jesus it becomes possible to perceive that the goal of creation is the unity of creation, in this newly understood and achieved form, with the Creator. No longer is death the final word on any individ-

ual's existence. No longer is it possible to ignore the dependence on and unity with God.

That the resurrection of Jesus is an event in our history, in the history of this world, forces a revision of the conception of reality. Pannenberg states that this has been and should remain foundational to Christian thinking (1 Cor 15:17) (OG xiv). The fact of the resurrection and the promise it holds for all creatures means that participation in the unity of all reality with the Creator is not an empty unity. It is here and now a participation in the eternal life beyond death which is the destiny of the creation (IST 61).

The idea of resurrection values the individual in the face of his or her questionableness. Evil, suffering, and death negate the individual and radically call into question the value of individual existence. They call into question the power and/or goodness of God. Pannenberg maintains that the resurrection to new and eternal life is the ultimate and incontrovertible answer to the problem of theodicy (ST 2:389). He argues that only a resurrection to new life can fully address the value of the individual, and can promise to make good the wrongs endured.

The revelation of the image of God in the person of Jesus Christ--for Pannenberg this is focused especially in Jesus' resurrection from the dead--does more than affirm the unassailable value of each individual. As in the doc-

trine of creation, Christology brings to light the ultimate unity of all reality (universal history). God is the one Other, who is the sole source and end of history, and each individual is embraced by the love of God. The resurrection is God's eternal valuation of individual persons, but it is also the ultimate realization of the image of God in human life. It is life fulfilled:

This eternal affirmation of the individual existence of creatures in eschatology appears as the completion of the divine creative will. And the characteristically Christian idea that God searches with everlasting love for each individual of his creatures also stands in close relationship to the affirmation of the finite existence of creatures beyond death and in all eternity, as is characteristic for Christian eschatology.⁴¹

The resurrection of Christ is a divine affirmation of the eternal value of individual human existence, and ultimately, it is an anticipation of the goal of creaturely existence, of the eschatological fulfillment of creaturely being. The destiny of the creation is most fully expressed in the resurrection of Jesus. Creation is proleptically completed in Jesus' resurrection (JGM 205f. & 206n13). This destiny can be spoken of as the specific destiny of

⁴¹"Diese ewige Bejahung des individuellen Daseins der Geschöpfe in der Eschatologie erscheint als die Vollendung des göttlichen Schöpfungswillens, und auch der eigentümlich christliche Gedanke, daß Gott jedes einzelne seiner Geschöpfe . . . mit ewiger Liebe sucht, steht in enger Verbindung zur Bejahung des endlichen Daseins der Geschöpfe über den Tod hinaus und in alle Ewigkeit, wie sie für die christliche Eschatologie charakteristisch ist" (MG 49).

humans, and even of individuals. However, as will be argued below, it is not human destiny apart from the rest of the creation. It is the destiny of all creation, and when this destiny is attributed especially to humans it is intended as a representative determination.

The specific, concrete, and personal nature of this hope, however, opens it to various historical distortions. Lest this concept be mistaken for the justification of individualistic anthropocentrism, as in modern western style, it must be added that resurrection is a fundamentally social concept (Romans 8:29). It is a metaphor that is embedded in the notion of the Kingdom of God (Rev. 21:22-22:5). The Kingdom is itself a metaphor that points to a new creation, a world of creatures united in an eternal covenant of love with God and with each other (cf. Is. 11:1-10). The concepts of justice and righteousness are fundamental to this eschatological hope (cf. Enoch 1:1-9). And these are fundamentally social concepts that depend upon both the "old" covenant and the eschatological hopes of the Jewish community. The significance of the "neighbor" in the context of the love of God expresses the social character of the Kingdom.

The resurrection does not imply a special mystical view of reality. As the self-revelation of God in history

it has universal character (OG 98f.). But is there not a mysterious aspect, a hiddenness to the activity of God in history? Has Pannenberg taken seriously the obscure and humiliating death of Christ, the "stumbling block" character of this revelation? Indeed, Pannenberg acknowledges that the cross radically questioned the claims of Jesus, but he points out that the resurrection vindicated these claims. He argues that individual events taken in their true context--history--speak in the language of historical facts, and taken together they speak of God. That many are blind to this does not mean that reason is not capable of understanding revelation or that something supernatural must be added to reason, but rather that people must be brought to reason (OG 100). The way to bring people to reason is to present the Christian claim to truth in its historical context and to interpret it in the context of modern perceptions of reality. In other words, the Christian claims are treated as hypotheses that need to be tested for their truth.⁴² Pannenberg does not regard these claims as absolutely true. He admits that the truth will ultimately be known only when history has reached its goal. In this sense the truth remains hidden until the whole is available to all.

⁴²Regarding Pannenberg's tests of truth see the subsection "Whole and Part" in the previous chapter.

Prolepsis and the Determining Power of the Future

Both in creating the world and in sending the Son as the divine representative, God, the eternally loving Parent, becomes the one who is absent. The Creator is not present in the world. Pannenberg points out that this contributes to the "feeling of life in secular culture."⁴³ This absence of God is experienced as the truth of the judgment of death. And death is the inescapable end of all creatures that emancipate themselves from God in order to be independent. On the other hand, says Pannenberg, the death of sinners also represents the powerlessness of God. For God intends the life and well-being of creatures. It is in this context that the presence of the Kingdom in the destiny of Jesus of Nazareth represents the power and love of God (ST 2:435f.).

But this power and love, or at least their ultimate realization in the Kingdom, remain questionable. At best they are the objects of Christian hope and expectation, which at the same time exercise transforming power in the lives of individuals and communities of believers. Pannenberg also regards the future realization of the Kingdom as the future of God. God is in the process of realizing his kingship. On the other hand, however, God is in eternity Father and King. God will become what he has always been.

⁴³The absence of God "gehört nicht zufällig zum Lebensgefühl der säkularen Kultur" (ST 2:435).

Pannenberg affirms both that God has always been what he is and will be, and that God is becoming King (ST 2:437f.). From the point of view of the economic Trinity God is becoming the Lord and Father that he always has been in the immanent Trinity.⁴⁴ And in this process the whole creation is drawn into the inner-Trinitarian love. It is a process that, having determined the independent existence of creatures, continues to work towards the realization of that determination.

Human sin, the refusal to acknowledge God as God, frustrates this realization, for in not acknowledging God creatures are subject to death. The independence of the creature is only possible inasmuch as its dependence upon God is recognized. In other words, apart from the source of its life the creature must die. But God sends the Son in creaturely form to overcome this sinful separation and death. Participation in the obedience of the Son implies participation in the resurrection of the Son. The individual creature's realization of this participation remains essentially future, although its impact can be experienced in present reality--through trust.

The Kingdom of God is already present in history through Jesus' resurrection, and determines history towards

⁴⁴Cf. OG 97. There Pannenberg states that God has a history--the history of his becoming the one God of all people. Cf. also "Probleme einer trinitarischen Gotteslehre," 333.

the complete appearance of the Kingdom in history. This appearance also provides rational insight regarding the source, character, goal, and truth of history. This is so because it is an anticipation of the whole of reality, of reality from the point of view of its completion. It is an anticipation of the unity which encompasses all the oppositions and pluralities within history.

Jesus' resurrection is understood by Pannenberg to represent the unsurpassable revelation of the ultimate end of reality. It is the presence within history of the end of history. There is only a quantitative, no longer a qualitative, difference between the anticipation of the end represented in Jesus' resurrection and the ultimate appearance of the Kingdom of God (GF 1:155f.).

Furthermore, the proleptic appearance of the end of history has a causal function in the process of history towards its ultimate goal. The ultimate unity of history in God and the ultimate realization of the image of God in humans is a future reality. But, according to Pannenberg's metaphysics it is already operative within unfinished history. The future reaches into history to draw history towards itself as history's goal. Pannenberg uses the idea of causality to describe this action of the future on all present moments of history. "If the future is the source of the possible wholeness of existence [das Dasein], that means that its essence, and thus its being what it is

(Wassein), is determined by its future."⁴⁵ All being is determined by the possibility of its wholeness, which is future. The future of each creature, as revealed in the resurrection of Jesus, already determines what it is in nature and essence within the historical process towards the ultimate perfection of its Being.

The nearness of the coming Kingdom means, for Panenberg, the proleptic presence of the Kingdom. He claims that this is different from other attempts to deal with a supposed contradiction between the presence of the Kingdom in Jesus and the fact that it is announced by Jesus as yet to come (ST 2:371). The Kingdom of God breaks into the present from the future. The message is grounded in the unity of God and in his exclusive claim on the present life of the creature (ST 2:370). The future Kingdom of God is the one God's perfect rule over all creation. All competing considerations for loyalty and power are excluded by God's future rule. Creatures who already acknowledge God now participate in the unity of this future rule; they participate in the exclusion of all competing powers. In this sense the future is present to them now (ST 3:573).

Participation in the rule of God is made possible by Jesus through forgiveness of sin, that is, through the

⁴⁵"Wenn die Zukunft der Ursprung möglicher Ganzheit des Daseins ist, dann heißt es, daß sein Wesen und also sein Wassein durch seine Zukunft bestimmt wird" (MG 63).

overcoming of the separation of humans from God.⁴⁶ "Individuals are caught up and snatched away in the process of their history; but Jesus, in bringing close to them the meaning that is tied up with their wholeness, discloses to them their salvation within a history that is not yet complete."⁴⁷ The wholeness of individuals is only available at the end of all history, in the context of the wholeness of all reality. But Jesus reveals that God is the "unifying unity" who is now already overcoming all evil with the unifying power of the love of the Son for the Father through the power of the Spirit (see GC 240f.).

Pannenberg points out that there is no dualism of future and present reality in this understanding of the relationship of God to world. The future is an immanent reality. It has appeared in the message of Jesus. It is a motivational drive to reach out, at social and individual levels, toward the wholeness of the Kingdom. It stands as the relativization of all historical realizations of utopian social orders. Pannenberg argues that the eschatological nature of the Kingdom becomes the new foun-

⁴⁶"It cannot be doubtful, however, that the presence of the rule of God and participation in its salvation includes universal forgiveness of sin--the overcoming of everything that separates humans from God." ("Daß aber die Gegenwart der Gottesherrschaft und die Teilhabe an ihrem Heil ganz allgemein Vergebung der Sünden, Überwindung alles den Menschen von Gott Trennenden einschließt, kann nicht zweifelhaft sein.") (ST 2:372).

⁴⁷"Theology and Science," 381.

dation for the law of God (ST 2:372). The message of the Kingdom is fundamentally moral. Jesus calls humans into an ethical community of love whose aim is to live "that form of life which is appropriate to the impending Lordship of God" (JGM 194). This community includes both human and non-human worlds (GF 1:155). Although Pannenberg does not point it out, the argument implies that the coming Kingdom should also provide motivation for humans to live in a just relationship with the non-human world, and should provide a standard of judgment upon all historical realizations of justice in these relationships.

The proleptic appearance of the ultimate destination of humans makes that destination concrete within the still unfinished and universal history of the world. Eschatological hopes are not incidentally related to the question of the meaning of human existence. In a world in which human existence is best seen as a striving to achieve its purpose, a realistic hope for the achievement of this purpose is central. Within an understanding of reality that is determined by the notion of God and of creation as a still unfinished process, the goal of the process must also play a fundamental role and must also be determined by God: and so it does in the eschatological nature of Jesus' message and destiny (GF 1:154).

From the history of Jesus can be gained an answer to the question, how 'the whole' of reality and its meaning can be thought, regardless of the provisionality

and historical relativity of all thought, as well as the openness to the future of all thinking--which knows itself to be still on the way and not at the goal.⁴⁸

The question is that of the historical relativism in which modern philosophical, theological, and ethical thought have found themselves, and appear to remain bound to this day. Pannenberg's answer to the problem is taken from the proleptic presence of the Kingdom. In a manner similar to the Kingdom, the ultimate truth regarding the nature of reality is only available at the end of history. But the truth, along with the Kingdom, is already present in our systematic and historical anticipations. On the basis of such anticipations it is possible to know what our moral obligations are as humans.

The task of theology is not only to deal with God and eternity, but also with this-worldly things. The incarnation is the expression of the relationship of the physical creation to the Creator. The Apostle Paul wrote that in Jesus "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge " (Colossians 2:3). According to Pannenberg, Augustine understood wisdom to refer to transcendent matters, what some would label metaphysics, and knowledge to

⁴⁸"An der Geschichte Jesu ließe sich eine Antwort gewinnen auf die Frage, wie »das Ganze« der Wirklichkeit und ihrer Bedeutung gedacht werden kann unbeschadet der Vorläufigkeit und geschichtlichen Relativität alles Denkens, sowie der Offenheit der Zukunft für den Denkenden, der sich erst auf dem Wege und noch nicht am Ziele weiß" (GF 1:158).

refer to mundane realities, to the sciences generally (WT 14). Jesus encompasses all realms. Not only is the opposition of history and matter overcome but so also the opposition of the eternal Creator and the time-bound material universe. Dualism is not an option for anyone who takes the incarnation seriously. It would be false, however, to think that the unity of divine and creaturely reality means uniformity. The divine and human realms are separate and Pannenberg continues to understand each in distinction from the other, but still within the overall unity of the Creator and the Redeemer (WT 15).

The Unity of Creation and Redemption

The Image of God in Creation

An aspect of Pannenberg's Christology that is very significant for this dissertation is his expansion of the concept of the second person of the Trinity to include the entire creation. I have already pointed out that Pannenberg understands the fact of creation to be rooted in the self-differentiation of the eternal Son from the Father. In the context of Christology the relationship of the creation to the Son is further elaborated.

The Son of God is still considered the second person of the Trinity, but while the Son became incarnate only in Jesus of Nazareth, he is conceived at the same time as being at work in the whole creation and especially in the life of human beings created in the image of God (IST 65).

Pannenberg draws this conclusion on the basis of the Bible's connection of the act of creation with the Son, the creation of humans in the image of God, as well as the foreshadowing of the incarnate Son in both the Davidic king and in the people of the covenant (IST 65f.). The ideas of creation and redemption together give expression to the unified nature of the process of reality towards the realization of the incarnation of the eternal Son. "The incarnation of the Son is now seen as the completion of the creation of humanity in the image of God" (IST 66). It is the Trinitarian focus of Pannenberg's theology that has unified the notions of creation and incarnation, and has simultaneously given expression to the unity of all reality in the Creator God, as revealed in the incarnate Son (IST 67 & OG xi).

It is significant to note that all reality is grounded in the nature of the relationship of the Father and the Son. Humans can be differentiated by degree from other creatures. But they are fundamentally different neither in nature nor in ultimate destiny. The same can be said of Jesus as the incarnation of the eternal Son. In Jesus the relationship of Son and Father is realized fully. But this is not an isolated occurrence. The incarnation is intended to draw all creatures into the fullness of this divine love (ST 2:433). In Jesus the unity of creature and the Creator are realized. In Jesus God has drawn near to

the world. Thus the incarnation is understood by Pannenberg as an essential act in the process of creating a world of creatures who are together determined to participate in the Kingdom of God.⁴⁹

It is the destiny of all creation that in the relationship of the creatures to God the eternal Son becomes manifest. That means that the creatures accept themselves in their finite existence as different from God and in voluntary subordination to him. In an explicit form, this can occur only in the human creature, because it is a peculiarly human ability to discern oneself from anything else and everything in its finite particularities from the infinite God. But in accepting themselves and anything finite in distinction from the infinite God and therefore in subordination to him, human beings do not only realize their particularly human destiny, but they also act in the place of every creature (IST 61).

This means that Pannenberg understands humans as fundamentally determined to differentiate themselves from the Father. The everyday human action of distinguishing oneself from others is here seen as a form of the self-differentiation of the Son from the Father. And the goal of all creaturely existence is to realize, or to make manifest, this humble self-differentiation of the Son. The unity of all reality becomes manifest in this conception of the message and destiny of Jesus. In Jesus' subordination to God is found the unity of all creatures with each other

⁴⁹Stanley Grenz, Reason for Hope, 114, sees the significance of the incarnation to be relevant only for understanding human nature. I here argue that while Pannenberg's focus is clearly on humanity, he gives explicit indication that his intention is to include all reality in the determination towards the realization of the incarnation of the image of God.

and with the Creator. The reflections of Romans 1:18-32 appear to form part of the context for Pannenberg's thinking here. Especially vss. 21, 25, & 28, which state that the central problem of human existence is the refusal to "honor," "serve," and "acknowledge" God, seem to inform Pannenberg's interpretation of the fundamental character of Jesus' relationship to the Father, as well as the fundamental problem of human existence.

Just as the self-differentiation of the Son from the Father is regarded by Pannenberg as the ground of the possibility of the creation of independent creatures, so this self-differentiation is the ground of the appearance of the Son within history as a creature (ST 2:360).

This self-differentiation of the eternal Son from the Father is understandable as the ground of all creaturely existence in its otherness from God and, thus, also as the ground of the human existence of Jesus, which in its life-process adequately embodies the self-divestment of the Son in service of the lordship of the Father.⁵⁰

It is in Jesus' complete subjection of himself, in all his acts, to the Father that Jesus acknowledges and honors the Father as God. This is the mark of the divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth (ST 2:406f.). But it is the confirmation

⁵⁰"Diese Selbstunterscheidung des ewigen Sohnes vom Vater läßt sich als Grund alles geschöpflichen Daseins in seiner Andersheit gegenüber Gott und so auch als Grund der menschlichen Existenz Jesu verstehen, die in ihrer eigenen Lebensbewegung die Selbstentäußerung des Sohnes im Dienst an der Herrschaft des Vaters adäquat verkörpert" (ST 2:420).

of this Sonship by God himself through the resurrection of Jesus that makes it possible for the disciples and all Christians thereafter to recognize Jesus as the Son (ST 2:408f.).

The other side of this conception of the relationship of Jesus and the eternal Son is that theologically it is not possible to discuss the eternal and preexistent Son in isolation from Jesus of Nazareth (ST 2:411). It is in Jesus of Nazareth that the eternal Son has been revealed in the creation. Jesus reveals the humble self-differentiation of the Son from the Father, and the connection of this self-differentiation with the independent existence of creatures. He reveals the honor and perfect obedience that the Son gives the Father as God. He reveals that the heart of the relationship of the Son to the Father is in self-giving love. It is the perfection of this love that is the foundation of both the creation of the world and of its redemption, and is the unity of creation and redemption.

In other words, apart from the realization of God's perfect rule in the world, which is mediated through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, God cannot truly be named Creator (ST 2:434 & 3:583). God has determined that the divine rule (Basileia) be realized in the world through the Son. To Pannenberg this means that the godhood of the Father

depends upon the success of the Son: "The rejection the Son experiences also places in question the kingship of the Father."⁵¹

Pannenberg uses the idea of the Logos (from John 1:3) to talk about the structural and generative character of the Son's part in the creation of the world. The Logos is defined by Pannenberg as the generative principle within the self-differentiation of the eternal Son from the Father. It is the generative principle of all finite reality. It is the principle which generates "ever new forms of others."⁵² At the same time the Logos is the generative principle of relationships between everything finite as well as between these and their eternal source (ST 2:80). Because the Logos is at the same time the logos ensarkos (Jesus Christ) and the logos asarkos (the eternal Son), it is the concrete ordering of the world (ST 2:81). This means that each creature has its being and structure or form (logos) through the creative work of the Son's love. In other words, the unity of each creature with all other creatures and with the Trinity is neither external to its existence nor is it anything other than a received unity.

⁵¹"Die Ablehnung, die dem Sohn widerfährt, stellt auch das Königtum des Vaters in Frage" (ST 2:435).

⁵²The Logos is the principle which generates "immer wieder neuer Formen des anderen, die anders sind gegenüber allem Bisherigem" (ST 2:80).

The unity of creation and redemption, as well as the ultimate fulfillment of the process of history, is based on the unity of the Trinitarian persons. Ultimately God is one, and all three persons of the Trinity participate in the three aspects of the creative process.⁵³ The inner-Trinitarian unity, according to Pannenberg, is discovered through an examination of the qualities of God, especially those qualities which all three Persons of the Trinity share. "In the identity of these attributes the God who acts in creation, redemption and fulfillment will be recognizable as [one and the] same."⁵⁴ Pannenberg argues that love is the one quality which lies at the root of all the divine attributes (eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, wisdom, justice holiness, and mercy). Love, furthermore, is not merely a divine attribute, but is identical with the divine essence. "Thus the sentence 'God is love' is to be understood as the summary expression of the Trinitarian communion of Father, Son and Spirit."⁵⁵

⁵³Pannenberg, "Probleme einer trinitarischen Gotteslehre," 339.

⁵⁴"An der Identität dieser Eigenschaften wird der in Schöpfung, Versöhnung und Vollendung handelnde Gott als derselbe erkennbar" (Ibid.).

⁵⁵"So ist der Satz »Gott ist Liebe« als zusammenfassender Ausdruck der trinitarischen Gemeinschaft von Vater, Sohn und Geist zu verstehen" (Ibid., 341 & cf. 339-341).

When Pannenberg argues that history is the self-revelation of God, he means that it is the process aimed at the incarnation of the eternal Son. He means that all creation is the process toward the unity of creature with Creator. The appearance of the Son in the person of Jesus of Nazareth is the proleptic realization of this goal. As such it reveals the ultimate unity which is the goal of creation (cf. OG xiif.). It is the prior relationship of God, as well as each individual, to the whole of reality that makes it possible to speak of a manifestation of the one almighty and triune God in the context of such individual events.⁵⁶

The Significance of Humans

History is the process that gives opportunity to overcome the conflicts that result from the tendency of creatures to attempt to gain independence (ST 2:83). Jesus Christ is the goal of creation because in him the communion of creature and Creator were realized. This is so because in Jesus the second person of the Trinity appeared in the form of a human being. This means that humans can be regarded as the goal of creation. In other words, the entire history of the universe can be regarded as preparation for the appearance of humans.

⁵⁶OG xiiif. Also see the section "Whole and Part" in the chapter above.

I have already pointed out that Pannenberg regards the anthropic principle as showing significant coherence with this Judeo-Christian view of humans.⁵⁷ The idea that the eventual discovery of other intelligent life in the universe would threaten the centrality of the incarnation of the Son in Jesus is discounted by Pannenberg. He observes that such a possibility is vague and speculative, and that the Bible itself speaks of other intelligent life besides humans. Some of these require no salvation (angels) and others cannot be saved (fallen angels). He argues that there is no ground here for questioning the Christian understanding that "in Jesus of Nazareth the Logos which is interwoven throughout the whole universe has become human and therein a crucial function for the unity and meaning of the entire creation has passed to humanity and its history."⁵⁸

Pannenberg does differentiate between humans and the rest of creation, but he does so only in the context of a vision of unity and wholeness. The entire creation is included in the redemptive work of the Second person of the Trinity, just as it was included in the creative work of

⁵⁷Chapter 1 above & cf. ST 2:93f.

⁵⁸The German text follows: "in Jesus von Nazareth der das ganze Universum durchwirkende Logos Mensch geworden und dadurch der Menschheit und ihrer Geschichte eine Schlüsselfunktion für Einheit und Bestimmung der gesamten Schöpfung zugefallen ist" (ST 2:96).

the Father. The incarnation of the Son as a human is determinative for the meaning and end of the entire creation. In both creation and redemption humans are given a central function, but that function is in both instances directed toward the good of the entire creation.⁵⁹

The Problem of Evil

Does Pannenberg's theology account for the possibility of the final defeat of God's love in persons such as Stalin and Hitler, but also in more ordinary persons who turn their backs to goodness and love, who fail to trust God and rely instead on their self-interested manipulations of created reality to stave off personal emptiness and death?⁶⁰ Pannenberg's arguments regarding the unity of reality under God attempt to make sense of the world in a manner that overcomes ontological dualism, at least. However, the consideration of radical evil seems to raise again the possibility of a dualist opposition of evil and God. Certainly, in Pannenberg's conception of reality,

⁵⁹See Harder and Stevenson, "Continuity of History and Faith," 47. They agree that Pannenberg regards humans as instrumental to the divine plan for the entire creation.

⁶⁰Polk in On the Way to God, 219-224 & 293, argues that Pannenberg's conception of the ultimate unity of reality in the Kingdom of God includes evil. In other words, the most horrible criminals are thought to be united in and through God with their victims. My interpretation of Pannenberg does not come to this conclusion. I am in agreement with Stanley Grenz's conclusion (Reason for Hope 200f.).

dualism is overcome at the ultimate level, and at the end of history. But radical evil works in opposition to the creative process which supposedly leads to the Kingdom of God. It appears to me that evil, at this level, is to be connected with a kind of dualism.

There are two dangers to be avoided here. One is to regard this dualism as ultimate. To regard evil as infinite is wrong. Good versus evil (God versus the devil) is not the final truth regarding reality. The subordination of Jesus to the Father and the resurrection of Jesus show, proleptically, that this dualism is not ultimate. Pannenberg is correct in arguing that in the Christian tradition the ideas of creation, incarnation, and resurrection are the answers to the question regarding the challenge of evil to God's kingship. Reality is ultimately created by God for communion with him. The incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of the eternal Son in the person of Jesus of Nazareth serves to overcome the opposition of sin and evil to God's intentions for creation. However, not until the resurrection is generally realized in all creation will the answer to evil be definitively given.

The second danger is to ignore the reality of evil's radical character. Evil and sin are indeed opposed to the Kingdom. And Pannenberg does acknowledge that sin and death are opposed to the intention of God. To ignore

this opposition would not do justice to reality as we know it. If the Kingdom is not opposed to the corruption and destruction of reality then the Kingdom cannot be of God. Perhaps the dialectical "NO!" of God to the human "no" to life does reveal some truth about the radical neediness of the human situation. Evil must be opposed, and cannot be taken into the ultimate synthesis that the Kingdom of God is.

Pannenberg acknowledges that the problem of existence is not only its finitude. Sin is not merely a result of the anxiety of death. Sin is the turning of a self away from the divine source of its existence (ST 2:304-314). Radical evil seeks its pleasure and good, if the terms can so be used, in the suffering, pain, and destruction of creatures and in the thwarting of God's goal, quite apart from pragmatic considerations of the one doing the evil.

E. Frank Tupper suggests that Pannenberg has not taken seriously enough the implications of radical evil. He states that "Pannenberg's theology all too frequently reflects an unqualified optimism that lends credibility to the charges of Christianized idealism of historical monism."⁶¹ Does the emphasis on the unity of all reality in God, when emphasized as thoroughly as Pannenberg does, allow one to take evil seriously, in its radical destruc-

⁶¹Tupper, The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, 301.

tiveness? My concern is specifically with Pannenberg's understanding of the relationship of the Kingdom to the world as we experience it.

In his "Postscript" to Tupper's book, Pannenberg points out that he has indeed taken evil seriously.⁶² Pannenberg points to his anthropological study What is Man? To this can be added the later major monograph on anthropology and the appropriate sections of the Systematische Theologie.⁶³ He points out specifically that he has identified sin as inescapably belonging to the self-centered character of human existence, and admits that he feared he would be charged with Flacianism (identifying sin with human nature).⁶⁴ He further points out that he has defined freedom as a gift, not as self-constituted, and that this view of human nature has had a practical result in his reservations about the potential for political systems to overcome evil. Perhaps the best way to approach this problem, then, is to ask how Pannenberg connects his concept of the whole with his view of human sinfulness. I

⁶²Pannenberg, "Postscript," in Tupper, The Theology of Pannenberg, 304.

⁶³The relevant texts are as follows: WM 40-49; ATP 80-153 & 265-312; ST 2:266-314.

⁶⁴Cf. Pannenberg's "Probleme einer trinitarischen Gotteslehre," 338. Here Pannenberg, in connecting sin with the self-differentiation of creatures from God, is very close to identifying sin with the possibility of independent creaturely existence (Cf. also ST 2:288f. & 296-303).

will return to these matters in the next chapter, where I take up Pannenberg's anthropology.

The evil of an Antiochus, or of a Hitler, is turned by God to the ultimate good of his people--but not to the good of the oppressor. Entailed in the death of Jesus is a message of ultimate condemnation and separation from God of those who hate him and oppress his creatures. It is central to the message of the cross that Jesus has borne the condemnation that falls upon those who fail to acknowledge God. Does Jesus' death also atone for those who not only fail to acknowledge God, but who hate him? It remains true that he has borne the condemnation of those who receive the grace of the cross. But there remains the possibility of continued rejection of God's love. And the life of a Hitler personifies such rejection, but more than that it also represents a radical hatred of both God and creation.

My reflections lead me to the conclusion that within Pannenberg's understanding of the overall unity of God's economy, there remains the freedom of creatures not only to turn from God, but to turn radically against him. The exercise of this freedom introduces oppositions between creatures, among which is the opposition of humans to the natural world. The very possibility of speaking of history and nature in opposition to each other, as a dualism, is rooted in the refusal of humans to acknowledge God. The implications of acknowledging God have already been

explained in the previous chapter. What these reflections add to that account is that the experienced duality of history and nature, of spirit and matter, is real. I do not see Pannenberg denying this argument, but he does not make it explicit in his theology.

However, this duality is no more than the implication of evil within the context of God's unifying love. This duality presupposes the more fundamental unity of creation with its Creator. The power of the eschatological hope is that all such oppositions are regarded as overcome by God. Evil will be annihilated. Only the justified will participate in the ultimate Kingdom. But those who turn to the Kingdom of God are called to practice its love and unity within history. If the Kingdom is the determining power of the future, then it must show itself, albeit in provisional form, in the life of the community that joyfully anticipates the Kingdom (ST 3:204, 573 & 583).

Through the fate of Jesus, his death and resurrection, the Kingdom of God appears in history and is present for each creature. Its presence enables persons to open themselves to the future and to transcend their own self-centeredness. In this way the Kingdom comes to them with forgiveness of sin and opens the imaginations of self-centered individuals to others, through the creative power of God's love. In other words, the power of the Kingdom is the manifestation in Jesus of the future perfection of

love's rule of the universe. Openness to this future is based on trust in the power of God as revealed in the resurrection and hence, justification of, Jesus.

Redeeming Love

Pannenberg finds in the connection of God's creative goodness and redemptive love, the grounding of the two-fold motion of love (ST 2:372-374).

Whoever opens him or herself to the call into God's Kingdom, whoever focuses [his or her life] completely on its nearness, and therein receives the presence of salvation, must allow him or herself to be drawn into the motion of God's love, which is directed beyond the receiving individual to the world. It is only possible to have communion with God and his Kingdom in that one participates in the motion of his love.⁶⁵

Participation in God's Kingdom means participation in his love and this means love for God as well as love for the entire creation. Love of God and love of world are united. The Kingdom of God is the destiny of the entire creation. Although Pannenberg focuses on human creatures, he does include all creation in his conception of the creative, redemptive and fulfilling activity of the Trinity. In my understanding of Pannenberg's theology, this is true even if he does not always make it explicit. The love of the

⁶⁵"Wer sich dem Ruf in die Gottesherrschaft öffnet, sich ganz auf ihre Nähe einstellt und darin die Gegenwart des Heils empfängt, der muß sich auch selber hineinziehen lassen in die Bewegung der Liebe Gottes, die über den einzelnen Empfänger hinaus auf die Welt gerichtet ist. Man kann mit Gott und seiner Herrschaft nur so Gemeinschaft haben, daß man an der Bewegung seiner Liebe teilnimmt" (ST 2:372f.).

if he does not always make it explicit. The love of the Kingdom, in my interpretation of Pannenberg, does not allow for human disregard of the non-human members of the world.

Pannenberg argues that the connection of the love of God and the love of others is given concrete expression in the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. 18:22-35), which teaches the necessity of forgiving others in order that one receives forgiveness of one's own sin. And, as stated above, love of one's enemies is connected with the goodness of the Creator (Matt. 5:45f. & ST 2:373).

Pannenberg argues that while there is an important agreement between Jesus and the Jewish leaders regarding the summation of the law in the double command of love (love God and love your neighbor), in Jesus' teaching this double command is not merely the law's summation. To the rabbinic interpreters this command continues to presuppose the authority of the entire legal tradition of Israel. But in Jesus' teaching this command stands independently over against the tradition as its critical principle.

It is decisive that the authority of the tradition no longer functions as measure (Kriterium), because Jesus, in his eschatological message and in the revelation of God's love in the dawning of his Kingdom, has found a new basis for the interpretation of the law of God.⁶⁶

⁶⁶"Entscheidend ist, daß als Kriterium nicht mehr die Autorität der Tradition fungiert, weil Jesus in seiner eschatologischen Botschaft mit der Offenbarung der Liebe Gottes im Anbruch seiner Herrschaft eine neue Basis für die Interpretation des Gottesrechts gefunden hat" (ST 2:374).

Jesus himself is the mediator of the dawning of the ultimate reign of God, and he announces that forgiving love is the basic truth of this future reign. Pannenberg argues that this provides the theological foundation of ethics. For Pannenberg ethics is grounded on the basis of "the claim of the future of God on people, and from its dawn in Jesus' . . ." appearance (ST 3:73).

"In him it has become manifest how the creature can relate to the eternal God in such a way as to enjoy communion with him in eternity, beyond this earthly life, but already in each present moment" (IST 55). In the context of the concept of the two aspects of love this can only mean that communion with God can already be enjoyed through a total trust in the love of God. According to Pannenberg, the double command of love is not actually a law. It is the motion of the love of the Father and the Son for each other. This love is the active power of the Spirit of God, at work in creaturely life (ST 3:87). Love is not a law that is external or opposed to human reason. Love is the destiny from which reasonable creatures have their existence (ST 3:104-113). According to Pannenberg love is the redemptive power which frees humans and enables them to love God and world.

In participating in the love of God, one's love is also directed to one's neighbors and enemies. Love takes the concrete form of forgiving both neighbors and enemies,

and seeking their good. Love is creative solidarity. It "contributes to individual and social integration, unity, and peace" (TKG 118). Love contributes to the freedom of the loved. It does not establish or entrench dependencies, but overlooks vast social and personal differences to progress toward the realization of the fundamental creaturely equality of persons (TKG 118-121). In other words, those who are less "equal" in practice are given opportunities to improve their lot.

Unlike law, the "imagination of love is capable of creating new codes of conduct" that reflect the needs of the situations that have come to prevail (ST 3:91). Laws are specific to concrete situations, and as cultures and needs change laws must be renewed. Pannenberg argues that the imaginative power of love, which is best understood as the heart of the future Kingdom of God, is the most fundamental creative source for both the formation of just laws and their renewal (ST 3:89-93 & 108-111). Furthermore, according to Pannenberg, the future of love (i.e., the Kingdom of God) also grounds the notions of justice, equality, and freedom, which are intermediary concepts between love and law. Justice, equality, and freedom are not regarded by Pannenberg as fundamental anthropological notions. He argues that in history humans are neither equal nor free, but that they are destined by love for both freedom and equality (ST 3:89f.).

"Love is a power that goes forth from God. It is not primarily an act of humans. But it grips humans in a manner that allows them to become active."⁶⁷ According to Pannenberg human love that is not concerned for the self is a gift that comes from the Kingdom. It is received in faith and trust that are oriented completely towards God's rule. Thus love exists in the hope of perfect participation in the love of the Father and Son for each other (ST 3:206). "Genuine Christian hope means a fascinating vision of a new life for all mankind, even for the natural world. . . . It is only this comprehensive humanistic vision which opens up the universal perspective for the creative activity of Christian love."⁶⁸ The fascinating vision of a new life for all creation is founded on the forgiving love of God, who both creates and redeems. It is founded on the mediator of the Kingdom, Jesus of Nazareth, because he has not only taught that forgiving love is the basis of the Kingdom, but has brought it to complete concrete expression in his life, teaching, death, and resurrection. Pannenberg sums up the dual movement of love as follows:

⁶⁷"Die Liebe ist eine Kraft, die von Gott ausgeht. Sie ist nicht primär ein Akt des Menschen. Aber sie ergreift den Menschen so, daß sie ihn selber aktiv werden läßt" (ST 3:207). Pannenberg refers to 1 John 4:10.

⁶⁸Pannenberg, "The Working of the Spirit in the Creation and in the People of God," in Spirit, Faith, and Church, Pannenberg, Avery Dulles, Carl E. Braaten, (Philadelphia: Westminster P., 1970), 28.

In love for God, as the answer to the received love of God--an answer made possible by the Holy Spirit--humans take part in the inner-Trinitarian life of God, in the reciprocity of communion between Father, Son, and Spirit. Through the love of the neighbor they take part in the movement of the Trinitarian God in the creation, redemption, and completion of the world.⁶⁹

These are two aspects of human participation in the love of God that the Spirit pours into creatures who turn to God (Romans 5:5).

According to Pannenberg it is in this way that the church is "called to continue Jesus' ministry and to further the Kingdom of God among all human beings so that the eternal Son may become apparent in their relations to God the Father and make them brothers and sisters in their relations with each other" (IST 64). Pannenberg does not explicitly include the rest of creaturely reality here, but as we have seen he does include all reality when speaking especially about humans (cf. IST 60f.).

Pannenberg specifies that participation in the future Kingdom is made concrete through anticipatory experiences of "peace, spirit, love, and life," and that these are imperfect participations of creatures in eschatological

⁶⁹"In der Liebe zu Gott als durch den Heiligen Geist ermöglichter Antwort auf die von Gott empfangene Liebe nimmt der Mensch teil am innertrinitarischen Leben Gottes, an der Gegenseitigkeit der Gemeinschaft zwischen Vater, Sohn und Geist. Durch die Nächstenliebe nimmt er teil an der Bewegung des trinitarischen Gottes zur Schöpfung, Versöhnung und Vollendung der Welt" (ST 3:218).

life.⁷⁰ Pannenberg's argument for Christian ecumenicity can be generalized and made relevant in this context. He argues that unity amongst Christians cannot be based on either doctrinal unity or the authority of a single highest office; although the latter may need to be a manifestation of the spiritual unity Pannenberg feels has already begun to form among the laity.⁷¹ Because unity with Christ is bound up with "the purposes of God concerning all mankind," that is with the Kingdom of God, it is never a merely private relationship.⁷² The unity of the Spirit goes beyond the bounds of the church, it involves "concern for the human situation in general," and this concern "belongs to the logic of catholicity."⁷³ Catholicity is defined by Pannenberg as excluding all claims to uniformity. "The unity it invokes is the unity of the spirit in the midst of pluriformity, and the unity of the spirit can emerge only when every attempt is avoided to impose uniformity."⁷⁴

In other words, neither authoritative structures nor anthropology, but the coming Kingdom is the source of

⁷⁰"Response to Discussion," in Robinson, et. al., eds., 263.

⁷¹"The Working of the Spirit in the Creation," 29f.

⁷²Pannenberg, "The Church and the Eschatological Kingdom," in Spirit, Faith, and Church, 110.

⁷³Ibid., 116.

⁷⁴Ibid., 117.

the unity.⁷⁵ This pluriformity grows out of the provisional character of all present knowledge and realizations of the ultimate goal of existence. The recognition of the difference between the final realization of the Kingdom and its historical approximations makes Christian freedom possible. It leaves room for the acknowledgment of doctrinal and institutional variety (BM 39). Variety in expression and doctrine does not negate the presence of the unifying love and peace of God. Again, this argument applies more broadly to human experience. It is not necessary to the experience of unity and love that all nations unite under one political and legal system. It is necessary, however, for political and legal systems to recognize the fundamental unity of humans, despite cultural differences (TKG 125). Beyond this it is also necessary for institutions and individuals to recognize the fundamental unity of humans with the non-human world.

The catholicity of the Christian community is the heart of love and joy from which a Christian view of reality can make an impact upon the thought and morality of the modern age. The power of the Christian faith is found in the proleptic presence in history of the ultimate hopes of creatures for harmony, love, and ecstasy. The Kingdom of God is not merely a vision, it is a present reality.

⁷⁵Ibid., 114f.

Pannenberg's concern for Christian unity is rooted in his understanding that the church is to be a sign of the coming Kingdom of God. The disunity of the churches not only indicates the distance of the church from the goal of history, but also its inability to witness to the truth of the Christian claim regarding the ultimate unity of reality under God. The role of the church in history is bound up with truth of the Christian claim about the eschatological Kingdom:

The church is called before the world to witness to the truth of the Gospel. This witness is connected with the notion that the church is itself in this world a sign of the destiny of humans, which is to be renewed to communion of freedom, justice and peace in the future of the Kingdom of God.⁷⁶

Pannenberg explains that the success of this task is directly related to the question of Christian unity (ST 3:10f.).

Conclusion

The promise of the Kingdom moves beyond strictly human concerns to include all of reality. It gives ultimate meaning to human life within the context of the destiny of mediating God's love in the world. Thus it amounts to the rejection of the opposition of the history

⁷⁶"Der Welt die Wahrheit des Evangeliums zu bezeugen, ist die Kirche berufen. Deises Zeugnis ist damit verbunden, daß die Kirche selbst in dieser Welt Vorzeichen der Bestimmung der Menschheit ist, zu einer Gemeinschaft in Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Frieden in der Zukunft des Reiches Gottes erneuert zu werden" (ST 3:11 & cf. 48-51).

of human progress and untamed nature which has characterized much of modern techno-scientific thought and practice. Capricious manipulation and consumption of the non-human world is opposed to the love of God--just as such abuse of humans is opposed. But the promise of the Kingdom also transcends merely human possibilities of achieving love, peace, and justice. Thus it also demands the recognition of the provisional character of all historical realizations of peace and justice (TKG 126). In this way the ossification of particular historical realizations of the peace of the Kingdom is prevented. The principle of love, in other words, is also the critical principle by which every political achievement of peace and justice is seen as less than ultimate.

The eschatology of Christian faith does not amount to a forsaking of present reality for the sake of the future and "otherworldly" Kingdom. Rather, in the context of a community it provides for a hope that overcomes the fear of death and condemnation, as well as the fear of the conflicts that threaten our existence. It opens imaginations to horizons beyond self-centered gratifications. The heart of the message and experience of reality from the Christian point of view is forgiving love. This love empowers and frees individuals to form communities of hope. It conquers cynicism and despair and fear. It thus enables persons both to value and to relativize all reality in the

light of the ultimate good. Because this redemption is intimately connected with the creation of all reality, with its existence and ultimate end, this new life, in turning persons to God turns them also to the whole of created reality.⁷⁷

In the context of Christology, the unity of nature and history means the reconciliation of the oppositions introduced by sin and evil. This unity is the reconciliation of the opposition of divine and human, of human and non-human nature, and of humans between each other. In Christ all history is taken into that goal from which God has created all that has being. Love is at the core of this understanding of reality. Divine love creates, redeems, and completes the creaturely world. Love determines the very structure of creaturely existence. Love is its goal. And this divine love is the foundation and essence of all morality. In as much as it structures existence, it structures its moral character as well. Finally, the creative and redeeming character of love means that love is neither external to existence nor opposed to the freedom of creaturely existence.

⁷⁷This analysis of Pannenberg's understanding of the relationship of love for the Kingdom and love for the world is in basic agreement with Ted Peters, "Pannenberg's Eschatological Ethics," 242-244. Peters, however, does not include all creation in his analysis of Pannenberg's understanding of unity.

Chapter 3

The Unity of Creation and God

The claim that humans are the epitome of all created reality is a dangerous and discredited one in an age in which human sciences and technology threaten the continued existence of organic life on the planet earth.¹ Furthermore, some people might consider such anthropocentrism as a naive notion connected with a geocentric conception of the universe.² Nonetheless, Wolfhart Pannenberg states that humans are at the center of concern in the universe.³ This, he argues, is grounded in the creation of

¹See Erazim Kohák, The Embers and the Stars: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Moral Sense of Nature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 90-93 and James Gustafson, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, vol. 1, Theology and Ethics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 95-99 & cf. 4-7 & 82-84.

²H. Paul Santmire, The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 1-3. Santmire briefly surveys some of the ecologically motivated attacks against the western heritage, and especially against the Christian tradition. Stephen Hawking, Brief History 126, compares some forms of modern anthropocentrism with the discredited Ptolemaic view of the cosmos.

³In Was ist der Mensch? (1962), 44f. & 60 Pannenberg almost appears to provide a theological foundation for the continued destructive domination of the natural world by humans. However, this is neither his intent nor the necessary outcome of that booklet. Nonetheless, he does appear to focus on humans to the exclusion of the non-human world. However in Anthropology in Theological Perspective (74-79) Pannenberg claims that his theological anthropology provides for an understanding of humans that places them in a fundamentally moral relationship with the non-human world. Pannenberg is able to do this without altering the

all reality toward the end of manifesting the eternal Son's acknowledgement of the Father. In the Christian understanding of creation, humans have a special place as representatives of God. The notion of the incarnation of the Son in the person of Jesus of Nazareth implies that the creation most fully realizes its relationship to the Creator through humankind.⁴

In Pannenberg's account of the priority of humanity he emphasizes the unity of humans with the entire created world. In their destiny to oneness with God humans are not set completely apart from the non-human creation. Rather, through humans the entire creation is destined to oneness with its Creator. That the notion of the special place of humans in creation has been abused, and has been interpreted as a separation and elevation of human beings from and above non-human existence, reveals not the fault of the

basic arguments of Was ist der Mensch?

⁴That the relationship of creature and Creator finds its highest and final realization in humans may be maintained only in view of the incarnation of the eternal Son in the form of a human." ("Daß im Menschen das Verhältnis des Geschöpfes zum Schöpfer überhaupt seine höchste und endgültige Realisierung findet, läßt sich allerdings erst angesichts der Inkarnation des ewigen Sohnes in der Gestalt eines Menschen behaupten.") (ST 2:203). This implies that the idea of creation alone neither fully guarantees nor fully realizes the special place of humans in the world. Since this is only realized in the incarnation of the eternal Son its character must be sought in the life and destiny of Jesus. I suggest that this character is especially marked by the servant and priestly character of his kingship.

notion, but a particular sin of modern humanity--a sin in which much Christian thought and practice shares. Although one may very well regard this as a characteristically modern sin, it is necessary to point out that the opposition between human and non-human reality goes back into our pre-history and is, perhaps, always connected with sin. How then is this universal opposition of human and non-human reality taken up in Pannenberg's notion of wholeness? How is the particular sin of the modern age against the non-human world addressed? How, in other words, does the unity of nature and history in Pannenberg's theology fare in the face of human experience?

Pannenberg regards the creation of humans toward the image of God and human sin as the two fundamental statements of a Christian anthropology (ST 2:208). They are presupposed in the notions of incarnation and salvation, which provide the most complete picture of the human situation. The notions of creation, sin and incarnation indicate the origin, the situation, and the destiny of existence. This chapter is focused on the situation of life in the world: on sin, misery, and the solution of the problems of existence. Pannenberg's theological concentration on anthropology is an attempt to understand humans in the context of the creative and redeeming love of God for the entire universe.

Finally it must be stated that the questions regarding anthropology and the idea of unity in history are here asked in the context of the quest for a theological ethic which at its foundation also addresses the questionable character of the relationship of humans to the non-human world.

The Idea of Human Dominion

The idea that humans rightfully exercise dominion over the non-human world has come under severe criticism.⁵ It is at times regarded as the ultimate religious root of the ecological crisis. Pannenberg admits that some theologians have appealed to the biblical idea of dominion with apologetic motives. They have wanted to show the legitimacy of Christianity in the context of the hegemony of modern science and technology (ATP 77). This fact not only implicates these theologians as possibly contributing to the wanton exploitation of nature, but coincidentally and ironically serves to show the fallacy of all attempts to blame the Judeo-Christian tradition for a uniquely modern problem. That is to say, biblical statements regarding human dominion did not themselves lead to the exploitation of nature, but were misused in apologetic form by theologians who wished to show the correspondence of

⁵See the surveys in Kurt Koch, "Der Mensch und seine Mit-Welt," 29-33 and Santmire, Travail of Nature 1-3.

Christianity to a dominant facet (i.e., the scientific and technological exploitation of nature for purely human ends) of emancipated modern culture.

It is true, says Pannenberg, that Judaism and Christianity resulted in the secularization of the world of nature (ST 2:234). The gods of wood, sky, and water were shown to be empty notions. Yet it is also true that primitive cultures used the gods of nature to make themselves masters of nature (ATP 77). The biblical understanding of God, humanity, and world brought the human-world relationship into a new and explicit focus: everything is created by God, and human creatures are to have a special role as regents of the Creator. The world continues to belong to the Creator and the will of God for creation continues to be the measure for human activity in the world. Thus, according to Pannenberg, the secularization of nature that is entailed in Judeo-Christian faith submits the relationship of humans with nature to their prior relationship to God. Furthermore, it is important to note that nature is here seen as sharing in this prior relationship to God.

Pannenberg argues that an interpretation of the role of humans in the world that is grounded in Genesis and the Psalms results in the rejection of certain modern criticisms of these texts and the traditions that are dependent upon them. He rejects the argument that the biblical notion of humanity is responsible for the "limitless

exploitation of the natural world by modern technology and industrial society."⁶ Rather, the ecological crisis needs to be seen as the consequence of emancipated modernity

(Neuzeit):

Emancipation from religious commitments and considerations and from the general guidelines of social life was one of the presuppositions for the autonomous development of the economic life of modernity. Modern secularism cannot simultaneously pride itself in its emancipation from religious ties and load the responsibility for the consequences of its absolutization of earthly acquisitiveness on those religious origins from whose restrictions it has freed itself.⁷

⁶"In light of this result [that the dominion of humans over the creation is to be 'like' that of the Creator's] the criticism of the biblical view of humans-- the criticism which blames the unrestrained exploitation of the natural world by modern technology and industrial society, with the resulting ecological crisis, on the biblical commission that humans have dominion over creation-- must be dismissed as unjustified." ("Angesichts dieses Befundes [daß die Herrschaft des Menschen über die Schöpfung der des Schöpfers selber »ähnlich« sein soll] muß diejenige Kritik am biblischen Menschenbild, die die hemmungslose Ausbeutung der Naturwelt durch die moderne Technik und Industriegesellschaft mit der daraus folgenden ökologischen Krise dem biblischen Auftrag an den Menschen zur Herrschaft über die Schöpfung (Gen 1,28) zur Last legt, als unberechtigt zurückgewiesen werden.") (ST 2:234). Panenberg refers specifically to Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," in The Environmental Handbook (New York, 1970) and Carl Amery, Das Ende der Vor-sehung. Die gnadenlosen Folgen des Christentums (1972). Cf. ATP 74-79.

⁷"Die Emanzipation von religiösen Bindungen und Rücksichten und von den darin begründeten Rahmenbedingungen des gesellschaftlichen Lebens ist eine der Voraussetzungen für die eigengesetzliche Entwicklung des Wirtschaftslebens in der Neuzeit gewesen. Der neuzeitliche Säkularismus kann sich nicht gleichzeitig der Emanzipation von religiösen Bindungen rühmen und die Verantwortung für die Folgen seiner Verabsolutierung irdischen Besitzstrebens jenen religiösen Ursprüngen aufbürden, von deren Beschränkungen er sich gelöst hat" (ST 2:234). Cf. ATP 77-79.

In the modern age humans have made themselves the ultimate goal of their actions, and have thereby usurped the throne of God. The creature has declared itself to be the absolute monarch over all reality. Pannenberg suggests, moreover, that it has been proven that nature is guaranteed far less protection by human autonomy than by a Christian conception of reality.

This is especially the case when the idea of autonomy is connected not with a concept of reason to which the individual is subordinate, but with the modern understanding of individual freedom as an unlimited power of self-disposition which is subject to factual limitations only by the demands of society (ATP 79).

I suggest that any attempt to solve the environmental crisis that does not also deal with the fundamental issues raised by Pannenberg's theological enterprise is unlikely to penetrate to the root of the problem. To seek the cause of a modern problematic in ancient notions which have long been rejected is symptomatic of shallow thinking. This practice can only further hinder the recognition of the true problem. It can only delay the fundamental change in thinking that is required if we are to deal effectively with our problem. The responses of various governments to the current economic difficulties are also particularly telling. The non-human world continues to be treated simply as a human resource and as an environment for the task of generating wealth. The modern disposition appears to continue unabated by any significant shift in under-

standing of the problems that have led to the destructive impact of our culture upon the world. Canadian and American bills of rights have entrenched notions of individual rights and freedoms which are not readily open to correction by biblical notions of human responsibility. The Cartesian and Baconian dualism of mind versus matter and human versus non-human nature appears to continue to inform the character of modern culture.

Pannenberg's Christian anthropology attempts to cut away the foundation of such extreme oppositions. He recognizes the special place of humans in the world without losing sight of the ultimate unity of reality. This makes it possible to ground a fundamentally different approach to understanding the relationship of humans to the world. Humanity cannot renounce its rule over nature, but needs to accept its destiny to rule lovingly within the created world. Pannenberg calls for a "responsible exercise of dominion" (ATP 79).

He argues that humanity is determined to participate in God's rule of creation (Ps 8:6f. & Gen 1:26f.). "As 'image of God' humanity is to be the representative of and to prepare the way for God's rule in the world."⁸ Human rule of the world is to be similar to God's rule and

⁸"Als »Bild Gottes« soll der Mensch Platzhalter und Wegbereiter der Gottesherrschaft in der Welt sein" (ST 2:233).

follows from the likeness of humans to God. Human dominion over creation and human likeness to God are not, however, reducible to each other (ST 2:233f.). Pannenberg suggests that the statement in Genesis 1:26f. is intended to ground the place of humans as rulers of the world. The commission to rule is regarded by the biblical text as the immediate consequence of the image of God in humans.

Pannenberg notes the connection of the idea of the "image of God" with notions of kingship in the ancient Near East:

For in the ancient Near East the king was regarded as the earthly representative of God and of the divine rule over the world. By making the statement about the image of God in the human being the Priestly document is thus assigning the human being as such the role of king in the context of the creation (ATP 75).

The king is God's son. The Israelite conception of the role of the king is, however, more akin to the notion of regency than to the other ancient notions kingship, some of which appear to have almost literally regarded the king as the son of a god.⁹

This implies that God does not rule the world directly and is not directly manifest in the world. It is particularly through humans that the rule and presence of God in the world is to be manifest--to human and non-human creation alike. But humans have denied this destiny to

⁹Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, vol. 1, 41.

represent the rule of God as first among creatures and have thus failed to make the rule of God manifest. It is only with the appearance of the Christ that the rule of God becomes manifest. Pannenberg locates this especially in the crucifixion of Jesus, whereby all "customary notions of sovereignty among human beings are turned upside down" (ATP 76). Pannenberg quotes Mark 10:43f. where Jesus explicitly makes the demand that rulers and leaders must be the servants of all.

No right to arbitrary exploitation is handed to humans (ST 2:234f.). The intent of the commission to rule the world is compared to a type of affirmation and protection of nature that is most perfectly described as gardening (Gen 2:15, ATP 79 & ST 2:235). It is in concert with Pannenberg's theological program to characterize this responsible dominion as a loving rule. I base this on Pannenberg's statements connecting both the loving self-differentiation of the Son from the Father and Christ's death for the sake of the world with the image of God and, thus, with the divine determination of humans to represent God's dominion in the world.

It is true that Pannenberg draws a significant distinction between God and the world and that the biblical notion of creation coupled with that of human regency "locates human beings on the side of God and thus sets them too over against the world" (ATP 76f.). But this does not

contradict Pannenberg's intentions to overcome dualism. This distinction must be understood in the context of an overarching and pervasive unity of reality in God, who is Creator, Redeemer, and Perfecter of reality.

Pannenberg does not so distinguish humans from the rest of the world that its creatures can be regarded as objects whose sole purpose is to serve human ends. The creatures participate in the determination of existence toward communion with God. Their use by humans should be guided by the goal of this communion. The non-human world should never be used to serve merely pragmatic human interests.

The notions of evolution and differentiation of species confirm that human life can legitimately be viewed as the highest achievement of the evolution of complex and conscious life.¹⁰ If this is combined with the idea that the intention of creation is the communion of creatures with the Creator, and that this is fully realized in the incarnation of the Son as the person Jesus of Nazareth, then the rise of human history is at the center of the creative processes of nature. The meaning of nature is then bound up with human history, and the meaning of human existence belongs not to humans in isolation from the rest

¹⁰The anthropic principle further confirms this (cf. Chapter 1 above). The following argument is not given by Pannenberg, but I regard it as a logical consequence of his thought.

of reality, but is the meaning of all creation. If this is so then the meaning of human existence cannot be determined apart from the incorporation of the beauty and purpose of non-human existence. This beauty and purpose exist quite apart from any immediately evident benefit to human interests that are not completely subject to the end of communion with God.

The existence of most, if not all, creatures allows of no total reduction of purposefulness to merely human interest. The non-human world is not only the environment or stage of human history. The meaningfulness of non-human existence is to be found in relationship to God in concert with the human relationship with God. In the context of Pannenberg's conception of creation, this means that the relationship of creatures to God is ultimately a unified relationship which finds its perfect expression in the destiny of Jesus. It also means that no individual can achieve this relationship in complete independence of others nor apart from non-human life.

In spite of the self-serving abuse of human power over nature the world continues to be God's--if Pannenberg's idea of creation is true. Pannenberg recognizes in the self-centeredness of human domination a destructiveness that will fall and already has fallen on humans themselves. The ecological crisis can in part be understood as a con-

sequence of the emancipation of modern culture from its Judeo-Christian heritage (ST 2:235).

Precisely in this way the ecological crisis at the end of emancipatory modernity allows itself to be understood as a reminder that now as always the God of the Bible remains Lord of his creation and that the arbitrariness of human capriciousness in its dealings with creation is not extendible without limits and is not without consequences.¹¹

In my estimation the understanding that the image of God is not a possession but a task that must be achieved in history allows for the possibility of brokenness and corruption in the exercise of the commission to rule the world. Here there are approximations to God's creative love just as there are examples of the most destructive forms of hatred. That the maltreatment of nature rebounds onto humans reflects not only the continued Lordship of God, as Pannenberg argues, but also the participation of nature in the history of the formation of the image of God in humans. Stated plainly, the ecological crisis, among other things, is a self-condemnation of modernity. If Pannenberg is correct regarding the relationship of the crisis to the emancipation of the modern west from its religious origins, then the ecological crisis is also a call to repentance. It is a summons from nature that humans again

¹¹"In diesem Sinne läßt sich gerade die ökologische Krise am Ende der emanzipatorischen Neuzeit als Erinnerung daran verstehen, daß nach wie vor der Gott der Bibel Herr seiner Schöpfung bleibt und die Beliebigkeit menschlicher Willkür im Umgang mit ihr nicht ohne Schranken ausdehnbar und nicht folgenlos ist" (ST 2:235).

acknowledge God as Creator and as Lord of creation, and to leave off the tyrannic usurpation of this kingship. Positively, it is a call to take up our destined regency and to represent the creative love of God in the world.

In the following discussion of Pannenberg's theological anthropology I focus on the relationship of humans to the non-human world and how this is ultimately grounded in the relationship of all reality to God.

Theological Anthropology

According to Pannenberg the tendency in the modern age has been to develop the concept of "person" in contrast to "the objectified world of technology" as well as in contrast to the formation of social structures by technology. The attempt is made, in other words, to develop a humanized anthropology in the face of a culture which exercises its technological powers frequently in de-humanizing ways.¹² In contrast to such approaches Pannenberg begins with the Christian ideas of creation and redemption. He regards the story of human existence as the history of realizing the incarnation of the image of God, toward which God creates all reality, and which has been proleptically realized in the life and destiny of Jesus.¹³ It is in this context

¹²Pannenberg, "Das christologische Fundament christlicher Anthropologie," Concilium 9,6 (1973): 425.

¹³Ibid., 426f.

that he critically appropriates the insights of secular anthropologies.

The Image of God

The intention of this section is to show how the image of God is operative within history. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, Pannenberg argues that humans do not possess the image of God. Rather, its realization is the goal toward which they are created. Nonetheless this goal is present as an openness which is constitutive of human existence. It is an openness that reaches beyond the self to others, beyond the others of the immediate environment to the world, and beyond the world to what is without limit. Through this openness the image of God is present as the determinative power of the eschatological future.¹⁴ The image of God is understood by Pannenberg as the goal of perfect communion with God.

Pannenberg's understanding of the image of God moves away from the notion of intelligence as providing the fundamental distinguishing factor that makes human existence unique among creatures. He focuses rather on the notion of the relationship of the Father and the Son as determinative regarding the destiny and meaning of human life. He understands the image of God in terms of the communion of the eternal Son with the Father. Each person is

¹⁴Ibid., 427.

of inviolable worth through the determination of his or her existence toward perfect communion with the Father (ST 2:204).

Pannenberg argues that the biblical documents have not specified clearly what the image of God is, and that this open-endedness may be intentional (ST 2:249, 251). He contends that the image of God is nowhere realized by humans except in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. All other humans approximate the image to a greater or lesser degree. In other words, the image of God is something that must yet be achieved by humans. It is a future reality, but it has determinative power throughout the history of creation. "Its full realization is the determination of humans, which broke forth historically with Jesus Christ, and in which the rest of humanity is to participate through transformation into the image of Christ."¹⁵

Pannenberg understands the image of God to be centered upon the determination of humans to communion with God (ST 2:55-258). Present existence is to be understood from the point of view of this future communion. Pannenberg argues that it is especially in human personality that the future communion with God (the image of God) is already present in humans (ST 2:258). It is what we are becoming,

¹⁵"Ihre volle Realisierung ist die Bestimmung des Menschen, die mit Jesus Christus geschichtlich angebrochen ist und an der die übrigen Menschen teilnehmen sollen durch Verwandlung in das Bild Christi" (ST 2:249).

but do not yet see clearly (Romans 8:19-25). These concerns come together in Pannenberg's understanding of the person of Jesus and in the conception of creation:

If the creation of humans to the likeness of God implies their determination to communion with the eternal God, then the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth can be regarded as the fulfillment of this determination. The unity of God and humanity in the life of one human is obviously unsurpassable by any other form of communion between God and humans.¹⁶

The acceptability of this depends ultimately on the verity of the claim that Jesus has risen from the dead and that the resurrection of Jesus has implications for all creatures (ST 2:259). The final "proof" of these claims depends upon the future general realization of the promises entailed in the message of Jesus. For the present Pannenberg offers historical evidence backed by arguments to show the coherence and correspondence of Christian faith and hope.¹⁷

But the determination to communion with God, or the image of God in humans, cannot be a merely future hope if it is to function as the foundation of a Christian anthropology which itself is to be the foundation of

¹⁶"Wenn die Erschaffung des Menschen zum Ebenbild Gottes seine Bestimmung zur Gemeinschaft mit dem ewigen Gott impliziert, dann wird die Menschwerdung Gottes in Jesus von Nazareth als Erfüllung dieser Bestimmung gelten dürfen. Die Vereinigung Gottes und der Menschheit im Leben eines Menschen ist offenbar durch keine andere Form der Gemeinschaft von Gott und Menschen überbietbar" (ST 2:259).

¹⁷See the chapter above on Christology.

morality. Pannenberg suggests there is a disposition (Anlage) of humans toward the goal of communion with God. He argues that this goal is present not as a consciously chosen task, but "in the indeterminate trust that opens the horizons of experience of the world and of intersubjectivity, as well as on the other hand, the restless yearning to transcend every finite condition."¹⁸ He argues that this is not merely a failure of humans to come to terms with the finitude of existence, but is connected with the development of the notion of 'world' and with the differentiation of finite objects. In both instances Pannenberg argues that an openness beyond the world, a dim awareness of the infinite, is necessary for humans to reason about finite objects and about their unity in a concept like "world".¹⁹

This disposition does not imply that humans have a capacity to reach the goal of their existence through their own work or thought alone. Rather, humans are "dependent upon the work of divine Providence through tradition and

¹⁸"Das Ziel ist ihm primär unbestimmt gegenwärtig, nicht einmal als Ziel, sondern in dem unbestimmten Vertrauen, das den Horizont der Welterfahrung und der Intersubjectivität eröffnet, sowie andererseits im unruhigen Drang zur Überschreitung jeder endlichen Gegebenheit" (ST 2:263).

¹⁹ST 2:263 and see above in this chapter and the section on 'Whole and Part' in the chapter on creation.

learning, reason and experience."²⁰ Neither God nor the determination of humans to communion with God are directly present to consciousness. Only in the process of history, in reflection upon concrete experiences of God, is the relationship of humans to the Creator manifest. Thus the religious theme of existence is an ambiguous reality, open to misinterpretation. It is just as possible for humans to deny its reality as falsely to claim its unambiguous presence. Only when the distinction between God and creatures is recognized and honored is the likeness of humans to God most open to realization (ST 2:264).

This amounts to accepting one's finitude while at the same time transcending the finitude of existence. This is essential to self-differentiation from God, and Pannenberg suggests that it is only possible when the Spirit of God lifts humans beyond their finitude, thereby enabling them to accept their finitude (ST 2:264f.). "Humans must be formed in the image of the Son, in his self-

²⁰Pannenberg takes this from the Enlightenment figure J.G. Herder: "der Mensch könne das in ihm angelegte Gottesbild nicht selber aushauen und ausbilden . . . , sondern sei dazu angewiesen auf das Wirken der göttlichen Vorsehung durch Tradition und Lehre, Vernunft und Erfahrung" (ST 2:262). See the appropriate section in ATP esp. pp. 43-47. He appears willing to see this as the work of the divine Spirit and parallel to the work of the prophets of ancient Israel ("Das christologische Fundament christlicher Anthropologie" 428).

differentiation from the Father. Thus they will also take part in the communion of the Son with the Father."²¹

For it is in acknowledging God as God and themselves as finite creatures that humans most fully correspond to their calling and most nearly anticipate the ultimate communion with God which is the destiny of creation. Pannenberg explicitly states that it is in this context that the human commission to rule over the earth must receive its character. All creation is to be united with the Creator (Romans 8:19-23). Human recognition and acceptance of the finitude of existence "must also include that each other creature is shown due respect." Each creature has a place in the order of God's creation. "Only in this way can humans unite the whole creation in praise to the Creator, and together with the gratitude for their own existence offer the gratitude of all his creatures."²²

This text clearly indicates that Pannenberg understands humans, in their special role with regard to the image of

²¹"Die Menschen müssen dem Bilde des Sohnes gleichgestaltet werden, seiner Selbstunterscheidung vom Vater. So werden sie auch an der Gemeinschaft des Sohnes mit dem Vater teilnehmen" (ST 2:265).

²²"Annahme der eigenen Endlichkeit muß auch einschließen, daß jedem anderen Geschöpf in den Grenzen seiner Endlichkeit die ihm gebührende Achtung erwiesen wird. Damit kommt die Vielheit der Geschöpfe als eine Ordnung in den Blick, in der jedes von ihnen seinen Platz hat. Nur so kann der Mensch die ganze Schöpfung im Lobe ihres Schöpfers zusammenfassen und dem Schöpfer mit dem Dank für das eingene Dasein zugleich den Dank für alle seine Geschöpfe darbringen" (ST 2:266). Emphasis mine.

God, to be representatives of the whole creation. All creatures are included in the destiny to praise the Creator.

Pannenberg points to relationships with others, and specifically as relationships find their fulfillment in love, as the heart of personal existence (GF 1:197). This again shows the connection of human existence with the self-differentiating love of the Son for the Father. Relationships with others are also destined to be taken into the divine love that is manifest in Jesus. The foundation of life is the divine love that reaches out to all creation. Human destiny is to participate in this operation of love. In the course of history it means to love God, other humans, and all creation. This is the character of the image of God and it entails a fundamentally religious conception of life. It is also the immediate source of the moral character of life.

Openness to the World

In his theological anthropology Pannenberg attempts to show the correlation of his Judeo-Christian understanding of humans with that of modern anthropology. However, it should be noted that certain traditional notions are modified and even rejected in the process. The critical interaction of these two perspectives (theological and secular) cuts both ways. It is not my intention to evalu-

ate this dialogue. My intention is to round out the theoretical aspects of the discussion of the unity of nature and history, and to move towards their practical implications.

At the root of uniquely human existence are qualities that are variously described by notions such as exocentricity, openness to the world, freedom from the environment, and lack of instincts (ATP 34-42). Pannenberg argues that rather than speaking of the lack of instincts as a deficiency at birth we should think of humans as incomplete, as creatures who experience "a hiatus, a gap, between perceptions and impulses."²³ This "incompleteness" is really a freedom from the limitations of instincts. "Openness to the world" is a common anthropological phrase used in describing this aspect of human existence. Instincts determine within a narrow range responses to stimuli. The absence of instincts is an opening up of the range of relational possibilities, but it is also a need within human existence to develop successful means of relating to the world. In light of this discussion one could describe the ecological crisis as a radical failure of modern culture to fulfill this need. This failure is especially visible in its sciences, technologies, and industries. My argument is that Pannenberg's thought

²³The term "hiatus" is taken from Arnold Gehlen, Der Mensch (1950) (ATP 39).

provides a way to understand the deeper cause and possible solution to this problem.

Openness to the world makes it possible for humans to develop languages, rational processes, cultures, and technical skills; indeed, it drives them to do so. Thus humans "convert the disadvantages of their initial biological condition into advantages" (ATP 39). The development of individual selves is here seen as a socio-cultural process that is rooted in the peculiar biology of humans. Individuals must learn particular sets of responses that correspond to particular stimuli within particular ecological and socio-cultural systems.

The concept of openness to the world describes the free space for interpretation and decision over against the tyranny of the content of perception (ATP 61f.). Pannenberg maintains that this free space could also be described as the differentiation of the individual from the environment. In animals the instincts determine responses that are appropriate to particular situations. This incorporates the animal and the environment into one process. Varying gradations of incorporation are reflected in various species. In no species other than humans, however, is the free space so great as to amount to an openness to develop complex languages, cultures, and technologies, and beyond that to allow for the yearning to transcend the limitations of finite existence on the finite

planet earth. Here there is a definite distinction of humans from all other creatures. Yet it is a distinction rooted in the evolutionary processes of natural history. What sets Pannenberg's theological view of this fundamental human openness apart from a secular anthropological one is that he regards it as reaching beyond the limits of the world to the eternal and infinite.

The Open Image

Pannenberg argues that this phenomenon that modern anthropology has called "openness to the world" is connected with both the image of God in humans and the commission to rule the world.

Only because in their exocentric self-transcendence they reach beyond the immediately given to the broadest possible horizon of meaning that embraces all finite things--only because of this is it possible for them to grasp an individual object in its determinateness that distinguishes it from other objects. . . . We are dealing here with the action of reason which conceives the individual in the light of the universal as it stands out in its particularity against the background of the universal. This process of defining the individuality of things has become the basis for all human mastery of nature (ATP 76).

Pannenberg notes that the naming of the animals is analogous to having dominion over the world (Gen 2:19f.).

Naming the animals is part of the differentiating activity of human reason. This ability to differentiate the objects of the world from each other in the context of their inter-relationship within the whole of reality is what enables humans to rule the world.

Pannenberg notes that a significant aspect of this openness is the capability of humans to develop the tools and machines which they manifest the power humans exercise over the rest of the world. This power is rooted in the freedom of humans vis-à-vis their perceptions, which enables them to discern and direct themselves to objects as other from themselves. It enables them to distance themselves from the perception of one object in favor of another object (ATP 67). This capability to distance oneself from objects is the basis for distinguishing the self from its environment. The individual moves in thought beyond the self and then from the object back to the self. In the process the self is perceived as one object among other objects (ATP 67). It is in this exocentricity (being outside of oneself) that the self becomes aware of itself as a self.

Pannenberg argues that neither individually nor corporately can humans realize their own destiny. He agrees with J.G. Herder that "as instinct guides the behavior of animals, so the image of God guides human beings" (ATP 45).²⁴ Herder has understood the image of God as that which must be achieved through "tradition and learning,

²⁴This is taken from Herder, Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man, trans. T. Churchill (London, 1800), xi, 5.

reason and experience."²⁵ But Herder understands this process in the context of faith in divine providence. The image of God, while remaining the destiny that will be achieved eschatologically, is "already present in outline form and thereby gives human life a direction" (ATP 46 & cf. 60).

But the connection between this present anticipation and the future fulfillment of human destiny has its basis in the plan of divine providence, which coordinates the influences coming from other human beings with the impulses of the person's own reason and experience and thereby turns these into means contributing to a single result, the formation of human beings (ATP 47).

As Pannenberg points out Herder has changed the Enlightenment idea of human-driven progress toward perfection into human participation in the realization of a destiny that depends ultimately upon the continued work of divine providence.

Pannenberg also notes that regarding the development of the image of God as the task of history, Herder removed "the restriction of the problems of human life to a moral task" (ATP 53). In other words, human freedom and destiny are not first of all moral, nor is the problematic of existence epitomized by moral issues. Most basically human existence is here described as the history of the realization of the image of God. The moral character of existence is entailed in this process.

²⁵Ibid.

This basic anthropological openness or exocentricity is described by Pannenberg as historicity. But he does not intend that persons should on this basis be understood only as "autonomous subjects of historical action" (ATP 491f.). History is the tale of what people have done, but it is also true that persons themselves are the products of their histories. Human beings are directed beyond themselves and to the future, to the fulfillment of their destination. They are not yet complete, not even in the unity of their subjectivity. It is the end of their history which brings them to completion and the end of all history which brings the story of the entire human race and of all nature to its completion. Each event along the way is not fully understood until the one goal of all history is attained. This is true whether it is the history of an individual or of the whole of creation (ATP 492-515).

Openness to God

We have seen that Pannenberg regards humans as created with the image of God as their ultimate destination. He transforms the notion of openness to the world in this context. He argues that although humans are finite they have an orientation toward infinite self-transcendence (GF 1:348).

In the reflexive, exocentric process the unlimited character of basic openness becomes apparent. There are no

limitations in the process of perceiving ever greater wholes. The self eventually arrives at the notion of a world and the eternal and "divine reality that is the ground of the world" (ATP 68). According to Pannenberg, openness to the world is therefore better described as an unlimited openness, one that transcends the world and can best be understood as an openness to God (ATP 69). The discernment of objects "also includes a discernment of their finitude, and therefore it includes an awareness of what is other than finite" (IST 51). Pannenberg contends that the awareness of the whole of reality and the infinite which encompasses it is pre-supposed by all discernment of individual finite objects. This is the case even though such awareness is often vague or not even present to consciousness. The Judeo-Christian tradition identifies this infinite source of the world with the creating and redeeming God.

Thus, he argues the capacity to discern objects is grounded in the explicitly religious nature of existence. Pannenberg contends that "humans are essentially directed to the infinite, but are never in themselves already infinite."²⁶ In other words, humans are in large degree oriented to the infinite transcendence of finite existence.

²⁶"Der Mensch ist auf Unendlichkeit wesentlich bezogen, aber er ist nie in sich selbst schon unendlich" (GF 1:353). In the context Pannenberg is arguing against the Hegelian roots of Feuerbach's atheism.

Even in simple perception of objects of the world humans experience dependence upon something that "surpasses and sustains everything finite" (IGHF 95). Pannenberg maintains that if humans are fundamentally directed beyond the finite to the infinite then religion is never merely a mistaking of human essence for an infinite and divine Other. Then religion is an expression of the innate drive of humans towards an infinite Other. Moreover, this openness to the infinite makes possible the perception of a unity which encompasses all the diversities and conflicts of finite existence. This unity transcends the limits of finitude and gives rise to the idea of a world. In this divine way specifically individual human existence becomes possible.²⁷

In other words, God is the goal toward which human openness reaches out (GC 197). God alone is infinite. God is the goal as well as the source (Creator) of human existence (including freedom), and human existence is incomplete, still on the way to its fulfillment. This is true for both individuals and the human race as a whole. Thus, in Pannenberg's understanding, human openness (exocentricity) is fundamentally oriented to the future and "to an Other beyond all the objects of their world, an Other that at the same time embraces this entire world and

²⁷Ibid.

thus ensures the possible unification of the life of human beings in the world, despite the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the world's actions on them" (ATP 69). Pannenberg has elaborated an anthropology which is in essence also a philosophy/theology of history, that includes the entire world in this process towards God.²⁸

Pannenberg also draws a formative link between Christ's self-subordination, which is part of his self-differentiation from the Father, and human self-discernment. He notes that exocentricity involves self-effacement.²⁹ The individual must forget him or herself in order to focus on other objects, to understand them as they are in themselves. The human creatures of God's world reflect the self-differentiation of the eternal Son. It is noteworthy that this eternal self-differentiation is also regarded as the source of all finite existence. The principle of otherness that is the source of creation is also reflected in the fundamental structure of human existence, as well as its destiny.

²⁸It should be remembered that he regards all creation as destined to the realization of the image of God. Cf. Chapter 2.

²⁹The human capacity for domination "is rooted in the peculiarly human ability to discern--to discern between objects, but above all to discern between the objects themselves as self-centered entities, not simply as correlates to our own drives; that is to say: to discern them from ourselves and ourselves from everything else. Paradoxically, this ability of discernment empowers human beings to make themselves masters of the world" (IST 50 & cf. 51).

Human self-differentiation is regarded by Pannenberg as an act of self-denial. This "disregard" of the self makes possible both the differentiation of finite objects from each other and human power over these objects. In the case of the Son and the Father the self-differentiation is a humble act of love and recognition. By contrast, arrogant self-assertion rather than love seems to characterize the goal of much of human self-differentiation. While it may be true that modern technology often has this character, it is important to note that the cause for the arrogance and abusive application of the technology lies elsewhere than in the connection with the action of the eternal Son. It lies in human perversion of the power gained through self-differentiation. And as Pannenberg suggests, the problem lies in the dualistic separation of discernment of finite objects from discernment of the infinite power that made them.

Pannenberg argues that the self-effacing power of discernment is most fundamentally related to the self-differentiation of the Son from the Father. Human self-differentiation from God is the source of human freedom, and is essential to participation in the inner-Trinitarian communion. It is in this context that the earthly dominion of humans is considered by Pannenberg. The rule of humans over the rest of creation is more fundamentally connected

with the determination of humans to communion with God than with the intelligence of humans (ST 2:219).

In this way Pannenberg attempts to understand God as the source and destiny of human freedom. Pannenberg thus describes the fundamental structure of human existence as religious. It is of crucial importance, according to Pannenberg, that the power of domination gained by the discernment of finite objects in the creaturely world be subordinated to the discernment of what is not finite. Pannenberg is not arguing that religious and/or magical belief should control the sciences. Rather, he is arguing that subordination to the Triune Creator is fundamental to independent creaturely existence. The separation of these two types of discernment, he argues, is the source of ecological disaster. It is also the loss of human freedom. Paradoxically, freedom for the creature comes in subordination to the Creator that takes perfect form only in the self-differentiation of Jesus.

The Unity of the Self

Each person is unique in the context of his or her relationships with other creatures and things. But each person also transcends these relationships and the transitions between various finite contexts of life. Ultimately it is in the relationship to God, who is the source of the identity of the self, that the individual is a unique per-

son. Out of this identity it is possible for the individual to integrate the various moments of life, which would otherwise fall apart. Pannenberg argues that action presupposes an acting subject who already has an identity that bridges the flow of time from intention to achievement. "The unity and integrity of life are constituted in another sphere, one that precedes all action."³⁰

Nonetheless, the identity of a person is in a process of becoming throughout the history of the individual (ST 2:231). Only at the end of history in the context of the completed whole of reality will it be apparent what each person is becoming during the course of history. The individual, though still in becoming, is the unity that makes possible the appearance of an acting subject (Handlungssubjekt). The identity of the person cannot be reduced to the actions she or he undertakes (ST 2:231f.).

Pannenberg attempts to show that the self is neither the source of its own unity nor of the unity that is discovered in the world.³¹ Rather, he states that the self becomes aware of an overarching wholeness in a process of disciplined and discriminating reflection upon perceptions (Anschauungen) that come to one's feelings (das Gefühl)

³⁰Einheit und Integrität des Lebens werden in einer anderen Sphäre konstituiert, die allem Handeln vorausliegt" (ST 2:232).

³¹See ST 2:204-232, esp. 220f. & 224-232.

through the receptive imagination (Phantasie).³² These perceptions arise as the imagination moves between the unfathomableness of feeling and the finite realities that have been distinguished by the activities of consciousness.³³ But it is only in the process of submitting these perceptions to differentiating reflection that the unity of all the diverse objects becomes visible. The perceptions must be connected with the appropriate objects in their diversity, as well as with the unity within which the diversity appears (ST 2:224). The following lengthy quotation shows the relation of unity to consciousness:

In this respect the comprehension of the unity in difference also remains a function of the capacity to detach oneself in the consciousness of otherness [Andersheit]. The unity of the differentiated is consequently itself an other to consciousness. It is not due to the unity of the self. The unity of the self, as the ground of all experience, and that which grounds

³²Pannenberg suggests that feeling (Lebensgefühl) is the expression of the creative life-giving presence of the divine Spirit (ST 2:225, cf. 220-22, esp. fn. 58). Pannenberg appears to use the concept "feeling" in a less differentiated manner than Schleiermacher does in his discussion of the consciousness of dependence. Pannenberg defines feeling as rendering "us familiar with ourselves in the whole of our being, without our as yet having or needing an idea of our self" (ATP 251). Feeling precedes and embraces the differentiation of subject and object (Cf. ATP 247-53 for Pannenberg's discussion of the agreement and difference between himself and Schleiermacher on this point).

The section 'Whole and Part' in Chapter 1 provides a means of conceiving the relationship of individual things to the world.

³³Finite realities are characterized by the fact that they are always limited and contradicted by other finite realities (ST 2:225).

the unity of its [the self's] contents in subjective experience and unites these contents in the individual consummation of life, this unity of the self forms itself as a correlate of the objective unity of the "concept" [Begriff] which grasps the concretely different objects in their unity.³⁴

By means of this process the concept of a world comes to be formed in consciousness. It is the concept that includes all the multifarious and finite objects of reality. Pannenberg notes that it is over against the concept of a world, which epitomizes all finite existence, that the notion of the eternal and infinite can be realized. A further step of reflection is needed to recognize that the eternal cannot be thought of as limited by an opposite--the world, or everything that is not eternal (ST 2:224f.). Rather the eternal encompasses the world within itself.

In this notion of eternal oneness becomes thematic that which is always already present to consciousness as indeterminate eternity and which forms the spiritual-mental [geistig] space in which the separation of the self from others and all determination of otherness and

³⁴"Insofern ist auch die Erfassung der Einheit im Unterschied noch eine Funktion der Fähigkeit zur Distanznahme im Bewußtsein der Andersheit. Die Einheit des Unterschiedenen ist somit selber dem Bewußtsein ein anderes. Sie verdankt sich nicht der Einheit des Ich. Die Einheit des Ich als Boden aller Erfahrung, der die Einheit ihrer Inhalte im subjektiven Erleben begründet und sie im individuellen Lebensvollzug zur Einheit integriert, bildet sich aus als Korrelat der objektiven Einheit des »Begriffs«, der das gegenständlich Unterschiedene in seiner Einheit begreift" (ST 2:224).

relationship are exercised. And in this exercise it [eternal oneness] is disclosed to consciousness.³⁵

This argument, as well as Pannenberg's discussions of the categories "part" and "whole" and openness beyond the world to an eternity only vaguely perceived, reflect parallels to Anselm's argument for the existence of God. In each case one is led to think of ever greater or more encompassing realities until one reaches toward that which thought and experience can neither surpass nor fathom.³⁶ Pannenberg does not intend to prove that God exists. His intention is to point out the innate and inescapably religious structure of human existence. His argument intends to show that the basic unity of personal existence, as understood by anthropologists, lends itself to a religious construal of reality.

In this passage the unity in diversity is taken as a fundamental aspect of both human consciousness and the world. Furthermore, the experience of unity is shown to be rooted in the eternal, which itself pervades all reality and is the ground of the exercise of the faculties which

³⁵"In diesem Gedanken des unendlich Einen wird thematisch, was als unbestimmt Unendliches immer schon dem Bewußtsein präsent ist und den geistigen Raum bildet, in welchem das Distanznehmen vom anderen und alle Bestimmung der Andersheit und Bezogenheit sich bewegt und der selber durch diese Bewegung für das Bewußtsein erschlossen wird" (ST 2:225).

³⁶As far as I know Pannenberg does not make this connection.

form human consciousness. There is no dualistic opposition of mind-body, world-human, or eternal-finite. Pannenberg provides an interpretation of mind, body, world, finitude, and eternity that transcends facile oppositions. He makes a strong case for the fundamentally spiritual and religious character of existence. The relationship of humans to the divine is neither external nor secondary to human existence. On the other hand, neither is the relationship of humans to the natural and social worlds secondary. All reality is intertwined and brought into oneness in the relationship of the individual to God. It is this character of reality that Pannenberg argues is the root of the unity of the self. It is important to note that Pannenberg sees this as perhaps the most fundamental fact of human subjectivity. Not the self, but the divine Spirit is the ground of unity.

This development of a unified consciousness in individuals is connected by Pannenberg with the self-differentiation of the Son from the Father:

Despite all the perversions that have come into effect as a result of sin . . . human intelligence, in the realization of the otherness of the other, shares in the self-differentiation of the eternal Son from the Father, through which he is not only united with the Father, but is also the principle of all creaturely existence in its uniqueness. Human reason, it is true, generates merely thoughts, not directly the reality of finite things. However, these thoughts not only represent the finite objects in their difference from

others, but beyond this also can become the foundation for the formation of human technology.³⁷

The development of a self is dependent upon the differentiation of finite objects from each other. One of these objects is the human whose self is developing. Pannenberg states that just as the Son differentiates himself from and is united with the Father through the Spirit, so humans are dependent upon receiving from the Spirit (through the Phantasie) the capacity to apply reason to the naming (differentiation) of each actuality and to perceiving the unity in the differences. Human reason is not itself filled with the Spirit, but is dependent upon the Spirit to be lifted beyond its finitude to perceive also the presence of truth and wholeness amidst all creaturely limitations (ST 2:226).

All life is given by the Spirit, but among creatures human life is most fully awake. Pannenberg suggests that in order to understand the role of reason in life, it is best to consider it from the point of view of the con-

³⁷"Trotz aller infolge der Sünde eingetretenen Perversionen . . . hat die menschliche Intelligenz in der Wahrnehmung der Andersheit des Anderen teil an der Selbstunterscheidung des ewigen Sohnes vom Vater, durch die er nicht nur mit dem Vater vereint, sondern auch Prinzip alles geschöpflichen Daseins in seiner Besonderheit ist. Die menschliche Vernunft erzeugt freilich nur Gedanken, nicht unmittelbar die Wirklichkeit der endlichen Dinge. Doch diese Gedanken repräsentieren nicht nur die endlichen Gegenstände in ihrer Unterschiedenheit von anderen, sondern können darüber hinaus auch zur Basis für die Gebilde menschlicher Technik werden" (ST 2:226).

nectedness of all individual creaturely existence with its environment (Umweltbezogenheit).

The higher that consciousness is evolved the more the individual life-form in its consciousness will exist outside of itself and simultaneously, the more its reference to the world (Weltbezug) will be internal, present within itself. . . . To our knowledge human self-consciousness forms the highest level of this intermeshing of the ecstatic and inwardness.³⁸

Pannenberg defines the "ecstatic" of consciousness as intensified participation in the life-giving Spirit, as increased inwardness of life. This makes it possible for persons, as members of the world, to regard themselves as objects in the world (ST 2:227 and 3:29). It also makes possible the dualistic opposition of self and other, be it other persons or creatures or inanimate objects. But most significantly, it makes possible the recognition of the promised wholeness of life. It is possible to perceive this promise in the anticipations of wholeness which we encounter in the process of history.

The Self and Culture

In my view this human openness can be understood to be a space in which humans both need and are enabled to receive and construct cultures, which in this context

³⁸"Je weiter entwickelt das Bewußtseinsleben, desto mehr ist das Lebewesen in seinem Bewußtsein außer sich und desto mehr ist ihm zugleich sein Weltbezug innerlich, in ihm selber präsent. . . . Das menschliche Selbstbewußtsein bildet die für unser Wissen höchste Stufe dieses Ineinanders von Ekstasik und Innerlichkeit" (ST 2:227).

appear to be sophisticated patterns and methods of relating to the environment. Culture replaces instinct. The environment includes not only the non-human world, but other humans and the self as well. It also includes the vague infinity within which the world of finite objects takes shape. Individuals receive their culture, but have the ability to transform these traditions at every stage: reception, practice, and transmission.

I suggest that the development of rapid means of transportation, of marine vessels, of air travel, and of space travel appear as particularly transparent and successful examples of the striving to transcend the limitations that are "normal" to creaturely existence in time and space. This is confirmed by the scientific imagination of time travel, cloning, space travel beyond the speed of light, ad infinitum. These human activities are no doubt also connected with the special human awareness of death, but here it appears as quite reasonable to regard them, at least partially, as distortions of the fundamental openness that is seen to reach beyond the finite world to God.

Pannenberg connects openness to the world with the need of humans to realize their destiny. Human openness is ultimately openness to communion with God. It is openness to the love of the Son and the Father. It is openness to the life-giving Spirit. Humans are not in a position to

achieve this destiny apart from the life-giving Spirit. They are needy creatures.

Cultures provide ways of attempting to address this neediness. They provide means of achieving the common goals of human existence. They are also experienced as rigid structures which seek to restrict human openness. They function not only to educate but to hinder individuals. Socio-cultural rules (set patterns of responses to stimuli) are often used in the interests of powerful groups and individuals. Less insidiously, every human culture is limited in the options and tools that it provides to its members. Individuals ultimately are driven beyond the limits of their cultures. Culture can as easily cut humans off from their destiny as help them to achieve it.

In this context it becomes possible to argue that when a particular culture's practices have a widespread and massively negative impact on the world (which includes humans), then the entire tradition can be regarded as having become questionable and in need of revision. This applies to its scientific achievements as well as to its morality. The "success" of the natural sciences and their application in technology and industry are in need of criticism. They have failed to understand the complexity of the relationships that unite the objects of the world with each other. They have especially failed to note the wider contexts of these relationships. If Pannenberg is

correct then this failure is directly linked to the mechanistic and atheist assumptions of an emancipated age. Here one can regard positively the attack of Lynn White on the Judeo-Christian tradition as a wake-up call; although otherwise it must be regarded as an expression of the hypocrisy of emancipated modernity (cf. Matthew 7:5). It is emancipated modernity that is in need of revision, and Pannenberg attempts this by looking to its religious roots.

Sin and Human Destiny

Separation from God

Pannenberg points out that the self-chosen independence of modern western culture from its religious roots has only served to heighten the problem of evil (ST 2:272). Modern societies have committed some of the worst atrocities in history. Aside from the outrages against humans they threaten the continued existence of organic life on earth. And having turned away from its religious traditions, western culture has only itself to look to for responsibility for this mass destructiveness.

It is incredible that having rejected God and thereupon having committed such atrocities against humans, while continuing to ravage the earth, modern humans would point the finger of blame for these evils at others (ST 2:272). There is a tendency to blame social, economic, religious, and political structures. There is a temptation

to look to the past and find the source of evil in the pre-modern traditions and concepts that were rejected in the 18th century Enlightenment. It is clear that modern society is not able to come to terms with its own evil. Pannenberg argues that the Christian tradition very clearly points out that the source of evil is in the universality of individual sin (ST 2:272). While modern culture has had limited success in separating itself from the religious character of human existence, try as they might humans cannot distance themselves from evil (cf. ST 2:294).

We know that cultural constraints have restricted the objectification of other humans. To some extent animals have also been drawn into the protective umbrella of social mores. The existence of laws prohibiting the mistreatment of animals restrict the unlimited objectification of these creatures through the attempts of the self to gratify its capricious cravings. However, these restrictions and others that apply more widely to wildlife have only recently come into effect as the destructive consequences of human whim and greed have become evident. I suggest that modern society has been unable to address the moral causes of such destructiveness. It has merely responded to the appearances of evil with new external restrictions. Thus society becomes increasingly legalized. In this process society has increasingly become dependent upon experts to recognize, define, and treat the destruc-

tiveness of its members. Specialization and professionalization have accompanied the legalization of modern culture. These trends do not appear capable of providing holistic solutions.³⁹ They tend, rather, to introduce new difficulties, such as an increase in the experience of alienation, violence, and oppression. Modern pluralistic culture appears to be unable to address the root cause of its evils.

The Enlightenment notion of the autonomy and reasonableness of the individual appears to continue to inform society in this process. Unfortunately this has not made it possible for modern culture to penetrate to the idea that reason itself is distorted by the sinful character of cravings that are warped in upon the self. The professionally trained specialist is also a self driven by desires and cravings that are perverted by the failure to recognize, acknowledge, and love God above self and the world on par with the self.

Tragically, all relationships, all others, and even one's self are sometimes sacrificed in this pursuit of power. The individual vaguely recognizes his or her determination to eternal life and either seeks to flee from

³⁹Pannenberg points out that "laws cannot achieve the justice we seek precisely because they are abstract and general." He argues that only love that cares for the individual can achieve true justice, and that such just love is the central characteristic of the Kingdom of God (TKG 79).

this destiny or attempts to achieve it on the basis of its finite existence. This attempt is doomed to failure and the individual who makes the self the objective of existence will live in frustration, anxiety, and dread (ST 2:284-286). Anxiety and anger are already the result of sin, but they motivate further evils that range from self-deception to consumptive attempts to allay the dread of death and meaninglessness.

Pannenberg argues that a failure to trust God underlies the turning of humans away from God (ST 2:288f.). Lack of trust that God will bring to completion the destination toward which he has created the world leads humans to trust in themselves and their manipulations of others. Nonetheless, says Pannenberg, that this lack of trust in God is the root of sin and evil only becomes clear in the context of the historical self-revelation of God. Similarly the hubris of wanting to be as God is evident only through an awareness of the God of history (ST 2:289f.).

The notions of misery (Elend) and alienation (Entfremdung) serve Pannenberg in describing the separation of humans from God. The misery of humanity describes its sinful lostness in its separation from God.

In the concept of misery is summarized the isolation and independence of humans from God with the consequences which follow therefrom The person who is estranged from God lives in misery and sepa-

ration from God, distant from the home of his or her own identity.⁴⁰

That independence and separation from God is discussed in terms of estrangement, misery, and sin presupposes that humans (and through humans all creatures) are created and destined to communion with God (ST 2:208). Pannenberg argues that this misery is at its worst in situations where people live in the midst of wealth and luxury, but know nothing of their separation from God, who is their true good (ST 2:206f.). But perhaps this misery is yet worse where people live in physical misery, still know nothing of their separation from God, and seek only wealth and luxury.

Sin

With regard to individual actions Pannenberg states that "responsibility and guilt result from the validity of a norm which the acting person is to follow or should have followed."⁴¹ When the individual has incorporated a norm into her or his self-identity then failure to follow the norm leads to the experience of guilt. Pannenberg connects this experience with the idea of sin. Both are experiences

⁴⁰"Im Begriff des Elends ist die Absonderung und Verselbständigung des Menschen von Gott mit den daraus hervorgehenden Folgen zusammengefaßt. . . . Der Gott entfremdete Mensch lebt im Elend der Trennung von Gott, fern von der Heimat der eigenen Identität" (ST 2:207).

⁴¹"Verantwortlichkeit und Schuld ergeben sich erst aus der Geltung einer Norm, der der Handelnde folgen soll oder hätte folgen sollen" (ST 2:300).

of a condition in which the self is separated from its identity and destiny (ST 2:300).

But sin precedes all individual acts as a "power" which indwells subjectivity and overpowers it. "It is a situation of estrangement from God."⁴² Estrangement is the result of attempting to achieve true life apart from the source of life--the Creator. Eternal life is the eschatological destiny of humans, and it is to be realized in an historical process that is the history of God's creative love. Pannenberg argues that this is the basic fact of human existence and that sin is the failure to trust and love God as the one who will bring creation to completion. The power of sin lies in its ability to deceive us into believing that this fullness is possible apart from trust in God (ST 2:303).

Pannenberg notes that the first eleven chapters of Genesis point to a series of actions--from Adam's and Eve's disobedience, to Cain's murder of Abel, and to the evil conditions that led to the Flood, to which one might add the Babel story--which are presented as a steady increase of evil's power among humans. God is depicted as counter-ing this process and as protecting creation from the full consequences of evil (ST 2:302). This process and God's creative counter initiative is presented as descriptive of

⁴²"Es ist ein Zustand der Entfremdung von Gott" (ST 2:301).

the fundamental character of individual and social existence in all history. It is not primarily an account of the origin of evil, and provides no ground for metaphysical dualism. It is an account of reality as the history of God first of all creating and then redeeming his creation from evil. God is not surprised by evil, but has foreseen it as a danger inherent in the process of creating independent creatures (ST 2:194ff. & 302f.). According to Pannenberg evil must be seen as anticipated by God, and as relativized by the anticipated future salvation and fulfillment of creation (ST 2:303).

Humans as creatures who have arrived at complete independence must through themselves become and cultivate what they are and are to be. Therein it lies all too near that the process of becoming independent occur in a form in which humans put themselves in the place of God and his lordship over the creation. However, apart from creaturely independence the relationship of the Son to the Father cannot come to appearance in the medium of creaturely existence.⁴³

In other words, the possibility of evil is risked and its reality is endured and overcome in order to achieve the appearance of the Son's relationship to the Father. This appearance does not refer merely to the incarnation of the

⁴³"Der Mensch als das zu voller Selbständigkeit gelangte Geschöpf muß das, was es ist und sein soll, durch sich selber werden und ausbilden. Dabei liegt es nur allzu nahe, daß das in der Form einer Verselbständigung geschieht, in der der Mensch sich selber an die Stelle Gottes und seiner Herrschaft über die Schöpfung setzt. Aber ohne geschöpfliche Selbständigkeit kann auch das Verhältnis des Sohnes zum Vater nicht im Medium geschöpflichen Daseins zur Erscheinung kommen" (ST 2:303).

Son in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. All creation is determined to participate in the relationship of the Son with the Father. Apart from creaturely independence creatures could not come to participate in the eternal love of the Son and the Father through the Spirit.

Pannenberg also considers the possibility that sin and evil are rooted in the finitude of creaturely existence. Because they are creatures humans are limited in certain ways. They cannot know and accomplish everything. Therefore, they are liable to deceive themselves and engage in other wrong actions.⁴⁴ However, Pannenberg argues that this does not account for the source of evil. Both the notions of creaturely independence and limitation contribute toward understanding evil. But according to Pannenberg they are not themselves already evils: "The source of evil is rather to be sought in the rebellion against the limits of finitude, in the refusal to accept one's own finitude, and in the illusion of being like God (Gen 3:5) that is bound up with this."⁴⁵ The attempt of creatures to achieve fulfillment independently of God plays the central

⁴⁴Pannenberg refers to Leibniz, Theodizee, 20f., 156, 288 (ST 2:197).

⁴⁵"Die Wurzel des Bösen ist eher im Aufstand gegen die Schranke der Endlichkeit zu suchen in der Weigerung, die eigene Endlichkeit anzunehmen, und in der damit verbundenen Illusion der Gottgleichheit (Gen 3,5)" (ST 2:199).

role in Pannenberg's understanding of the origin of evil (ST 2:199).

In Pannenberg's understanding of freedom and sin the focus is not on the ability of the will to select between good and evil actions. He suggests that a will that can choose to do evil is already less free than one which cannot choose evil. For in the ability to choose evil the corruption of the will is already evident. The will is entrapped in evil. The will that is able to choose evil cannot choose good that is unqualified by evil (ST 2:296f.). From the perspective of the two aspects of love, we could say that the self is never able so to love God and others that it does not also thereby seek its own advantage (ST 2:298f.).

The self-centeredness of personal existence is inescapable. Pannenberg, however, does not identify this fundamental self-centeredness with sin. This personal centeredness is essential to the nature of existence as creatures with a high degree of independence from and control over their environment (ST 2:298). He argues that when the self shuts itself in by absolutizing the self, a decision which entails the refusal to acknowledge God and others, then self-centeredness has become sin. The will to self-realization is rightly exercised in the context of trusting self-differentiation from God (ST 2:298f.). The sin of

turning from God already underlies the choices made regarding individual actions.

The biblical idea of sin addresses human existence at the level of the fundamental attitudes and convictions of individuals. The longings and desires of persons are the manifestations of these attitudes (ST 2:274f.). If a person's desires are turned away from God and against the love of God this is a reflection of the refusal of the person to acknowledge God as God. Humans turn to themselves. The individual chooses to love the self and to honor the self as god rather than to love and acknowledge the Creator as God. The implication of this for the relationship of the individual to God is that he or she comes to hate God (ST 2:280). The individual regards her or himself as the center of reality and uses everything else as a means to achieve the ends of the self. God can only be recognized as a hindrance to such self-realization. Needless to say, other creatures can then only be viewed either as objects of self-gratification or as hindrances of these desires.

The structure of the craving that is so turned to the self is described by Augustine as concupiscence. Panenbergh argues that it is a mistake to think that Augustine thought of concupiscence as only or even primarily associated with sexual desires. All desires that are ultimately centered upon the self are concupiscent desires (ST 2:277-79). The implication of such a focus on the self and the

realization of its desires is that everything else in the world tends to be reduced to its value for the ends of the self and the reduced world within which it lives.

Consequences of Sin

According to Pannenberg it "does not follow from finitude, that death belongs to the nature of human" existence.⁴⁶ Pannenberg states, rather, that:

Death is the consequence of the breaking off of the relationship with God, the source of life, and is to be understood in connection with the other consequences of sin, which exist in that humans in their opposition to the Creator also wind up in opposition to their co-creatures, to the earth, to the animals, and to other humans.⁴⁷

God does not intervene in history to punish sin. The consequences of sin follow naturally quite apart from any special activity of God. "Rather, the conflict of the sinner with the creation of God and with other humans and even with oneself follow from the character of sin as breach of the relationship with God."⁴⁸ Just as God is the source of

⁴⁶"Aus der Endlichkeit folgt nicht, daß der Tod zur Natur des Menschen gehört" (GF 2:153).

⁴⁷"Der Tod ist die Folge des Abbruchs der Beziehung zu Gott, der Quelle des Lebens, und er ist im Zusammenhang mit den übrigen Sündenfolgen zu sehen, die darin bestehen, daß der Mensch durch seinen Gegensatz zum Schöpfer auch in Gegensatz zu seinen Mitgeschöpfen, zur Erde, zu den Tieren und zu den andern Menschen gerät (vgl. Gen 3,14-19)" (ST 2:309).

⁴⁸"Vielmehr folgt aus der Wesensart der Sünde als Bruch des Gottesverhältnisses der Konflikt des Sünders mit der Schöpfung Gottes und dem Mitmenschen und sogar mit sich selber" (ST 2:309).

life so is he the source of wholeness and unity. Thus when humans fail to acknowledge God they are not separated from God only, but also from all creatures. This separation signifies an inability to fully acknowledge other creatures as existing independently of the aims of the self.

The whole of one's identity is not available until beyond the end of life. As long as existence is within time both past and future are lost from the possibilities of the present moment. Neither is wholeness present at death, as Heidegger argued. Death is the dissolution of the individual and is not her or his wholeness. Wholeness is given only in the Christian idea of resurrection to communion with the Creator who sees beginning and end, to whom nothing is lost in the passage of time (MG 62). What remains true of Heidegger's connection of death and wholeness "is the unity of the future and the possible wholeness of existence."⁴⁹ The Christian hope of resurrection to communion with God does not imply a unity that subsumes creaturely existence in God, but the renewal and consolidation of creaturely life. Pannenberg argues that Endlichkeit (finitude) will continue to be a mark of participation in God's eternal life (ST 2:310f.). However, as long as finite existence is in time it continues to be subject to

⁴⁹"Bestehen bleibt aber die Zusammengehörigkeit von Zukunft und möglicher Ganzheit des Daseins. . ." (MG 62).

death. During its finite existence in time the self is separated from its true identity.

Death remains as the final threat to self-realization. It is the unbridgeable gulf between existence in the process of time and the realization of human destiny in eternity. Death is connected with sin. It belongs to the separation of human existence from the Creator who gives not only wholeness, but life itself. Death is the consequence of humans turning from God and placing themselves in God's position. It is not, however, thereby to be understood that God created death. God's actions in history are of the character of limiting evil and the consequences of sin (ST 2:313). That humans at times do remarkable things and reach great heights of "cultural flowering" is regarded by Pannenberg as a sign not of the continued operation of human capacity to do good (freedom of the will), but of the creative and renewing activity of the "Divine Spirit in the life of humanity." This occurs where the "image of the Son takes form" in history.⁵⁰

Pannenberg nowhere restricts this activity of the divine Spirit to the church. Quite the contrary, he attempts to show that this activity of God is open to perception even in natural processes. For example, he con-

⁵⁰"Befreiung von der Herrschaft der Sünde und des Todes erlangen die Menschen nur da, wo durch das Wirken des göttlichen Geistes im Leben der Menschheit das Bild des Sohnes Gestalt annimmt" (ST 2:314).

nects death and evil with entropy, the second law of thermodynamics, which states that more highly organized forms of energy will tend to change to warmth, a less highly organized form of energy. While this inexorable process implies the death of individual organisms, it is a necessary process for the evolution of higher life forms. It can be regarded as a pre-condition for the development of order out of chaos.⁵¹ Pannenberg agrees with the possibility of connecting entropy with the notion of demonic opposition to the creative purposes of God. However, he also notes the greater power of God to turn the power of dissipation to serving the goal of creating various forms of independent creatures (ST 2:131, 199f.).

This example makes plain that Pannenberg regards all reality from the point of view of the process of God's creative activity, which is aimed at the establishment of independent creatures. This is the unity of nature and history. All reality is regarded as history. And if we also take into account that the goal toward which God determines these creatures is participation in the love of the Son and the Father for each other as mediated through the Spirit, then it further becomes clear that all reality

⁵¹Pannenberg (ST 2:118f.) cites Carl F.v. Weizsäcker, Die Einheit der Natur (1971), 172-182, C.F.v. Weizsäcker, Zum Weltbild der Physik (1954), 224f., A.M.K. Müller, Die präparierte Zeit (1972), 287f., R.J. Russell, "Entropy and Evil," Zygon 19 (1984): 449-468.

is also regarded as the history of God's self-revelation to his creation. Furthermore, in the context of sin and death all reality is the history of God's redemptive activity. God overcomes the separation of creatures from their destiny.

The Future and Morality

The Crisis in Ethics

The moral character of existence is rooted in the creative love of the Father and the Son. Pannenberg states that "the idea of the determination of humans is not first of all ethical, but is eschatological, and that with regard to its realization one must think in terms of salvation history. . . ." ⁵² That the realization of the destiny of human existence is thought of in terms of the action and image of God, according to Pannenberg, does not undercut the moral implications of his theological anthropology. ⁵³ Rather Pannenberg seeks to ground ethics by reversing Kant's derivation of God from practical reason.

⁵²In regard to avoiding the "the danger of a moralization of evil" ("Gefahr einer Moralisierung des Bösen") as a failure to achieve the spiritual/historical goal of existence Pannenberg notes the significance of the argument "daß der Gedanke der Bestimmung des Menschen nicht in erster Linie ethisch, sondern eschatologisch und hinsichtlich seiner Realisierung heilsgeschichtlich gedacht wird, was nicht ausschließt, daß daraus dann auch ethische Verbindlichkeiten folgen" (ST 2:300n300).

⁵³Ibid.

Pannenberg points out that one significant difference between Plato and Kant lies in the more fundamentally anthropological nature of Kant's position. For "Kant not only is the link between material nature and the soul broken down, but he has also no further reason for supposing that all phenomena have as it were a soul within them. Something like a soul is only to be found in man, in so far as man is a subject" (IGHF 81). For Plato the stars and soul were phenomena that led the lover of wisdom to the divine. For Kant the stars no longer provide a way to God. Instead God is conceived as a requirement of moral experience (IGHF 84). Pannenberg points out that anthropology has become the battleground regarding the truth of the idea of God. What is further evident here, as Pannenberg also points out, is that Kant grounds religion in the moral character of existence. Pannenberg rejects Kant's moral conception of religion as well as the idealistic separation of soul (with the notions of spirit and mind that are associated with it) and body (with the notions and physical reality associated with it). Pannenberg's work aims to reverse this order by convincingly pointing out that humans are fundamentally religious creatures. He argues this by returning to a biblical conception of humanity.⁵⁴

⁵⁴Pannenberg argues with both philosophical atheism and the methodological atheism of the modern sciences. See "Typen des Atheismus und ihre theologische Bedeutung" and "Die Frage nach Gott," both in GF 1. See also IGHF, especially pp. 80-177 and his WT Part 1. Pannenberg treats the claims of the Christian tradition as rationally testable

Pannenberg understands Hegel as completing the Kantian anthropological interpretation of reality. He points out that for Hegel the connection of the Absolute with the human spirit expresses "the relationship of man to nature, man's elevation above the finitude of natural phenomena to the idea of the infinite . . ." (IGHF 84). In the context of the ontological proof, which begins with the assumption of God, it is the religious elevation of the human mind above all finite reality "to the idea of the infinite and absolute" which must be shown both to be true to human existence and to lead to a divine being (IGHF 86). I wish to draw attention to Pannenberg's essential disagreement with both Kant and Hegel regarding the soul. The disagreement involves a fundamental difference in the understanding of the relationship of both God and humans to the natural world. The argument starts with a different understanding of soul, body and spirit.

Pannenberg argues that a notion of the independence of the soul from the body entered Christian thought in the second century. He suggests that this neo-Platonic conception of the soul is not in agreement with the Hebrew notion of the unity of human existence as body and soul. He also states that Plato's notion of the undying soul does not place the same worth on the individual as does the biblical

hypotheses about the nature of reality.

notion of one life (with no reincarnation) followed by a bodily resurrection.⁵⁵ Jesus presented God as the one who eternally loves each individual person and thus gives each person measureless value.

Along with introducing a notion of the soul that has proved unacceptable in the modern period, according to Pannenberg neo-Platonism introduced an unnecessary and unfortunate dualism of soul and body (ST 2:211). Pannenberg argues that the Hebrew understanding of the soul is of a living but needy being. "According to Genesis 2:7 the soul is not only the life principle of the body, but is the ensouled body itself, the living being as a whole" (ST 2:213). Nevertheless, humans are beings that are in need of receiving the life-giving Spirit (TKG 87). Humans do not exist of themselves and on their own power. They require the gift of life from the Spirit. Only thus does the soul live (ST 2:214f.). And the animals also share this nature with humans. They too as a result of the life giving Spirit are living creatures, are ensouled bodies (Gen 1:30; 2:19) (ST 2:218).

Pannenberg's disagreement with Gerhard Ebeling's attempt to ground Christian theology in the moral character

⁵⁵BM 10. Pannenberg interprets the biblical understanding of life after death through the resurrection of Jesus. Other ancient Jewish notions of the after-life are excluded by the New Testament.

of human experience is relevant in this context.⁵⁶ Ebeling claims that the theme of morality is the universal problematic which Christian faith addresses.⁵⁷ Pannenberg argues that modern historical consciousness has resulted in the relativizing of all ethical norms as cultural phenomena. They can no longer be grounded in a universal moral character; for this has no content that is not subject to historicity (EE 47f.). In the interest of ethics also, says Pannenberg, the theologian must seek to establish the truth of the Christian claims regarding God and his self-revelation in the love of Christ (EE 47 & 53f.). Ebeling suggests that Pannenberg's attempt to ground ethics within the context of a Christian conception of reality results in an ethic that is valid only for those who first believe the Christian claim.⁵⁸ Pannenberg's response to this is that the claim of Christianity regards all reality and addresses all people. It addresses the fundamental questions of meaning and existence (EE 66-68). If it is not true for everyone, then it is true for no one (ATP 15).

⁵⁶The argument between Pannenberg and Ebeling focuses on Wilhelm Hermann's ethics, which Pannenberg regards as a continuation of Kant's moral anthropology (EE 45-54). See Gerhard Ebeling, "Die Krise des Ethischen und die Theologie: Erwiderung auf W. Pannenbergs Kritik," in Wort und Glaube, vol. 2: Beiträge zur Fundamentaltheologie und zur Lehre von Gott (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1969), 42-55 and Pannenberg, "Antwort an Gerhard Ebeling," in EE 55-69.

⁵⁷Ebeling, "Die Krise," 47.

⁵⁸Ebeling, "Die Krise," 50f.

Pannenberg notes that the problematic of morality presupposes a generally accepted notion of the good. He states that as Plato knew, the metaphysical and religious questions regarding the notion of the good underlie concrete forms of resistance to evil (EE 57f.). Pannenberg's aim is to argue convincingly at this foundational level that experience shows all reality to be consistent with the Christian claim that God creates, redeems, and does so toward an eschatological consummation in which sin and death are transcended. Ebeling counters that Pannenberg is attempting to undo the emancipation from religion achieved by the Enlightenment and to "re-theologize" the modern sciences.⁵⁹

While these charges have an element of truth it is not true that Pannenberg is attempting to re-pristiniate pre-modern Christendom. He is not attempting to re-establish the authority of the church over human reason. Rather he is attempting to re-establish in the context of modern (scientific) culture the validity of the Judeo-Christian conception of reality as grounded in the creative and redemptive activity of God's love. This is seen specifically in the context of Pannenberg's efforts to show how both "the connection of Christian faith with the historical form of [revelation in] Jesus" and "the special relation-

⁵⁹Ebeling, "Die Krise," 44.

ship of the biblical God with the experience of reality as history" through the history of their transmission (Überlieferungsgeschichte) have led to the development of modern notions of reality and history, and also serve to correct the atheist assumptions of emancipated modern culture (EE 66f.).

In other words, on the basis of the Judeo-Christian tradition and the history of its transmission, Pannenberg develops a critique of the post-Enlightenment West and its understanding of reality.⁶⁰ He argues that the opposition of soul and body on the one hand, and the pluralism of values that has resulted from the emancipation and autonomy of reason on the other hand, fail to acknowledge the inescapably religious character of reality. Therefore, modern culture and its sciences have fallen short of understanding the most basic characteristic of all existence. Modern dualism is linked with the modern crisis in ethics, one aspect of which is seen in the problematic relationship of materialist culture to non-human reality.

In short, Pannenberg's thought can be seen as an attempt to overcome the destructive character of reason's autonomy in modern culture. He does so by seeking to

⁶⁰Pannenberg also makes use of Plato's conception of the good. See "Christentum und Platonismus: Die kritische Platonrezeption Augustins in ihrer Bedeutung für das gegenwärtige christliche Denken," Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 96 (1985): esp. 151 & 158f.

establish a theological/metaphysical foundation for reason. In other words, according to Pannenberg both theoretical and practical reason are grounded in a transcendent good (God).⁶¹

Eschatology and Ethics

I have argued that Pannenberg employs the image of God rather than a notion of autonomous human reason as the true ground of social mores. He argues that purely rational attempts to ground the worth of individual human life have long fallen in ruins, due to individualistic arbitrariness and the pluralism which grows in its seedbed. Modern notions of equality and reciprocity also fail to provide grounds for the absolute valuation of individual existence. Only the notion of worth given in the ideas of creation and redemption (incarnation, salvation, resurrection) serves to provide a durable ground for the ineradicable value of individual human existence (ST 2:205). The worth of the individual person's existence

⁶¹Pannenberg recognizes that the modern period has understood God to be the opponent of reason's autonomy. His arguments against the atheism of Feuerbach and others show his concern to conceive God as the ground of human freedom (cf. GF 1:347-386 & IGHF 80-115). Also see Pannenberg, "Rezeptive Vernunft: Die antike Deutung der Erkenntnis als Hinnahme vorgegebener Wahrheit," in Überlieferung und Aufgabe: Festschrift für Erich Heintel zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. Herta Nagl Docekal (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1982), 273 & 299f. and Oswald Bayer, "Die Gegenwart der Güte Gottes," Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie 21 (1979): 266. Bayer points out Pannenberg's use of the Platonic notion of the good.

goes beyond the person's place in nature and in his or her social world (ST 2:204). Disease, poverty, oppression, suffering, misery, and death cannot rob an individual of this worth. Only one's own action in contradiction to this worth can so set one against God that one is condemned by the worth towards which all are destined.⁶²

In addition to God's creative and redeeming love, Pannenberg connects the image of God especially with two further characteristics of God--eternal life and righteousness. Especially moral determination (moralische Bestimmung) is grounded in the expectation of humans to be united in an eternal communion with God, which means a participation in God's eternal life and righteousness. This moral determination aims not only at the relationship of humans with God, but intends the perfection of inter-human relationships (ST 2:258). The communion of individuals with God forms the foundation of communion with each other. "Only in the relationship with God, and thus from the eschatological future of their determination, does the moral self-determination of humans, their ethical autonomy,

⁶²ST 2:206. It appears that this provides a Christian foundation to criticize some modern forms of devaluation of individual life. While it is beyond the focus of this dissertation, I believe that this point would provide grounds for developing a Christian response to issues such as abortion and euthanasia.

find a firm and viable foundation."⁶³ In other words, social existence is intended by God to be fundamentally shaped by love. And love is defined by its future perfection in communion with God.⁶⁴

We have seen that Pannenberg argues that humans are fundamentally oriented towards the future realization of the image of God. He argues that the future is real and that "it already determines the present" (IGHF 110). The Kingdom of God as proclaimed by Jesus is already operative in history. It is most fundamentally connected with human exocentricity or openness. The Spirit of God providentially guides (determines) history through the human imagination, through education, through the transmission of religious traditions, through rational reflection, and through experience generally. Love, righteousness, and eternal life are divine categories. They define the Kingdom of God. Therefore our experiences of them are fleeting and imperfect. Our experiences and our knowledge of history confirm this. These qualities are at home in the

⁶³"Nur in der Gottesbeziehung also und darum von der eschatologischen Zukunft seiner Bestimmung her findet auch die moralische Selbstbestimmung des Menschen, seine sittliche Autonomie, eine feste und tragfähige Basis" (ST 2:258).

⁶⁴Pannenberg argues that the Platonic notion of the good already recognized--on the basis of a structural analysis of existence--that the good was not a possession, but had to be striven for. The good is "beyond the presently realized human condition" (TKG 106).

promised future (eschatological) realization of perfect communion with God and others. But Pannenberg's argument is that this future realization is already operative. It has ontological priority. It is on its foundation that the world exists. It is towards its creaturely realization that the process of history moves. And it is on the basis of its creative, providential, and redemptive power that there is this process.

Both Plato and Jesus taught that human life needed to find its focus outside of itself.⁶⁵ The one pointed to the Good and the other to the Father. "The pursuit of happiness for its own sake is egocentric and misleading. Only the one who strives for the Good for its own sake will thereby find both happiness and her or his own identity."⁶⁶ Pannenberg continues with a quotation of Matthew 16:25: "For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Pannenberg combines this with the Platonic notion that happiness follows from goodness. Only when God is honored as the highest

⁶⁵See Ted Peters, "Pannenberg's Eschatological Ethics," 241f. Peters notes that Pannenberg connects a Platonic notion of the good with the future rule of God (see TKG 111).

⁶⁶"Das Streben nach dem Glück um seiner selbst willen ist egozentrisch und führt in die Irre. Nur wer nach dem Guten um seiner selbst willen strebt, wird dadurch auch das Glück und seine eigene Identität finden" (ST 2:286).

Good of the self will the self achieve its own identity.⁶⁷ The individual receives life through recognizing and praising God in Jesus. This recognition involves the ordering of personal existence in accord with Jesus' love for the Father and his love for the creation as it is entailed in his love for the Father.⁶⁸ This is summed up by Jesus in the admonition to "seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33) (ST 2:286). Blessedness follows goodness.

The other aspect of this goodness is expressed by the dual character of the movement of love: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). Proper recognition and love of others is unfailingly implied by love of God (the Good).⁶⁹ The moral quality of existence is fundamental and inescapable. It characterizes all existence from beginning to end. "God is the ultimate good of the ethical quest, not when he is conceived in splendid self-isolation, but when he is understood as relating himself to our world in

⁶⁷Pannenberg refers to Plato, Gorgias 470e, 491bff. (ST 2:286 & MG 46).

⁶⁸Pannenberg argues that Plato did not adequately determine what the nature of the good was. This left the idea of the good open to association with happiness. It did not allow for a clear distinction of the good as being both prior to and the source of happiness (TKG 106-108).

⁶⁹These are not two kinds of love (TKG 112).

the coming of his rule" (TKG 111). Thus, all moral concern is set within this understanding of God as the concrete future realization of our good.

The Kingdom of God is deeply concerned with the world and is emphatically not a merely otherworldly goal, disengaged from history. This means that human "striving for God as the ultimate good beyond the world is turned into concern for the world" (TKG 111). Pannenberg is not suggesting that human activity will gradually, or suddenly through some revolution, progress until the Kingdom is realized in the world. Jesus already represents the concrete, but preliminary, appearance of the Kingdom in history. In Jesus is revealed the right human relationship of love for and participation in ultimate reality, and within this divine love is included the self-giving love for all creation. In Jesus' resurrection is revealed the power of God to realize the Kingdom as the ultimate goal of history. Faith in God and devotion to Jesus results in the conversion of the individual to the coming Kingdom and to the world (TKG 126).

Taken together--the unfinished and future-oriented character of human existence, the capacity of humans to respond freely to experience, the determinative and moral character of the future fulfillment of human life (the image of God) in the coming Kingdom of God, and the inclusion of non-human reality in a theology of history--these

aspects of Pannenberg's anthropology and theology of history provide an understanding of human life as intrinsically moral in character and fundamentally concerned with all aspects of the world. Furthermore, his taking nature into a unified philosophy of nature and history shows the intimate connection of humans with the natural world.

Participation in the love of God means to participate in the giving of oneself for others as Jesus has done. To obey the command of love is to serve others and to be willing to give one's life for them. To those who lose their lives now is given the promise of eternal life (John 12:25). This future reality is the source of existence, and it is the source of love. It gives human existence its peculiar exocentric and self-differentiating form. It is also the answer to the deepest longings and hopes of human existence. Therefore the command of love is not external to the self, but resonates with the exocentric character of human being. The image of God which is the source of the command of love is no heteronomous authority. It is the source and goal of all reality.

The Ethics of Dominion

It is important to note the positive and central role Pannenberg gives to the human activity of differentiating the various finite things of the world. The sciences of the modern world are here seen as rooted in a

theological view of human nature. This amounts to a basically positive evaluation of a wissenschaftliches point of view. A scientific approach to knowledge of the world is quite appropriate for humans. However, it must be clearly noted that this scientific approach to the world is grounded in a religious conception of existence.

Furthermore, Pannenberg conceives of humans as co-existent with all creatures and fundamentally belonging to the world. All reality is determined by God to be united with the Father. It is true that he regards humans as having a special role in the creaturely expression of this future unity, but neither as isolated from nor opposed to other creatures. The innate curiosity of humans is rightly structured by logical methods. But these methods are secondary to both the differentiating curiosity of humans and the unifying work of God, a work that makes a world of the multifarious things that exist. This means that all the differentiating activities of humans are subject to this work of God. And since the character of God's unifying action is best described as love, the human activity that corresponds to the self-differentiation of the Son from the Father needs also to conform to the love of the Father and Son for each other and of the Trinity for the world. In other words, the differentiating activities of humans--which include the sciences--must be structured by love for every creature in the context of love for God.

The notion that the human drive for knowledge is rooted in the self-differentiating love of the Son for the Father can provide a critical principle by which to guide and evaluate human activities including modern science and technology.⁷⁰ It certainly provides a theological rooting for morality. All creaturely activity is here seen to be destined to participate in the inner-Trinitarian love. The ultimate destiny determines the very character of human subjectivity, and is also the ground of all morality. But it so determines humans that each individual must either co-determine his or her personhood in accord with this end or determine it in some other way. The character of love is that it must be given and received freely. Otherwise it is not love. Therefore, in every thought and action a person must love or not love:

In relation to the God of the power of the future, man is free: free for a truly personal life, free to accept the provisionality of everything, free with regard to nature and society, free for that creative love that changes the world without destroying it. This creative love proceeds from freedom and is directed toward affirming and creating freedom in the world. If the unity of mankind, which is the purpose of history, one day becomes reality, it will be achieved by this love (TKG 69f.).

This applies as much to relationships with the non-human world as those with other humans. All relationships are

⁷⁰Pannenberg notes the critical function of the Kingdom over against all political achievements. He also identifies the heart of the Kingdom as love (TKG 80, 65f. & 79).

grounded in the relationship of each creature to the Creator.

Let God be God. This is the fundamental task of humans. It is to recognize their own status as creatures in submission to the Creator. To do so is to honor God as God. It is to trust in the eschatological realization of God's rule. And it is to achieve the freedom of creatures under the Father (cf. IST 68). It might be helpful to rephrase the above charge: Let the Creator be Lord. In other words, in the exercise of our dominion we must acknowledge that the objects of the world are not at our disposal apart from the freedom and authority granted us by the Creator. Each has its own prior relationship to the Creator and is part of the history of the revelation of the image of God.

To Pannenberg's analysis we must add that we live in virtual isolation from the earth and its wild creatures. We are surrounded by objects that we have created, objects that appear to be completely at our disposal. Yet these products are formed out of the earth, plants, and creatures. Our production of books, tools, machines, etc. is dependent upon the world. We have come to regard these naturally occurring objects as raw materials. Most of us have only occasional concourse with the raw world. We have grown very accustomed to having considerable powers of disposal over the objects (products) we generally perceive.

Only social and legal considerations interfere with this power. Except for our relations to other humans, we are generally removed from immediate interaction with the world of divinely created things (cf. CS 73f.). It has perhaps become all too easy to extend the character of our authority over our products to our relationship to the non-human world, and increasingly to humans as well. But in this sub-world of cultural artifacts too, love can be accepted as the foundation of morality. Love for God, for humans, and for the whole of divinely created reality is the foundation for guiding our relationship to our culture and its accoutrements. This foundation also provides a critical principle for judging these relationships and products.

Modernity's self-emancipation from religion has resulted in the loss of orientation toward the eternal future. This is, ironically also a loss of freedom, since true freedom is rooted in trust in the power and love of God, which hold the promise of resurrection and fulfillment. Apart from this humans are left to their own resources to achieve their destiny, to make themselves persons. However, apart from the relationship to God, who is the source of unity, who makes it possible to conceive of a world, we become separated from ourselves. We no longer know how to direct the infinite openness of our being. Augustine would say that our self-assertion has cut off our restless hearts from their infinite rest. In this situa-

tion modern culture has become enslaved to its economy of production and consumption. Materialist culture is anything but free. The attempt to sate our infinite openness with finite objects is doomed to failure.

This is but one sign of our loss of freedom. Another is seen in the changing character of our relationship to science and technology. Here we see how dependent we have become on the ability of our efforts to free us from the fears and threats of existence. As modern culture has become aware of the destructive consequences of science, technology, industry, and normal daily life it has turned to science and technology to save the situation. The economics of consumption which is the driving engine of all these activities continues to dominate us.

Pannenberg attempts to show that secular views of reality do not adequately account for existence (cf. CW 68). He argues that the religious character of existence needs to be recognized and allowed to shape the self and culture. We have seen that he argues that humans have a fundamental openness

to an Other beyond all the objects of their world, an Other that at the same time embraces this entire world and thus ensures the possible unification of the life of human beings in the world, despite the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the world's actions on them. A mere very general horizon containing all objects would have no inherent existence. In fact, when human beings reach out to a very general horizon embracing all the individual objects of actual or possible perception, they are relating themselves exocentrically to a reality prior to them; in this reaching out they are

therefore implicitly affirming at the same time the divine reality, even though they have not yet grasped this thematically as such, much less in this or that particular form (ATP 69).

This openness to the infinite does not entail an abandonment of the world of finite objects, but it entails the recognition that the objects can neither be accounted for of themselves nor can they satisfy the basic neediness of finite existence. It is a consciousness of the absolute contingency of all finite objects that leads to the idea of a transcendent ground of the world.⁷¹ But every attempt to understand this infinite is itself finite and able to be transcended. According to Pannenberg this means that the human relationship to the infinite is mediated through the finite world. Thus, "from the transcending of all finite realities" consciousness is always turned back to the reality of its finite self and environment. This line of reasoning leads Pannenberg to conclude that human experience reveals a dependence upon something that "surpasses and sustains everything finite" (ATP 70). He claims that his argument serves as proof, not that God exists, but that the question of God cannot be separated from the question of the nature of existence (ATP 73).

⁷¹Pannenberg points out the affinity of these results with Hegel's view that the experience of finitude already implies its transcendence and the elevation of consciousness to the idea of the infinite (ATP 70).

One of the significant implications of this argument is that the movement of the self beyond itself and toward the infinite goal of its existence is only and always achieved in and mediated by the finite natural and social worlds. To love God is to participate in God's love for the world (TKG 111-113). The fundamental requirement of this self-transcending process is a basic trust in the world, as well as in the ultimate human destiny--the image of God. This second type of trust is ultimately expressed in the hope of bodily resurrection. Trust flourishes in the soil of love.

Creative and redeeming love is at the heart of Pan-nenberg's understanding of reality. The eternal Son's self-differentiating love is the principle of otherness which is the source of the independent existence of creatures. The redeeming love of the Son aims to draw alienated and dying creatures back to the eternal love which is the source of their existence. Perfect communion with the faithful love of the eternal Father is the goal toward which the divine Spirit draws history.

Love is the formative ground upon which existence is based. The exocentricity of human existence is an essential capacity which enables humans to recognize others as other from themselves and to recognize their worth apart from any advantage to the self. This is fundamental to love. In this way love shows its absolutely basic sig-

nificance for responsible human existence. Love is the structure of our being. It is not an external authority that bids us to love God and to love others. This theological conception of reality is the foundation of Pannenberg's understanding of the moral character of existence.

It is coherent with Pannenberg's theology to use biblical images here that he has not used: The rule of humans over creation is to have the character of a servant priesthood and kingship, both of which are defined through the character of Jesus' self-giving love. The image of Jesus, the king of kings and high priest who came in the form of the suffering servant, who submitted all notions of authority to the law of love, is the anticipation of the goal of existence. As such it is also the root of the moral responsibility of existence. In Pannenberg's conception of existence morality begins with an appropriate response to God and finitude, and this is achieved in relationship with humans, the products of culture, and all creation.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have focused on how Wolfhart Pannenberg's understanding of creation, Christology and anthropology provide for a conception of the unity of nature and history. I have also attempted to show how this theological conception of the unity of nature and history might ground ecologically conscious moral thought.

In the first chapter I presented an account of Pannenberg's eschatological notion of creation. Creation is understood by Pannenberg as the unified action of the Trinitarian God. The idea of creation encompasses the entire process of reality in its movement towards participation in the love of the Creator. Thus, creation is joined with the ideas of redemption, providence, and fulfillment. He also makes philosophical arguments regarding universal history, the notions of "whole" and "world" and he reflects philosophically on scientific notions such as "field" and "contingency." On these and other grounds he argues that reality should be understood as a unity of nature and history.

In the second and third chapters I attempted to show how Pannenberg's Christology and theological anthropology support and augment the arguments presented in the first chapter. Of central significance to the

Christology of Pannenberg is the idea of the self-differentiating love of Jesus. This is seen especially in the self-effacing intimacy of Jesus' relationship to God, whom he regarded as his Father. The love of the eternal Father and Son for each other is manifested in Jesus' destiny. Jesus submitted his life to the will of God and God raised Jesus from the dead. Pannenberg conceives of this divine love as encompassing the created world. In loving the Father, Jesus loves the world. In loving Jesus, the Father loves the world. Together, Father, Son and Spirit create and redeem the world and bring it to the realization of its destiny.

That humans have a central role in this process is based, according to Pannenberg, on the incarnation of the eternal Son in the person Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus represents the proleptic realization of the image of God in history. The eschatological goal of history is the perfect realization of the image of God in creaturely reality. This image includes, through humans, all creatures. The content of the image is divine love. Humans are called, therefore, to participate in the divine love as representatives of the entire creation. The eschatological source and destiny of creation--the God whose future rule is love--is the "unifying unity" of reality.

Pannenberg thinks of all reality, non-human nature as well as the story of human cultures, as one process. It

is a process that goes forth from the creative and powerful love of God. Pannenberg's philosophy of universal history is grounded in a theological system which unites nature and history on the basis of his interpretation of the ideas of creation, redemption, and fulfillment.

Though creatures turn from God and from divine intentions, God responds with forgiving love. God enters redemptively into a history with creatures. Pannenberg argues that the process of creation is providentially guided towards the perfect realization of God's Kingdom. Trust in this future is the appropriate attitude of humans as they live within the process of history. Trust is based on the ever faithful love of God, which is reflected even in those regularities of nature which allow description in the form of laws of science.

Pannenberg characterizes the relationship of God to creation in terms of faithfulness and love. The resurrection of Jesus especially reveals the eternal love and value that God has for individual creatures. The aim of divine love is to free and enable creatures to enter into the twofold motion of love. Love is not an authority that is external to creaturely existence. The transforming power of love comes to creatures through the ecstatic and open structure of their being. Love empowers their imaginations and makes them free. Participation in the eschatological Kingdom of God is the central expression of the hope of the

Christian faith. It is on this understanding of love and the unity of the process of creation that Pannenberg would ground ethics.

Human life is to be guided by the love of God, which includes all creation in its movement. The good of humans is not opposed to that of other creatures. The good of humans is the perfection of the image of God, which is realized in Jesus' self-giving love of God and others. This is the ground of moral responsibility. It is not the authority of law, but is the response of the spirit of love. All life is to be lived in the Spirit which originates in God and is directed to back to God and to others.

I have tried to show that Pannenberg's thought aims to overcome both the dualism of nature and history and the isolation of religion from public and scientific life. I have argued that Pannenberg's thought seeks to provide a universal ground for moral thought in the idea of the twofold movement of love. I have argued, furthermore, that taken together these aspects of Pannenberg's thought provide both a critique of the relationship of the modern west to the non-human world and a foundation for a positive ecological ethic.

Although Pannenberg attempts to undercut Cartesian dualism with the idea of a universal history that is grounded in the love of God, his thought focuses on human

life. He includes all creation in the goal of the realization of the image of God, but he does not consistently make this explicit. He has connected the idea of dominion with an understanding of the image of God that does address ecological concerns. However, I have had to extend his thought to include more consistently the non-human world in the process of love. I have attempted to show that his thought can ground an ecologically conscious theological ethic. Pannenberg has not consistently made this application. However, I believe that this is consistent with Pannenberg's theology. I have also pointed out that Pannenberg has decided in favor of addressing fundamental theological issues rather than developing a theory of justice and a full-fledged ethic.

That the process of reality is the work of God's love and that creatures are destined to participate in this love indicates, for Pannenberg, that love is to function as the motivation for and guiding principle of creaturely communication and action. This also indicates that the movement of love which has its origin in the end of the process, if one accepts Pannenberg's arguments regarding the goal of history, can serve as 1) the creative force for the development of just forms of life and 2) the critical principle by which to judge all human achievements. It is important to note that the justice of particular relational

structures needs to be informed by the love that includes the entire creation in its redemptive force.

Loving the natural world means losing our fear of it and losing the drive to so transform it as to reduce it to serving human ends only. Loving nature may mean granting it freedom to express its own relationship to God, apart from merely human ends. Human action must be guided by a love that values the independence of others, human and non-human, each in its relationship to God.

Pannenberg's argument regarding the theological unity of nature and history is coherent and, in my judgment, shows significant correspondence with reality. Pannenberg is also able to show some significant agreement of his conception of reality with other scientific views of the world. Several of his claims, however, are controversial. For example, his claim regarding the ontological priority of the future has come under critical scrutiny, and requires further examination.

His theology regards divine love as the source and goal of existence. Divine love, as Pannenberg has presented it, appears capable of providing a theological ground for the unity of nature and history. It also appears to be capable of supporting and even facilitating the development of an ecologically concerned public morality. His argument claims to take account of the pluralistic character of modern culture. Other aspects of

his argument for the unity of reality show promise for overcoming the isolation of theology from public life. This, however, requires further testing. Whether the Christian idea of love can contribute a foundation for public morality needs to be tested in the process of developing both a theory of justice and concrete ethical guidelines.

Thirteen years ago David McKenzie applied a paraphrase of John 21:25 to Pannenberg: "But there are also many other things which he has written" ¹ McKenzie adds that, in addition to the number of Pannenberg's publications, one must also consider the vast scope of subjects to which he has applied his attention. I, like McKenzie before me, have of necessity chosen a strand of Pannenberg's work and have attempted to present it somewhat systematically. There is no pretense here to presenting an epitome of his work. There is no claim to have done justice to the whole of Pannenberg's corpus and the numerous critical interchanges he has been involved in. I can only hope that my work can contribute to the challenge which Pannenberg has taken up, that of bringing theology into a more meaningful role in public life. My hope is that this work can make a contribution to the critical task of rethinking the relationship of modern techno-scientific

¹David McKenzie, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Religious Philosophy, p. 143.

culture both to its religious roots and to the natural world.

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