PANNENBERG'S CRITIQUE OF BARTH'S THEOLOGY OF THE WORD

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with what two modern theologians have said about knowledge of God. Karl Barth, who must be regarded as the most influential theologian of this century, defended the position that God can only be known through his revelation in Christ - the Word of God. Consequently, any attempt on man's part to attain to knowledge of God in another way must be seen as an expression of his refusal to recognize the freedom and grace of God. Theology, according to Barth, is only true to its calling if it submits to the Word and accepts it unquestioningly as the point of departure for theological reflection.

Wolfhart Pannenberg belongs to the post-Barthian era. He is deeply concerned about the situation in which theology finds itself today. It is his firm conviction that a 'Theology of the Word' leads the Church into a ghetto and fails to respond to the challenge of atheism.

Pannenberg observes that the word 'God' has become a meaningless sound to many of our contemporaries, which is precisely the reason why theology ought to render a reasonable or rational account of the Christian faith. Theology must engage in such a task not only for the sake of those who have become estranged from the Christian tradition, but also and equally for people who confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Christians, too, need the assurance that their faith is not based on private experiences or subjective decisions, otherwise they

will not be able to free themselves from the gnawing doubt that their faith might be an illusion, a merely subjective affair without a corresponding reality.

Pannenberg presents us with a program of which many details still have to be worked out. Nevertheless, his numerous publications give us a clear picture of the direction theology is to take. The main elements in his approach are (1) the development of a philosophical theology with a basis in modern anthropology, and (2) the development of a concept of revelation as history; i.e., revelation is not so much a matter of divine words as of historical acts which can be verified by means of the historical-critical method.

It is the contention of this author that there are indeed differences between Barth and Pannenberg but they are not nearly so radical as the latter contends.

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A pastor who is in a position to follow a doctoral program while serving a fairly large congregation is privileged indeed. I consider myself most fortunate that I could continue my theological studies, and I am thankful to God for allowing me to do my work as a pastor and to study on a part time basis for a period of nearly six years.

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In particular, I wish to thank Dr. John C. Robertson, my supervisor, who helped me find my way through sometimes very difficult material. I am certain that without his guidance and encouragement I could not have written this thesis.

In conclusion, I dedicate this study to my wife Lynn in recognition of all the love and support she has given me over the years.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont'd)

ABBREVIATIONS

Works by W. Pannenberg

AC	The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Today's Questions. (E.T. Margaret Kohl) Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972.
BQ	Basic Questions in Theology. Volumes I & II. (E.T. G.H. Kehm) Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970 & 1971.
FaR	Faith and Reality. (E.T. John Maxwell) Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977.
GdT	Grundlagen der Theologie - ein Diskurs. Stuttgart - Berlin - Köln - Mainz: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1974.
Gf.II	Grundfragen systematischer Theologie, Band II. Göttingen: vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1980.
Idea	The Idea of God and Human Freedom. (E.T. R.A. Wilson) Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973.
JGaM	Jesus - God and Man.[2] (E.T. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe) Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968.
RaH	Revelation as History. (E.T. David Granskou) New York: MacMillan Company, 1968.
Reformation	Reformation zwischen Gestern und Morgen, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus (Gerd Mohn), 1969.
TaH	Theology as History. Edited by James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb Jr. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.
TKG	Theology and the Kingdom of God. Edited by Richard J. Neuhaus. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969.
TPS	Theology and the Philosophy of Science. (E.T. Francis McDonagh) Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976.
WiM	What is Man? Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective. (E.T. Duane A. Priebe) Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970.

Other Works

K.D.	Karl Barth, Die Kirchliche Dogmatik. Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1947-1955.
LThK	Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche.[2] Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1960.
RGG	Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart.[3] Herausgegeben von Kurt Galling et al. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1957-1965.
TWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament. Herausgegeben von G. Kittel. Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1953.

INTRODUCTION

The question of how to respond to the challenge of unbelief has always been a matter of greatest importance to the Christian Church. It is a concern that we find expressed in the apostolic admonition: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (I Peter 3:15). When the Church came in contact with the world of Hellenistic thought, it was precisely this question that gave birth to a controversy within the Christian community that is still with us today. On the one hand, there were apologists who sought ways of reconciling faith and (Greek) philosophy; on the other, there were those who urged that reason be rejected in the very name of faith. The same conflict emerged during the time of the Reformation: Roman Catholic theologians defended an elaborate natural or philosophical theology, while the Reformers attacked the use of philosophy in matters of faith, denying that man, apart from faith, had any capacity of his own for knowing God truly.

In our century, Karl Barth mounted a fierce attack upon apologetics and natural theology. He saw in such endeavors a negating of the freedom and grace of God who reveals himself solely in Christ, the incarnate Word. Since we depend entirely upon the Word of God for our knowledge of God, theology ought to start with the Word as an

unquestionable given and to accept it as the only criterion for theological reflections.

Wolfhart Pannenberg, whose work has received wide-spread attention in recent years, has subjected the 'Theology of the Word' to severe criticism. Judging its approach to theology untenable, he has accused Barth and his followers of leading the Church into a ghetto where any meaningful dialogue between Christianity and atheism is no longer possible. The word 'God', Pannenberg argues, has become so problematic for many of our contemporaries that an appeal to the authority of the Church or Scripture or revelation will fall on deaf ears. This situation makes it necessary to demonstrate the reasonableness of the Christian faith, and this can only be done by making use of arguments whose convincing power can be recognized also by those who are not committed to the faith.

Further, Pannenberg claims that Barth's theology is subjectivistic since it can offer no other foundation for faith than man's own decision to believe. Pannenberg contends to the contrary that the believer needs the assurance that his faith is not founded on a subjective decision but on historical facts. Therefore, it is the task of theology to show that the acts through which God revealed himself are indeed reliable historical facts.

The basic question which this thesis will seek to answer is: How does Pannenberg propose to overcome the alleged weakness of Barth's theology (1) with respect to the task of speaking meaningfully of God to modern man, and (2) with respect to the task of assuring the believer

that his faith is resting on a strong, objective foundation."

In order to reach our goal, we will, firstly, take a brief glance at the historical development of the tension between faith and reason. Secondly, we will explain and analyze Barth's position on apologetics and natural theology. Thirdly, we will consider Pannenberg's critique of Barth. Fourthly, we will study Pannenberg's own solution to the problem of how one might speak of God, and of how an objective ground for the Christian faith may be established. And finally, we will have to determine the strength and weaknesses of Pannenberg's proposals.

The reader will note that our discussion of Pannenberg does not follow the chronological order of his writings. This procedure allows us to concentrate on key-issues without too much distraction, and to present a more concise picture of Pannenberg's counter-offensive. It is true that Pannenberg has changed his mind in certain respects, but these changes have little or no bearing on the subject matter of this thesis. One cannot speak, as with Barth, of an earlier and later Pannenberg since his work has shown a remarkable consistency thus far.

The question of God has always been, and still is, a fascinating one. This study hopes to make a contribution to the ongoing discussion by comparing two theologians who both have earned the respect and admiration of the theological community.

CHAPTER I

FAITH AND REASON IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

At the root of Pannenberg's critique of Barthian theology lies the question of the relation between faith and reason. The purpose of the overview, given in this chapter, is to put the question in historical perspective. It will help us to get acquainted with the nature of the problem and with some of the answers formulated in the past. It can easily be shown that Pannenberg's opposition to Barth is the extension of a conflict which can be traced back to the early years of Christianity. Thus, our brief excursion will provide us with the background we need for a more thorough understanding of the positions taken up by Barth and Pannenberg respectively.

The Earliest Opposition to the Christian Proclamation

The Christian message, proclaiming Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, met with strong opposition from the very first moment it was proclaimed in the world. It confronted the Church with the question of how to respond to the objections and/or inquiries of those who did not believe. It does not appear that the option to keep silent has ever been seriously considered, for such silence could be interpreted as a sign of weakness rather than one of strength.

The opposition to Christianity came initially from the Jews with whom the early Christians not only shared the same cultural climate

but also the recognition of the Old Testament as the authoritative Word of God. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Christian witnesses, in their addresses to Jewish audiences,[1] made use of "Moses and the Prophets" in order to prove that the promise God had given to his people had been fulfilled in Christ.[2] At this time, the attitude of the Church towards her opponents was not nearly as antagonistic as it would become in later years, when it was denied that the Jewish people could make any claim to having received the revelation of God, or were still to be regarded as his covenant people.[3] The authors of the New Testament writings seldom go that far; rather, they exhibit an awareness of a continuing relationship between the Jews and themselves. Even though Jews were accused of stubborness and disobedience, they would still be addressed as 'Fathers and Brethren'. Paul, who charged that both Jews and Gentiles were under the power of sin, recognized that the Jews were in a more advantageous position: "What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God".[4] The same apostle insisted that "God did not reject the people, whom he foreknew"[5], and he expressed the firm hope "that all Israel will be saved".[6]

This is sufficient to show that, no matter how profound the differences between Jews and Christians may have been, we cannot speak of a gulf that separated them to such an extent that no common ground whatsoever could be found. The knowledge of God which they shared and the acceptance of the authority of the Scriptures opened the way for a

meaningful presentation and defence of the Gospel.[7] The Christian message was new but not esoteric, for it was brought in words and concepts (including concepts such as a general resurrection of the dead and a final judgment for all men) with which the Jewish mind was quite familiar.

It is true, of course, that the New Testament writings do not contain apologetics in our sense of the word, that is to say, as a branch of scientific theology. But it is also true that

> All of them contain reflections of the Church's effort to exhibit the credibility of its message and to answer the obvious objections that would have risen in the minds of adversaries, prospective converts and candid believers.8

With respect to the Jews, this "effort" was facilitated by the fact that there was a great deal of common ground between Jews and Christians. We may even go a step farther and say that those who rejected the message did not do so because it was couched in incomprehensible concepts. In fact, the Gospel was a stumbling block for them not so much for intellectual as for religious reasons.[9]

Paul and the Pagan World

We learn from the book of Acts that the situation changed considerably when the message of Christianity came into contact with the world of pagan religions and Hellenistic thought. During a visit to Lystra, Paul healed a man crippled from birth.[10] The people sought to explain this event in terms of their own religious thought: "They shouted in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in

human form'". It is remarkable that Paul, speaking of the incarnation of the Son of God, could use almost similar words.[11] But since the incarnation is something entirely different from a divine metamorphosis, he found it necessary first to clear the ground before he could preach Christ to them. It was precisely for this reason that he stressed the dissimilarity: "We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God ...". It should be noted, however, that the apostle recognized also the testimony God had given to these people: "He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

Even more interesting is Paul's address at the Areopagus.[12] Not only did he make the religiosity of the Athenians and the altar dedicated to an unknown God his point of departure, he also used quotations from Greek poets during his discourse: "'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring'".[13] Here we catch a first glimpse of the problem that plays such a dominant role in the controversy between Pannenberg and Barth. The intriguing question is: how are we to understand Paul's approach? Did he attempt in Athens even more than in Lystra, to find a point of contact that could serve as a stepping stone for the higher truth of the Gospel? Does it mean that, according to Paul, Greek poets and philosophers must have seen something of the truth, and do we have here a biblical justification of natural theology?[14]

More important for our immediate purpose is the emergence of two

diverging answers with respect to the question whether or not Greek thinkers had any valid knowledge of God. On the one hand, we find within the Christian community a more positive or irenic approach; on the other, a more negative or disjunctive approach.

Justin Martyr

As a representative of the first group we choose Justin Martyr, the most important apologist of the second century. After his conversion to Christianity, an account of which we find in his Dialogue with Trypho, he wrote two Apologies mainly for the purpose of winning toleration for the Christian religion. Justin believed that one can find kernels of the truth in the writings of some of the Greek philosophers. He explained this by pointing out that they had taken many of their ideas from Moses and the prophets. However, that their understanding was not accurate is evidenced by the fact that "they assert contradictories".[15] Justin further believed that Christ as the logos had already been at work among men before his incarnation. Thus he could state boldly, "Those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them ...."[16]

Still, the enlightenment they received from the logos spermatikos[17] was only partial. Therefore, "Philosophy contains only part of the truth, but by itself it cannot even distinguish that part of the truth from the great deal of falsehood in which it is enveloped."[18] In addition, Justin charged that the errors of the pagans are the work

of demons who delight in leading men astray.[19] Since man has fallen victim to a demonic power, he needs divine aid to use his reason and freedom rightly. In Christ, the incarnate Word, this aid has become available for all people. In this way, Justin was able to appreciate the valuable insights of philosophy and, at the same time, to maintain the superiority of Christian teaching. The Word that became flesh revealed the truth in all its fulness; thus Christianity offers all philosophy has to offer, and even much more.[20]

Tertullian

We now turn to a representative of the second group of apologists: Tertullian, a man who "explicitly and repeatedly rejects every intrusion of philosophy in matters of faith".[21] His critique of philosophy is indeed very harsh, for he claims that those who are ignorant of God are also devoid of the power of reason. Philosophers do not know anything about God, "since no treasure house at all is accessible to strangers".[22] Greek and Roman thinkers may give the impression that their teachings match those of the Christian Church, but they all drank from "the fountain of the prophets", and what they could not use, they changed to suit their own purposes. They found God in the Jewish Scriptures, but, "even what they found certain they made uncertain by their admixtures."[23] Tertullian does not hesitate to denounce Greek philosophers as "those patriarchs of heretics".[24] In an celebrated statement he declares categorically:

> What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?

> What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from 'the porch of Solomon', who had himself taught that 'the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart'. Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the Gospel! 25

Yet, the distance between Tertullian and Justin Martyr is not nearly as great as these words would lead us to believe, for on many occasions Tertullian is unable to hide his admiration for the Stoic philosophers. For example, he speaks of Seneca saepe noster[26] (Seneca who is often ours), he agrees with the Platonists on the immortality of the soul; and, making use of the Stoic doctrine of the corporeity of all that exists, he teaches that God is both body and spirit.[27] He admits that philosophers have sometimes said the same things as Christians,[28] and he argues against the enemies of the faith with an appeal to the testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae:

> Though under the oppressive bondage of the body, though led astray by depraving customs, though enervated by lusts and passions, though in slavery to false gods; yet, whenever the soul comes to itself, as out of a surfeit, or a sleep or a sickness, and attains something of its natural soundness, it speaks of God .... O noble testimony of the soul by nature Christian! 29

It is clear that Tertullian is not the Karl Barth of antiquity; he seems to waver between total rejection of all philosophy and partial acceptance. Despite this ambivalence, the disjunctive element is the more prevalent, and he must therefore be seen as one of the initiators of a line of thought that would eventually culminate in the radically negative position of Karl Barth.

Augustine

The question concerning the relationship between faith and reason appeared anew in the writings of Augustine, the man who would chart the course of theological thought for many centuries to come. His appreciation of philosophy was awakened when he read Cicero's Hortensius, which caused him to give up his easy-going life style and to search for knowledge of the truth. This search led to his involvement with Manichaeism, which claimed to be the true Christian philosophy and promised to give a rational grounding of its teachings without resorting to any other authorities.[30] But its dualistic premise, namely the perpetual struggle between the primordial elements of light and darkness, failed to satisfy Augustine's questioning mind. After a period of mild skepticism, he became acquainted with the writings of Plotinus, which helped him, not only break with Manichaeism, but also solve the intellectual problems he had with the Christian faith. The two obstacles which stood in the way were the incorporeal nature of God, and the existence of evil. Neoplatonism gave Augustine the means to surmount these difficulties without having recourse to dualism.[31] The influence of Plotinus, and through him of Plato, proved to be a lasting one. Neoplatonism became a tool for him to sort out Christian thought, and it remained a part of his Christian philosophy.

It goes without saying that such an adoption required a fundamental reinterpretation of Neoplatonic ideas. Still, Augustine did not think that philosophers were so blind that they did not possess any knowledge of the truth. In this context, he speaks of "their gold and

silver, which they did not create themselves but dug out of the mines of God's providence .... These, therefore, Christians ought to take away from them and devote to their proper use in preaching the Gospel."[32] There is much here that reminds us of Justin Martyr, but Augustine moves beyond him in that he not merely recognized 'kernels of the truth' in philosophy, but shaped Neoplatonism into an instrument that could be used for the intellectual apprehension of the Christian faith. The result was a wonderful union of theology and philosophy; the man whose only desire was to know God and the soul employed all the means at his disposal to explain and to interpret what he believed, whether he found help "in the philosophers of the past, in the Scriptures and in the teachings of the Church, or whether he presented the result of his own reasoning and religious experience."[33]

In this union of theology and philosophy, the two partners are not placed on equal footing; reason has the more subordinate role of a servant, while faith holds a position of pre-eminence. That is to say:

> The safest way to reach the truth is not the one that starts from reason and then goes on from rational certitude to faith, but, on the contrary, the way whose starting point is faith and then goes on from Revelation to Reason. 34

Augustine's position is quite clear in this respect. According to him, faith precedes reason; i.e., one seeks to understand with the mind what one already believes on the basis of the Word of God. This very important principle is expressed in the following passage:

> The prophet thus speaks quite rationally when he says, 'Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis' - 'If you will not believe, you shall not understand'. (Isaiah 7:9 - lxx). The prophet here distinguished

> between faith and reason, and counselled us that we should first believe, so that we might come to understand the thing which we believe. 35

This leads us to the question of whether the reasonableness of the Christian teaching can only be demonstrated to those who already believe. Does Augustine's principle not imply that it is not possible for unbelievers to understand the things of faith? As we shall see later, this point forms the core of Pannenberg's critique of Barth and his 'Theology of the Word'. But, unlike Barth, Augustine did not maintain that natural reason is so helpless that it cannot function at all apart from faith. Even though man is a sinner, he is nevertheless a rational being, and as such he is capable of hearing and receiving the Word of God. Taking this into consideration, Augustine contends that, in a way, reason is antecedent to faith:

> Faith precedes reason; if this precept is not reasonable, therefore it is unreasonable - which God forbid. If therefore it is reasonable that faith should precede reason to bring us to certain great matters which cannot be understood, then, undoubtedly, in however small degree, reason which persuades us unto it, is likewise antecedent to faith. 36

Augustine's point is that no man can believe something that makes no sense,[37] and this is not required, for one can adduce rational arguments and invite him to consider the evidence offered. When he does this, his own rational insight may 'persuade' him to accept the fact that there is a God who revealed himself. As we shall see, this could serve very well as a general description of Pannenberg's approach.

One could ask if this does not contradict the principle of faith preceding reason. Augustine would refute such a charge with the

observation that human cognition of every kind requires a divine illumination of the intellect. God is "the intelligible light, in whom and from whom and through whom all things intelligibly shine, which anywhere intelligibly shine".[38] It is very true, "St. Augustine does not distinguish between our need of the divine illumination in the understanding of any sphere of the truth - whether of mundane things or of the biblical revelation."[39] Certainly, there is no understanding without faith, but it does not follow that the mind, enlightened by God, is unable to perceive evidence of that truth which is only accessible in faith, and which will be fully known when the soul attains to the visio dei.

With this, Augustine opens the door for a natural theology; but, although he worked out a proof for the existence of God, he did not elaborate on the question in how far non-Christian philosophers "had arrived at an adumbration or partial realization of revealed truth."[40] The exact range of man's intellect in matters of faith, apart from the knowledge we have through the Scriptures, lay outside the sphere of his interest.

Aquinas

It was not until much later in the history of Christian thought that we saw a new development. Anselm, whose Fides Quaerens Intellectum belongs definitely to the Augustinian school, made faith a conditio sine qua non for understanding the truth of God.[41] But ever since the 13th century, Christian theologians showed a growing tendency to make a

distinction between the things we believe and the realm of what we know through rational reflection.[42] But how could this be done? Thomas Aquinas solved the problem by presenting faith and reason as two distinct types of knowledge, each operating within its own sphere. Thus, the intellect accepts as true what can be proved with rational arguments, while faith, on the other hand, "implies the assent of the intellect to that which the intellect does not see to be true."[43] Consequently, it is not possible for one and the same thing, at one and the same time, to be both an object of knowledge (in the sense of science) and of faith.[44]

Now the question arises: if we know God through faith, on the basis of his revelation, how can he be the object of scientific or philosophical reflection? According to Aquinas, the solution is that the realm of faith and that of rational knowledge not only touch each other, but also, to a very limited extent, overlap:

> The theologian, who bases his reflection on revelation, naturally starts with God and only afterwards proceeds to a consideration of God's creation. But the philosopher ... starts with the immediate data of experience, and it is only by reflection on these data that he comes to some knowledge of what, considered in its essence, transcends natural experience. 45

In Aquinas' view, reason can discover certain truths, such as the existence of God, his essential attributes, and the immortality of the soul. Now, God's revelation contains all these truths and much more. In giving man all the knowledge he needs for his salvation, revelation shows him both the truths which he could have found himself and the truths which lie beyond the range of reason. But is it not

superfluous that God reveals to us what we can find by making proper use of our intellect? Not at all, for the road of reason is difficult, and leads seldom to clear insights into the nature of God and man:

> Even as regards those truths about God which human reason can investigate, it was necessary that man be taught by divine revelation. For the truth about God, such as reason can know it, would only be known by a few and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors. 46

There can be no doubt that Aquinas acknowledged the possibility of a natural knowledge of God, but the actual realization of such a possibility is an entirely different matter.[47] It is important to keep this in mind when one studies his proofs of the existence of God. The fact that these proofs are based on philosophical argumentation does not make him a rationalist. He shows what reason can accomplish, but reason is viewed here from the standpoint of a believing theologian; or better: he thinks of the true philosophy, of the natural capacity for knowledge which has been restored by grace.[48] Aquinas was not a theologian who, even temporarily, pretended to exclude from his thinking what he already believed: "It is obvious that he was not a split personality. He remained a Christian whether he was pursuing theological or philosophical themes."[49] His proofs must not be seen as a substratum, consisting of natural knowledge, to which the superstructure of a revealed knowledge could be added. "Only because faith stands at both beginning and end is the philosophical intellect able to arrive not only at the recognition of a supreme being, but at the knowledge of God."[50] This salvific faith is God's gracious gift to man - fides infusa. But since God's

grace perfects nature rather than destroying it, rational reflections should not be despised.[51]

Thus, when Aquinas entered into a conversation with Paganism, Judaism, or the Islam of Avicenna and Averroes, he did so with the firm conviction that he could talk to them "within the sphere of mutual understanding".[52]

The Vatican Council

No matter how carefully Aquinas had formulated his thoughts on the relation between faith and reason, and how strongly he stressed the limitations of the latter - particularly when it operated without the aid of divine revelation, it did not remove the growing distrust of philosophy among the theologians. As a result of this distrust, we see the development of a tendency to narrow the 'overlapping area', and to increase the number of truths which are accessible only to faith. Aquinas' subtle distinction between possible and actual knowledge was evidently not sufficient to stem the tide. "Thus it came to pass that the list of the revealed truths that can be either believed, or proven, was steadily growing shorter and shorter to the point of shrivelling into nothingness."[53] Duns Scotus taught that rational demonstrations could prove the articles of faith, but only on the condition that one first believed these articles. It was his opinion that "philosophical reason alone utterly fails to prove them".[54] William Ockham was even more skeptical. He admitted that the articles of faith could be shown to be probable, even more probable than their contraries, but none of

these propositions could be demonstrated in philosophy or in theology; "in short, they could not be demonstrated at all".[55] At that time, such a viewpoint did not produce agnosticism as it would in later centuries. The result was an increasing emphasis on the authority of the Church, which alone could guarantee the truthfulness of faith-propositions. The separation between philosophy and theology, that had already begun with Aquinas, was now complete.[56] And with that, the possibility of a natural or philosophical theology could not even be considered.

The influence of Ockham is not to be underestimated. Yet, the Roman Catholic Church chose to follow Aquinas in the matter of the possibility of a natural knowledge of God. The decision of the Vatican Council (1869-70) is well known: Sancta mater Ecclesia tenet et docet, rerum omnium principium et finem, naturali humanae rationis lumine e rebus creatis certo cognosci posse.[57] As often has been pointed out, the Church wished to maintain that knowledge of God was indeed possible within the sphere of reason, but it carefully avoided the question of whether this potentiality of reason had ever yielded any actual knowledge. The Council did stress the moral or relative necessity of divine revelation, employing almost exactly the same terms as we find in Aquinas. Even so, now it had been officially stated that revelation was not absolutely necessary in order to know certain truths, the possibility of a natural knowledge of God was no longer open for discussion. It had become dogma.

Luther

What we have discussed thus far touched mainly on that attitude towards philosophy which started with Justin Marytyr, but we find in the history of the Christian Church also those who leaned more to Tertullian's position. We find among them Bernard of Clairvaux who called Abelard with his methodical skepticism, and theologians like him, "slaves of curiosity and pride". Bernard urged his brethren not to belong to this school but to the one of that supreme teacher: the Holy Spirit. Peter Damian showed an even greater antagonism "with his much more vicious attacks on Dialectics, Grammar, and generally all that which involved the slightest reliance upon the power of natural reason ...."[58]

We discover a similar attitude in the works of the great theologians of the Reformation. Luther, who had been trained in the school of Ockham at Erfurt, strongly opposed the extensive use of Greek Philosophy in Scholasticism, and made it his goal to free theology from Aristotle's influence.[59] Aristotle was nothing but a blind pagan teacher (Meyster), and one who wishes to make use of his philosophy without peril must first become a fool in Christ.[60]

Yet, we would misunderstand Luther if we assumed that he did not want to have anything to do with reason and philosophical thought. He only wished to make sure that theology would be allowed to have its own domain and its own method, unencumbered by what is foreign to it:

> Thus Luther's real concern in his dispute with the dominant philosophy of his time is that a genuine understanding of holy Scripture should be made

> accessible to theology, from which it was concealed by the terminology and method or inquiry of Aristotelian thought. 61

This is why Luther could admit that reason, even though it must be called the 'devil's whore' in the realm of the spiritual, may render good services in the realm of the natural. In this way, he could recognize the value of Aristotle with respect to rethoric and dialectics.[62] Yes, if reason is willing to abandon its proud claims and to accept the role of a handmaid, it can even be fruitfully employed for apologetical purposes. In his Commentary on Galatians, we find both rejection and, to a certain extent, approval of the use of reason:

> Contrariwise we, excluding all works do go to the very head of this beast which is called Reason, which is the fountain and headspring of all mischiefs. For Reason feareth not God, it loveth not God, it trusteth not in God, but proudly condemneth him..... This pestilent beast (Reason, I say) being once slain, all outward and gross vices should be nothing. 63

Limited approval is expressed in the following:

> But apart from the matter of justification, when thou must dispute with Jews, Turks, Papists, heretics etc., concerning the power, wisdom, majesty of God, then employ all thy wit and industry to that end, and be as profound and subtle a disputer as thou canst: for then thou art in another vein.64

What did Luther think of natural theology? That question is difficult to answer because nis theology is one great complexity, but it seems safe to assume that he would not have denied the possibility of man knowing his Creator with the aid of reason. Since this is the case, man can be approached with reasonable arguments; but the God of grace, the God-for-us, can only be known by those who believe. That is simply the necessary consequence of being justified through faith.

Calvin

Calvin joined Luther in rejecting all philosophical speculation about God as he is in himself, since "the essence of God is unknown and inaccessible to us".[65] According to Calvin, faith is always a knowledge of the God who turned his face to us; i.e., who revealed himself in Christ. In a famous definition, he states:

> Now we shall have a complete definition of faith, if we say that it is a steady and certain knowledge of the divine benevolence towards us (divinae erga nos benevolentiae firmam certamque cognitionem), which, being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds and confirmed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. 66

Does this statement mean that man, apart from Christ, does not know God at all? Calvin taught that a sense of the Divinity (sensus divinitatis) or the seed of religion (semen religionis) had been implanted in the human spirit, and this he used to explain the universality of religion. In fact, even idolatry, which is found everywhere, is seen as a strong indication of the presence of such seeds in man.[67] We are born with the idea of the Deity impressed on our minds, it forms an inseparable part of our constitution, and it can never be erased.[68] Still, "we scarcely find one man in a hundred who cherishes what he has received, and not one in whom they (the seeds) grow to maturity, much less bear fruit in due season."[69] It is the sinful state of man that prevents the proper development of what is present in his mind.

In addition, Calvin taught that God revealed himself through the works of his hands. He "hath manifested himself in the formation of every part of the world, and daily presents himself to public view, is such a manner, that they cannot open their eyes without being

constrained to behold him". There is no mundi particula, says Calvin, "in which you cannot behold some brilliant sparks at least of his glory".[70] Even so, the light afforded us in the formation of the world is "insufficient to conduct us into the right way".[71] The utmost extent of this revelation is "to render men inexcusable".[72] That is why we need the instruction of the Holy Scriptures in order to know God rightly. Just as old people, or those with poor eye-sight, can only read with the aid of spectacles, so "the Scriptures dispel the darkness and show us clearly the true God".[73] This means "that no man can have the least knowledge of true and sound doctrine, without having been a disciple of the Scripture. .. . For obedience is the source, not only of an absolutely perfect and complete faith, but of all right knowledge of God."[74]

Calvin claims that it would not be difficult for him to prove the authority of Scripture with arguments based on reason. In this connection, he mentions its power to affect us more deeply than any other document, the fact that the Scriptures are much older than other writings, the many signs and wonders to which they attest, the evidence that a prophetic spirit is at work in them, and the consensus of the Church.[75] But then he continues with stating that the testimony of the Holy Spirit is more excellent than all rational considerations. "For, as God alone is a sufficient witness of himself in his own word, so also the word will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit."[76]

E.A. Dowey, Jr. summarizes Calvin's position as follows:

"Calvin absolutely condemns all man's efforts to know God outside Christ, but subsequently urges them to look upon the wisdom, power and goodness of the Creator in creation."[77] Karl Barth, however, is more reserved in his judgment, since he fears that in Calvin the possibility of a natural theology has not entirely been excluded. He argues that "the Reformers could not clearly perceive the range of the decisive connection which exists in the Roman Catholic theology between the problem of justification and the problem of the knowledge of God, between reconciliation and revelation".[78] Still, even though the Reformers could have expressed themselves more clearly in this matter, Barth maintains that they had no other desire than to ground the Church as well as human salvation on the Word of God alone, i.e., on God's revelation in Jesus Christ. And so, in spite of a slight leaning towards natural theology, their teaching is "the clear antithesis to that form of teaching which declares that man himself possesses the capacity and the power to inform himself about God, the world and man."[79]

Barth's reservation stems from his conviction that the acceptance of a revelation in creation must inevitably lead to the idea of a natural knowledge of God. At least, it makes room for the possibility of such knowledge. But this is certainly not the case with Calvin who stresses man's inexcusability: man does <u>not</u> know God, even though he lives in a world that manifests the power and glory of the Creator. It is precisely the emphasis on man's inexcusability, or guilt, which made it impossible that Calvin's recognition of a general revelation would open the way to a natural theology for him. According to Calvin, fallen man has

neither an actual knowledge of God nor the 'capacity' for it.[80]

The 18th and 19th Century

The great conflict within the Christian Church during the time of the Reformation brought fundamental differences to light, but these differences did not involve the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures. True, the Reformers disputed the claim of the Roman Catholic Church that she alone had the right and competence to interpret Scripture. Still, both sides agreed that salvific knowledge of God rested on the authoritative revelation preserved for all times in the writings of the Old and New Testament.

At the beginning of the 18th century we see the emergence of a new movement which challenged this long-established tradition. The Englightenment advocated the autonomy of human reason and sought to free the human spirit from its subjection to external authority. In the words of Kant: man found the courage to make use of his intellect and thus broke the bonds of a self-inflicted immaturity. The rejection of the tutelage of Bible, Church and tradition did not immediately result in a denial of the existence of a supreme being, but it gave rise to the question: what exactly is the status of religious and theological propositions. Lessing presented the problem very well with his famous dictum that the accidental truths of history can never be a proof of necessary truths of reason. He saw clearly that the truth of Christianity is based entirely on historical facts and this presents us with a two-fold problem. First, historical facts are always contingent, that is to say: they could have taken place in a different way or not at all.

For this reason, they cannot form the basis for eternal, necessary truths. Secondly, the past is not directly available to us, and the only way we can reach across the nasty ditch of history (der garstige Grabe) is by way of historical research. This means that the certainty about historical truth can never be more than a relative certainty. These questions are as relevant now as they were two centuries ago:

> For Lessing posed what is today called the problem of the historicity of the truth; and he put it forth in a critical and radical way. Applied to the Christian religion and its truth, his 'discovery' raises the question that has often been heard since then: what happens to Christianity if Christian truth is historical and therefore not absolute? 81

The subsequent development of the problem was very much dominated by the influence of Kant's critique. His investigations into the possibility of knowledge led him to the conclusion that the knowledge of faith does not belong to the sphere of scientific or rational knowledge. Therefore, in order to make room for faith, "I must give up (aufheben) knowledge".[82] Kant proceeded with subjecting the rational arguments for the existence of God to severe criticism and found them wanting. His main objection was that God is not an object in the world of our experience. On the other hand, this does not mean that God does not exist. What one must learn to recognize is that the knowledge of faith lies beyond the range of pure reason: just as pure reason cannot reach "the thing as such" (Das Ding an sich), but only the phenomena, so it cannot reach God. Therefore, pure reason must be declared incompetent to judge in matters of faith.

One can say indeed that Christian theologians found themselves faced with an impossible dilemma: if our knowledge of God rests on supernatural revelation, then one cannot give an account of it before the tribunal of reason; but if, conversely, such knowledge is accessible to reason, then it leaves no room for a supernatural relevation. What was the solution? Did faith and religion have no choice but to retreat into a safe area whereby would be sheltered from the onslaught of modern critique? Schleiermacher, with whom we will conclude our historical overview, expressed his deep concern about the situation in a letter to his friend Lücke: "Shall the knot of history come apart in this way, that Christendom is for the barbarians and science for the unbeliever?"[83] Schleiermacher's own solution deserves our attention since it represents a type of theological thought that Barth combatted with all his energy, and as such it forms a logical transition to the next chapter.

Schleiermacher feared that, should science and religion be allowed to go their separate ways, religion would soon become a relic of a past on which mankind had turned its back. It was for this reason that he wished to speak about religion to its "cultured despisers".[84] The problem he faced was: how to find room for religion in a world in which the natural sciences and their methods began more and more to shape man's thought. Schleiermacher's point of departure was that religion has its own province; i.e., its seat is not to be located in thinking or doing, but in feeling. What characterizes religious feeling is that it is one of absolute dependence. The self-identical essence of

piety is: "the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God".[85]

This consciousness is expressed in various thought-forms, and such variableness must not be used as an argument against the truth of religion. It is simply caused by the ever-changing historical situations and conditions. Schleiermacher contends:

> Religion never appears quite pure. Its outward form is ever determined by something else. Our task is first to exhibit its true nature, and not to assume off-hand, as you seem to do, that the outward form and the true nature are the same. 86

What religion seeks is the immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all finite things, in and through the Infinite. Yet:

> Religion is not knowledge and science, either of the world or of God. Without being knowledge, it recognizes knowledge and science. In itself, it is an affection, a revelation of the Infinite in the finite, God being seen in it and it is in God. 87

What then is the status of faith-propositions? They are rational expresssions of man's pious feelings: "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech".[88] What we find in Schleiermacher is a turning from objectivity to subjectivity; when he speaks of the reality of faith, he is not referring to an objective reality that corresponds to faith, although he certainly does not deny the existence of such a reality. Rather, he is referring to the authenticity of man's religious experiences.[89]

This brings us to Barth. He critized Schleiermacher, and the 19th century theology in general, for ascribing a normative character to the ideas of its environment. Consequently:

> It was forced to make reductions and over-simplifications, to indulge in forgetfulness and carelessness, when it dealt with the exciting and all important matters of Christian understanding. These developments were bound to threaten, indeed, to undermine, both theology and the Church with improverishment and triviality. 90

This situation, in which liberalism, subjectivism and anthropocentrism dominated theology, demanded a radically new beginning, and it prompted Barth to mount his great counter-offensive against the legacy of the 19th century.

CHAPTER II

BARTH'S "NO" TO APOLOGETICS AND NATURAL THEOLOGY

Beginning and Development

As a young man, Karl Barth studied at various universities in Switzerland and Germany, and attended lectures of the best among the theologians of those days. But it was only when he began his pastorate in Safenwil that he became dissatisfied with the training he had received. The task of having to prepare a sermon every week caused him to turn to the Scriptures; especially Paul's letter to the Romans aroused in him an interest that bordered on fascination. Another reason for dissatisfaction was the support which von Harnack, Herrmann and other leading theologians gave to the war policy of Wilhelm II ("an ethical failure"); it indicated to Barth "that their exegetical and dogmatic presuppositions could not be in order".[1]

His exhaustive study of Paul resulted in the publication of Der Römerbrief in 1919. It was quickly sold out, but it was the second, completely reworked edition of 1921 that "fell like a bomb on the playground of the theologians".[2] Characteristic for this work of the young Barth is the strong emphasis on the diastasis, i.e., the infinite distance and absolute difference between God and man. The main theme, that dominates the whole book, is the description of God as "the Wholly Other". Man, with all that he is and has and does, is placed under God's

judgment, in a crisis-situation. This crisis means, among other things, that there is no way leading from man to God; such a possibility must be radically denied in view of the majesty and holiness of God. It is true that this awesome God revealed himself to man, but not in such way that his revelation would ever come to be at man's disposal. Barth was not afraid to use startling expressions to underscore the fact that God's Word to man is, and remains, God's own possession. Revelation is: the point on the line of intersection", "the crater made at the percussion point of an exploding shell", "insofar as our world is touched in Jesus by the other world, it ceases to be capable of direct observation as history, time or thing", the new world of the Spirit touches the old world of the flesh "as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it".[3]

Man's religion is also placed under divine judgment; Barth calls religion "the supreme possibility of all human possibilities",[4] it is the most devious of all the attempts to cross the abyss between God and man. What constitutes the reality of religion, including the Christian religion? "Conflict and distress, sin and death, the devil and hell .... So far from releasing men from guilt and destiny, it brings men under its sway."[5]

Nevertheless, despite these accents, the theology of the Römerbrief was not one of sheer negativity. The crisis-motive was not an end in itself, but it sought to destroy all those thought forms which darken the light of sovereign grace, and thus it was directed against the hubris of man. Without a doubt, the later Barth sounded much more

positive. He admits that he more and more acquired a taste for the affirmative (Bejahungen).[6] At one time, man apparently had no place in his theology, but he learned to speak of God, and of his relationship with man "in a way that allows man greater prominence".[7] This development must not be interpreted as a transition from judgment to grace, for the connection between these two was something Barth had in mind from the outset.[8] What we do notice, however, is a different kind of transition: one that concerns the proper method for theology. When his Römerbrief required a second edition, Barth found that he had to rewrite the whole book because he could see now how much he had been under the spell of Platonic and Kantian presuppositions. In retrospect, it seemed "to have been written by another man to meet a situation belonging to a past epoch".[9] The struggle to free himself from philosophical influences proved to be a slow and difficult process. The second edition of the Römerbrief appeared to have traces of existentialism (influence of Kierkegaard), and this led to a new attempt which was made in his Christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf of 1927. Even though he "was on his way toward moving beyond Kierkegaard and bringing Christ into the centre of his thought,"[10] Barth came to see also this work as a false start and spoke of "the eggshells, atavisms and regressions which he sought to overcome".[11]

His study of Anselm during these years was of decisive importance. Barth discovered here an approach to theology that diametrically opposed the one of the 19th century theologians, who "set out to prove the possibility of faith in its relatedness to, and its conditioning by, the worldviews which were normative for their contemporaries and even for

themselves".[12] Such methodology is wholly foreign to Anselm; he is quite willing to discuss the question of the existence of God with the 'fool', but not by taking up a position on his opponent's ground. On the contrary, Anselm wants to prove the existence of a God whose existence he has already accepted in faith. His argument not only begins with a prayer but is a prayer throughout; he speaks about God while speaking to him. Faith itself does not require proof; "Anselm wants proof ... because he wants intelligere and he wants intelligere because he believes. On no account can results or non-results involve for faith the question of its existence."[13] Since the beginning and the end of the process of reflection are given in faith, one can say that "in a sense, Anselm has the solution of his problem behind him while they are still ahead".[14]

All this helped Barth to see how the Christian theologian ought to go about his task: he must follow the movement of faith "advancing from implicit understanding to explicit understanding."[15] It might be observed that Barth is engaged here in offering a proof of God, but it consists of following or tracing out the proof that God gives of himself; we do not prove God but God proves himself. Therefore,we are not to begin with all kinds of philosophical presuppositions, standing on neutral ground as it were, but with God, who gave himself to us through his Word as object of our knowledge.

The insight Barth had gained with respect to the method he thought proper to theology is quite evident in his monumental Church Dogmatics. The two parts of the first volume contain the prolegomena,

with this peculiarity that it functions no longer as an introduction to dogmatics. The prolegomena has now become a part of dogmatics itself for it deals, not with things "that are to be said beforehand (vorher), but with the things that are to be said first in obedience to the Word of God."[16] It is necessary to choose this starting point, says Barth, because man can only learn the pathway of knowledge if he lets God speak to him, and that forbids him to take up a position prior to faith.

Dogmatics, then, "is the scientific self-examination which the Christian Church makes with respect to speaking of God which is peculiar to her".[17] Barth insists that its scientific character does not demand that it must submit to standards which are valid for other sciences; dogmatics has its own criterion in the Word of God. Barth states that we are dealing here with a presupposition: "dogmatics presupposes that God in Jesus Christ is the Truth ... also and precisely the Truth for us."[18] For this reason, dogmatics can only be regarded as an act of faith; without faith, dogmatics would be without object and without meaning.[19] Now, such an obedience of faith is not an option that man can exercise in a freedom of his own: "it depends on God whether our listening is real listening and our obedience real obedience, whether our dogmatics as true knowledge of God is blessed and sanctified, or whether it is nothing but futile speculation."[20]

The next question to be answered is: what is the Word of God? Barth speaks of its three-fold form: the Word revealed, written and proclaimed. The revealed Word, Jesus Christ, is God's Word in the

original and immediate sense; to speak of revelation is to speak of the Word that became flesh. Both Scripture and the proclamation of the Church depend on the Word incarnate as their only ground. Indeed, they, too, are the Word of God, not as such and in themselves, but when God in his freedom decides to use them; this means: "they must again and again become the Word of God."[21] There is an indirect identity, which Barth seeks to clarify by referring to the pool of Bethesda, the waters of which had the power to heal, but only when an angel descended and 'troubled' them.[22] In the same way is the Bible the Word of God "insofar God allows it to be his Word."[23] Thus, "the identification of revelation and Bible can only occur when and where Bible-words become God's Word"[24]; this is why Barth calls it an event (Ereignis), rather than a state of affairs. He stresses that such an event must always be granted by God, who makes himself known to us in an act of grace. Now grace would no longer be grace if one ascribes to man the capacity to know the Word of God independent of the Word itself. [25] Barth affirms that the Scriptures are holy Scriptures, for the God who once spoke to Moses, prophets, evangelists and apostles, speaks to his Church through the written Word. "Scripture is holy and the Word of God in that for the Church, through the Holy Spirit, it became and will become witness to God's revelation."[26]

Barth then goes on by stating that the revelation of God is not to be differentiated from God himself, from the divine 'I' that encounters man in this very act; revelation is "Dei loquentis persona".[27] In connection with this, Barth speaks of the root of the doctrine of the Trinity

which already lies in the Christian concept of revelation. In fact, it is this doctrine which "distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God and of revelation from all other possible doctrines of God."[28] To interpret revelation correctly is to interpret it as the ground of the Trinitätslehre.[29] What becomes manifest in revelation is a distinction within God himself: the One who reveals (the Father), and the One in whom it takes place (the Son), and the One who opens man's ears and eyes for it (the Holy Spirit) are three distinct persons, or better: three modes of being; and yet they are the one true God.

Since we cannot know what revelation is apart from the Word of God, Barth warns us not to discuss the possibility of revelation. We must not think that God acts in a way which man can foresee and eventually approve; if that were so, our position would be superior to that of God.[30] In order to avoid this danger, we must only speak of the possibility of revelation on the basis of its actuality (Wirklichkeit).[31] The objective actuality of God's revelation is Jesus Christ, and as such he is also "its objective possibility". When we make the revelation in Christ our starting point, we learn that the possibility of revelation lies in God's freedom to cross the boundary between him and us. He became what we are, but it does not mean that man has a previously existing aptitude (Eignung) to be the instrument through which such revelation can take place. Man, being flesh, does not even have the capacity to receive it; he must be made free in order to hear. This is the work of the Holy Spirit who illuminates man to the knowledge of God.[32] Thus, just as Christ is the objective possibility of revelation, so the Spirit is its subjective

possibility; he grants man "the freedom in which God's revelation can occur to him."[33] To put it succinctly: "all that may be, all that is possible, subjectively and objectively with respect to revelation, is according to the Scriptures contained in the being, will, and act of the triune God."[34]

What we have discussed so far shows clearly which fundamental thought determines all of Barth's theology: his overriding concern is the acknowledgment of the freedom and grace of God. God comes to man in a truly astounding act of condescension, the possibility of which never entered into man's heart. The pathway to knowledge leads from 'above' to 'below', and this constitutes a relationship which is irreversible. The knowledge of God is always a gift, and "we should strive in vain to discover anything that might be termed a disposition towards the Word of God".[35] It is also a free gift, granted again and again, and this prevents it from ever coming to be at our disposal. And yet, says Barth, to be so completely dependent on the freedom and grace of God does not make man a being without life and action; it is not true that there is nothing left for man to do. Far from it: the grace of God prompts man to live a life of praise and gratitude; in other words: what is left for him is the doxology.[36]

One can easily see that Barth's concept of revelation as a free and gracious act of God motivated him to reject apologetics and natural theology. In the following paragraphs we will examine his negative stance more closely.

Apologetics

In 1929 Emil Brunner wrote an article in Zwischen den Zeiten in which he spoke of "the other task of theology". He asserted that dogmatics should not only reflect on God's Word in the Scriptures, it should also come to grips with the problems posed by non-believers, particularly those arriving from the natural sciences. "Christian theology owes it to the world to show that we do not believe in revelation because we ignore the protests of the world, but that we believe in spite of the fact that we know these objections, and have indeed wrestled with them seriously."[37]

Barth found it impossible to support Brunner's ambitious program. He agreed that the preaching of the Church must always be done in confrontation with the unbelieving world, Christian dogmatics is indeed a kind of apologetics, but he judged deliberate apologetics and polemics to be an "irresponsible, out-of-date and ineffectual undertaking".[38] Apologetics of this kind is to be rejected on three grounds: (1) faith takes unbelief too seriously here, thereby taking itself not seriously enough; (2) it acts as if everything is quite in order with dogmatics, and instead of working on its subject matter (Sache), it talks with others about it; (3) it either deceives the discussion partner, pretending to stand with him on the ground of common presuppositions, or, if it thinks that this is really the case, it is not dealing with its own subject matter.[39]

Barth's negative reaction does not come as a surprise. Discussing the theology of Schleiermacher, he said that this theologian

"allowed himself to be forced into the fundamentally unworthy position of the apologists". By doing this, "he forced Christianity, solely for the sake of culture, into a position where the whole was already surrendered".[40] The position of the apologist is fundamentally unworthy because "he must, even if he himself belongs to one side, at least carry a white flag in his hand when approaching the other for parley; he cannot at that moment be engaged as a combattant, to put it unmetaphorically: as long as he is an apologist, the theologian must renounce his theological function".[41] The apologist is on the wrong track because "he must take up a superior position from which he can understand both parties and be the just advocate of both".[42] Thus, Schleiermacher takes his stand "above Christianity, suspends his judgment of the truth or even the absoluteness of Christian revelation".[43] To take a stand point above Christianity can only mean that "the apologist is the complete master of Christianity ... and that he is able to elicit its nature and assess its value".[44] What Schleiermacher failed to see, according to Barth, and that goes for Brunner as well, is that we cannot think and talk about the revelation of God apart from the Word; we can only reflect on what the Word itself says to us. "We can only speak out of the revelation itself, otherwise we shall be thinking and talking about something else".[45] Deliberate apologetics is to be rejected, because "there has never been any other effective apologetics ... than the non-deliberate; that is the one, which appeared when God made himself the witness of faith".[46]

Consequently, Barth refuses to worry about the question of how

the Church should address non-believers. Brunner claimed that "the Church is dependent upon the possibility of speaking to man of God.... The Church's proclamation must be comprehensible, or else it is useless, however true its contents".[47] Barth retorts that it is an almost peripheral problem, "invalid and to be invalidated again".[48] It should not burden us, for it is a care we may cast on God; he then continues: "I have the impression that my sermons reach and interest my audience most ... when ... I allow my language to be formed and shaped and adopted as much as possible by what the text seems to be saying".[49] Barth seems to relent a little when he argues that the confession of the Church must be translatable into the speech of the man and woman in the street, who have a different vocabulary and different spheres of interest. For those a translation is indeed necessary, since "the language of pulpit and altar outside the area of the Church is as effectual as Chinese".[50] It does not mean, however, that he wishes to entertain the idea of bringing the message home: the real question is how we have to serve this Word by pointing to its coming. "This Word has never been 'brought home' to any man except by its own freedom and power."[51]

At this point we must consider the question: what exactly did Barth mean when he said that the Christian theologian should not take atheism too seriously? It is important to understand him correctly, since it forms one of the main issues that Pannenberg raises in his critique. Barth's seemingly unconcerned attitude is the direct result of the particular way in which he deals with the doctrine of divine election. Calvin, and many of the Reformed theologians after him,

thought of it in terms of an eternal decree (a decretum horrible): "The decree is dreadful indeed, I confess. Yet no one can deny that God foreknew what end man was to have before he created him, and consequently foreknew because he so ordained by his decree".[52]

Barth is of the opinion that Calvin needs to be corrected, since the idea of a decretum horrible or absolutum leads in the wrong direction. It creates a darkness behind God's revelation, "an empty spot where the name of Jesus Christ belongs."[53] The proper starting point lies in what Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "For he (God) chose us in him (Christ) before the creation of the world ...".[54] To Barth, this means that all our attention must be focused on Christ. We are not to speak of God in abstracto, or of man as such, but concretely of the man Jesus Christ. The very heart of Barth's view of the election is that Jesus is both "the electing God"[55] and "the elected man".[56] That we were chosen in him must be interpreted as being chosen "in his person, in his will, in and with his being chosen".[57] In that Christ became a man, "he made our rejection his own concern"[58], so that in his death "man himself as a sinner died."[59] Barth acknowledges a praedestinatio gemina (election and reprobation); however, in the election "God granted us life, but chose death and condemnation for himself."[60] God's 'yes' is never without his 'no', but the 'no' does not strike us,[61] since it was borne by Christ in our place. On this basis, it is impossible for the Church to recognize unbelief as a "final datum".[62] The Church proclaims also to non-believers: "in Jesus Christ you are not rejected but chosen."[63] Here we have the reason for Barth's unconcern: the godless man is

powerless against the power of grace that triumphs in spite of all opposition; he cannot undo what God has done in Christ. The death and resurrection of Jesus reveal a new situation in which the whole world participates. This situation exists, regardless whether it is accepted in faith; and thus "the non-believer is a person who lacks the subjective knowledge of an objective state of affairs."[64] Therefore:

> On the basis of the eternal will of God we have to think of every human being, even the oddest, most villainous or miserable, as one to whom Jesus Christ is Brother and God is Father; and we have to deal with him on this assumption. If the other person knows that already, then we have to strengthen him in the knowledge. If he does not know it yet or no longer knows it, it is our business to transmit this knowledge to him. 65

It may seem as if Barth has no choice but to accept the doctrine of a universal reconciliation (apokatastasis), for how can anyone be a reprobate if Christ has borne God's rejection for all men? Yet, Barth declares emphatically that this is not the case, for "grace that automatically includes and reaches each and every one is certainly not free, not divine grace".[66] With this in mind, Barth can say that unbelief is not without grave danger; on the contrary: "a negative attitude to revelation is a perilous undertaking".[66]

Natural Theology

Barth displays an even greater hostility with respect to the matter of natural theology. Already at a very early stage, he showed himself to be an implacable foe of the theologia naturalis, a position

from which he never deviated:

> Ever since about 1916, when I began to recover noticeably from the effects of my theological studies ..., my opinion concerning the task of our theological generation has been this: we must learn again to understand revelation as grace and grace as revelation and therefore turn away from all 'true' or 'false' theologia naturalis by ever making new decisions and being ever converted anew. 68

God can only be known by man when he allows himself to be known; thus, "we call to mind (gedenken) God's grace when we say: God is knowable".[69] If this is true, then it follows "that there is no way, bypassing the grace and mercy of God's good pleasure, by which we can assure ourselves of the knowability of God, and thus of the certainty of our knowledge".[70] The error of natural theology is that it attempts to acquire at least some knowledge of God prior to and apart from his revelation in Christ. It is no less than "an assault (Attentat) on the Christian concept of God."[71] Barth opposes here an approach which, as we shall see, Pannenberg accepts as valid: man asks questions about himself and his world, and regards the goal and origin of his search as his God, but, according to Barth, what he believes to be his God is merely an idol (ein Götze). This self-acquired knowledge is so dangerous because it does not lead to the true God, but "keeps man away from him and makes him his enemy."[72] The irreversible relationship has been reversed: man finds God, instead of allowing God to find him. As a result, it becomes impossible to refute Feuerbach's thesis that gods are nothing but projections of man's urge for happiness. In fact, Barth agrees with Feuerbach, be it that a correction has to be made:

"all idols are reflections, not so much of man's urge for happiness as of human pride".[73]

The error of natural theology is so evident that it should not even be discussed.[74] It is

> An abyss into which it is inadvisable to step if one does not want to fall. To reject natural theology is not to discuss it, but to refuse to admit it as a separate problem, you don't stare at a serpent with the result that it stares back at you, hypnotizes you, and is ultimately certain to bite you, but hit it and kill it as soon as you see it. 75

If natural theology is so evidently a deviation from true theology, how does one explain its amazing vitality? Barth replies that man by nature is opposed to the grace of God. The knowability of God requires not only a willingness on God's part but also on the part of man. It requires a receptivity for grace, an "openness for the majestic, free, undeserved, unforeseen ... openness of God for man."[76] And that is exactly the point where the problem arises: man's existence shows everywhere "that he would much rather endure the reality of his existence, entangled as it is in guilt and death, than the grace of God."[77] What, then, is natural theology? "Nothing more and nothing less than the inevitable theological expression of the fact that in man's actuality and possibility the openness of man for the grace of God is not visible."[78] To deny natural theology means to deny oneself; and how would man be able to do that? Can he jump over his own shadow? "He wishes, like a true Atlas, to carry the whole world on his shoulders, but under no circumstance does he wish to be carried himself; that is why he will always be an enemy of grace, one who hates and denies his

real need."[79]

Thus, when man learns to see his need and to accept God's openness for him, it can only be the work of the Holy Spirit; it is through him "that we participate in the being and work of Jesus Christ."[80]

Analogia Entis

Barth combines his rejection of a natural knowledge of God with an equally fierce attack upon what he considers to be the root of all natural theology: the analogia entis. He calls it an invention of the Antichrist and states that this is the reason - the only proper one - why one should not become a Catholic.[81] A good point to start the discussion is the teaching of the 4th Lateran Council of 1215, which declared that there is no similarity between God and man that is not surrounded by greater dissimilarity. It was directed against Gilbert de la Porée, who sought to clarify the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by using the analogy of the union of the believers with Christ.[82] The Council's emphasis on dissimilarity gave rise to a new problem: if it is true that God is altogether different from us, how can we make true statements about him?

Aquinas presented the following solution: univocal predication is impossible between God and creature, for this would do away with the 'otherness' of God. On the other hand, one cannot say either that we apply names to God in a purely equivocal sense, for then it would follow that on the part of creatures nothing can be known or demonstrated about God. Therefore, when we use names which are said of both God and creatures, we do so in an analogous sense, which is a mean between

simple univocity and pure equivocity. "In analogy the idea is not, as it is in univocals, one and the same, yet it is not totally diverse as in equivocals."[83] Up to this point, the question concerns the validity of the statements we make about God, but Aquinas takes a further step when he grounds the possibility of analogous language upon something God and man have in common; i.e., on "some relation of the creature to God as to its principle and cause, wherein all the perfection of things pre-exist excellently."[84] Thus, analogous language, which allows us to speak of God in concepts derived from the created reality, is made possible by the fact that there is a similarity between God himself and his creature. Even though it is true that Aquinas did not use the term analogia entis,[85] he certainly expressed the idea when he stated that "the effect (creature) must in some way resemble the form of the agent (God)."[86] This analogy of being became the cornerstone of natural theology, its theological justification; "upon this principle of the analogia entis rests our whole natural knowledge of God".[87]

Barth objects that this line of thought "applies the wordly term 'there is' to God and divine things".[88] It brings God and man together under one viewpoint, namely, the viewpoint of being. But how can the origin of all being participate in a general being?[89] To Barth, this constitutes an illegitimate crossing from creatureliness to God. Even more serious, Barth could tolerate a natural knowledge of God based on logical conclusions, especially because the Vatican Council merely spoke of a posse; but he cannot accept "the division within the Christian concept of God".[90] He means that the Vatican teaching, although it did

not intend to speak of any other God than the God of the Scriptures, resulted in a 'splitting-up', for (1) we have God as the "rerum omnium principium et finem", who can be known by reason; and (2) we have God as "dominus noster", who can only be known through revelation. But, says Barth, we do not know God as our Creator unless he reveals himself as such to us. Hence, there is no separate theology of the first article (i.e., of the Apostles' Creed): God as our Father and Creator is not known if he is not known through Jesus, "Jesus' message of God the Father is not to be understood as if Jesus expressed the well-known truth that the world must have a Creator, and as if he then ventured to characterize this Creator with the familiar human name 'Father'".[91] This means, says Barth, that we are talking here about another God: "What man can know by his own power will be at most something like a supreme being, an absolute nature, the idea of an utterly free power, a being towering over everything. But it has nothing to do with God".[92] It follows that knowledge of creation or a Creator is knowledge of God, and consequently knowledge of faith. "It is not just a vestibule in which natural theology might find a place".[93] If one does not maintain the unity of the concept of God, and allows a division between God as Creator and God as dominus noster, one is bound to end up with an idol. "This is the worst and most objectionable part of the Roman Catholic teaching that identifies the Lord of the Church with such an idol."[94]

Still, we must not say that there is no analogy at all between God and man. For this would mean - Barth agrees here with Aquinas - that true knowledge of God is out of the question.[95] Barth admits that

there is "a correspondence (Entsprechung) between the Word of God and the word man thinks and speaks",[96] but such correspondence can only be conceived as an analogia fidei. That is to say: the correspondence must not be sought in a neutral and common concept of being, but it is based on grace and revelation. The truthfulness of our knowledge of God depends on this "that God destines our intuitions and concepts to participation in God's truth."[97] Human words are his possession and they have their original truth and meaning in him; even so, "in that he uses words which belong to him, he gives them to us for our use, and allows us to employ them in relation to him".[98] Thus Barth can say that our thought- and word-pictures concerning God are not as such pictures of God; "they are not true but become true."[99] In other words, the possibility of analogy depends on God's revelation that "encounters what we say and makes its own selection among our human words."[100] Consequently, we can only speak of God "in an attitude of humility and awe".[101]

Theology and Philosophy

Another significant point is: how does Barth see the relation between theology and philosophy? He is concerned that the latter will intrude upon the territory of the former, claiming to be a source of 'higher' knowledge. Barth admits that it may be impossible for a theologian to prevent such an intrusion, but at least we can and should deny that philosophy "has the right to do so."[102] For how could philosophy ever be the judge of the Word that the Church addresses in God's name to sinful men? It is not even able to provide us with the insight that

knowledge of the Word of God is not possible apart from the reality of this Word. Now it may seem as if Barth should demand that the Christian theologian purify himself from every philosophical influence when he reflects on the Word of God. But Barth knows very well that such a demand cannot be made; he argues that "there is no one who does not mix the Gospel with philosophy, just as there is no one (except in faith) who is free from all sin. We all have our philosophical presuppositions, which is not only unavoidable, it may even be called legitimate".[103] It shows, however, that our reflections on the Word of God must always have the character of an attempt, and who is to say whether our manner of thought (Denkweise) can not be made fruitful through the grace of this Word? Barth speaks here of a hypothesis which we have to venture in faith, and because it is a hypothesis, "we should always be prepared to make new attempts in giving expression to our thoughts about God."[104] The real danger of the use of philosophy in explaining the Scriptures lies in "forgetting the unfitness (Nichteignung) of human thought for such a task".[105] In theology, the method of thinking is to be determined and controlled by the text; only then can it function "legitimately and fruitfully."[106] Unlike Luther, Barth has no intention of making philosophy the ancilla theologiae; he claims that theology itself is the ancilla of the Scriptures, and therefore it may use philosophy only as a tool, never as a principle:

> As a human science theology employs the viewpoints, concepts, images and linguistic media handed down or newly arisen. But there is no time or situation in which theology can allow itself to recognize some general or binding law for its viewpoints, conceptions, images and speech. 107.

No doubt, this places the Christian theologian in a position of solitude, and this he will have to accept for the sake of his specific calling. "Theological knowledge, thought and speech cannot become general truths and general knowledge cannot become theological truth."[108] We should not be concerned about this solitude, says Barth; if the theologian is really concerned about theology, "he should not reject having to swim against the stream of fellow-theologians and non-theological opinions and methods".[109]

One may ask, as Pannenberg does, if such a stance does not necessarily entail a sacrificium intellectus. Barth denies that this is the case; he judges the sacrifice of the intellect "to be a last, desperate, bold act of trust in oneself, a leap of faith which cannot possibly give the Christian an unassailable position".[110] Faith is not opposed to intellect; quite to the contrary: faith illuminates human life and also human intellect, not from the outside but from the inside; it opens man's eyes, it does not destroy his intellect and does not necessitate him to sacrifice it. It sets him free "in that it captivates him for itself."[111] Barth makes the same point when he speaks of the resurrection of Christ. It is a light in which we are discovered as belonging to Christ; it is a joy, a liberation, not a blind, irrational roaring (rauschen); no, through this power "we can use our eyes and ears and intellect as never before".[112] It is obvious that Barth does not want to have anything to do with a 'credo quia absurdum', for "the theologian cannot posses, maintain and demonstrate enough reason"![113]

Theology and Anthropology

With the question of a sacrificium intellectus, we have already touched on one of the fundamental aspects of Pannenberg's critique of Barthian theology. Closely connected with it is another question: the one concerning anthropology. After all we have heard so far, it is clear that Barth must reject the view that anthropological research can open a way to knowledge of God, for this, too, would mean that the irreversible relationship - from God to man - has been reversed. In this context, he speaks of the 'spirit of the times' (Zeitbewusstsein), and warns, in a discussion with Gogarten, against any attempt to meet this spirit on its own ground. The only result would be that "theology allows the opponent to dictate its course of action".[114]

Nevertheless, the Bible does speak of a relation between God and man, and theology cannot avoid the question: what kind of being is this man with whom God entered into a relationship? It is indeed an anthropological question, but, says Barth, by raising it, theology does not reach beyond the sphere of revelation. In fact, it receives from the Word of God "the foundation and the truth of its statements about man".[115] Theology must take into account that there are many different kinds of anthropology (physiology, biology, psychology and sociology); they are as such not enemies of the Christian confession because they aim at something else. This science treats of man "as a phenomenon, not of man in his reality".[116] What Barth means is that the relationship with God forms the very essence of being man; even as fallen creatures we are and remain God's creatures. That this relationship still exists is

possible only through grace, and so Barth can formulate: "not sinful man as such, viewed without the light of grace, but the sinner who participates in God's grace is the real man".[117] Of course, no human science is able to teach us these things, we can only know them through the Word of God. The next step follows logically: the Word that reveals who man really is, is God in his incarnation; thus, "the man Jesus is the source of our knowledge of the human being God created".[118]

In this way, Barth attempts to ground anthropology (i.e., the one the Christian theologian pursues) upon Christology. Not that this particular anthropology can be derived directly from Christology, for Jesus "became what we are, but did not do what we do".[119] He is the first-chosen, the receiver and dispenser of grace, and we are only in a position to receive grace. Barth claims that Jesus is the real man, and "we participate in human nature because Jesus participated in it first".[120] Not only our knowledge of human nature (the noetic aspect) but also our being human (the ontic aspect) is made dependent on Christology. To put it succinctly: the essence of man consists in his being related to Jesus and through Jesus to God.[121] On this basis, Barth can say that if man denies God, he denies himself.[122]

Inasmuch as we ourselves do not know anything about God and the real man, an analysis of human existence will not help us discover these insights revealed in the Scriptures. Still, Barth can see certain good things in an existential anthropology such as Jaspers' because it shows us human existence as a movement and fundamental openness, as an action of man in relation to another than himself, and his encounter with this

"other". What is lacking is any "certainty (Vergewisserung) concerning man's counterpart, which is the ground of this movement".[123] How does one prove that a real encounter took place? "Is it truly a break-through into the transcendental, or could it be something one simply imagined?"[124] These considerations lead Barth to the conclusion: "existential analysis, although not without value, cannot reach beyond the sphere of the phenomena, for what man is cannot be known without God".[125]

Revelation and History

Before we conclude our discussion of Barth's position, we have to deal with one more question, one that plays such a decisive role in Pannenberg's counter-proposal: what is the relation between revelation and history in Barthian theology? We have already noted that the early Barth spoke of God's revelation as touching our world without touching it. And it is true that he maintained throughout a sharp distinction between the history of salvation and history. Later, however, he stressed that the history of the covenant is carried out in the midst of the totality of creaturely events.[126] The special event in Israel, in Jesus, in the Church, is not only embedded in these general events, but so interwoven with them that it has become indistinguishable. The history of the creature provides "time and space, an opportunity for the divine will and action in the revelation of grace".[127] But this does not mean that history as such gives us access to the history of salvation, and can function as a source of the knowledge of God.

"Revelation", says Barth, "is not a predicate of history, but history is a predicate of revelation".[128] In other words: one can and must say that God's revelation is temporal and historical, but not that history reveals God. All Barth is willing to concede is that, since Christ existed in our time, it should be possible to know him as an historical figure; for this, one does not need special eyes or understanding. However, to know him (kennen) is something different from acknowledging him (erkennen). Historical research cannot give us the insight that it was God himself who became a man; this belongs to faith, and does not lie within the range of what is "visible and interpretable" (deutbar).[129] In contrast to Pannenberg, Barth comes to the conclusion that historical research cannot prove the resurrection of Christ either. He calls it a 'primal-historical event', which means that it is both in and beyond history.[130]

The distinction between the history of salvation and general history helps Barth to tackle the problem of historical distance. He refuses to recognize it as a genuine problem, and he asserts that Lessing's question - how to find a bridge across the nasty ditch of history - is "more an intellectual difficulty than a theological question".[131] The solution is that Christ, as our mediator, is always at work: "he interceded and intercedes for us, bore and bears the sins of the world, his Geschichte never becomes history; rather, it becomes eternal Geschichte".[132] "The bridge between him and us is his eternal action."[133] Christ, as the Lord of time, co-exists with us in whatever time: he is the same yesterday, today and forever.[134]

There is no doubt that Barth believes in a real coming of God into this world. Still, the question has been raised if he does justice to the historical nature of revelation:

> Everything is not merely decreed in eternity but already perfected, what takes place in time is merely a carrying out of the original divine decree, a repetition of the original and eternal pattern. The world is created as a stage and man as the spectator. 135.

One may ask indeed, if Barth, despite his best efforts, was able to overcome the danger of docetism with respect to the historicality of God's revelation.

Looking back we see Barth doing battle on many fronts, although for him it is basically one battle and one front. No matter what colors his opponents may wear, Barth charges that they all seek a way to a knowledge of God that by-passes the cross. Thus they fail to honor God as the Lord of revelation. To get to know God, says Barth, is like entering a castle whose door cannot be opened from the outside, but only from the inside; "it is a matter of his will, his power, his action, and to reflect on our situation, while we are standing before the door, will not take us any further."[136] To know God through Christ is a gift "which is new every morning, and which we receive with empty hands".[137] We would be entirely blind and lost, "if it were not for the Holy Spirit, the doctor veritatis, the Finger of God, who opens the eyes of the blind."[138]

Now that we have presented Barth's position, we turn to Pannenberg. He agrees with Barth's rejection of natural theology, but

at the same time, he accuses Barth of rendering theology helpless in the face of atheistic criticism. In the following chapter we will consider the objections which Pannenberg raises against the 'Theology of the Word'.

CHAPTER III

PANNENBERG: THE CHARACTER OF HIS THEOLOGY AND HIS CRITIQUE OF BARTH

Wolfhart Pannenberg was born in 1928 in Stettin, which at that time was located in Germany (the territory now belongs to Poland). Although he had been baptized in the Lutheran Church, religion did not play a dominant role during his earlier years; in fact, "he spent his youth largely outside the sphere of Christian influence among people who sought fulfillment in life quite apart from God".[1] After the collapse of his country at the end of World War II, Pannenberg studied at the universities of Berlin and Göttingen. It was during this time that he committed himself to the Christian faith. This commitment did not stem from a conversion-experience or anything of that nature; rather, it came as the result of rational reflection. As Richard Neuhaus puts it: "It is in fact hard to imagine a more intellectual path to Christian affirmation than the one traveled by young Pannenberg".[2] In 1950 Pannenberg went to Basel to study under Karl Jaspers and Karl Barth. The next year he left for Heidelberg where Hans von Campenhausen, Gerhard von Rad and Günther Bornkamm gave new impulses to his development as a young theologian. It was his participation in an interdisciplinary discussion group that proved to be of greatest importance for the direction into which he was to go. The group, which eventually became known as the Pannenberg Circle,[3] turned away from Barth and Bultmann and began to lay

the foundations for a new theological program. Their joint efforts resulted in the publication of a collection of essays under the title Offenbarung als Geschichte (1961). This title gave a clear indication of the kind of program these young theologians had in mind: they proposed to work out a theology of history, rather than a theology of the Word.

In 1958 Pannenberg became professor of systematic theology in Wuppertal; from 1961 to 1968 he held the same position at the University of Mainz. Since 1968 he has occupied the chair in systematic theology at the University of München.

Through his many publications Pannenberg earned the reputation of being a scholar of unusual ability. Clark H. Pinnock says the following about him:

> To dismiss Wolfhart Pannenberg as just another German theologian seeking fame through ingenuity and novelty would be a grave mistake. Pannenberg is a Lutheran theologian of rare brilliance, remarkably capable in philosophy, biblical studies, and theology.... He is projecting the most rigorous and ambitious program of academically oriented theology since Barth, and like Barth (of whom he is sharply critical) is likely to be remembered as a towering giant in twentieth century Christian thought. 4

In certain quarters, however, there was a rather profound sense of disappointment, in particular among Evangelical Christians who did not find in Pannenberg the staunch defender of orthodoxy they had expected him to be. Others again were disappointed because they felt that he was still far too close to traditional Christian thought. Nevertheless, even among his critics there will be very few who would not agree with Neuhaus' evaluation: "He (Pannenberg) presents the case with lucidity and

intellectual courage. It demands examination and response".[5] We will be engaged in such an examination in this and the following chapters.

The Crisis in Theology

Pannenberg shares the conviction of those modern thinkers who believe that the Christian Church is facing a crisis situation of such magnitude that her very existence is at stake. The Church claims to present the message of God, but the crucial question is whether or not 'God talk' still makes sense in our modern age. There are unmistakable signs that our Western world has become alienated from its Christian heritage, with the result that the word 'God' is void of any meaning to many of our contemporaries. If we speak of God, we can no longer simply assume that everyone knows what we are talking about. Pannenberg drives this point home when he writes:

> Anyone who tries to speak of God today can no longer count on being immediately understood - at least, not if he has in mind the living God of the Bible as the reality which determines everything, as the creator of the world. Talk about the living God, the creator of the world, is threatening to become hollow today, even on the lips of the Christian. 6

Pannenberg mentions several factors that helped create the present situation. To begin with, there was the emergence of autonomous reason during the time of the Enlightenment. Man no longer felt obliged to accept the authority of Church or Scriptures, but demanded the freedom to think for himself. Pannenberg sees this as a ripening of the seed that had been sown during the Reformation. This great schism undermined the authority of the Church since it had now become a house divided

against itself. Furthermore, the Reformed doctrine of justification through faith alone placed the believer in a relationship with God which no longer required the mediation of Church and priesthood. All believers were to be regarded as priests before God, and this meant in principle the end of all external authority.[7] The Reformers themselves were not aware of the full extent of the freedom that had begun to dawn. Rather, they challenged the authority of the Roman Catholic Church with the greater authority of the Scriptures, and in that way they remained caught within the confines of authoritarian thinking. However, it became increasingly difficult to maintain the authority of the Bible as the Word of God since its credibility became more and more suspect when it was subjected to the methods of historical criticism. Pannenberg does not see this as an irreparable loss, he accepts it as a simple fact that for us the Scriptures can no longer be the expression of God's authoritative Word; thus, we have no choice but to read them as expressions of the faith of human authors, and as documents of their time.[8]

Another factor that had serious consequences for theology was Kant's critique of the traditional proofs of the existence of God. Kant did not say that there is no God, but he declared that reason was not competent to judge in such matters. His systematic destruction of the arguments which had been used to demonstrate the existence of a supreme being was significant because it robbed theology of a means to approach non-believers without having to appeal to a supernatural revelation. As the validity of the proofs could no longer be maintained, the theologians were left with the problem of discovering a new basis for a

dialogue with non-believers.

No less important was the astonishing success of the natural sciences and the development of scientific methods. It seemed quite possible to explain the existence and workings of the phenomenal world without the aid of a God who created the heaven and the earth, and whose power upholds and governs the universe. Pannenberg points out that the very fact that science could construe a mechanistic system of finite causes as an independent process meant the disintegration of the relationship between physics and philosophical theology.[9] Physics, as it seemed, no longer needed metaphysics to complement its view of the world. It was Ockam who took an important step in this direction by claiming that, on purely philosophical grounds, it was not necessary to assume a first link in the chain of moving causes, since the earlier cause may have collapsed while its effect still exists. (e.g., children may be alive even though their father died). But such a first link must be assumed in the series of maintaining causes, for if the maintaining cause collapses, the effect will collapse as well. (e.g., without the sun there can be no sunlight) Hence the maintaining cause and its effect must exist simultaneously. Further, according to Ockam, one cannot go back infinitely in the series of maintaining causes without coming upon a first cause.[10]

It was, no doubt,an ingenious argument, but eventually science found a way around the problem. The acceptance of a first maintaining cause became superfluous with the discovery of the principle of inertia. That is to say: every body has in itself the tendency to

persist in the state in which it is (rest or movement). This means that its state will change only under the influence of other forces. Therefore, the persistence of a state no longer needs any particular cause. The effect on metaphysics is clear: "If continuance in being and movement had become something that could be taken for granted, then there was no longer any place for God in an account of nature".[11]

The combination of the factors mentioned above not only undermined the credibility of the Scriptures, and consequently of faith-propositions, but it also intensified the challenge of atheism. In connection with this challenge, Pannenberg discusses the theory of Ludwig Feuerbach whom he regards as a key-figure.[12] The significance of Feuerbach's work was that he attempted to prove the truth of atheism by giving a genetic explanation which would bring the actual origin of religious ideas to light. Since Feuerbach has exercised such a great influence on later thinkers, and since both Barth and Pannenberg show considerable interest in him, it may be helpful to give a brief summary of his critique of religion.

Man, says Feuerbach, is an imperfect, finite, mortal being, but, and this distinguishes him from the 'brutes', he is also a being who is aware of his limitations. How did he get this awareness? Feuerbach answers: by perceiving the infiniteness of his species.[13] Once the idea of infiniteness was given, it became possible for man by means of imagination to conceive of a being of a higher kind, and to ascribe to it those qualities which man as an individual member of the species does not possess. Thus Feuerbach comes to the conclusion that the predicates man

gives to God "are always determinations and qualities drawn from his own nature, qualities in which he in truth only imagines and projects himself".[14] In religion as well as in theology, man is the center and measure of all things. This discovery led Feuerbach to write his famous sentence: "I, while reducing theology to anthropology, exalt anthropology to theology".[15] Feuerbach insists that his thesis is not the result of certain preconceived ideas that determined the outcome of his investigation a priori:

> I let religion itself speak. Not I, but religion worships man, although religion, or rather theology denies it. It is not I, an insignificant individual but religion itself that says: God is man, man is God .... Atheism is the secret of religion itself, it believes in nothing else than the truth and divinity of human nature. 16

In a later work (Vorlesungen über das Wesen der Religion, 1851), Feuerbach complements his analysis with the introduction of a new element: man's feeling of being dependent (Abhängigkeitsgefühl) on the world that surrounds and supports him. What man experienced at the primitive stage of his development was a sense of helplessness in the face of the forces of nature. It caused fear, but since these same forces provided the things he needed, they also inspired feelings of love and gratitude. The forces of nature must therefore be regarded as the first objects of religion. In this way, man created gods by transferring the qualities of his own nature to that on which he felt dependent. Thus, says Feuerbach, in deifying nature, man deified himself.

Pannenberg argues that a theory like this cannot be ignored. The weakness of atheism had always been that it could only present itself

as an assertion (Behauptung), and to explain everything without God demands that one can also explain religion without God. This is precisely the service Feuerbach rendered to the cause of atheism; it could now claim to be more than merely an assertion.[17] The 'recluse of Bruckberg' may have found little recognition in his own time, yet, says Pannenberg, "all important atheistic tendencies in succeeding years have derived from Feuerbach. This is true of Marxism, Nietzsche, Freud and Sartre".[18]

How did the theologians respond to a challenge of such magnitude? Pannenberg is of the opinion that by and large they failed dismally to stem the rising tide that threatened the very existence of the Christian Church. Instead of meeting the opponent head-on, or at least trying to come to grips with the problem, they retreated into a 'storm-free' area where they hoped to find protection against the attacks of reason. They were unable to find a better defence than asserting the claim that the knowledge of faith belongs to a realm inaccessible to reason. It was a ghetto-mentality that seemed to justify theology's failure to give an account of the faith. At the same time, this mentality made it impossible to mount a counter-attack. As we will see, Pannenberg judges the theologies of Barth and Bultmann to suffer from the same mentality and accuses them of having failed to defend the Christian faith against the attacks of atheism.[19]

The Character of Pannenberg's Theology

One can say without exaggeration that Pannenberg's work is borne by the conviction that a theologian acts irresponsibly if he remains in his ivory tower in a time of crisis. Rather than trying to hide in an

area beyond the reach of the enemy, he should find a ground where he can meet his opponent and argue his case in terms that can be understood and verified by everyone. This does not mean, however, that Pannenberg may be called an apologist for the Christian religion without further qualification. It is certainly true that he rises to the defence of the Christian faith, but he has no intention of defending the traditional teachings of Christianity as if such teachings were indisputable and could simply be taken for granted. Pannenberg does not attempt to restore and secure ecclesiastical and theological ownership (Besitzstand), for this is precisely what contributed to the present crisis for Christianity and the Church.[20] Therefore, whatever Christian doctrine fails to pass the test of critical examination must not be retained or reaffirmed; on the contrary, what is required in such case is rethinking and reformulation. Pannenberg shows here that he is prepared to take the arguments of atheism seriously, which is not possible for the theologian who is convinced of the rightness of what always has been taught. That is to say, intellectual honesty may compel us to admit that in certain respects the atheistic critique is justified.

Moreover, an important part of Pannenberg's strategy is to challenge the tenability of the position of his opponents. He shows convincingly that:

> Apologetic theology need not be merely a defensive reaction, protecting what we think we are already sure of from the onslaughts of secular criticism. Rather, engaged in the honest pursuit of truth, theology may find it has to take the offensive against any secular picture of the world which incompletely or inadequately represents reality the way it is. 21

Thus understood, one may speak of the "apologetic thrust" of Pannenberg's work,[22] but his main objective is undoubtedly the development of a theology of reason which will speak meaningfully of God, not only to believers, but to non-believers as well. Or, to put it in different words, he wishes to demonstrate the reasonableness of the Christian faith, reserving for himself and others the right to reject what conflicts with reason and experience.

Does such an approach make Pannenberg a rationalist? Not at all. Although it is true that "the world of Wolfhart Pannenberg is a rational world, presided over by a self-conscious, full-fledged commitment to reason",[23] he makes it very clear that no man can attain to knowledge of God on the basis of rational reflection alone. To know God requires a revelation of God and God is only revealed in Jesus Christ.[24] Pannenberg can therefore fully agree with Barth's thesis that God can only be known through God.[25] But he disagrees with the opinion which one can find so often in contemporary theology, foremost in Barth, that:

> Rational insight into the ground and content of faith is not only denied to us as a matter of fact, but is even injurious to the essence of faith. Faith, one likes to say, must remain a risk. Against this view, I have asserted that the essence of faith must come to harm precisely if in the long run rational conviction about its basis fails to appear. Faith then is easily perverted into blind credulity toward the authority-claim of the preached message; into superstition, owing to its seeming contradiction of better judgment; or even into a tediously wrought work of faith. 26

As Pannenberg sees it, faith and reason do not necessarily stand in opposition to each other, consequently no one should be forced to make a choice between irrational faith and unbelieving reason. The first and

most obvious question to ask is if there is really such a thing as 'the' reason, "so monolithic in form that theology can only be dashed to pieces against it."[27] Theology would do well to inspect the kind of abolute claims put forth in the name of reason:

> Only in this way will it be possible to obtain a critical concept of reason and knowledge that will for the first time make it possible to give a rational account of the truth of the Christian message and thereby would itself already be a step on the way to such an account. 28.

Upon closer examination, Pannenberg finds that reason is by no means "a uniformly determined entity".[29] He proves this point by discussing three different concepts of reason that can be found in the history of Western thought. First we have the a priori reason which sees knowledge as the result of applying the principles already contained in the intellect to the data presented by experience. Secondly, there is the concept of receiving reason which views knowledge as the reception of pre-existing forms of true being through illumination. Thus reason receives what already is, the eternal amidst the changing phenomena. And thirdly Pannenberg mentions historical reason, oriented to the philosophy of Hegel, which regards every insight gained as but a stage to a new insight:

> Thus, through the movement of reflection, imagination is called upon to bring forth ever new syntheses. What appeared in Kant (with his a priori reason) as a rigid, permanently structure of reason was dissolved by means of the principle of reflection into a process which continually moves forward from one stage to another. 30

The historical nature of reason, to which Pannenberg subscribes, implies the thought that we know merely in a provisional way, since history itself

is still in progress. From this the conclusion must be drawn that "every assertion of meaning rests upon a fore-conception of the final future, in the light of which the true meaning of every individual event first becomes expressible in a valid way".[31]

In the light of this, Pannenberg can claim that there is an element that both faith and reason have in common:

> Faith is not the only thing that has a relationship to the future in that as trust it anticipates something future and unseen. Rather, a fore-conception of the future is constitutive for reason, too, conceived in its historic openness, because it is only an eschatologically (because temporally) constituted whole that yields the definite meaning of everything individual, which we ascribe to things and events as a matter of course by saying what this is or that is.[32]

Since reason is always concerned with things at hand, it has a tendency to understand itself in the light of the present and to forget that only in the eschaton the totality of meaning will be known. By pointing to the eschatological future faith can assist reason; that is:

> Faith is directed to this future (of God's reign) which constitutes reality as a whole and thereby brings everything individual to its essential perfection. However, because this future is not alien to reason, but is rather its origin from which it implicitly always derives, faith cannot stand in opposition to reason. Much more does it remind reason of its own absolute presupposition by speaking about the eschatological future and its pre-appearance in the history of the resurrection of Jesus, from which faith derives. In this way, faith can assist reason to become fully transparent to itself in its reflections.
>
> Faith can confirm itself as the criterion for the rationality of reason just by its orientation toward a final, eschatological future. 33

Reason, understood as historical reason, has its rights, and Pannenberg insists on the recognition of these rights. That is why he

is strongly opposed to all irrationality in theology and to all authoritarianism that demands blind obedience. He does not deny that the Scriptures show authoritarian features, but this cannot be used as an argument since we live in entirely different times. Any effort to approach post-Englightenment man with authoritarian claims will not only remain without effect, it will even do more harm to theology. Pannenberg argues:

> In the realm of modern thought ... where even historical questions are settled not by appeals to authorities but by the new science of historical criticism, persistence in maintaining the authoritative character of faith in contrast to reason takes on a new aspect. This insistence upon an authority that is no longer generally convincing as an authority takes on the character of an external coercion, and the individual's acceptance of such a claim becomes an arbitrary decision - quite the opposite of what it was earlier, when the acceptance of an authority was grounded in insight into its credibility. 34

Authoritarianism will also fail as a defence against the attacks of atheism; modern man will suspect that claims of this nature "clothe human thoughts and institutions with the splendor of divine majesty. Thus they are defenceless against the reproach of interchanging the divine and the human, and against the accusation of absolutizing what in truth is finite in content ...".[35]

Closely connected with the foregoing is Pannenberg's rejection of faith that is conceived as a merely subjective decision on the part of the believer. Faith (fiducia) is trust in God and as such it presupposes knowledge (notitia). "Every act of trust", says Pannenberg, "reaches backward or forward to a ground of trustworthiness in the object being relied on".[36] The question is now: what reason do we have

to trust God? Our trust in him can only be grounded in the knowledge we have of him and, according to Pannenberg, this knowledge is based on the concrete acts by which God demonstrated his power and faithfulness. In other words: for faith everything depends on the reliability of the knowledge we have of such revelatory acts. But since such events lie behind us in a far-away past and cannot be reproduced, how can we ascertain the reliability of our knowledge of them?

Pannenberg objects strongly to the thought that it is a special kind of certainty that one only can have in faith. It is instructive to listen here to his discussion with Paul Althaus. Althaus confirmed that faith indeed presupposes actual knowledge, "namely, the impression of the credibility of the reports of facts and events ... contained in the proclamation, thus of the factuality of the reported history".[37] To this, however, he added that this is not yet knowledge of God's revelation in the events, for this knowledge is only given with faith, and is first disclosed in believing reception of the message. Barth, of course, would have agreed with this statement, but Pannenberg fears that it will lead to a perversion (Verderben) of the concept of faith:

> This sentence (i.e., Althaus' statement) seems to lead to the conclusion that the decision of faith is the ground of certainty with regard to the content of faith, and that is precisely the conception of the relationship of knowledge (with assent) and faith that I must reject, because with that the founding of faith upon a truth 'outside myself' (extra me) is in fact surrendered in favor of a self-grounding faith. In every grounding of knowledge (notitia) upon trust (fiducia), I can see only the perversion of a correct understanding of Christian faith. 38

Pannenberg then contends that the only way to avoid such a

'perversion' is that we establish the reliability of the reports concerning the revelatory events by using the proper means; that is, these documents must be subjected to an examination carried out by the methods of historical research.[39]

We meet here with one of the most important aspects of Pannenberg's theology: he cannot accept two kinds of knowledge and therefore he must reject the traditional distinction between faith-knowledge and rational knowledge:

> I admit that I cannot understand any knowledge as other than 'natural'. And I cannot free myself of the suspicion that the distinguishing of a special knowledge of faith leads once again to the conclusion that the truth of such knowledge can be justified, in the last analysis, only by a decision of faith. 40

The believer is not in a privileged position as far as knowledge is concerned. What he knows the non-believer can know just as well. As we shall see later, Pannenberg does not mean to say that faith as trust in God is entirely man's own doing. Such trust requires an action of God, but the work of the Spirit has nothing to do with a revelation that "transcends the realm of knowledge of natural reason, which would make a supernatural elevation of our cognitive powers necessary ...".[41] The road that leads to reliable knowledge of revelatory events is the same for everyone, since the truth of Christianity has nothing to do with the mysteries of Gnosticism which could only be understood by the initiate.

Approaching the matter from a different angle, Pannenberg argues:

> Even from the side of theology the exclusion of the distinctive biblical history from the realm of historical

> method is out of the question. The history of God from which faith lives bears witness to the one true God only because the symphony of all human life finds its fulfillment in it. This is expressed in the universal-historical tendency in the Israelite historical consciousness. The exclusive claim of the God of Israel to be the only true God finally becomes effective in this tendency. For this reason, no genuine Christian theology can be satisfied to see the work of historical research as an inquiry on another spiritual plane. 42

This type of research is an indispensable tool to determine the trustworthiness of the things the 'eye-witnesses' report to us. One may say indeed that Pannenberg "makes an ally instead of an enemy out of critical history".[43]

To summarize: what we have found thus far is that Pannenberg's theology seeks to overcome the opposition between faith and reason; the possibility for this is given with the fact that both are related to the ultimate truth which cannot be fully known as long as history is in progress. Consequently, Pannenberg attacks subjectivism and authoritarianism and emphasizes a revelation of God in historical events whose facticity can only be established with the help of the methods of modern historical research. We will have to return to each of these features for a more detailed discussion, but at this stage they should have prepared us sufficiently for Pannenberg's critique of Karl Barth and his 'theology of the Word'.

Pannenberg's Critique of Barth's Point of Departure

The whole of Barth's imposing Church Dogmatics rests on a single foundation, namely, God revealed himself exclusively in Jesus Christ, apart from whom man does not know anything about God. This thesis, which

functions as Barth's point of departure is non-debatable, for by discussing it we already imply that man is capable of forming an independent judgment with respect to the revelation of God. If we ascribe to man a capacity of this nature, then we have given him a position above the Word of God and we no longer acknowledge God's grace and freedom. Hence, says Barth, we must not start with discussing the possibility of revelation and lay down the conditions for it. On the contrary, we must begin with the reality of revelation, for only when we are taught by God do we know what it means that God revealed himself.[44]

This point of departure, sometimes called fideism, forms the main target for Pannenberg's penetrating critique. The problem with Barth according to Pannenberg, is that he presents us with a thesis on which everything else depends, but he refuses to support it with rational arguments; that is to say: Barth asserts without giving us an intellectual legitimation of his assertion. Such an unsupported thesis does not have any claim to general validity, it assumes this claim rather than proving it. When one simply states that God is the 'Wholly Other' who is inaccessible to an approach from the human side, then one leaves oneself "unprotected against the argument that one's language and use of the word 'God' can be refuted by the (same) atheist argument that it is a projection".[45]

Pannenberg points out that the reality of God and assertions about him can never be one and the same thing. It belongs implicitly to the structure of assertions that they are distinguishable from the object or state of affairs of which something is asserted:

> The claim to correspond with the state of affairs automatically presupposes a difference between the

> assertion and the state of affairs, and conversely the distinction between the assertion and the state of affairs can be determined only by reference to the correspondence asserted. 46

When one follows Barth's approach, it is hardly possible to make such a distinction, for what he asserts about God derives directly from an assumed revelation of God in Christ. The result is that the validity and intelligibility of his statements depend entirely on the question whether or not one believes as Barth does. This is precisely what makes the status of theological propositions highly problematic:

> It is at this point that the difficulty arises for religious and theological propositions which purport to be intelligible as cognitive statements, assertions. Today especially, the reality of God seems to be mentioned only in the utterances of believers and theologians .... However, if the reality of God cannot be distinguished from the assertions of believers and theologians about it, such assertions can no longer be taken seriously as assertions, but look like fictions created by believers and theologians. 47

Furthermore, Barth's approach to theology has the earmarks of a subjectivism that must forego all claims to objectivity, Pannenberg charges. To say that God revealed himself in Jesus Christ already presupposes the existence of God, but this is exactly what may no longer be treated as a matter settled in advance. The reason for this is, of course, that the theologian is now addressing himself to a world in which the very existence of God is questioned. Barth may be convinced that there is a God, but many of our contemporaries do not share this conviction, and under these circumstances the statement that we can only speak of God on the basis of the Word of God must appear as meaningless from a non-believer's point of view. Pannenberg finds it quite ironic

that Barth wishes to attain the highest possible degree of objectivity by forcing human thought into subjection to an 'objective' revelation, but, contrary to his intentions, his theology turns out to be an extreme example of subjectivism inasmuch as it rests solely on the subjective decision of the believer.[48]

Subjectivism often has authoritarianism for a companion, and Pannenberg finds this combination also in Barth's theology. It demands the recognition of the authority of the Scriptures because they testify to the revelation that took place in Christ. Again Pannenberg raises the same objection: it is simply no longer possible in our age to assert the authority of the Scriptures without giving any reasons why this authority should be accepted. Therefore:

> Instead of using the formula 'Word of God' (whatever one understands by that) as evidence of its own orthodoxy and as something to be mouthed at any time in order to shatter opponents, theology should perhaps rather devote itself more to the less pretentious task of clarifying the problem of application designated by this term, and taking as its theme the problem of the possibility of transmitting the Christian tradition in the present age. In any case, the task of theology is not accomplished in the long run by mythologizing talk about the Word of God ..., nor by confronting the hearer, threatened by the asserted authority of this divine Word, with a naked demand for obedience.[49]

Since the authority of the Scriptures is disputed, theology has no choice but to treat it as a problem. This means that theology "must not avoid the demand for a means of treating its statements by criteria other than those of an authoritarian doctrinal tradition".[50]

In this context, Pannenberg comes to speak of Barth's positivism. It is typical of every form of positivism that it makes a

certain fact or idea the basis on which it develops its arguments. Thus, according to Pannenberg, empiricist positivism takes experience, or better, sense perception, as the ultimate fact upon which all knowledge builds or by reference to which it must be justified. Logical positivism, on the other hand, stresses the principle that assertions must show in their logical structure a correspondence to states of affairs whose existence can be determined by observation. Its central question is whether and how propositions which make assertions about states of affairs are open to verification, falsification or testing of any sort.[51] Pannenberg sees in Barth's theology a parallel case, for we find here what Bonhoeffer called a positivism of revelation. That is to say: Barth 'posits' God's revelation as the ultimate datum or fact and takes this "as the basis of all his arguments, without considering what grounds he has for such an assumption".[52] In view of the crisis-situation in which theology finds itself, Pannenberg insists on de-positivisation.[53] Instead of stating peremptorily that God revealed himself in Christ, theology must find ways to test such a statement:

> Since the existence of divine authority, for example in the form of Scripture as the Word of God, can no longer be treated as a generally accepted premise, this approach no longer offers corroboration of theological statements. The divine authority of Scripture and reliance on the Word of God in it or in the person of Jesus have themselves become assertions whose content must be subject to testing if the intended assertion is not to be regarded as an expressive linguistic gesture with no cognitive significance.[54]

Claiming that Christ is the sole source of our knowledge of God, Barth opposes all natural theology. To a certain extent Pannenberg

agrees with him; at least, he appreciates Barth's argument "that the concept of revelation is emptied of significance if it is possible to find elsewhere what can seriously be called definitive knowledge of the God to whose revelation the Scriptures bear witness".[55] But what he holds against Barth is that he not only rejected traditional natural theology but, at the same time, every possibility of a philosophical theology. Pannenberg sees this as a fatal error, for if all philosophical theology or rational argumentation is dismissed, then all that is left is a 'theology from above' which amounts to an act of spiritual capitulation to Feuerbach. We must realize that we cannot begin with talking about God as if nothing had happened. Rather:

> Theology has to learn that after Feuerbach it can no longer mouth the word 'God' without offering any explanation; that it can no longer speak as if the meaning of this word were self-evident; that it cannot pursue theology 'from above', as Barth says, if it does not want to fall into the hopeless and, what is more, self-inflicted isolation of a higher glossolalia, and lead the whole Church into this blind alley. 56

Such an isolated position prevents any serious confrontation with atheism. Even more: the theology of the Word manages to make it appear as if it were really quite normal that man outside the sphere of Christian proclamation should not know God. He may give evidence of possessing some remnants of religious consciousness but this can conveniently be interpreted as expressions of his separation from and rebellion against the true God.[57] Once one takes this stance, it follows that the Christian theologian cannot and should not enter into any serious discussion with his non-believing opponents. In fact, he

can then only counterattack with the proclamation of the Word.

Furthermore, Pannenberg detects a connection between a wholesale rejection of natural theology and the emergence of the American 'Death of God' theology. He argues that if it is impossible to defend the idea of God on rational grounds, then theology will eventually have to abandon this idea as logically untenable. Even an appeal to the teachings of Jesus is not sufficient to prevent such a development. Therefore:

> However highly we value the motives which led Protestant theology to an increasingly intense criticism of all non-Christian knowledge of God, it must be realized that the consequence of this course was the breakdown of the idea of God: Herbert Braun's demythologization and the American 'Death of God' theologians are the heirs of Barth and Bultmann. For if all philosophical theology is to be dismissed, what justification is there for continuing to maintain and believe what Jesus says about God? The human authority of Jesus alone? Would this not mean that the idea of God was one of the features of his ministry and preaching which were conditioned by his own time, particularly as it is clear that Jesus usually presupposed the idea of God and of his coming Kingdom which he found in his environment. But if Jesus' idea of God, which unquestionably forms the centre of his message, is abandoned, then there is virtually no point in continuing to assert any connection, any continuity of meaning worth calling 'Christian', with what was central for Jesus himself. 58

It does not mean that Pannenberg takes here the side of theologians such as Hamilton, Altizer and Van Buren. Rather, he is of the opinion that the 'Death of God' theology is marked by a certain superficiality, for it is clear that a God who died cannot have been the true God. Even worse, Pannenberg is convinced that the abandonment of God would bring the end of Christianity. It should be understood that "the abandonment of the idea of God would not make the task of apologetics any easier for

Christian theology, a curious view which many Christians seem to hold, but would make it incomparably harder, and indeed completely hopeless".[59] Nevertheless, these theologians are not wrong in every respect, they have at least one valid point: "every theological statement must prove itself on the field of reason and can no longer be argued on the basis of unquestioned presuppositions of faith".[60]

At this point a question is in order: if a theologian accepts Barth's fundamental thesis that God can only be known in Christ, does it not necessarily lead to the exclusion of any rational argumentation in support of the idea of God? Pannenberg rejects such a conclusion, contending that the Christian proclamation is indeed open to testing or verification:

> Christian speech about God can be verified only in such a way that it is the revelation of God itself which discloses that about man and his world in relation to which its truth is proved. In this way Christian speech about God would be more than mere assertion. It could lay claim to the existence of man and of the world, in the way they are disclosed in the light of the biblical tradition, but thereafter perceivable as really being so characterized, as witnesses for the reality of the biblical God. [61]

What Pannenberg has in mind is something that plays a role of great importance in his philosophical theology, namely, the problematic of the relation between question and answer. Man asks questions about himself and his world, and he does so in the expectation of finding answers to his questions. Without this expectation, his questioning would not make any sense. It can be said, therefore, that man's questions are awakened by the (expected) answer, even though it is not yet known.

As we will see in our next chapter, Pannenberg does not intend to use this problematic as a proof for the existence of God; but it can be fruitfully employed to demonstrate the reasonableness of the idea of God. A start in this direction, claims Pannenberg, was made by Barth himself in the early period of dialectical theology. In the second edition of his Epistle to the Romans, he spoke of the awakening of the human question without any qualms: "Men call upon God, because and only because, he answered before they call".[62] "We do not ask the question of ourselves, but we do it because God himself through Jesus Christ has placed us in question, because he is the answer to the question of our existence."[63]

In his Church Dogmatics, however, Barth no longer makes use of the relation of question and answer. Pannenberg supposes Barth feared that it might be misunderstood as a means by which man could attain to knowledge of God on his own. But there was no real reason for such fears: "to be sure, such misunderstanding had already been guarded against by his stress on the priority of the answer over the question".[64] Moreover, by abandoning the problematic of question and answer, Barth gave up the possibility of claiming human existence as a witness for the truth of revelation. What Pannenberg attempts to show here is that the isolated position of Barth's theology is not the necessary consequence of honoring God's revelation in Christ, it is therefore indeed 'self-inflicted'. The conviction that God can only be known through God does not force us to withdraw from the opposition into a dead-end street, neither does it compel us to give up on the possibility of a philosophical

theology. Rather, it must be maintained over against the dialectical theologians that the Christian theologian can and must meet atheist criticism with arguments based on reason, without thereby jeopardizing the freedom and grace of the God who revealed himself to man.

Pannenberg protests particularly against Barth's interpretation of non-Christian religions and his adoption of Feuerbach's theory with respect to them. Feuerbach sought to demonstrate that man in his religion projects his own longings into an imaginary being outside himself; thus he could claim that all God-talk is nothing but man talking about man. Is Barth not following the same route when he speaks of idols as reflections of human pride and states that 'gods' are merely products of man's imagination?[65] But though he accepts Feuerbach's analysis with respect to other religions, he claims at the same time that such critique does not apply to the Christian idea of God. It was the belief of dialectic theology, writes Pannenberg, "that it is possible to accept atheist arguments and trump them by a radical belief in revelation."[66] But this is all too simple. The very fact that there are extensive analogies between Christianity and other religions makes it very difficult for a Christian believer to assert, without further ado, that his religion has a monopoly to the truth because it is based on a genuine divine revelation. The question of what justifies such an assertion is legitimate and should not be ignored.

Pannenberg raises similar objections in a discussion with Helmut Gollwitzer, a pupil of Barth, who stated that the God of whom the biblical authors speak is sharply distinguished from any idea of

God which is a necessary element of man's self-interpretation.[67] When man speaks thus of God, he speaks indeed of nothing but man. However, says Gollwitzer, one cannot prove that Feuerbach's anthropological interpretation does not apply to the Christian idea of God. If a person makes such an assertion, he cannot be refuted, and a Christian can only protest and witness.[68]

Pannenberg finds Gollwitzer's 'solution' most unsatisfactory. Again he asks why the idea of God found in other religions should be different from that which we find in the New Testament or in the Christian preaching. Why is it that in this case man is suddenly not talking about himself? Mere assertions such as Barth's and Gollwitzer's are an inadequate defense against the Feuerbachian interpretation of the Christian religion. In fact, "if the idea of a personal God is everywhere else judged to be a mythological self-interpretation of man, one would hardly be able to prevent this view from having repercussions on Christian theology and its language about God."[69] A theology that can do no more than "protest and witness", and that is unable to defend its position over against the atheist critique with rational arguments is in a hopeless situation.[70] In declaring that the God of Israel and of Christianity is different from pagan concepts of God one must avoid the impression that the Christian believer simply has made an arbitrary choice. This means that the assumption of the superiority of the Christian revelation over other religious traditions must in principle remain open to discussion.[71] The Christian religion, says Pannenberg, is one among many in this world, and what is specific in it can only

be established by comparing it with other religions:

> The revelation of God to which the biblical writings testify (however high a status is according to their content and unity) cannot be isolated by an act of irrational and arbitrary choice from the sphere of other religions and their claims to be revelations. The specific characteristics of Israelite and early Christian belief in revelation can be established only by comparison with them, and not by an a priori postulate. 72

Such a task is to be carried out by a philosophy of religion:

> A comparative study of this kind, and still more the judgment it involves concerning the truth of a belief in revelation which we first encounter as one amongst many religions in the world, is quite impossible without a philosophical theory of religion. Thus a basis in the philosophy of religion is necessary for a theology of revelation. 73

Here we have another example of how Pannenberg seeks to lift the Christian faith out of the sphere of subjectivism. In opposition to Barth and Gollwitzer, he argues that the truth of Christianity can never be based on mere assertions. One will have to adduce arguments which demonstrate that the Christian religion is indeed different from and superior to other beliefs. If a theologian only appeals to divine revelation, he destroys every intellectual justification of the claim to general validity.[74]

Theology A Science?

Pannenberg's insistence on the necessity of a philosophy of religion brings us to the question of the scientific character of theology and its relation to the other sciences. We remember that Barth, too, spoke of theology as a science on the ground of appropriateness to its object. But since theology has its own criterion in the

Word of God, it is not to be subjected to standards valid for other sciences.[75] Is this position tenable? H. Scholz, in contrast to Barth, maintained that theology had to meet certain standards in order to qualify for the status of being a science. In view of this he formulated three minimal requirements or formal postulates:

1. The postulate of propositions. In any science there can only be statements whose truth is asserted. This includes the requirement of lack of contradiction and excludes statements of faith.

2. The postulate of coherence. All propositions must be related to a single field of study. This rules out Schleiermacher's idea that theology consists of various disciplines which find their unity in the purpose of serving the leadership of the Church.

3. The postulate of control. A claim to truth made by a statement is subject to testing; i.e., it should be such that it can be verified.

To these minimal requirements Scholz added two more:

4. The postulate of agreement with other sciences.

5. The postulate of freedom of prejudice.[76]

Barth rejected these postulates on the ground that their acceptance would mean a betrayal of theology since it would cause the loss of theology's own theme.[77] Pannenberg, on the other hand, argues that such a refusal demands too high a price, for the result is that the theologian "gives up the claim to know what he is saying."[78] He believes, therefore, that the validity of Scholz's postulates must be recognized, even though they need "supplementation and refinement".[79] It is a simple fact, and that is the truth of logical positivism, that any statement which is not capable of being verified is meaningless. That

is precisely the difficulty in which Barth's theology became entangled: he does not allow any discussion or testing of his point of departure (i.e., the Word of God), he only asserts, but he does not seem to realize that his stance endangers the scientific status of theology and with that its place at the university.

Pannenberg finds this an extremely serious matter; should theology be dismissed from the universities, it would have a negative effect on the Christian understanding of truth, and it would have consequences for the other sciences as well:

> If theology were now forced to disappear from universities on the ground, maintained by many people, that it is essentially tied to authority and therefore unscientific, this would be a severe setback for the Christian understanding of truth, even if theology were taken over by educational establishments belonging to the Church and continued to be studied there. But such a change could also contain dangers for the sciences, in particular because without the critical collaboration of theology and philosophy the unity of knowledge, which prevents the sciences from totally disintegrating into a set of completely separate disciplines and ossifying, would no longer be appreciated. Collaboration between theology and philosophy is necessary because philosophy alone cannot provide a basis for the understanding of the unity of the perception of meaning, the historical roots of intellectual life. 80

Pannenberg denies that in this way theology would be forced to accept a concept of the truth from somewhere else. But theology must be able to defend its claim to be a science, and in order to do this, it will have to agree on a common basis for the argument about what science is. On what basis, asks Pannenberg, can theology justify its claim to be in a different and privileged position when the truth of its statements is

challenged? The answer:

> Even if claims of this sort are made on the theological side with disarming innocence, it is understandable, to say no more, if in other quarters they give an impression of immense arrogance on the part of a discipline which can ultimately, as a discipline, be no more than human. 81

The Relation Between Faith and Knowledge

Thus Pannenberg criticizes Barth's point of departure because it is unable to respond to the challenge of atheism, and because it cannot defend the scientific status of theology. There is, however, another concern. A rational account of the Christian faith is necessary, not only with a view to the questions of non-Christians, but also for the sake of those who do believe in the God who revealed himself in Christ. They must have the assurance that their trust in God rests on a firm foundation. Pannenberg agrees that the ground of our faith is the history of Jesus as reported in the writings of the New Testament, but what arguments do we have for saying this? If we believe these reports only because we decided to believe them, then it is clearly a matter of faith grounding itself; it lacks an element essential to it, namely a truth outside itself.[82] Such a faith, says Pannenberg, is "degraded to a work of self-redemption"[83] and it leaves the Christian without any certainty concerning the reliability of what he believes. Faith, therefore, needs the support of knowledge:

> This knowledge is not a condition for participating in salvation, but rather it assures faith about its basis. It thereby enables faith to resist the gnawing doubt that it has no basis beyond itself and merely satisfies a subjective need through fictions and

> thus is only accomplishing self-redemption through self-deception.84

In order to believe or trust one must know the thing or person one trusts. That is why Pannenberg can say that knowledge logically precedes faith.[85] Psychologically speaking, however, both faith and knowledge can be taken up in the same act:

> Trust can also arise in the expectation that the (logically already presupposed) knowledge will later be disclosed - a fore-conception of the result that is ordinarily characteristic not only of the attitude of faith but also of the cognitive process generally. One conjuringly anticipates the result, but must then confirm this conjecture, find verification of it. 86

It is not necessary that the believer himself carries out such a process of verification, it is the special task of theology to do it in his behalf. In this way it is possible to trust in God on the assumption that things are in order with respect to the ground of faith. In other words: "The decision of faith can have the form of an anticipation of future insight ..., but logically it must remain grounded upon possible insight".[87] It is not Pannenberg's intention to let the certainty of faith depend on assurances given by theologians, for this would only be another form of authoritarianism. He would rather see that believers are taught to use their intellect in such a way that they can draw their own conclusions. He therefore urges theology to do everything in its power to make the individual Christian competent to judge (urteilsfähig) in questions concerning his faith.[88]

May we conclude from the foregoing that Pannenberg leaves no room for the work of the Holy Spirit? Denying such an accusation emphatically, he declares that no one can come to faith without the

illumination of the Spirit. However, an appeal to the power of the Spirit must not become a "haven of ignorance",[89] for "an otherwise unconvincing message cannot attain the power to convince simply by appealing to the Holy Spirit".[90] He is not to be misused "as a figleaf to protect the nakedness of the Christian tradition".[91] He is not "a kind of supernatural key to a Christian message which has meanwhile become incomprehensible".[92]

What then is the relation between faith and knowledge? Pannenberg clarifies this point by saying that knowledge does not replace faith,[93] nor is it a stage that surpasses faith as was the case in Gnosticism. Rather, he maintains that the opposite is true: knowledge, if it is genuine, "issues in believing trust".[94]

It is now possible to give a more precise formulation of Pannenberg's critique. What he attacks in the theology of Barth is not the fundamental thesis that God can only be known through God; he finds himself in complete agreement on this point. What he objects to is that Barth fails to underpin his theology with a rational argumentation (i.e., one that is not based on faith-presuppositions), which can show that the Christian faith is not based on the arbitrary decision of the believer. The consequence of a theology which begins with the Word of God is that theology becomes subjectivistic and authoritarian. It leads into a ghetto and speaks a language that many people cannot comprehend. Such an approach to religion and theology demands nothing less than the sacrifice of the intellect.[95]

Although Pannenberg's critique is not free from exaggeration,[96] there can be no doubt that he alerts us to a very real problem. We turn for a moment to Barth's critique of Feuerbach, which comes to its sharpest expression in the words he borrowed from Hans Ehrenberg: "As a true child of his century he (Feuerbach) was a man who did not acknowledge (nichtkennen) death and who misunderstood (verkennen) evil". and then Barth continues:

> Truly any man who knew that we human beings are evil from head to foot, and who bore in mind that we all die, would know that the illusion of all illusions is the notion that the being of God is the being of man. Even if he held the good God to be a dream, he would certainly leave him free of any identification with such as we. 97

Barth's critique carries a great deal of weight for one who accepts the biblical interpretation of sin and death, but, and here we touch on the problem, Feuerbach judged such an interpretation to be antiquated, and for this reason he would have rejected the validity of Barth's argument.

With this we have come to the very heart of Pannenberg's protest against the Barthian approach to theology: how can the atheist and the Christian come to grips with each other as long as the opponents remain within their own sphere of thought? Pannenberg asserts that we cannot break the dead-lock, unless we find a common ground which will make a meaningful discussion possible. The question is: can such a ground be found? Can Pannenberg agree with Barth's thesis that God is only known through God and yet add a new dimension to theology: the possibility of demonstrating the reasonableness of the Christian faith

without making faith a necessary condition for such a demonstration? What Pannenberg proposes sounds very promising, it would mean the overcoming of the age old conflict between faith and reason, theology and philosophy.

Whether or not he succeeded is a question we cannot answer now, it has to wait till we have examined his own solution to the problem. And what is Pannenberg's solution? Briefly stated, he believes it is necessary to give theology a foothold or foundation in anthropology and to show that God's revelation is mediated through historical facts whose facticity can be established with the help of the historical-critical method. This, according to Pannenberg, is the only way to overcome what he takes to be Barth's subjectivism. Thus, the next two chapters will deal with Pannenberg's move toward a philosophical theology and his concept of revelation as history.

CHAPTER IV

TOWARD A PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY

We learned in our previous chapter that, according to Pannenberg, an appropriate response to the present crisis-situation for theology requires the development of two themes. (1) Theology must demonstrate the reasonableness of the idea of God in such way that it does not depend entirely on the assumption of divine revelation. This involves a kind of natural theology or, as Pannenberg prefers to call it, a philosophical theology. (2) Theology must demonstrate that the Christian faith is founded on reliable historical facts. This involves the concept of revelation as history and the application of the historical method.

When we look at the dates of Pannenberg's publications, it appears that he has been working on both themes simultaneously.[1] This means that neither theme belongs to an earlier or later period, and it gives us the freedom to start with whichever one we wish. I have elected to discuss the reasonableness of the idea of God before the concept of revelation as history, since it seems to me that the idea of God logically precedes the revelation of God.[2] Further, it should be noted that Pannenberg, most of the time, elaborates and clarifies in later articles what he has written in earlier publications. This, and the fact that he consistently follows the same line of thought, allows us

to present his viewpoint in a composite manner without necessarily following the chronological order in which his writings appeared.

The Failure of Natural Theology

When Pannenberg sets out to develop a philosophical theology, he has no intention of proving the existence of God in a similar fashion as natural theology attempted to do it. He already made it clear that it will be necessary to move in a different direction, for he agrees with Barth that there is no such thing as a 'natural' knowledge of God: we can only know God through revelation. However, to state this as a matter of fact is not sufficient, one has to explain why and how natural theology failed to reach its objective.

Pannenberg shows in a brilliant analysis that traditional natural theology was based on two different concepts of God (the biblical and the Greek) which were linked together, even though the contrast between them made their union a dubious one. On the one hand, Greek philosophers viewed God "as the origin of everything presently in existence. Accordingly, philosophy could construct its concept of God by inference back from the world".[3] In addition to this, these thinkers reasoned that whatever is capable of change will not last and therefore it does not possess true being. This line of thought led to the idea that God, if he exists, must be free of any change, and thus the idea of immutability became the predominant feature of the divine reality. On the other hand, we meet with the biblical concept of God. This concept certainly thought of him as the source of all being; even so, says Pannenberg, "as origin he is never merely the invisible ground of

present reality, but the free, creative source of the ever new and ever unforeseen".[4] A comparison between the two concepts shows clearly how they differ: the first is characterized by rigid immutability and the second by creative freedom.

One can easily see that such a contrast raises serious questions concerning the acceptance of the inferential method with respect to the biblical idea of God, for such a procedure is based on the assumption that there must be some similarity between a cause and its effect. Indeed, that assumption is justified if a cause operates necessarily the way it does. However, "if that is not the case, if the effect follows from it contingently, then one cannot without further ado draw conclusions from the effect about the nature of the cause".[5] Now, the biblical God does not act because of the 'necessity of his essence', but only because he chooses to do so, and that is the reason why the inferential method should not be applied in his case. The freedom of God and the contingency of his acts "permit no reflection upon a similarity of effects with the essence of God, and thus do not allow any statement that would transfer creaturely perfection to God in a superlative sense".[6]

The error of natural theology now comes to light. Christian theology cannot adopt philosophical concepts of God unless they are remolded in view of the freedom of the biblical God. Such remolding requires profound changes and "is not accomplished simply by adding certain revealed truths to the philosophical concept of God".[7] In connection with these observations, Pannenberg criticizes what theologians

such as Aquinas taught; according to them, reason could attain some knowledge of God by way of inference from created reality, although it was incapable of reaching the truths which are only given to man through revelation. In this way, the 'lower' truth of reason was supposed to serve as a basis for the 'higher' truth of faith. Pannenberg thinks that the acceptance of two kinds of knowledge did nothing to solve the tension between theology and philosophy, since reason was bound to rebel against the limitations forced upon it by theology. Eventually it had to lead to an open conflict:

> (on the other hand), the idea of a philosophy which as theologia naturalis was merely required to prepare the ground for the higher truth of theology remained a hopeless dream of theologians. The tradition of philosophy led it to be concerned as much as Christian theology with the one total truth. The attempt to put philosophical thought to use as a mere preparation for the truths of revelation, unattainable to reason, was consequently bound to be a failure. It was bound to be a challenge to philosophical thought to set itself free from theology. The conflict between theology and philosophy cannot be resolved by according to each their own and particular field of operation. 8

The Shift Towards Anthropology

Since the way of the old natural theology is closed to us, and cannot serve as a ground for an encounter with the atheist opponent, what other avenue is open to us? Pannenberg starts with the insight of Kant that man is unable to understand himself in his subjectivity without the presupposition of a divine reality.[9] Hegel took this a step further and showed that man through his experience of the finite nature of all things is led to the idea of an infinite reality. In fact, it would not be possible to think of something as finite if we

did not already have a conception of the infinite. Thus Hegel concluded that the traditional proofs of the existence of God were not as absurd as they seemed to be. They should be considered "as expressions of man's elevation beyond the finite world to the idea of the infinite".[10] The form of the proofs was undoubtedly inappropriate; still, according to Hegel, they evidenced a meaningful process of thought.

What took place in Kant and Hegel was a shift in focus with respect to the question of God. Anthropology, man's self-understanding - not the existence of a created world - became the starting point for demonstrating the truth of the idea of God:

> Hegel's renewal of the proofs of God must be understood as a completion of the anthropological interpretation which Kant began. In Hegel's interpretation, the cosmological and physico-theological arguments no longer relate directly to the processes of nature, but express the relationship of man to nature, man's elevation in religion above everything finite to the infinite.11

Pannenberg notes that atheism followed a parallel course. It, too, turned towards anthropology but with a different purpose in mind: it attempted to use man's self-understanding to prove the illusionary character of the idea of God. "It is no accident", says Pannenberg, "that the arguments of modern atheism since the time of Feuerbach have been entirely anthropological".[12] In view of this situation, it appears that theology cannot come to grips with the challenge of atheism in an area of its own choice, for the validity of Feuerbach's hypothesis cannot be decided anywhere else but within the realm of anthropological discussion. This means that theology must not seek the safety of a storm-free area:

> Theology may not take the religious-psychological atheism of Feuerbach as an occasion to retreat into a supernaturalistic wildlife sanctuary. Rather, what is called for is to carry the struggle about the truth of the idea of God into the area of the understanding of man. 13

Now that the field of encounter has been found, we have to take the next step and determine which question exactly will be discussed. That question is not whether the idea of God is a product of the human mind, for, as Pannenberg insists, that in itself is not a sufficient ground for atheism. That is to say: the answers of man, in which he tries to express how he understands himself and his world, always take on the form of projections. However, and this is the crucial point, what the mind projects is not necessarily an illusion. Therefore, the demonstration that an idea is the product of the human mind does not prove the non-existence of a corresponding reality. What then is the decisive question? It is "whether the development of an idea of God is of the essence of man's being, or whether it can be shown to be a misunderstanding of man on his own part, and consequently an error".[14]

It is now possible to formulate the task of a philosophical or anthropological theology in confrontation with the challenge of atheism. To remain within Hegelian terminology: man's elevation beyond the finite to the idea of the infinite must be shown to be something "which is inevitable and necessary for the human mind".[15] At the same time, we must be aware of the limitations of an anthropological discussion. It can show the reasonableness and even the necessity of the idea of God, but we may not expect it to supply a proof of the existence of God. Despite such limitations, the anthropological argument can still render

good services, for "it can show that what takes place in religious experience is as much a constituent part of man's being as walking erect, or the ability to use fire and tools".[16]

These considerations determine Pannenberg's plan of action. He states that "access to the idea of God is no longer possible directly from the world, but only through man's self-understanding and his relation to the world."[17] Pannenberg proposes therefore to initiate the dialogue with atheism on the ground where it has chosen to take its stand, i.e., the field of anthropology, and to demonstrate on the basis of anthropological findings the religious dimension of human existence.[18] This means that we have to ask: what is man?

Man's Openness to the World

Modern anthropology often speaks of man's openness to the world as the feature that characterizes human existence.[19] Pannenberg finds this expression somewhat vague, but it does not prevent him from making it the starting point for his anthropological reflections. He observes that animals have no choice but to live within the confines of their environment and instinct. These factors form the boundaries of their existence and determine a situation from which they cannot escape:

> One can say that man has a world, while each species of animals is limited to an environment that is fixed by heredity and that is typical of the species....
>
> Certain features in the surroundings act as signals and trigger a mode of behavior that in its essential elements does not need to be learned but is hereditary. The sense organs of animals are specialized for the perception of such features, and when they appear, the instinctive reaction follows. 20

Man, on the other hand, does not live in such 'bondage'. He has the ability to transcend any situation in which he finds himself and this "unique freedom of man to inquire and to move beyond any given regulation of his existence is called his openness to the world."[21] Not only can he form mental pictures of things that are not there as yet, he is also capable of changing his environment by transforming the world of nature into an 'artificial' world of culture. By means of this man-made world he attempts to gain mastery over his existence and "to control the diversity of sensations that storm in upon him".[22] Now it is evident that this self- and world-transcending movement always fails to produce a situation with which man can be entirely satisfied. Whatever he may achieve, he does not find lasting rest in any of his constructs, and for this reason he continues to replace the earlier forms of culture with new ones.[23]

What causes this restless activity? It is at this juncture that Pannenberg parts ways with the secular anthropologists. To Arnold Gehlen, man's openness to the world means that man lives actively and must create his own chances. Pannenberg finds this all too simple, for "hardly once does he (Gehlen) mention the presuppositions that man is thrown back upon to be able to engage in such independent activity."[24] Micnael Landmann suggests that man was put by nature in the world as a 'half-finished' being.[25] We may safely assume that this solution would satisfy Pannenberg even less. The key, says Pannenberg, must be sought in the fact that man is looking for something that always eludes his grasp. What drives him on is ultimately the concern with himself, with

the meaning of his existence, his destiny (Bestimmung). Man does not merely ask questions here and there, he himself is the question that demands an answer. "Thus it makes good sense to describe man as a question that continually pushes him further into the open."[26] Precisely because the movement always continues, we may speak of man's chronic need or infinite dependence.[27]

Pannenberg contends that this restlessness is one of the roots of all religious life, but one must not conclude that religion is therefore merely a product of man's own imagination. Religion must be more than a creation of man since the imaginitive activity, which undoubtedly plays an important role in the formation of religions, is always preceded by something else.

We reach now the critical point in Pannenberg's refutation of Feuerbach's hypothesis, for man's chronic need and infinite dependence indicate the presupposition of something that does not belong to the world of finite things:

> Man's chronic need, his infinite dependence, presupposes something outside himself that is beyond every experience of the world. Man does not simply respond to the pressure of his surplus of drives by creating for his longing and awe an imaginary object beyond every possible thing in the world. Rather, in his infinite dependence he presupposes with every breath he takes a corresponding, infinite, never ending, otherwordly being before whom he stands, even if he does not know what to call it. That again lies in the nature of his infinite drives. Man is infinitely dependent. Thus in everything that he does in life he presupposes a being beyond everything finite, a vis-a-vis upon which he is dependent. Only on this basis can his imagination form conceptions of this being. 28

Pannenberg wishes to make it very clear that the above considerations cannot decide whether or not this extra-mundane entity really exists. They are only descriptions of an openness of man that aims at an answer, but at this point the answer itself has not yet come in sight. Therefore, when we use the word 'God' for this entity, we do it here on a provisional basis. Within the context of the anthropological discussion, God is merely a name for the unknown reality after which man inquires.[29]

The limitations of anthropological theology, of which Pannenberg spoke, now begin to show themselves. This type of research fails to provide us with proof of the existence of God; all it can do is to illuminate the religious dimension as one of the constituent elements of man's being and it does this by pointing at this openness to and beyond the world. The reason why the question of man's existence does not directly refer to God is that it does not directly refer to a person:

> Rather, at first, it shows man as dependent upon being encountered by something that functions as a supportive ground for the existence of man in its transcending movement into openness, as well as for the totality of all extant reality, the world.... Therefore, man inquires after a ground which can support himself and all reality, which as the power over all reality is also able to carry him beyond the limits of his own present existence, and which therefore supports him precisely in the openness of his freedom. 30

At this stage the question concerning the reality of God is still wide open, and since no further help is to be expected from anthropology, the argument will have to move beyond the pale of a purely anthrological discussion.

Pannenberg has established that it belongs to the being of man

that he reaches restlessly for a 'mysterious something' which can serve as the ground and the fulfillment of his existence. This leads to the next step: man does not only pose questions, he also expects to find an answer; in other words, the answer is already anticipated in his questioning. Pannenberg argues:

> To live in the attitude of radically open inquiry without any anticipation of a possible answer is possible under normal conditions probably only with regard to questions which for the people involved in the inquiry are not - or no longer - concerned with the central issues of life. Otherwise there is as a rule an envisaged answer. If no answer appears at this point, that signifies a threat to the very possibility of living, which cannot be endured for very long.31

Such anticipated answers take on the form of projections, of which indeed may be said that they are creations of the questioner himself. In this respect, Pannenberg can recognize an element of truth in Feuerbach's hypothesis. But the matter has another side. According to Pannenberg, man's imaginative activity does not operate all on its own, it needs something, an impulse, to produce projected answers. Therefore one may say that man's imagination contains a passive element for it manifests itself in a loose series of inspirations in which man is more the recipient than producer. Proof for this is that a person cannot simply call forth genuine inspirations at will.[32] This gives rise to the question: what is it that activates man's power of imagining, what is the source of these inspirations?

We touch here on a difficult but crucial point in Pannenberg's critique of Feuerbach. He reasons that this source is not to be sought in the perfection of the human species, but in that very same mystery

after which man in his openness is inquiring. That is to say, the inspirations which result in the projection of answers come from the direction of the yet unknown answer. How does this make sense? Pannenberg explains that "it would be an abstraction to imagine the questioner as still prior to all contact with the reality he is inquiring about. Rather, the question is always framed only in association with the reality in question".[33] Since man's infinite dependence presupposes an infinite vis-a-vis, it is clear that man's movement beyond himself and the world cannot be explained if he is not somehow in touch with, and confronted by, an entity that does not belong to the world.

Thus Pannenberg reaches the important conclusion:

> In his openness to the world man is not only creatively free to shape and produce things ever anew, but is also thrown back upon a ground supporting both himself and his world, and which indeed supports him in such a way that it cannot be identified with anything that shows up in the world, 34

The same idea is expressed even more clearly in the following:

> In that man's existence is animated by the question about his destination and fulfillment, he is already borne by the reality at which such inquiry is directed. He always already stands in the experience of the reality about which he is concerned in his question - the experience of a non-objective depth of reality, which underlies all extant objects and supports nis own life. 35

Pannenberg is now in a position to discuss which criteria are to be used with respect to the truth of projected answers. The validity of an answer can only depend on the question if it can maintain itself in the face of man's continuing experience of reality. It may well be

that an answer initially seems to offer a satisfactory explanation of the world and of the events which take place in it. Yet, subsequent experiences may prove it wrong or inadequate. Whenever that is the case, correction and reformulation are required. "Of course", says Pannenberg, "the new answer included in such a happening can again only by comprehended as a corrective of the previously projected answer and thus as a new project of understanding."[36] This idea necessarily implies the provisionality of every projection, which rules out any form of dogmatism. We only know in part till the moment when history will have run its course and the totality of reality will stand revealed before us. Pannenberg is now ready to take the next step and to discuss the question of the validity of religious statements.

The Validity of Religious Statements

The problem to be solved is basically the same as the one Lessing raised when he said that the accidental truths of history can never be a proof of necessary truth of reason.[37] Pannenberg neither follows Schleiermacher's attempt to solve the difficulty by locating the seat of religion in feeling,[38] nor Barth's dismissal of the Lessing question as a non-theological question.[39] Instead, he uses an altogether different approach. As we have seen, Pannenberg contends that the restlessness man exhibits in his questioning is one of the roots of all religion. In light of the above it is possible to explicate this further. Imagination, activated by inspirations, produces projected answers, and the field where we find these projections thematized,

and to a smaller or larger degree reflected upon, is that of the history of religions. Thus it is to this field that the discussion now must move.

Religions call the ground that supports man and his world 'God' or 'gods'. Now, what led them to form such a concept? Since God is supposed to be the ground and goal of all reality, he cannot be conceived as an object among others. But if this is true, how can man experience his presence and think thoughts about him? The study of the history of religions answers this question, for it shows us that such an experience of an extra-mundane reality takes place in and through events which occur in man's world. In principle, says Pannenberg, it could be any event because all of reality refers man to God. However, "this mystery will confront him particularly in events which illuminate a wider range of his experience of existence and will in fact encounter him as a power over at least one aspect of his existence and of his world as a whole."[40] It is on the basis of such events that man forms concepts of the entity he encountered, and since it is always an indirect experience of the infinite (occurring in finite events), such concepts can also in religion never be more than provisional answers.

The history of religions shows this provisionality very clearly. Man does not attain to an absolute answer that cannot be superceded by a 'better' answer. The reason for this is that occurrences of divine reality are historical and therefore ongoing events.

> As powerful events they - or the power experienced in them - illuminate the experience of existence of the men who encounter such happenings. But since man's experience of existence - their picture of

> nature and their historical world - succumbs to progressive transformation, thus even the experienced happening of divine reality does not automatically retain its power over men. It grows pale - whereby, with its sinking into the past, even its deity can become doubtful - or else it may find a continuation in new happenings. Even in this sense the individual happening of divine reality is historic. As an individual event, it becomes a member of other such happenings. The peculiar character as well as the reality of the divine mystery to which man is referred in the transcending movement of his existence comes into play again and again in the succession of such events. 41

Although Pannenberg stresses the fact that ideas about God are subject to change, he does not agree with the evolutionary concept of religions, which sees in religious thought a gradual development from chaotic demonism to monotheism, and which attempts to give each religion its own peculiar place in the process. His objection is, among other things, that a classification of this kind fails to take into account the changes that occur within these religions themselves. Now the history of religions shows that "every conception remains inadequate which treats the individual religions as self-enclosed, more or less unalterable types, and allows them to be linked only by means of a historical succession".[42] Thus it appears that the profound changes one and the same religion undergoes in the course of its history make it impossible to coordinate, as Hegel did, a particular religion with a single stage of the total process of religious development.[43]

How then do religious transformations come about? Pannenberg is of the opinion that they are not simply the result of social and political changes, although such shifts may have provided the occasion for change. Ultimately, the main factor must be sought in the relation

or reference which religions have to reality (Wirklichkeitsbezug). It is the ongoing process of the understanding of reality which determines whether a concept of God will be upheld or discarded. Thus, "the fate of god-figures and of whole religions is ultimately decided by their religious convincingness or lack of it; by the power over reality in relation to the horizon of experience of the current historical situation which either emanates from them or fails to appear".[44]

In this way, it is the study of the history of religions that provides the citerion by means of which the validity of religious statements can be judged. Opposing Barth, Pannenberg insists that such a judgment cannot be a matter of arbitrarily preferring one religion above others:

> Instead of this, it should be tested in every case to what extent the underlying experience of the divine mystery expressed in a religious phenomenon is able to illuminate the reality of existence as it was experienced then and as it presents itself in contemporary experience, and therewith to confirm its claim to open up an access to the divine mystery.45

Further, even from the Christian point of view, it is now no longer necessary to assume, as Barth does, that Christianity and non-Christian religions have nothing in common:

> Even looking back at it from the standpoint of Jesus, the history of religions permits of being understood as the appearance of the God revealed by him. The alien religions cannot be adequately interpreted as mere fabrications of man's strivings after the true God. Ultimately, they have to do with the same divine reality as the message of Jesus. 46

Maintaining that also 'alien' religions may give expression to a genuine encounter with the God of Jesus, Pannenberg states that the salvation

Christ offers may also be received by those who never heard the Christian message. It is not impossible that somehow their lives are related to the revelation of God which appeared in Jesus. Pannenberg thinks here in particular of people about whom Jesus talked in the Beatitudes; i.e., people who without having encountered Jesus "simply on the basis of their situation or their behavior have no other hope apart from the God whose nearness and whose coming kingdom Jesus preached."[47]

It does not mean that Pannenberg places Christianity and other religions on equal footing. The fundamental error of non-Christian religions is that they identify the infinite reality with something finite, and this identification is connected with their closed, cyclical view of history:

> One may observe in the religions man's peculiar resistance to the infinity (non-finitude) of the divine mystery. The forms of religious finitization that result from this, images of God and the cult, may be described, with Paul, as a radical confusion of the infinite with the form of the finite. The deepest reason for this might be found once again in the temporality of the religious attitude .... They (the religions) exemplify in ever new ways the fixation of the infinite God onto the finite medium of its appearance at some time 48

To come back to the validity of religious statements, Pannenberg would be first to admit that the task he took upon himself is still far from finished. He only charted the course which theology should follow if it wishes to enter into a serious discussion with atheism. The argument must begin with anthropology - not with an appeal to divine revelation - for if Feuerbach's theory can weather all counter-

critique on anthropological grounds, then "for modern man, who can no longer find divine powers directly present in nature, all assertions of such kind - even if they are declared to be 'non-religious' - would collapse".[49]

However, even the atheist should realize that the matter is far from settled. Firstly, among those who regard the God-question as definitely closed, there is no agreement about what it is that lies behind the idea of God. Secondly, no projection theory is so securely established that it is immune to criticism. Therefore, says Pannenberg, "a sounder view would be that at least a knowledge of the openness and inconclusive state of the question of God is today necessary to anyone who professes an informed concern with the legacy of the theological tradition."[50]

As we have seen, the discussion cannot remain within the realm of anthropological research. It is indispensible to demonstrate the religious dimension of human existence, but this is not enough. In addition, religious assertions "must positively prove themselves worthy of belief, if they are able to claim universal relevance".[51] It is to the history of religions that we must turn in order to find the criterion against which such assertions can be tested. This history shows that the validity of a religious concept depends in the final analysis on its power to illuminate human existence. In view of this, Pannenberg can say, "... the reality of God or of divine power can be proven only by its happening (Widerfahrnis), namely, in that it proves itself powerful within the horizon of current experience of existence".[52]

Now that we have heard Pannenberg's solution with respect to the question of the validity of religious statements, we must discuss a different but closely related topic, i.e., the question of theology as a science.[53]

Theology as a Science

When Pannenberg attempts to make a case for the scientific status of theology, he uses the same type of argumentation as he did with regards to the validity of religious concepts. This does not come as a surprise, for the main problem is here also how theological statements can be verified. Pannenberg expresses his agreement with the thought that the logical structure of any statement implies the demand of verifiability, since an unverifiable assertion is meaningless.[54] Why is this so? Because every assertion has the logical structure of a hypothesis which must allow itself to be tested "against the relevant state of affairs and this state of affairs must be accessible as distinct from the assertion".[55]

Now the question is: if theology is the science of God, how can its statements be tested? Against God? This is not possible because the reality of God is in dispute, and "it would contradict his status as God to be readily available as a standard against which human assertions could be measured like any readily reproducible finite entity".[56] A way of circumventing this difficulty would be to deny that theological propositions are cognitive statements. Pannenberg, however, is of the opinion that such a solution distorts the intention of religious language. One cannot get around the fact "that people who

express their religious convictions are in doing so referring to a specific - usually divine and divinely instituted - reality and intend to assert something as true of it."[57]

It is to be admitted that religious language cannot be verified through sense observations which are available to any one at any time, but this only means that we have to look for a verification of a different sort. Pannenberg draws attention to Karl Popper who rejected both the principle of empirical determination and the inductive method as the only way to attain knowledge. Using Hume's argument, Popper reasons that:

> No number of identical observations, however large, permits the formulation of a strictly general law valid for all similar cases. There remains a gap between the limited number of the observations and the generality of the law derived from them. 58

This means that a general statement - metaphysical as well as non-metaphysical - can never be verified by observation, if it is true that any general rule or law must correspond to an infinite number of instances. Hence Popper can say that the positivist criterion of meaning has thus proved itself "just as destructive of science as it was of metaphysics".[59]

Popper himself thinks that our knowledge begins with conjectures, models, hypotheses:

> From a new idea, put up tentatively, and not yet justified in any way - an anticipation, a hypothesis, a theoretical system, or what you will - conclusions are drawn by means of logical deduction. These conclusions are then compared with one another and with other relevant statements 60

But how can we then distinguish between scientific and non-scientific

statements? According to Popper, scientific laws, although not verifiable due to an infinite number of instances against which they would have to be tested, are capable of falsification. That means, the assertion of a general rule or law fails as soon as a case is found which contradicts the assertion. Since metaphysical statements are immune even to falsification, "Popper believes that he has formulated a principle which metaphysical propositions cannot satisfy, and that he has therefore produced a criterion for distinguishing between scientific and metaphysical statements."[61]

Pannenberg disagrees, for the object of theology is God; that is to say: it formulates the totality of meaning in experienced reality "from the point of view of its unifying unity, the reality of God ...."[62] Now, if we call religious assertions hypotheses (or projections) in which man expresses his understanding of reality, then we may call theological statements hypotheses (or theories) about hypotheses.[63] The test for hypotheses or theories of this kind lies in their implications for the understanding of finite reality. As such they are completely comparable with the theories of natural sciences, which are normally considered to be proved when they are able to explain the facts at hand.

Pannenberg reminds us once again that the totality of meaning will only come to light at the end of history; till that time our statements will necessarily have the character of fore-conceptions. Since a final judgment is impossible in the still open process of history, John Hick believes that we should adopt a 'wait-and-see'

attitude till the eschatological future settles the verification of theological statements. Pannenberg counters that fore-conceptions of the whole can be shown to be unavoidable.[64] Therefore:

> Since assumptions about reality as a whole are unavoidable for the lives of men in the present, it is necessary here and now to work out criteria which will make possible at least a provisional decision between them. Such a decision can be based only on the success or failure of assumptions about reality as a whole, such as are made explicit in religious traditions and philosophical models, to prove themselves in the various areas of our actual experience. Traditional statements or modern reformulations prove themselves when they give the complex of meaning of all experience of reality a more subtle and more convincing interpretation than others. 65 (Added emphasis mine)

Since the problem of the verification of theological statements can be solved along the lines sketched above, Pannenberg feels that theology does not have to beg for a different and priviliged position. Instead, it may claim its rightful place at the university as a genuine science on grounds which at least deserve the serious considerations of other sciences.

It may be helpful to pause at this point and to summarize briefly what we have found so far. It appears that Pannenberg makes two moves. The first is that he considers the question of God in the light of modern anthropological research. Man's openness to the world indicates a unique freedom of choice which he neither has of himself nor does it come from anything finite. Man's continuing search for an answer to the question of his existence presupposes something that lies beyond him and that supports both him and his world.

In this way anthropology is made to serve the demonstration of the religious dimension of human existence, but that is all it can do. Its limitations make a second move necessary: the question of God is now to be considered in the light of man's understanding of himself and his world. We find this ever changing understanding recorded in the history of religions, for it is in his religion that man seeks to explain the mystery of his existence. Even though all his answers are provisional and subject to change, we may not therefore dismiss them as mere productions of his imagination. Pannenberg argues against such a dismissal on the ground that the history of religions shows us that the impulse which activates the imagination comes from historical events which illuminate man's existence. As a result man formulates ever new answers with respect to the mystery he is inquiring about. Whether or not such answers are true depends on their capacity to maintain themselves in the continuing process of man's understanding of reality. If they appear to be inadequate to explain new happenings, they will fade away and better answers will take their place. It is true, all this does not prove the existence of God, but it does provide us with a criterion against which the validity of religious statements can be tested.

Describing theology as a theory or hypothesis concerning religious statements, Pannenberg suggests that as such theology is not different from other theories or hypotheses which attempt to explain a state of affairs. Here as well as there, a theory is normally considered to be true till the time it must give way to a better explanation.

On this basis the scientific status of theology can and should be recognized.

The most Pannenberg can expect at this state of the discussion is to gain a hearing in the atheistic camp - which in itself would already be quite an achievement. Still, his argumentation would remain unconvincing if he failed to respond to some of the major objections which atheism raises against religion. These objections concern:

(1) The concept of God as a person.

(2) The concept of God as an existent being.

God as a Person

God, says Pannenberg, is a name or word that we use provisionally for the power that determines all reality. Indeed, we cannot think of him in any other way, for if there were a power greater than he, he would not be God. Now, the use of the word 'God' has significant implications for our understanding of the divine being. It means that we are already thinking of the all-determining power as something personal: "anyone who says 'God' says 'person'".[66] To Pannenberg, this may seem a matter of course, but the question arises: is it still possible for us to think of God in this manner? Has the idea of God as a person not become so problematic that its credibility is seriously threatened in modern times?

Pannenberg opens the discussion on this matter with a careful examination of the criticism of J.G. Fichte who contended that the idea of person includes the notion of finitude. He submitted that as 'person'

a being is always thought of in comparison with something else from which it distinguishes itself. The 'I' presupposes the existence of a 'thou' and an 'it' by which it is limited. This means that every person as person is finite since 'I' cannot be the other things at the same time.[67] These observations led Fichte to the following conclusions. Firstly, the concept of person originated when man became aware of the non-identity between the self or 'I' and the world; in other words, the concept originated with man. Secondly, the concept of person includes within itself the finitude of man as a constitutive element. Thirdly, because finitude is here an essential element, the concept is unfit as a designation of the infinite power that determines everything. What happened, according to Fichte, is that the concept of person, developed with regard to man, was transferred to God. However, such a transference means that God is nothing but a reduplication of man:

> What then do you call personality and consciousness? Is it not something you have found within yourself, which you have come to know in yourself and have designated by this name? The fact that you do not at all think of this without limitation and finitude, nor could do so, you can learn from the most cursory attention to the way you have constructed this concept. You make this being, accordingly, by attributing this predicate to a finite being, to a being like yourself, and you have not, as you intended, conceived God, but only reduplicated yourself in thought. 68

Pannenberg counters this critique with a concept of person which, in his opinion, is superior to that of Fichte's. The concept is already present in early Christology, and especially in Augustine's great work on the Trinity. The word 'person' was used here to express the idea of

a relation, and it was Hegel who rediscovered and developed it. Hegel taught that it is "the character of the person, of the subject, to relinquish its isolation .... The truth of personality is just this: to win it through immersion, through being immersed in the other".[69] Hegel did not claim that he had presented an entirely new viewpoint; but rather that he had given a philosophical interpretation of Jesus' words: "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life".[70]

In this way it was possible to gain greater clarity with respect to the three-and-oneness of God. The unity in the Trinity must be understood as a unity of reciprocal self-dedication.[71] Pannenberg agrees with Hegel and declares boldly that this more profound insight into the nature of personhood overcomes Fichte's argument that God can not be thought of as a person.[72]

Further, Pannenberg states, "The assumption that men first conceived of themselves as persons and then applied this assumption to their gods is arbitrary and artificial".[73] Rather than assuming such a thing, one must ask whether the idea of the personal really originated with reference to man. The answer to this question cannot be but negative in view of "the weighty evidence that the idea of the personal has its origin in religious experience, in the encounter with divine reality".[74] Again Pannenberg thinks that we should turn to the history of religions to find out what actually took place. He asks:

> Should we not perhaps look for the origin of the idea of person precisely in the phenomenology of religious experience, to the extent that in so

> doing one takes note of the happening that asserts itself in it? Was not the personality of man originally thought of as a participation in the inviolable majesty of God, just as the ancient commandment against murder in Israel was motivated by man's being in the image of God (Gen. 9:6)? Do we not have in the idea of the image of God in man the Old Testament expression for what we call personality? 75

Still, one might argue that children often ascribe personality to things they find in their surroundings, which seems to justify the assumption that primitive man did the same with the things he conceived as gods. Pannenberg, however, replies that the conception of God as a person can hardly be considered as a projection of a primitive mind. On the contrary, it takes "a high degree of discernment and culture to perceive a face of human kind in the powerful manifestations of divine powers in the life of nature and society."[76] What led Pannenberg to this assertion? The answer lies in his attempt to explain why God was ever conceived as a person. He finds it likely that the reason for this must be sought in the fact that God was experienced as a power that is not at man's disposal and that consequently cannot be manipulated. The concept of (God's) personality thus "characterizes the non-manipulatableness (Unverfügbarkeit) of this power, which, at the same time, however, makes a concrete claim upon man in that happening which is constitutive of religious experience".[77] Now, since a power of this nature cannot be manipulated, a notion which would hardly have entered a 'primitive' mind, one must also add freedom as one of its characteristics; i.e., the divine power is free to manifest itself at whatever time and in whatever form it chooses:

> The original phenomenon of the personal would then have to be sought in perhaps the impenetrability of the numinous power, which by no means remains vague but encounters one as having concrete pertinence. It is bound up with its holiness and inviolability. It is highlighted by the freedom of the power in relation to its form of manifestation, and this implies at the same time its freedom in relation to this particular form of manifestation. [78]

It cannot be said that the combination of Unverfügbarkeit with personhood has become completely foreign to our way of thinking. Pannenberg points out that the element of Unverfügbarkeit still determines the concept of personality in inter-human relationships. He means that we can only recognize a fellow human being as a person on the condition that there is something about him which we cannot completely grasp; in this sense, and to a certain extent, the existence of our human counter-parts remains a mystery. Pannenberg explains:

> Human beings are persons by the very fact that they are not wholly and completely existent for us in their reality, but are characterized by freedom, and as a result remain concealed and beyond control in the totality of their existence. A person whose whole being we could survey and whose every movement we could anticipate would thereby cease to be a person for us, and where human beings are falsely taken to be existent beings and treated as such, then their personality is treated with contempt. 79

On this basis Pannenberg argues that the word 'person' is related to the human life as a whole: we are already an 'I' but we are still in the process of becoming a person, although we are that already too.[80]

In view of the complexity of the matter we summarize:

(1) Pannenberg counters Fichte's critique with the 'more profound' insight of Hegel that the concept of person does not necessarily include finitude as its essential

element. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity already shows that the characteristic of personhood is to be sought in reciprocal self-dedication, in finding the self in the other.[81]

(2) The concept did in all likelihood not originate with reference to man but with reference to God. The divine power appeared as non-manipulatable, free, and asserting a claim on man. The assumption that man transferred to God what he had found himself to be is unwarranted. Rather, man's own personhood was conceived as an expression of his participation in God's majesty. This view has the advantage of being more than an arbitrary assertion, since it can claim the support of the history of religions, in particular of the Old Testament idea of man as the image of God.

(3) The connection with modern thought can be made by taking into account that the element of mystery and freedom is still decisive for the acceptance of other human beings as persons.

God as an Existent Being

Now that we have dealt with Pannenberg's reply to Fichte, we must turn to the second problem, namely, the concept of God as an existent being.

Since it is Pannenberg's aim to speak of God in terms that can be understood by non-believers he starts with the freedom of man as an

anthropological datum. He reasons that man's unique capacity to transcend any situation refers him to something beyond himself and his finite world, and thus the religious dimension of human existence begins to appear. Consequently, the whole of Pannenberg's argumentation hinges on human freedom as an established, undeniable fact.

Atheism, however, raises the question whether the Christian concept of God is not such that it excludes the very possibility of human freedom. To Pannenberg, this is a matter of vital importance, for if it is true that Christianity present us with a God who robs man of his freedom, then one must conclude that it thinks of him in a way which is no longer acceptable.

Pannenberg begins with admitting that there are indeed certain concepts of God that create insurmountable problems because they do not leave room for the freedom and responsibility of man. Such tension is evident in the discussions among medieval theologians as to how human responsibility can be maintained in the light of divine foreknowledge and predestination. For instance, the question was raised: does the preordination of all things include also man's fall into sin? On the one hand, preordination seemed to require that God 'willed' man's fall; on the other hand, to think of God, the Holy One, as the origin of evil would be blasphemous and his righteousness as well as his grace would become the height of absurdity. A solution to the problem was found in the idea of the permissio dei; that is to say: God did not will man's sin but allowed it. However, this was not quite satisfactory either as it gave the impression that his role was limited to that of

a mere spectator. In order to avoid this difficulty, the theologians defined permissio more precisely as permissio activa. It indicated that sin, although against God's will, still did not have a place outside the plans he made from all eternity.[82]

Pannenberg is of the opinion that the tension between the idea of God and human freedom can be traced back to a concept of God that views him as a being that is there (vorhandenes Seiendes) complete with omnipotence and omniscience:

> If God is understood as an omniscient and omnipotent being complete and perfect at the beginning of the created world, then in fact no human freedom would be possible; and on the other hand the experience of freedom excludes belief in the existence of such a God, as Nietzsche, Nicolai Hartmann and Sartre have rightly emphasized. 83

A concept that understands God this way fails for two reasons. Firstly,it thinks of him on the analogy of everything else that exists and treats him as an object among objects, as a 'thing' that was always there. Not only do the contingency and absurdity of history militate against such view, but also:

> If the eternity of God is thought of as the unlimited continuance of a being which has existed from the first, then the omnipotence and omniscient providence of this God must have established the course of everything that takes place in the universe in all its details from the very first. In this case there is no room for genuine freedom on the part of any creature. 84

Secondly, man has the ability to transcend anything that merely exists, including a God who is thought of as 'being there', and this means that such a God cannot be God at all:

> Because man transcends a God thought of as an existent being, and can get away from him as he

> can from everything that merely exists, then ultimately such a God would not be God at all. He would be no longer conceivable as the reality which determines everything, for he could no longer by definition determine the freedom of man, but could be transcended by it. 85

Pannenberg even goes so far as to say that "that the principle of a world complete in what exists here and now, and excluding freedom and change, would be diabolical rather than divine".[86] Consequently, one will have to admit that the atheistic criticism of this concept of God is fully justified, and it can be given credit "for having assisted theology to be more clear about its own subject, about the reality of God which is no longer to be confused with an existent being".[87]

Even though Pannenberg's intellectual courage cannot be denied, yet it may seem that he has gone too far and has no choice but to surrender to his opponent. In reality, however, he appears to have prepared the way for the crucial question that as yet has not been raised. The question on which everything depends is: is the (unacceptable) concept of God as an existent being the only possible concept, or can he be conceived in such a way that he appears to be the origin of freedom instead of its negation? At this juncture, we meet with one of the most intriguing aspects of Pannenberg's theology. If God cannot be thought of as 'being there', what alternative is left? The only possible answer is a God who is not there, but who is yet to come. "In a restricted but important sense", says Pannenberg, "God does not yet exist; God's being is still in the process of coming to be".[88]

This needs further explication, for how can we speak of the reality of God, if he does not yet exist? Pannenberg's answer is that

we must not make the reality of a thing or a person entirely dependent on its or his existence here and now. What still lies ahead of us is already effective in our lives even before it has arrived: "What belongs to the future is not yet existent, and yet it already determines present experience, at least the experience of beings who - like man - are oriented towards the future which they hope for and which they fear. Thus the future is real, although it does not yet exist".[89]

Pannenberg departs here from the familiar view which assumes that past and present are the cause of the future; instead, he sees the past and the present as the effect of the future. That the future is not an empty category is evident from man's relation to it; he is confronted by it "as by a dark and uncertain power threating our lives or promising their fulfillment".[90]

Now, in what way can God be thought of as coming to be? Pannenberg notes that the divine is primarily characterized by the possession of power. He can say therefore, "the being of the gods is their power".[91] It follows that to believe in one God means to believe in one power that dominates and determines all.

Thus it is clear that God's being and his reign over all things cannot be separated from one another:

> Only the god who proves himself master over all is true. This does not mean that God could not be God apart from the existence of finite beings, for God can certainly do without anyone or anything else. It does mean that, if there are finite beings, then to have power over them is intrinsic to God's nature. The deity of God is his rule. 92

Such a concept of God is not an entirely new idea that Pannenberg

invented in order to silence atheistic criticism. In fact, he claims, it can easily be recognized as a thoroughly biblical concept of God, which emerges particularly in Jesus' proclamation of the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is yet to come, and, since the rule of God and the being of God belong inseparably together, we may say that God is yet to come:

> From the biblical standpoint the being of God and that of the kingdom are identical, since the being of God is his lordship. He is God only in the execution of his lordship, and this full accomplishment of his lordship is determined as something future. To this extent, the God to whom the hope of the kingdom refers is characterized in a radical and exclusive sense by 'futurity as a quality of being' (Seinsbeschaffenheit).[93]

If this is true, two important conclusions may be drawn from it:

(1) The proof that God is God is still a matter of the future, and since the end has not arrived, the question of his existence must remain open till that time when he will show his power over all things in the sight of all the nations. This, says Pannenberg, is precisely what the Old Testament prophets expected him to do.

(2) As the power of the future, God does not deprive man of his freedom. Rather, as the power of the future God "frees man from his ties to what presently exists in order to liberate him for his freedom, to give him freedom".[94]

This biblical concept of God, claims Pannenberg, enables us to think of him as the origin of human freedom, and, at the same time, it has the advantage of not being subject to the justifiable critique of atheism.

Connected with the above are other aspects which deserve our attention. Pannenberg's emphasis on the future causes him to move away from the traditional view that thinks of the creation of the world as a primordial event lying far behind us in the past. He insists that also in this respect the primacy of the future should be recognized. This means that creation is not to be understood as an accomplished fact, finished once for all, it is still in progress, and the power that effects this progress, comes from what lies ahead. How is this to be understood? Pannenberg explains:

> In every event the infinite future separates itself from the finite events which until then had been hidden in the future but are now released into existence. The future lets go of itself to bring into being our present. And every new present is again confronted by a dark and mysterious future out of which certain relevant events will be released. Thus does the future determine the present.... In every present we confront the infinite future, and in welcoming the particular finite events which spring from that future, we anticipate the coming of God. 95

Once this view is accepted, it follows that the events of the past were determined by the same future that determines the present. In this way it is possible to maintain the eternity of God, for as the power of the future he dominates every present and tne remotest past; on this basis one may say that he is the eternal God:

> If God is to be thought of ... as the future of the most distant past, then he existed before our present and before every present, although he will demonstrate definitively his deity only in the future of his kingdom. He existed as the future that has been powerful in every present. Thus, the futurity of God implies his eternity. 96

Over against a concept of God as a being that exists as we do, Pannenberg places a God who is pure freedom and pure activity, and one could ask if all this does not turn history into a series of contingent events without any continuity. This conclusion is not necessary, says Pannenberg, if we keep in mind that freedom does not have to be understood as the making of all kind of whimsical decisions. The God of the Bible has nothing to do with whimsicalness, for the eternal One is also the faithful One; that is to say, he incorporates his creative acts of the past into new events in such way that each arriving event has to relate itself to the existing world. "Thus", says Pannenberg, "the continuity of nature is no longer understood as the irresistible dynamic of the already existing pushing forward, but as the building of bridges to the past that save the past from getting lost."[97] The historical acts of God are therefore defined by freedom and faithfulness.[98] In his freedom, God is the source of the ever new and unpredictable, which accounts for the contingency of history, and which creates at the same time room for the freedom of man. In his faithfulness, God preserves the bond between earlier and later events:

> In his faithfulness God does not simply allow his previous deeds to fall to the ground for the sake of the new possibilities of his freedom, but instead includes the prior ones in the new. This is what first makes possible duration and continuity in created being. 99

If God as the future of past and present must be thought of as eternal, does his eternity also imply his immutability? Pannenberg agrees that God, as the basis on which the endurance of all things rests, cannot be mutable, but the concept of immutability is to find a deeper

expression in that of the free faithfulness of God:

> Immutability says too little, since God not only immovably establishes and maintains present reality in its lawful course, but has within himself an infinite plenitude of ever new possibilities in the realization of which he manifests the freedom of his invisible essence. For this reason, while he is unoriginate and indestructible, God is nevertheless not immobile, but rather, in this inner plenitude, the living God. 100

Eternity is not to be understood as timelessness or as the endless continuation of what existed from the beginning.[101] The very essence of God does not exclude time, but implies it.[102] What then is the relation between eternity and time? Pannenberg explains that the one does not stand in contrast to the other as something completely different:

> Eternity creates no other content than time. However, eternity is the truth of time, which remains hidden in the flux of time. Eternity is the unity of all time, but as such it is simultaneously something that exceeds our experience of time. The perception of all events in an eternal present would be possible only from a point beyond the stream of time.... Only God can be thought of as not being confined to the flow of time. Therefore, eternity is God's time. That means, however, that God is present to every time. 103

In connection with this, Pannenberg speaks with appreciation of the process theology of Whitehead and Hartshorne, who made the important contribution of incorporating time into the idea of God. Briefly stated, process theology suggests that God provides man with possibilities, or lures, which man, not God, actualized freely. In addition, the way man responds to these possibilities does not leave God untouched, but must have an effect on him. The response causes not just a change in God's

relation to us, "but in the very being of God itself".[104]

Despite his appreciation for the so-called Process Theology, Pannenberg criticizes it on two counts. Firstly, he objects to the thought that the futurity of God justifies the assumption of a development in God. He argues that the idea of development suggests that there is a future beyond the God who is the future, but if that were the case, then he cannot manifest himself in the end as the One he always has been. Indeed, from the finite point of view, the reality of God is in some way still in process, which is not to be understood as a process on its own terms.[105] Pannenberg means, and here he differs with the process theologians:

> What turns out to be true in the future will then be evident as having been true all along. This applies to God as well as to every finite reality. God was present in every past moment as the one who he is in his futurity. He was in the past the same one whom he will manifest himself to be in the future. What distinguishes the present argument from Whitehead's philosophy is the ontological priority of the future as this priority is evident in the idea of God as the one who is coming. 106

Secondly, since God must be thought of as the power that determines all reality, Pannenberg cannot allow his role to be reduced to that of creating possibilities, the actualization of which is placed into the hands of man. If it is true that God is the all-determining reality, then he does not only open up possibilities, but ultimately determines their actualization as well. In a discussion with Lewis Ford, Pannenberg states:

> I think there is a distinct difference between the way you and I use the phrase 'the power of the

> future'. For you appropriate that phrase to mean that God creates the possibilities for our own self-actualization.... But the implications of Jesus' message of the priority of the future of the kingdom do not have reference only to possibilities. If we endeavor to reformulate the traditional Christian idea of God in terms of the constitutive importance of eschatology, then the power of the future should not only create possibilities, but actualities as well. 107 (Added emphasis mine)

Pannenberg is wrestling here with problems of enormous magnitude. On the one hand, he wishes to steer free from a concept of God that conceives of him as an existent, changeless being. On the other hand, he rejects the view that fails to do justice to God's absoluteness (Absolutheit) by presenting him as one of the factors at work in the universe.[108]

What then is the solution? To begin with, Pannenberg agrees that God is involved in historical events in such way that these occurrences do not leave him unaffected, but indeed make a difference with regard to his being God. He thinks here specifically of the incarnation and argues that God cannot be God in exactly the same sense after this event as he was prior to it. If it made no difference at all to him, then the very idea of incarnation is cancelled (aufgehoben), and with that also the idea of his self-revelation in history.[109] If we take the incarnation seriously, we have to assume that God's being as God cannot be totally separated from what he does in history, and thus it implies a moment of historical becoming in God. [110]

However, this is not to be understood as a development in him under the influence of events which he only partly controls; rather,

it should be conceived as self-realization (Selbstverwirklichung). That is to say, man, as a finite being, finds his 'self' in an encounter with God, and it is through the discovery of the divine 'self' that the realization of God as the all-determining reality takes place.[111] Man's discovery of the divine 'self' is caused and directed by God, and thus he can be thought of as realizing himself through man's seeking and finding of the true nature of the divine.[112] This is why Pannenberg can say that the self-realization of both God and man takes place in that the creation turns to God. It is one and the same process: the self-realization of man may be seen as the self-realization of God, but with the understanding that it is accomplished only as God's self-realization. Clarifying this extremely difficult point, Pannenberg says that man, dependent as he is on a reality different from him, can only receive his being a 'self' (Selbstsein) as a gift, and this is precisely what distinguishes him from God.[113]

We must keep in mind that what we have discussed so far concerns the idea of God on which Pannenberg reflects in the light of atheistic criticism. It is his intention to show that speaking of God is neither against nor beyond reason. Although he declares that it is not his intention to prove the existence of God, one wonders if his argumentation is not meant to establish the logical necessity of the idea of God. At any rate, what he hopes to achieve is apparantly something more ambitious than that "perhaps the idea of a divine person as the origin of freedom may appear less incredible and unthinkable at the end of this argument than before".[114]

Pannenberg insists nevertheless that knowledge of God cannot be obtained by means of philosophical reflection as such; this knowledge comes only from God's self-revelation through historical events. This brings us to the second and perhaps the most important aspect of Pannenberg's theology: revelation as history, a new approach that differs sharply from Barth's theology of the Word.

CHAPTER V

REVELATION AS HISTORY

The Biblical Concept of Revelation

As we have seen, Pannenberg initiated his dialogue with atheism by attempting to demonstrate that man's experience of himself and his world refers him to something that does not belong to the realm of the finite things, i.e., to a mysterious entity that both supports him and causes him to inquire beyond any given situation. In view of this restless search, which continues to drive man on into open, one may say that he is questioning toward that being which Christians call God.

Pannenberg stresses however, that the questioning nature of man as such cannot serve as a proof for the reality of God:

> One cannot simply deduce from the openness of the question that God exists. Indeed, even the claim that by his questioning concerning himself and the meaning of his existence and of everything that has being, man is questioning concerning God, can, strictly speaking, only be justified if the reality on which man turns out to be dependent in the openness of his questioning meets him personally and hence as 'God'. The question has thus been raised whether a god exists as the reality that bears our existence, and, if so, which god. 1

It is obvious that Pannenberg regards the presupposition of God, which underlies human existence, and the knowledge of God as two different things. They are undoubtedly related, but they must not be

confused. As a presupposition, 'God' is no more than a enigma, but knowledge of God means concrete evidence on which the Christian founds his trust in God. In our final chapter we will come back to this point.

Since God is not present in this world as an object among others, the question must now be raised if and how God can be known, Pannenberg asserts that knowledge of God does not come as a result of our reflections and deductions, it requires revelation. Man only knows God because God has made himself known to man.[2] Such an assertion may seem curiously out of touch with modern thought, but Pannenberg argues that everything depends here on what one understands by revelation. The main problem, he thinks, originated from the fact that Christian theologians used to appeal to revelation, particularly to the Scriptures, as a supernatural authority to which one had to respond with blind obedience. Such an authoritarian concept of revelation must be abandoned as it no longer accords with the temper of our time.

The same authoritarian feature appears also in the theology of Karl Barth, and Pannenberg writes that it was the reason "why I finally turned away from the 'theology of the Word of God' in its different present-day forms; I was able to see in it only the modern expression of such an authoritarian theology of revelation."[3]

Now it is certainly true that both the Old and the New Testament show authoritarian forms of traditions, which is hardly surprising when one considers that these documents belong to a period in history in which all of life was stamped by authoritarianism. However, Pannenberg judges it to be short-sighted to reject the idea of revelation for this

reason. Instead, "one must ask whether the basic ingredients in the Biblical experience of God are not independent of the authoritarian features, which of course did not first of all appear in the later church tradition and proclamation, but already adhere to the Biblical texts themselves".[4]

On the basis of a careful analysis of the concept of revelation in the Scriptures,[5] Pannenberg comes to conclusions which he formulates in a number of 'dogmatic' theses:

> Thesis 1: According to the Biblical witnesses, the self-revelation of God has not occurred directly, after the fashion of a theophany, but indirectly through his historical acts.
>
> Thesis 2: Revelation happens, not at the beginning, but at the end of history.
>
> Thesis 3: Unlike special manifestations of God, historical revelation is there for anyone who has eyes to see. It is universal in character.
>
> Thesis 4: The universal revelation of the God-head of God was not yet realized in the history of Israel, but first in the destiny of Jesus of Nazareth insofar as the end of history occurs beforehand in him.
>
> Thesis 5: The Christ event does not reveal the God-head of the God of Israel as an isolated event, but only so far as it is part of God's history with Israel.
>
> Thesis 6: The universality of the eschatological self-disclosure of God in the destiny of Jesus was expressed by using non-Jewish ideas of revelation in the instruction in Gentile Christian churches.[6]

These theses give us a concise picture of Pannenberg's position with respect to revelation and they explain also why the revelation of

God does not necessarily have to be framed in authoritarian form. Two elements must be mentioned in particular, namely indirectness[7] and the importance of the end of history:

> First, Israel understood God's revelation as an indirect proceeding. Yahweh does not descend from heaven in order to give a few chosen ones a special lesson about his being and attributes, by which men are then fully supplied with all necessary knowledge of God. Yahweh does not speak much about himself, but acts and announces certain events. His deeds indirectly throw light back on him.... Second, it is only when the revealing events are completed that they can produce knowledge of the deity of Yahweh as, so to speak, their last act. 8

Pannenberg does not deny that the Old Testament speaks of appearances of God; such appearances, however, are not to be understood as self-revelation in the strict sense of the word. Self-revelation implies disclosure of actual being and theophanies do not need to amount to that.[9] As Pannenberg explains, the purpose of the appearances of God was to initiate contact between God and his people, "to command the establishment of a place of worship, make important communications, express promises, or give instructions".[10] Not even the name of God, Yahweh,[11] is to be interpreted, as Barth does, as a direct self-revelation; it was made known so that man would be able to call on God by means of this name. Thus one may say that Israel had a certain knowledge of God, but, at the same time, waited for him to be revealed as the one true God.

How then did God make himself known to his people? According to Pannenberg, this took place through the actual occurrence of events that had been announced in his name.[12] The main happenings by means

of which God showed his power to the Israelites were the crossing of the Red Sea and the conquest of the land promised to their forefathers. In this way, he appeared to them as the God who had proved his power and faithfulness, and who therefore was the true God who could be trusted.

Pannenberg points out that God's revealing acts did not follow an uneventful course. The fall of Jerusalem and the ensuing Babylonian captivity put Israel's faith in God to the severest of tests. The problem was how they could continue to trust in him after such disastrous events. There is no doubt, says Pannenberg, that the demonstration of Yahweh's power, which had been given in the past, would have been refuted, "If it were not that for generations the prophets in the name of Yahweh had predicted a catastrophe as Yahweh's judgment on Israel and Judah, whose people had disregarded the commandments of Yahweh".[14] It was thus that Israel's understanding of God underwent a dramatic change: "The content of the old formula was now reversed. To the disobedient people Yahweh reveals himself no longer as a saving power but as a destroying power".[15]

Even so, 'the reversal of content' did not mean a complete change that left Israel without any hope. The reason that this did not happen is that the same prophets assured the people that God would remain faithful to the covenant he had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When it seemed as if God had abandoned his people, they directed Israel's attention to the future, predicting a new and definitive demonstration of God's saving power which was to take place in the

sight of all the nations. Isaiah, for instance, brings such a message of hope when he announces, "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together".[16]

Pannenberg considers this turning from past to future to be a fact of unique importance:

> They look no longer back to the revelation of the deity of Yahweh as an event that ended in the time of the conquest of the land, but look forward to to it as coming in the future. And that is how it remained henceforward. Although the exiles returned, and Jerusalem was rebuilt, the decisive saving deed that would reveal Yahweh's deity to all peoples was more and more passionately awaited from a future that shone in colors that were increasingly those of the other world. 17

The same idea was taken over and further expanded in apocalyptic literature; it is in these writings that for the first time the thought of a universal history begins to emerge. That is to say, world-events came to be regarded as a whole, as God's way to a goal, and this goal was seen as one final event that would gather all earlier happenings together. Even the manner in which God would ultimately reveal his power over all things received concrete content: in the end a general ressurrection of the dead would take place, to be followed by a last judgment:

> In those prophetic circles which were the starting point of the apocalyptic movement, the whole history of Israel and of the world into the far future was understood for the first time as a continuing totality of divine activity realizing a plan which had been decided at the beginning of creation. Accordingly, God's final revelation, together with the glorification of the righteous, was now hoped for as the end of all occurrence. 18

After he has dealt with the development of the concept of revelation in the Old Testament, Pannenberg turns to the New Testament writings. He emphasizes that the person and work of Jesus Christ must not be isolated from their historical context, for the revelatory meaning of his fate or destiny can only be understood in the light of the history and traditions of Israel.[19]

Jesus shared with the apocalyptic seers the expectation of a universal revelation of God's power and glory, but in contrast with them, he did not locate the eschaton in a far-away future. We find the same in the preaching of his forerunner, John the Baptist, who stressed this point when he urged his listeners to repent in view of the nearness of the kingdom of heaven.[20] Jesus' preaching, however, shows a new and distinguishing feature, for not only did he call to repentance, proclaiming the impending end as a day of judgment, he also presented himself as the eschatological salvation.[21] That is to say, "He promised salvation to anyone who accepted the message of the coming of the kingdom and at the same time recognized Jesus, its herald".[22]

A conflict with the Jewish authorities was inevitable since Jesus' message threatened to do away with the very things they had always believed. Pannenberg explains the nature of the conflict: if a man's participation in God's kingdom depends solely on his acceptance of Jesus, and not on the observance of the law, "the detailed regulations of the traditional law and the cultic traditions of Israel come to be no consequence. In the name of the sole honor of Israel's God, Jesus was able to disregard Israelite traditions which had hitherto been thought inviolable."[23]

One can easily see that claims and promises of such magnitude required more than a merely subjective assertion. To say that one speaks in God's name is not enough, and thus Jesus' claim was in need of a special act of God by means of which he would confirm the truth of Jesus' message.[24] This confirmation, says Pannenberg, was given in the resurrection of Jesus. To a Jew, familiar with the apocalyptic expectation, the resurrection of a man, who had been condemned as a blasphemer, "could only mean that God himself had confirmed the pre-Easter activity of Jesus".[25]

Now, the event of the resurrection was not only a sign of God's approval. The Jews could not but associate such a happening with the eschaton and thus its occurrence indicated that somehow the end had arrived before history had completed its course. Pannenberg realizes that modern man may doubt whether any end of that kind awaits the world and in view of such skepticism he argues:

> Nevertheless, such doubt is only possible as long as one overlooks that the end anticipated by Jewish apocalyptic has already taken place in a human being, though, indeed, so far only in one man, Jesus of Nazareth, and that it took place in the event which became known to his disciples as his resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of the dead, of course, since the Babylonian exile had been the end of all history awaited by the Jews. If Jesus has risen from the dead to that life which is of a totally different kind from ours, if, in other words, he did not merely return for a time to this mortal life, then in him that end has already taken place, which for all other human beings down to the present is still in prospect.[26]

We will have to explicate the relation between apocalyptic hope and modern awareness more fully. For the time being, however, we will assume with Pannenberg that the end of history occurred in Jesus'

resurrection. If that is true, then one may say that Jesus is the final revelation of God. This assertion, however, seems to contradict a previous statement of Pannenberg, namely, that revelation in the sense of self-disclosure will take place at the end of history, and that therefore the totality of history constitutes God's self-revelation.[27] The question arises: if revelation coincides with the whole of history, how can one man, or a single event that happened to him, disclose the godhead of Israel's God to us?

Pannenberg overcomes this difficulty by introducing the concept of prolepsis (Vorwegnahme), "in the destiny of Jesus the end of all history has happened in advance, as prolepsis".[28] What he means by this is that Jesus must be regarded as the definite self-demonstration of God because the end of all things, which for us is yet outstanding, already took place in him. "By Jesus' resurrection ", says Pannenberg, "the God of Israel is revealed as the God with power over all that happens in history; for he who holds the end of all things in his hand, is also master of the things themselves".[29]

Seen from this perspective, the earlier acts which demonstrated the power of God appear to be purely provisional, and for this reason they cannot be called self-revelation in the true sense of the word. "In fact, the very concept of self-revelation really implies that it cannot take place in manifold forms, but that if it happens at all, it can only be in a single form."[30] Despite the critique he may have otherwise, Pannenberg agrees with Barth on two points: firstly, revelation is to be understood as self-disclosure, and secondly, God revealed

himself only in Jesus Christ inasmuch as he is the one who was raised from the dead.

The single form of revelation implies that no further self-disclosures of God can take place after Jesus' resurrection. It is true, of course, that history did not stop at Easter, it went on and new events appeared, especially as a result of the Church's proclamation. Nevertheless, the post-resurrection events do not reveal God in a fundamentally new way. The resurrection cannot be surpassed by any other event since it is the proleptic occurrence of the end of history, and thus we have to assume that what will happen in the end on a cosmic scale already happened in Jesus.[31]

However, Pannenberg maintains that even though God has revealed himself in Christ, he did not thereby become fully intelligible to us. We may know him 'better' than the Jews did, but we do not know him completely. In view of this, Pannenberg speaks of the hiddenness of God:

> No one can understand fully the wealth of what the Christ event has to say about God. After all, we have scarcely any conception of what the life of the resurrection is. We are just as incapable of thinking out how all world history, even in the history since Jesus and certainly not in the future, stands in relation to the end that has already appeared in Jesus. The sublimity and hiddenness of the God of Israel only becomes apparent in its true depth through his revelation in the life and death of Jesus. 32

It may seem strange that Pannenberg retains the idea of the hiddenness of God because he has critized Barth's assertion that the form of revelation essentially implies a veiling. Is there any real

difference between the proleptic character of God's revelation and the idea of God's veiling within his self-revelation? May one say perhaps, as H. Neie does, that "Pannenberg often seems to talk himself around to something he has previously seemed to reject?"[33] In my opinion, such criticism is here somewhat superficial, for even though Barth and Pannenberg use the same expression, they do not talk about the same thing. It is clear that Pannenberg does not object to the idea that God is hidden although he revealed himself in Christ. What he rejects is Barth's assertion that this hiddenness belongs to the being of God.[34] He wonders how we can still speak of revelation as self-disclosure, if that is the case. Barth's position makes it impossible to maintain the unity of revelation as self-revelation and the essence of revelation as self-revelation is lost.[35]

What Pannenberg means by God's hiddenness is indeed something quite different; it is not related to God's being but to the fact that "even the revelation of God in Jesus does not yet empower us with a final knowledge of God".[36] The event of the resurrection is to be viewed in union with a future that is still outstanding from our point of view:

> For this reason, only in that future will we be able to know as we have been known: that is to say, only then will we be able to know the full reality of what has already happened in the resurrection of Jesus, which as yet we can speak of only in a metaphorical manner. 37

Thus the hiddenness of God is for Pannenberg not given with the nature of the divine, but it is caused by the fact that the resurrection life surpasses both our experience and our imagination.

Now that we have examined some of the basic themes in Pannenberg's concept of revelation, we reach a point that is of critical importance for our discussion. At this junction, we must inquire into the further development of Pannenberg's thoughts, and this will directly lead us to the key-issues that are at stake in the controversy between him and Barth's theology of the Word.

In the following paragraphs, we will discuss three interrelated topics: (1) Historical revelation and historical research.

(2) Historical facts and their meaning.

(3) History and modern awareness.

Historical Revelation and Historical Research

Barth's position on the relation between revelation and history is expressed in the succinct statement, "Revelation is not a predicate of history, but history is a predicate of revelation".[38] What he means is that history, or historical research, does not give us access to the knowledge of God, since such knowledge can only be attained through the proclamation of the Word and the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, even though history does not reveal God, he wishes to maintain that God revealed himself in this world. God who became a man is indeed a historical figure; consequently, one will have to say that revelation is of a historical nature.

What is Pannenberg's position? C. Geffré is of the opinion that Pannenberg reverses Barth's statement so that revelation becomes a predicate of history.[39] This is, however, certainly incorrect, for although Pannenberg holds that revelation is mediated through historical

events and God's final self-disclosure coincides with the totality of history, he does not mean that history itself reveals God. On the contrary, "it is misleading to say that history reveals God. For history is not a subject which subsists independently over against God. In its very idea, history is constituted by the active presence of the infinite God, and therefore one can only say that God reveals himself in history."[40]

As Pannenberg sees it, Barth's fundamental error is that he devaluates the historical character of God's revelation by drawing a sharp distinction between pre-history (Urgeschichte) and history in the ordinary sense, and thus places the revelatory events reported in the Scriptures beyond the reach of historical investigation.[41] The matter is of such importance that it requires some further explanation. The distinction between special, redemptive history and ordinary history has been advocated by M. Kähler in his well-known work The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historical Christ.[42] Reacting against the Life of Jesus Movement which searched for the 'real' Jesus behind the text of the New Testament, Kähler declared that the living Christ of the faith is the One who is preached, who lives in the kerygma and in the hearts of the believers. Hence no one can have a genuine knowledge of Christ which is not a knowledge of faith.[43] Even if "a minimum of reliable facts" could be demonstrated by means of the historical-critical method, it would still not have the power to awaken and to sustain a living faith.[44] The assurance of the historicity of Jesus is given as an essential element of the faith created through the

preaching of the Gospel.[45] Facts whose historicity first has to be established cannot as such become experiences as faith. Thus the Christian faith and a 'history' of Jesus constructed with the help of the critical method repel each other like oil and water.[46]

Pannenberg agrees with Kähler insofar the latter protests against a historical Jesus who is placed in such an opposition to the apostolic preaching that there exists no longer any continuity between the two.[47] What he criticizes is the attempt to transfer the events on which the Christian faith is based to an area where they are supposed to be safe from the danger presented by a critical examination. Pannenberg argues that if it is true that the acts through which God revealed himself took place in human history, then any distinction between sacred (or redemptive) history and profane history must be denied.[48] Since historical research is the only way to establish the facticity of past events, the method must be allowed to do its work, also with respect to matters of faith. Therefore:

> The reference of the Christian faith to history unavoidably carries with it the demand that the believer must not try to save himself from historical-critical questions by means of some 'invulnerable area' - otherwise it will lose its historical basis. The believer cannot want to prohibit any historical question, no matter how it be fashioned. 49

Pannenberg uses the same line of argumentation in his critique of Barth, who, following Kähler's example, judged the revelatory meaning of the events reported in the Scriptures to be inaccessible to historical research. Consequently, while Barth insisted that the Christian faith is indeed based on facts, he held it is only the believer who can

discover the true significance of the facts. Pannenberg argues that if the salvific meaning of the fate of Jesus is in principle closed to all rational investigation, "then it is impossible to see how the historicity of the pure facts should be able to protect faith against the reproach that it rests upon illusion and caprice".[50]

The very same considerations cause Pannenberg to turn against Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann, agreeing with Barth, asserts that faith is not based on objective evidence which assures us that God did reveal himself in Christ. This is why we must not go behind the texts of the New Testament in order to find this kind of certainty. The only basis for faith is God's act in Jesus which confronts man in the preaching of the Gospel. To ask for objective certainty is to turn faith into a work of man; in fact, there is no distinction between the certainty of salvation on the basis of good works and the certainty which rests on objective knowledge.[51]

Bultmann's existential theology is often seen in diametrical opposition to Barth's position, but in spite of all that separates them, there is an extra-theological motive both theologians have in common. Pannenberg explains why his critique applies to both:

> Their common starting point is to be seen in the fact that critical-historical investigation as the scientific verification of events did not seem to leave any more room for redemptive events. Therefore the theology of redemptive history fled into a harbor supposedly safe from the critical-historical flood tide, the harbor of suprahistory - or, with Barth, of pre-history. For the same reason the theology of existence (i.e. Bultmann's) withdrew from the meaningless and godless course of 'objective' history to the experience of the significance of

> history in the 'historicity' of the individual. The historical character of redemptive event must therefore be asserted today in discussion with the theologies of existence and redemptive history, and with the methodological principles of critical-historical investigation.52

Now the question arises: do the very principles of the historical method not make it impossible for the Christian theologian to be engaged in such an investigation? Is it not true that it gives evidence of an anthropocentric world-view in which man is the measure of all things, and which leaves no room for the living God of the Bible? Pannenberg admits that there is indeed an anthropocentric element in the structure of the methodological principles of historical criticism. Although he does not explain what he understands by this 'anthropocentric element', he almost certainly means that the investigating historian is bound to his own position in history from which he cannot escape when he views events of the past. At any rate, this circumstance does not decide the matter, for "it must be said here, against all prejudgments that lie close at hand, that the principles of historical research do not have to be essentially and unavoidably imprisoned within an anthropocentric world-view".[53] Such a world-view would only hamper the progress of historical research, and Pannenberg trust that historians will become aware of their error and correct it. In this way the historical method will free itself from the restrictions it imposed on itself.

Pannenberg does not think that theology has anything to fear from a critical examination of the redemptive events. Instead of treating it as a dangerous adversary, theologians should welcome it as an ally whose help is indispensible in demonstrating that the Christian

faith is not based on the subjective decision of the believer, but on a ground outside itself, namely reliable historical facts. To this, Pannenberg adds reassuringly:

> The believer can only trust that the facticity of the events on which he bases himself will continually be upheld throughout the progress of historical research. The history of critical-historical investigation of the biblical witnesses, especially of the New Testament, by no means gives the appearance of discouraging such confidence. 54

In response to William Hamilton, however, Pannenberg admits that, although he sees no reason for apprehension, the possibility cannot be ruled out that some day historical criticism would make the facticity of the redemptive event doubtful to such a degree that the Christian faith would seem to be left without a basis in history. "In such a case", writes Pannenberg, "the foundation for the certainty of faith ... would be removed. To be sure, the possibility would still remain that one could build on a future, 'better' knowledge of Jesus, as over against the present judgment of historians."[55]

Understandably, concern has been expressed whether faith will not lose its independence this way, and whether it will not be forced to submit to the authority of historical science. Pannenberg does not deny, of course, that there is a degree of authority involved, but in contrast with an authoritarian concept of revelation, science does not demand blind, unquestioning obedience:

> Historical science by no means claims to be the kind of authority that demands blind subjection. It invites every competent person to make his own test of its results. Still, as Troeltsch rightly emphasized, where

> someone cannot himself carry out such a test, the certainty of the ground of faith is not relegated to the status of a more or less arbitrary hypothesis of an individual teacher, but rather it shares in the 'general feeling of historical reliability' that is created by the mark of scientific research. 56

When Pannenberg speaks of the necessity of establishing, or verifying, revelatory events, he appears to be thinking mainly of Jesus' resurrection. The reason for this is that he sees in this event the sustaining foundation of the Christian faith. If it collapsed as a historical event, so would everything else which the Christian believer acknowledges.[57] But before an attempt can be made to verify the resurrection as reported in the New Testament, two obstacles must be removed.

The first obstacle is that of prejudice on the part of the investigator. Pannenberg observes that we have a clear case of prejudgment interfering with the examination of a historical fact if the historian denies the resurrection of Jesus a priori on the ground that an event of this nature cannot have taken place. This would then be the anthropocentric world-view which allows man to determine what is possible and what is not. Pannenberg reasons that in doing so the historian uses grounds which do not properly belong to his science and its methodology. The objections "arise not so much from the character of the resurrection accounts as from the assumption that the historian cannot accept such an unusual event as a fact".[58] However, any historical event is more or less unique, for no other event happened exactly the same way, at the same time and under the same circumstances. Therefore, the unusual character of an event is not necessarily a valid argument against

its reality, and the historian should at least reckon with the possibility that the resurrection of Jesus actually took place. On the basis of such considerations, Pannenberg states:

> As long as historiography does not begin dogmatically with a narrow concept of reality according to which 'dead men do not rise', it is not clear why historiography should not in principle be able to speak about Jesus' resurrection as the explanation that is best established of such events as the disciples' experiences of the appearances and the discovery of the empty tomb. 59

The objection might be raised that the historian cannot be expected to reckon seriously with the possibility of a resurrection from the dead inasmuch as the idea of such a happening violates the laws of nature and consequently comes into conflict with the natural sciences. Pannenberg finds it curious that this argument is not so much used by scientists as by historians and theologians. Their reasoning, however, is not valid, for what they tend to overlook is that "the natural sciences try to establish and describe laws from data, but they do not decree what may be viewed as a datum in general, and what may not".[60]

Furthermore, Pannenberg argues, we know the natural laws partially, not in their totality. In addition to this, we have to remember that no individual event is ever completely determined by natural laws, there are always other factors involved that lie outside the realm of the natural sciences. It is precisely for this reason that these sciences must declare that they are not in a position to make definite judgments concerning the possibility or impossibility of an individual event. This means that the investigating historian must not allow his judgment to be clouded by leaving the decision to fields of study which

are not capable of dealing with the questions he seeks to answer. Thus, "the judgment about whether an event, however unfamiliar, has happened or not is in the final analysis a matter for the historian and cannot be prejudged by the knowledge of natural science".[61]

The second obstacle presents a far greater challenge to Pannenberg. He believes that it is possible to demonstrate the facticity of Jesus' resurrection in the same way the historian investigates other historical events. But now it seems as if the historical method itself contains certain principles that thwart any attempt in this direction. In order to get the problem into focus, we turn to E. Troeltsch who declared that one of the principles of historical criticism is that of analogy, and what this means, he explains in the following passage:

> The means by which criticism becomes possible at all is the application of analogy. The analogy of that which happens before our eyes ... is the key to criticism. The illusions, ... the formation of myths, the deceptions, the party spirit, which we see before our eyes, are the means of recognizing such things also in the tradition. Agreement with normal, usual, or at least variously attested, happenings ... as we know them, is the mark of probability for happenings which the critic can recognize as really having happened or can leave aside. The observation of analogies between past events of the same kind makes it possible to ascribe probability to them and to interpret the unknown aspects of the one on the basis of the known aspects of the other. The omnipotence (Allmacht) thus attached to analogy implies, however, the basic similarity (Gleichartigkeit) of all historical events, which is not, of course, identity (Gleichheit) ... but presupposes that there is always a common core of similarity on the basis of which the differences can be sensed and perceived. 62

If it is true, as Troeltsch claims, that the judgment of the historian concerning the facticity of past events depends on their basic similarity and the existence of analogies, then the investigator has

no choice but to declare that non-analogous events cannot be deemed historical. It is clear what this means with respect to the resurrection of Jesus. It is, without a doubt, an event without analogy and since the basic core of similarity is lacking, the historian will have to conclude that Jesus did not rise from the dead.

How does Pannenberg solve this problem? He does not wish to dispute the cognitive power of analogy in historical study; indeed, the known aspects of an event can help the historian to understand the unknown aspects of another. Neither would Pannenberg object if the 'core of similarity' meant no more than that one may expect to find similarity between events despite their differences. Troeltsch, however, goes a step farther, for he states that "all differences should be comprehended in a uniform, universal homogeneity".[63] That is to say, every actual event must conform to a certain standard which is recognized by the historian, and this standard is that the event is of the same sort (homogeneous) as all other events, no matter what distinguishing features it may have otherwise.

Pannenberg takes issue with this idea because we are no longer dealing with the unavoidable anthropocentric element in historical research; in its place we have now an anthropocentric world-view that determines the facticity of events of the past. "In this form", says Pannenberg, "the postulate of the homogeneity of all events leads to a constriction (Verengung) of the historical question itself."[64] The principle of analogy is carried beyond its limitations, for "what is there to warrant the assertion that man's viewpoint is the only viewpoint,

and that nothing can be real if not analogous from that viewpoint?"[65] Thus, what Pannenberg criticizes is the use of non-analogy as an argument against the facticity of an event. He argues:

> It is important to note that only the absence of analogies is regarded as an insufficient argument for contesting the historicity of an event .... My criticism is not directed against the critical use of the principle of analogy, which is basic to the critical historical method. This use is merely restricted. The instrument of analogy gains precision, if judgments about the historicity or non-historicity of events asserted in the tradition are based only on positive analogies between the tradition which is being studied and situations known elsewhere, but not on the lack of such analogies. 66

Pannenberg puts so much in just a few sentences that some explanation is required.[67] The value of analogy in historical research lies in this: an event of the past which is rather difficult to understand often becomes less opaque when it is compared with an event that lies closer to us. Analogy may therefore be called a means of knowing: "only because something about the unknown can be concluded from what is already known can analogy prove its power of disclosure."[68] The fact that such a comparison can be made not only indicates that the event in question may be regarded as possible, it can also serve to highlight the unique features of this particular event. Thus, the crucifixion of Jesus is considered possible "because the historian is aware of reports of other crucifixions and similar forms of death penalties past and present. The phenomenon of death is also a part of his world view".[69] At the same time, analogy may help the historian to discover in what way this crucifixion is different from others.

Now suppose that we have reports of an event so unique that no

analogy whatsoever can be found. Can we conclude that it did not occur because it cannot be compared with anything known to us? Such a procedure is called the negative use of analogy, and it is against this negative use that Pannenberg objects:

> If the analogies discovered are employed in the full knowledge of the limits of their validity, then they can hardly serve as criteria for the reality of an event affirmed in the tradition .... That a reported event bursts analogies with otherwise usual or repeatedly attested events is still no ground for disputing its facticity. 70

It would be a different matter if the historian could show that the resurrection reports are analogous to forms of tradition relating to unreal objects, i.e., myths or legends or delusion. In that case he must come to a negative conclusion, but such judgment would be reached, not on account of the unusualness of the reported event, "but because it exhibits a positive analogy to some form of consciousness which has no objective referent (Realgehalt)".[71] Pannenberg maintains that no analogy of this kind has been established with respect to Jesus' resurrection. True, it is an event without parallel in the history of mankind, but the reports of it cannot be characterized as legends despite legendary accretions. Further, the possibility that we are dealing here with a myth must be ruled out on the ground that "the idea of the resurrection of the dead becomes mythical only when it is thought of as the re-experiencing of the primeval experience of a hero or a divinity".[72] A purely psychological explanation of the appearances of the risen Lord as delusions or imaginations of his disciples fails because it cannot be denied that their faith was exposed to severe stress and "one could hardly expect the production of confirmatory experiences from the faith

of the disciples that stood under such burden".[73]

Pannenberg submits that the historian has no valid reason to make an a priori judgment concerning the facticity of Jesus' resurrection, and therefore he must "simply examine the witnesses or sources, gather the evidence, and draw a conclusion as to the most probable explanation for the experiences reported in the NT documents. What Pannenberg has done is to make room for the historical credibility of the resurrection as an event without analogy".[74]

Now that the obstacles have been removed Pannenberg can begin with his attempt to verify the reality of Jesus' resurrection by means of the very same methods historical criticism is using. What follows is a brief outline of his argumentation.

He recognizes that there are two different strands in the Easter traditions which developed among the early Christians. On the one hand, we have the tradition of the discovery of the empty tomb on Easter morning; on the other, there are the reports which tell of the Lord's appearances to the disciples. Pannenberg wishes to start the discussion with an analysis of the appearances tradition. He is of the opinion that the appearances reported in the Gospels "have such a strongly legendary character that one can scarcely find a historical kernel of their own in them".[75] For this reason, he focuses his attention primarily on the report of the apostle Paul in I Cor. 15:1-11. It should be borne in mind that the apostle stood very close to the events of which he gives an account; and, no less important, he did not only hear from others about this event, but experienced it himself.

The epistle was written ca. 57 A.D.; it mentions the appearances to Peter, to the Twelve, to the five hundred brethren, to James, to all the apostles, and finally to Paul. When did Paul hear about what had happened to the others? It is reasonable to assume that he was told when he visited Jerusalem three years after his conversion.[76] This visit took place ca. 36 A.D., which is only six to eight years after Jesus' death on the cross. Now when the apostle writes, "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received ...", he obviously appeals to a formulated tradition which must have come into existence even prior to his visit. We may therefore conclude, says Pannenberg, that the formula Paul is using developed during the five year period that followed after Jesus' death. On this basis, Pannenberg says of the Pauline report in I Cor. 15:

> In view of the age of the formulated traditions used by Paul and the proximity of Paul to the events, the assumption that the appearances of the resurrected Lord were really experienced by a number of members of the primitive Christian community and not perhaps freely invented in the course of later legendary development has good historical foundation. 77

There cannot be any doubt that Paul regarded the resurrection of Jesus as the event with which the Christian faith stands and falls, for "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins".[78] In this connection, the reference to more than five hundred brethren is of special significance. Since most of them were still alive at that time, Paul directed the attention of his readers to the possibility of verifying his report by questioning these eye-witnesses. According to Pannenberg, Paul intended this to be a proof of

of the actuality of the resurrection:

> Thus, Paul ... did not think a mere demand for faith was enough, but he gave a list of the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. This is a proof as it was commonly used in legal proceedings. The Greek historians, for instance Herodotus, also gave their proofs in such a way. It is not without reason that Paul emphasized the point that most of the witnesses were still alive and could still be submitted to an interrogation. The proof Paul gave was for his time a historical proof, a first-hand proof beyond doubt. 79

What more can be said about the Easter event? Is it perhaps possible to form an idea of what happened to the disciples? As Pannenberg sees it, Paul apparently assumed that his own encounter with the living Lord on the road to Damascus was of the same nature as what had happened earlier to the other disciples. If this is true, then we find in Paul a description of something that occurred, not only to himself, but to the other eye-witnesses as well. We learn from him that he encountered a light phenomenon, which means that he saw a person not with an earthly but with a spiritual body: a soma pneumatikon. That Jesus appeared to him in this form indicates that we should not think of his resurrection as the resuscitation of a corpse, somewhat analogous to the resurrection of Lazarus.[80] In that case, Jesus would eventually have died again, as Lazarus did. Not only that, such a resuscitation would indeed conflict with the knowledge we have of the laws of nature:

> If resurrection would mean revivification of the corpse, then we must really say this would hardly be thinkable from the point of view of the natural sciences. The range of the possible conditions in this model could be surveyed, so that such an event, although not entirely impossible theoretically, must practically be excluded. 81

Thus, in Jesus' resurrection, we have not to do with a return to life as we know it, but with a transformation into an entirely different kind of existence. This does not mean that there is absolutely no connection between the perishable and the imperishable. The radical change does not exclude all continuity:

> On the one hand, the transformation of the perishable into a spiritual body will be so radical that nothing will remain unchanged. There is no substantial or structural continuity from the old to the new existence. On the other hand, however, the transformation will occur to the same earthly body that we are here: something different will not be produced in its place, but there is a historical continuity in the sense of continuous transition in the consummation of the transformation itself. 82

Since such a transformation is unknown to us, it cannot adequately be expressed in terms we usually employ: "the only possible mode of speaking about it is metaphorical, using images of this-worldly occurrences".[83] It is a mode of speaking we find also in the Scriptures; the familiar experience of being awakened and rising from sleep serves here as a parable for what lies beyond our experience.

Pannenberg grants that the appearances of the Lord may have involved extraordinary vision, but it does not necessarily mean that what Paul and the others saw was imaginary. Rather, says Pannenberg, "The term 'vision' can only express something about the subjective mode of experience, not something about the reality of the event experienced in this form".[84] The subjective vision hypothesis, which denies the reality of what was seen in the vision, is to be rejected, for, as Pannenberg has already shown, the appearances cannot very well be explained as products of the faith of the disciples. What also counts

against such a hypothesis is the number of appearances and their temporal distribution.

The second strand in the Easter tradition is formed by the reports of Jesus' empty tomb. It is not mentioned in the Pauline writings, probably because he did not know it or because it was of no interest to him. However, it was a different matter for the early Christian community in Jerusalem. To proclaim Jesus' resurrection in this city would have been impossible if such an assertion could have been refuted instantly by inspecting the grave in which his body was interred. Without an empty tomb, the resurrection kerygma could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day. Furthermore, the reaction of the Jewish leaders to the Christian proclamation also evidences the trustworthiness of the reports of Jesus' empty tomb. Pannenberg finds it telling that the Jewish polemic "shared the conviction with its Christian opponents that Jesus' tomb was empty, and instead of denying it, they limited themselves to explaining this fact away".[85] Such considerations show convincingly that the news of the resurrection would not have been proclaimed for long, if it could have been proved that the body of Jesus was still resting in its grave.

Pannenberg admits that his argumentation in favor of the reality of the resurrection event does not constitute the kind of proof that is required in the field of the natural sciences:

> Naturally, in theology there can be no talk of proof in the exact, mathematical, scientific sense. It neither has to do with deductions from apparent principles nor is an empirical verification of theological statements possible (or even meaningful) in the sense that they can be explained by recorded statements about intersubjective sensorial perception.

> That is true for the whole field of the humanities. However, 'proof' in a broader sense that has also been adopted by theology since the patristic period can also mean that argument which appeals to a reasonable judgment and makes possible at least a provisional decision between contrasting assertions.[86]

Having examined both strands in the Easter tradition in a way that is not any different from the historical-critical method, Pannenberg reaches the conclusion:

> If the appearance tradition and the grave tradition came into existence independently, then by their mutual complementing each other they let the assertion of the reality of Jesus' resurrection, in the sense explained above, appear as historically very probable, and that always means in historical inquiry that it is to be presupposed until contrary evidence appears. 87

We have here a very good example of how Pannenberg thinks to overcome the 'fatal' weakness of Barth's theology. Rather than basing the Christian faith on a subjective decision of the believer, he insists that it rests on an event - i.e., the resurrection of Jesus - that can be established as a fact with a high degree of historical probability. In this way it is possible to defend oneself against the charge of subjectivism and arbitrariness, for we are not dealing with mere assertions but with a verifiable historical event.

We have, however, still not reached the point where the conflict between Barth's theology and Pannenberg's comes to its sharpest expression. Although Barth is opposed to any attempt to go behind the text of the New Testament in order to establish the facticity of the revelatory events, he does not deny that the historian may be able to find some evidence that Jesus actually arose from the dead. Although

what is gained in this way is not real and fruitful knowledge, such an impartial and conscientious examination may be conducive to true knowledge.[88] At the same time, Barth reiterates that it is impossible for historical research to discover the meaning of the resurrection event. To understand what it means that Jesus arose is only given to those who have the eyes of faith.[89]

Pannenberg, to the contrary, insists that fact and meaning belong inseparably together. Consequently, one does not need faith in order to understand the language of the facts. Since this is a crucial issue in the controversy between the two theologians, it warrants a more thorough discussion.

Historical Facts and Their Meaning

Pannenberg states categorically that God's revelation to man is not to be viewed as a mysterious happening that lies beyond the ken of rational knowledge; the danger is here that revelation could easily be distorted into a gnostic view of knowledge of the truth. It is against this kind of distortion that Pannenberg formulates the thesis: "Unlike special manifestations of God, historical revelation is there for anyone who has eyes to see".[90] That is to say, God reveals or manifests his power in happenings that speak for themselves. "If the events are taken for what they are, then they speak their own language, the language of facts."[91] It is true, of course, that these events are veiled from many, or even most people, but that is not because "this truth is too high and that their reason must be added by other means of knowing - it means rather that they must use their reason in order to see correctly".[92]

Faith is not a condition to appreciate the significance of the events, nor does it add knowledge of a revelatory character to them. Were this the case, "then we are back once again at self-salvation by a decision of faith".[93]

To make faith a condition for seeing or understanding is not only harmful, it is also wrong: "a person does not bring faith to the event as though faith were the basis for finding the revelation of God in history.... Rather, it is through an open appr~~eciation~~opriation of these events that true faith is sparked".[94] In this context, Pannenberg speaks of the transforming power of God's acts in history, for they provide the reasons why this God can and should be trusted. Opposing the attempts of Althaus and many other theologians to separate the meaning of an event from the event as such, Pannenberg contends:

> Such a splitting up of historical consciousness into a detection of facts and an evaluation of them (or into history as known and history as experienced) is intolerable to Christian faith, not only because the message of the resurrection of Jesus and of God's revelation in him necessarily becomes merely subjective interpretation, but also because it is the reflection of an outmoded and questionable historical method .... Against this we must reinstate today the original unity of facts and their meaning. Every event, if not artificially taken out of the context ... brings its own meaning for each particular inquirer, brings it with its context, which of course is always a context of tradition. 95

If not only the facticity of an event but also its meaning are accessible to historical research, can Pannenberg still maintain that faith is a gift of God? Is there still any need for the work of the Holy Spirit?[96] Pannenberg solves what seems to be a contradiction by explaining that, although divine illumination is necessary in order to

come to faith, the Holy Spirit "adds nothing substantive to the content of the event or to the content of the message that reports about it and its meaning".[97] The Spirit is not added to the Word "as a sort of appendix".[98] One should not make him "a haven of ignorance for pious experience, which exempts one from all obligation to account for its contents".[99]

The reason why faith requires his illuminating activity is that the way to insight into the truth is often barred by prejudice. Man appears to be reluctant to accept what is new and unfamiliar to him. He is self-centered and shows a tendency to put his trust in himself and in finite things. His openness to the world on the one hand and his ego-centricity on the other cause a conflict which he cannot overcome in his own strength. In order to do so, he would need to have his center outside himself.[100] These opposing forces within human existence explain why the truth, even when it is strictly demonstrable, is by no means evident to all at once. Clarifying the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and the use of human reason, Pannenberg writes:

> For this reason I have said that men must first be brought to reason in order that they may also really perceive the event that reveals the truth of God's deity. For this truth, as evident as it is in itself, and no matter how much it may also be presented as evident - otherwise faith would be without foundation - is opposed by pre-judgments which commonly prejudice men. It is true that the sweeping away of such pre-judgments can never be a matter of rational argument alone because these pre-judgments are themselves irrationally rooted. To this extent, a kind of illumination is needed in order for the truth, which is clear in itself and demonstrable as true, to dawn upon the individual man, too. 101

We must now inquire further into the relationship between fact and meaning. We have already noted that when Pannenberg speaks of the language of the facts, he does not have bruta facta in mind. "History is never made out of so called bruta facta. As human history, its cocurrence is always interwoven with understanding, in hope and memory, and the transformations of understanding are themselves events of history."[102] Events are to be interpreted, not in isolation, but in the light of the context to which they belong, i.e., in connection with the history of the transmission of tradition. What Pannenberg means is: "It is simply not the case that one can take uninterpreted, established facts and then subsequently ascribe to them this or that meaning one wishes .... On the contrary, events always bring their original meaning along with them from the context to which they have been assigned by their having happened."[103]

Now it becomes clear why Pannenberg stresses that the meaning of Jesus' resurrection can only be understood in the light of God's history with Israel, and why he refers in particular to the context of the apocalyptic tradition. The Jews had learned to expect a general resurrection of the dead and this enabled them to understand the significance of what had happened to Jesus. If he really had risen from the dead, it could only mean that the end of all things had already occurred in this one man.

What we see here is that a single event was interpreted, at least by those who believed that it had actually taken place, in the light of the totality of history, and now Pannenberg argues that such a

concept of the whole of history is equally indispensible for the modern historian:

> Since everything in history stands under overarching continuities, no particular unitary event can be definitively understood from within itself. Nor is it so certain that even a whole culture, which is widely taken to be the smallest field of historical study that can be understood from within itself, is isolable from the process of historical conditioning; it is not as self-contained as many proponents of theories of cultural wholes suppose. This can be seen precisely in western history, which ... appears to have a strong inner unity. It is the horizon of world history which first makes it possible to appreciate the full significance of an individual event. 104

Although we cannot deal extensively with the very large question of hermeneutic and universal history, we will consider briefly the way in which Pannenberg supports and criticizes Hans-Georg Gadamer. Discussing the problem of authentic historical understanding, Gadamer proposes that we initially view the past and present within the framework of a horizon. He explains: "Horizon is the mental range (Gesichtskreis), which circumscribes and includes everything visible from one viewpoint".[105] Now it is clear that ancient texts, which report happenings of long ago, have a horizon quite different from our own and that gives rise to the question of how we can understand the meaning of such reports. The problem is caused by the fact that we must do justice to what the texts intend to say, and that, at the same time, it is impossible for us to ignore our own horizon of understanding. The horizon we have, however, is not fixed viewpoint. Rather, according to Gadamer, "Horizon is far more something into which we move and which moves with us. Horizons are shifting for the one who moves".[106]

This flexibility makes it possible to extend our horizon in such way that it fuses with the horizon of the text (Horizontverschmelzung); as a result a broader, more comprehensive horizon is formed. Now it may seem as if the continuing broadening of our viewpoint points in the direction of a universal history in which every event receives its ultimate meaning. Nevertheless, Gadamer thinks that the claim of a philosophy of world history does not do justice to the finitude of our viewpoint. "A projection of the totality of reality and an end of history from the present moment within history ... would contradict the finitude of present knowledge and subvert the openness of reality toward new being."[107]

Pannenberg agrees that a concept of universal history such as Hegel's needs to be corrected. He raises the "earthshaking objection" that Hegel understood his own position as the end of history, which resulted in the loss of the horizon of the future in his thought. A further objection that should be made against Hegel is that he did not take the contingency of events seriously enough.[108] Still, Hegel was absolutely right in this that the truth of history, and with that the meaning of every event, comes into view only from its end. Thus, a fore-conception of the end is unavoidable but it does not necessarily conflict, as Gadamer assumes, with the finitude of the knowledge we have here and now. Our knowledge, including our fore-conceptions, are always provisional as long as history continues. Thus the idea of a universal history does not have to stand in the way of the openness of reality.[109] Pannenberg makes himself quite clear in the following statement:

> The anticipation of the whole cannot be evaded, for the reason that the individual entity is not really any more easily available than the whole. Each individual entity has its meaning only in relation to the whole to which it belongs. Therefore we can attain only provisional knowledge, which is subject to constant revision, both of the individual entity and of the whole. Because every individual entity has meaning only in relation to a greater whole, universal history is an inescapable theme of historical work. 110

History and Modern Awareness

This brings us to the last question we have to discuss in this chapter. Since we do not stand in the apocalyptic tradition as the Jews and the early Christians did, how would the raising of the dead be conceivable in the context of contemporary understanding of reality? Pannenberg points out that we owe our modern awareness of reality to the biblical understanding of history:

> The unity of this history is founded in the unity of the God who became the God of Israel and by whom the whole history of the West is determined - whether in faith or in unbelief. Therefore, whether we like it or not, we are all more closely linked with the history of Israel than - for instance - with, say, our Germanic ancestors. Only through the mediation of Christianity are we historically linked with antiquity. The European spirit is much more deeply and permanently marked by Christianity than it would seem to be at a superficial glance. 111

To establish a link between biblical and modern thought is not enough, especially in view of what Pannenberg calls the apostacy of the modern age from Christianity. The essential ideas implied in biblical concepts have to be tested against our own experience of reality. It is only in this way that they can show whether they have the power to convince.

How does modern man experience reality? As we have already seen, it is an essential characteristic of human nature to inquire beyond the horizon of his existence toward his final destiny. This inquiry is borne by the hope of finding an answer, and Pannenberg reasons that such an expectation is only justified if there is something to hope for beyond death. It is this question, says Pannenberg, that ultimately decides whether hope is a meaningful attitude toward existence or the most extreme foolishness.[112] In connection with this, he appreciates Heidegger's thought that man has the capacity of anticipating his death and thereby attaining the wholeness of human existence, but he disagrees with Heidegger's view that death rounds out man's existence into a whole. Pannenberg draws attention to the fact that death destroys life and he raises the question:

> Is it not rather the case that death breaks off our life, so that even in the best instances the successful life remains a fragment? That is to say, putting it the other way around, does not human being's intention toward wholeness, toward well-being (Heil), necessarily reach beyond death? If this is the case, the wholeness of the individual's existence would not come into view from the standpoint of his death, but only from the standpoint of a determination transcending the finitude of human being. 113

However, to assert that man's ultimate destiny compels him to think of life beyond death is one thing, but is such a life after death conceivable? Pannenberg reminds us that Greek philosophy advocated the immortality of the soul. This 'doctrine' expressed indeed an expectation that pointed beyond the grave, but it showed a weakness in that it rested on a dichotomy of body and soul. Modern anthropology has shown convincingly that such a dichotomy is unacceptable on the ground that a

soul, thought of as independent of a body, is merely an abstraction. Pannenberg is of the same opinion:

> In the sense of the concept that a part of man continues beyond death in an unbroken way, the idea of immortality cannot be held. In such a conception the seriousness of death, which means an end to everything that we are, is misunderstood. This criticism is also valid for modern attempts to maintain the idea of immortality, the acceptance of an indestructible kernel in man, independently of the bygone concept of the soul. The inner life of our consciousness is so tied to our corporeal functions that it is impossible for it to be able to continue by itself alone. 114

From this argument Pannenberg draws the conclusion that we can only conceive of life after death in the sense of some kind of revival of bodily life.

Pannenberg then continues with the observation that "the web of social life" must be taken into consideration as well. The human individual is not an isolated entity but a part of mankind, and therefore, "The question about the wholeness of human being can find a satisfactory answer only when it is directed beyond death toward the participation of the individual in the destination of mankind as such".[115] One may say therefore that to think of the resurrection as the future of all men is both logical and meaningful.

Further, man's existence is inseparably bound up with an environment, i.e., he can hardly be thought of as existing without a world. If man will arise from the grave, the event must logically be accompanied by the creation of a new world.[116]

And finally, the expectation of a general resurrection is connected with the concept of judgment. Why is this so? In this context,

Pannenberg speaks of man's sin, that is to say, his resistance against being driven into the open, his egocentricity, and the trust he puts in himself and finite things. Therefore, resurrection means at the same time judgment "because the eternal totality of his own life must be destroyed in the contradiction between the ego and man's eternal destiny".[117]

What Pannenberg wanted to demonstrate is that the biblical idea of a resurrection does not necessarily conflict with our modern awareness; indeed, the latter has the former as its presupposition, provided that Western man considers the implications of his hopes and longings, and draws logical conclusions from them. Summarizing his views, Pannenberg states:

> The possibility of all human individuals participating in the perfect society in which the destiny of mankind is realized is unimaginable without a resurrection of the dead. And for everyone to participate in the life of the society in the way appropriate for him is inconceivable unless a balance is struck by a judgment of the world which takes place beyond and outside it. Thus the association of judgment, the resurrection of the dead and the realization of a perfect society in the concept of the end of the world and of history, as they have existed hitherto, is in accordance with the idea of the consummation of man's destiny in the unity of its individual and social aspects. 118

Is all this sheer speculation, or is there some assurance that man's hope will be fulfilled? Pannenberg answers that question with a referral to Jesus' resurrection. In him we have the guarantee that the Christian hope of the resurrection is not the product of man's longing for happiness, as Feuerbach wants us to believe.[119] If it is possible, as Pannenberg claims, to establish the Easter event as a historical fact,

and to rediscover the essential truths of the biblical-apocalyptical concept of history, then our Christian hope is indeed well-founded:

> Then the resurrection of Jesus ceases to appear as an unintelligible, although historically attested miracle. It then becomes intelligible again as the irruption of the consummation of history, which for us is still to come but in Jesus has already happened. Therefore our link with Jesus' fate - with his sayings, his suffering and his cross - also guarantees our future participation in what has already appeared only in Jesus: sharing in the life of the resurrection in which man's destiny reaches its consummation. 120

In chapters III, IV and V, we have given a detailed description of Pannenberg's critique of Barth's point of departure, and of his efforts to find a better way to meet the crisis in which theology finds itself at present. In our last chapter we will have to determine in how far Pannenberg has been successful in carrying our his program.

CHAPTER VI

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

It is Pannenberg's aim to speak of God in such manner that not only Christians but also those who have become estranged from the Christian tradition will be able to understand what he is saying and to judge for themselves the validity of his argumentation. In other words: he wishes to make a case for Christianity that does not require a faith commitment in order to be convincing. He is of the opinion that Karl Barth, by making the Word of God his point of departure, places theology on the dubious foundation of a subjective decision, which keeps it from being able to come to grips with the challenge of atheism.

Opposing Barth's theological method, Pannenberg seeks to initiate a discussion with atheism on a rational basis. The possibility for such a discussion is given with the fact that the knowledge which Christians claim to posses is not different from any other kind of knowledge; it is accessible to reason, rather than supernatural or irrational. What Christians believe concerns a truth which in principle is open to all men and which, therefore, can be recognized by all men. Were this not the case, says Pannenberg, then the claims of Christianity would be mere assertions and this would put theology in a hopeless position.[1]

In this final chapter, we will seek to assess the success of Pannenberg's efforts. Does his theology present a significant advancement

beyond Barth and is his approach to be preferred to a theology of the Word?

The chapter is divided into two main sections corresponding with the material we discussed in chapters IV and V. Thus, we will first attempt to evaluate Pannenberg's philosophical theology and, secondly, his concept of revelation as history.

(A) Pannenberg's Philosophical Theology

Our first question will have to be: exactly what purpose does Pannenberg have in mind when he invites his atheistic opponents to a discussion? Would he be satisfied if he could present the idea of God in such a way that it appears "less incredible and unthinkable"?[2] If that were the case, Pannenberg would simply ask that the reasonableness of the Christian concept of God be recognized, regardless whether one is a believer or not. It is, however, quite evident that he wishes to do more than that.

It is true that Pannenberg states emphatically that God's existence is an open question that will receive its definite answer when God shows himself as the all-determining power at the end of history. That is why he explains that, even though an anthropological foundation is necessary for contemporary theology, we cannot expect anthropology to supply us with a proof of the existence of God. All it is capable of is showing that the religious dimension belongs to human nature as one of its constituent elements. The ground Pannenberg adduces for this assertion is man's consciousness "that he is dependent upon a reality which surpasses and sustains everything finite, and in this sense is a

divine reality".[3] Or, putting it in different words, in everything man does in life "he presupposes a being beyond everything finite ...."[4]

It should be noted that Pannenberg, by using grounds of this nature, has already moved beyond the rather modest goal of demonstrating the reasonableness of the concept of God. Whether it is his intention or not, his argument takes on the form of some kind of proof of the existence of God as an infinite reality. Apparently, he is not merely defending a certain idea against the charge of irrationality, but he seeks to show that man's very own existence refers him to a being beyond the world. This is a point of greatest importance, for if it can be shown that human beings have, or ought to have, an awareness of dependence upon a divine reality and that, in fact, man's existence presupposes such a reality, then all ground is taken from under the atheistic position. It would appear that an atheist can only maintain his position by deliberately closing his eyes to that which ineradicably belongs to human experience.

We have here one of the most fascinating aspects of Pannenberg's theology, but the question must be raised whether his argumentation can stand the test of a critical examination. No one will deny, of course, that man feels dependent on something that is greater than himself, something even that surpasses the world which he knows and in which he lives at present. The simple fact that all forms of life are dependent on the earth's proximity to the sun is already sufficient to prove this point. But why should he feel compelled to think that this something-greater-than-man supports and surpasses the finite, and

that it, therefore, must be considered to be infinite? We will return to this question shortly.

There is another difficulty in Pannenberg's reasoning that must be mentioned here. Speaking of the limitations of general anthropological considerations, he states that such considerations can do no more than provide grounds for the assertion that the man "whose being is fully aware" is conscious of his dependence upon a divine reality.[5] However, as Pannenberg knows very well, many among our contemporaries will say that a consciousness of this nature is completely foreign to them. Is he implying here that they are less than fully awake and that they would be compelled to change their mind, i.e., to abandon the atheistic position, if they only became more alert?

Giving Pannenberg the benefit of the doubt, one could assume that he merely wishes to point out that human awareness of any kind always requires a certain measure of alertness. This undoubtedly true; a man who never wonders about the mystery of his existence and who goes through life without ever raising questions as to its meaning and purpose will hardly give thought to his dependence on things and people. Pannenberg's statement could be taken to mean, however, that the lack of awareness of being dependent upon a divine reality is caused by a lack of mental awareness. This is unfortunate, for if Pannenberg is understood this way - no doubt contrary to his intentions - it would be hard to believe that he takes atheists and their criticism very seriously and it would be a ground to accuse him of the same arrogance, if not worse, with which he charged the theology of Karl Barth.[6]

Leaving this aside, what creates the problem is evidently the reference to a reality that surpasses everything finite, and Pannenberg must show that this reference is neither a deus ex machina nor an unwarranted assertion.

We have seen that he brings man's openness to the world into play for that very purpose. Man is never satisfied with the situation in which he finds himself and continues to replace old structures and cultures with new ones. This restless search for an answer to the question of his existence and for lasting rest shows a need that is chronic, an infinite dependence "which presupposes something outside himself that is beyond every experience of the world".[7] The Christian believer will appreciate this argument as a convincing one. Since he already believes in God, he will easily recognize in man's search a movement towards God who is both the origin of his questioning and the fulfillment of his existence. But would the argument be equally convincing for an unbeliever? Even though he may agree with Pannenberg that man is driven into the open by a need, he might ask if there is sufficient reason to call this need infinite.[8] Why should it be impossible that man eventually constructs a world in which he feels completely at home and finds the fulfillment of all his wishes? It is to be admitted that man so far did not succeed in creating such world, but can one claim on anthropological grounds that he will never succeed?

Furthermore, Christians expect the end of man's search and need when the Kingdom of God arrives in all its fullness. They believe that

they will find everlasting rest in the new world that God prepared for them. Does this expectation not imply the thought that, from a Christian point of view, man's need is neither "chronic" nor "infinite"? But if human need is not necessarily infinite, it can no longer be made to serve as an anthropologically established fact that 'proves' the existence of a reality beyond everything finite.[9]

Now, let us assume that the non-believer agrees with Pannenberg that man's need can never be completely satisfied in this world, would it compel him to acknowledge that this circumstance refers him to a being that transcends the finite? He might argue that he and his world are a part of an infinite progression of finite causes and their effects, and that there is no logical necessity to assume the existence of something that is not included in the process. Pannenberg would probably reason that this view does not answer the question of what set the process into motion and towards which goal,if any, it is directed. That is correct, but the fact that someone cannot answer such questions does not show that his life and work and hopes are based on the presupposition of a divine reality. I would think that Pannenberg's view can be appreciated as a reasonable proposal for belief, but not as one that a non-believer is willy-nilly compelled to accept.

We take Pannenberg's argument a step further. If the atheist can be persuaded to admit that man in everything he does in life presupposes a being beyond everything finite, the problem still remains if this entity may be identified with the God of the Bible. To Pannenberg, the matter is quite clear:

> Openness to the world essentially means openness to God. Man's very nature is this movement through the world toward God. In this movement he is on the path toward his destiny, which is community with God. Insofar as the direction of a man's life is toward God, community with God is already actualized in this movement.10

Pannenberg's argument is that man's continuing movement beyond himself does not make sense and cannot be properly explained unless it is based on the presupposition of a god-like being. Accordingly, once a non-believer is made aware of what his existence as a human being presupposes, it could be shown that this unknown entity corresponds with the God who revealed himself in Christ.

It seems to me that this type of argument, thought-provoking though it may be, is not really very convincing because it does not touch on the first and foremost reason why atheism views the concept of God as irrational. The difficulty is not so much that infinity as such is unthinkable; after all, Feuerbach spoke eloquently of the infinity of the human race, and Hegel was right when he said that the idea of the finite already presupposes the idea of the infinite. The problem is, however, that the concept of God, the Power that determines all reality, seems to suffer from an inner contradiction. The objection which atheism raises against any form of theism is: if there is such a God, how does one account for the existence of evil which is also a part of the reality determined by him? In this connection, Plantinga makes the following important observation:

> The most impressive argument of natural atheology has to do with the problem of evil. Many philosophers have held that the existence of evil, in one way or another, constitutes a problem for those who accept

> theistic belief. Those contemporary philosophers, who here find a difficulty for the theist, claim, for the most part, to detect logical inconsistency in the belief he typically accepts.11

What constitutes this logical inconsistency? This: "Evil is a problem for the theist in that a contradiction is involved in the fact of evil on the one hand, and the belief in the omnipotence and perfection of God on the other".[12]

It cannot be denied that the existence of evil has always formed one of the most perplexing problems for Christian theologians. Barth, too, dealt with it extensively and spoke in this context of evil as nothingness (das Nichtige) that received its existence on the basis of God's rejection of it.[13] Being quite consistent, he insists that we can only recognize sin and evil for what they really are in the light of Jesus' cross; i.e., their true nature must be revealed to us by God. That is why Heidegger, according to Barth, has such a misconception of nothingness, for to him it is not a sinister power but rather a depth filled with light.[14]

Of course, it is impossible for Pannenberg to follow Barth's reasoning, for, once again, knowledge is placed beyond the reach of non-believers and made dependent on the insight of faith. Now, how does Pannenberg respond to atheism's most impressive argument? Reacting to the suggestion that he might formulate some kind of theodicy, he writes:

> As to the problem of theodicy I do not think it is the task of theology to exculpate God theoretically for the evil in the world. In the face of the horrors of evil every theodicy would function as an ideological device. There can be only one valid answer to the reality of evil: the eschatological reconciliation of God with his world by that glorification of his suffering creatures which alone will finally prove his true divinity. 15

Pannenberg speaks here obviously as a Christian theologian and one cannot without further ado fault him for that as such. However, the expectation of an eschatological vindication of God is surely a matter of faith in the promises of Christ. This causes problems, for Pannenberg has told us repeatedly that arguments based solely on faith are insufficient to refute atheistic criticism, they need the collaboration of the experiences man has of himself and his world. How then is the expectation of the future vindication of God supported by man's experiences? Perhaps Pannenberg would reply that if there is a God who determines all reality, it is only logical to assume that he will show man in the end what his power accomplished in spite of the opposing forces of evil. Nevertheless, it is by no means an established fact that the idea of God has an anthropological foundation in man's openness to the world; neither is there, anthropologically speaking, anything that compels us to think that God will 'glorify his suffering creature'. At best one can say that such a thing is possible, and indeed we may hope that God will do it at the end of history. But this hope is based on the promise we received from Christ and therefore it seems to me that Pannenberg basically does what Barth did; i.e., he approaches the problem of evil from the standpoint of faith without showing how the Christian hope is collaborated by human experience.

We encounter the same problematic when Pannenberg discusses human freedom. It should be noted that his argumentation, although it still moves within the realm of anthropological considerations, takes here a somewhat different direction. Rather than merely positing the awareness

of dependence upon an infinite reality, he asserts now that man owes his freedom not to himself but to someone else.

First of all he notes that the atheistic descriptions of human behavior fail because they take man's personhood as something existent which, at the same time, is supposed to constitute itself in the act of choosing. "Thus in one breath the self is asserted to be already existent and at the same time constituted only by the act of its choice."[16] Since we have here two contradictory elements, Pannenberg argues:

> In the act of his freedom man goes beyond what he already was; that is, the origin of freedom lies in someone or something other than the self which already existed. In other words, human freedom is always received as a gift. Because man is always and in the first instance a being existent for others and for himself, his freedom cannot derive from himself. 17

And why should this freedom be called a gift? Because man, in the act of freedom, constantly transcends himself and therefore "the someone other to whom man owes his being cannot himself be an existent being, if he is to be the origin of man's freedom".[18] Although it is true that man develops his personhood only in the encounter with other persons, our fellow men are just as dependent upon the same gift of freedom, and that is precisely the reason why they cannot be the ultimate basis of freedom. From this Pannenberg draws the conclusion: "The basis of freedom as something held in common can be provided only by a personal reality of a supra-human kind, which by contrast to a human reality would be a pure act of freedom".[19] This viewpoint, claims Pannenberg, is confirmed by the history of humanity for it shows "that freedom with regard to what exists, with the corresponding step in the realization

of human personality, was in each case won only through a particular experience of divine reality".[20]

This is, no doubt, an impressive argument, but again the question must be raised whether strictly anthropological considerations can support the weight of Pannenberg's assertion, and whether they justify the reference to a divine reality as the origin of human freedom. By the way of critique, it should be mentioned first of all that the freedom of man is not - and never has been - a generally accepted fact. On the contrary, many feel that their life is shaped by forces and factors beyond their control, and that their freedom to choose is extremely limited, perhaps even an illusion. Pannenberg's appeal to the history of humanity is unconvincing because some of the world religions show unmistakable signs of fatalism caused by the overwhelming impression of divine reality. Thus, the difficulty is here that those who do not share Pannenberg's particular view of human freedom are hardly in a position to appreciate the force of his argument.[21]

Even if the freedom of man, which manifests itself in his openness to the world, is accepted as an undeniable fact, there is still no absolutely compelling reason why it should be considered as a gift which presupposes, of course, the notion of a giver. One wonders if it is not possible that Pannenberg can make use of the terms 'gift' and 'giver' in such facile way because he has already recognized God as the giver of human freedom. Should that be the case, then he adds a meaning to anthropological data which is not necessarily inherent in them, and with that we are back to the Barthian position.[12]

In the light of the foregoing, we must now raise the question: did Pannenberg succeed in refuting the atheistic critique of religion such as Feuerbach's; i.e., did he show convincingly that the idea of God belongs to man's essential being and that it is therefore an indispensible condition for man's self-understanding? I submit that, although he claims to present anthropological grounds which are accessible to everyone and which do not require an a priori commitment to faith, his interpretation of the findings of anthropology (namely man's dependence and human freedom) apparently stem from his faith in the God of the Bible. It is certainly possible to understand anthropological data the way Pannenberg does, but there are no cogent reasons which compel us to recognize the correctness or superiority of his interpretation. It is quite clear, I would think, that the convincingness of Pannenberg's reasoning depends to a large extent on whether one stands in the same tradition that he does. It is precisely this circumstance that casts doubt on the general validity of his argumentation, for how would it convince those among our contemporaries who are estranged from the Christian faith? The heart of the matter is: is it possible for a Christian theologian to present 'faith-free' arguments to non-believers, or will his Christian conviction inevitably shine through? If the idea of God cannot be argued remoto deo, treating it as an open question, then Barth is justified when he asserts that theology must start with its own presupposition, that is to say, with the Word of God.[23]

Could it be perhaps that the problematic we have been discussing so far does not really exist because Pannenberg has no intention of

presenting 'faith-free' arguments to non-believers? This is what Mark Kolden suggests, claiming that it makes most sense to understand Pannenberg not as a secular believer or theologian, speaking to unbelievers, but as a Christian who addresses himself to fellow believers:

> It is more nearly correct as well as more helpful to view him as a Christian (theologian) speaking to other Christians (theologians). By his work he is not primarily seeking to convince non-believers to believe; instead, he is trying to persuade believers that there are better ways to think about what they believe than have been represented in much contemporary theology. 24

One will have to admit that Pannenberg considers the question of the foundation of the Christian faith of crucial importance to believers. They must have the assurance that their faith is not based on a subjective decision - in which case faith would be founded on itself - but on objective, verifiable facts. Still, I cannot accept Kolden's suggestion that Pannenberg is not addressing himself to non-believers as well. If Kolden's claim were true, why then should Pannenberg be looking for a ground on which the encounter with atheism can take place, why should he enter into a discussion with the atheistic theory of religion, and why should he trouble himself with presenting the idea of God in such way that it will appear less incredible and unthinkable? Surely, it is not so much the believer as the non-believer who is plagued by the incredibility and unthinkability of God. Therefore, it is unwarranted to assume that Pannenberg's main objective is to help fellow Christians think about God in a 'better' way, and that he regards the task of responding to the challenge of atheism of secondary importance.[25]

What is more: even if Kolden were right, it would not solve the problem with which we are dealing. It is Pannenberg's goal to show that the Christian understanding of reality is superior to alternative non-Christian understandings. Now, if this superiority cannot be shown on rational grounds, his efforts will be of little value even to those who believe. Since it is clear that his interpretation of anthropological data is influenced to a significant degree by what he believes, how would his argumentation reassure me that I am not the victim of a widespread illusion? Could the fact that I find Pannenberg's interpretation impressive and convincing not simply be the result of a biblical view of man and his world which he and I share together? I wonder if it would have the same effect on me if I were not a Christian but a secular non-believer.

It is not difficult to see how Pannenberg would respond to my questions. He would explain that even though he speaks as a Christian theologian, his interpretation of anthropological findings is not an arbitrary assertion because it is capable of verification. And how is this verification to take place? By using man's experience of reality as a touchstone. Thus, the truth, or 'proof' of a statement lies in its ability to provide us with a more adequate understanding of what we experience in this life. It is Pannenberg's contention that the way Christianity accounts for human experience is superior to, that is, more illuminating than what non-Christian views have to offer.

The question is: does Pannenberg hand us here an objective criterion by means of which it becomes possible to verify the truth of

his interpretation of anthropological data? What Pannenberg seems to take for granted is that all men have the same experience of reality but only differ when it comes to the interpretation of their experience. However, it is precisely this presupposition of uniformity that must be called into question.

David McKenzie speaks of "a notorious lack of uniformity in the modern experience of reality", and states that "the modern experience is, in short, pluralistic".[26] H.M. Vroom stresses the same point when he finds it striking how differently people react to so-called similar events.[27]

An illustration may be helpful for our discussion. Two people, a Christian and an atheist, both survive heart surgery. Do they experience the event in the same way? Not necessarily. The Christian will be convinced that it was ultimately God, and not the surgeon, who saw him through, while the atheist is equally convinced that he reaped the benefits of an advanced medical science. How would it be possible to find a criterion which can determine which interpretation is correct?

Pannenberg fully appreciates the difficulty that arises here. He states:

> One speaks of an act of God in reference to a concrete event that nevertheless can always be described in another way without having recourse to God. Perhaps it would then be described less appropriately or more superficially in that case. Otherwise talk about a divine act would be completely dispensable for an understanding of the event. But if one concedes that specific circumstances ... can be understood in their full significance only when they are seen as acts of God, it still holds that one can describe the same events even if their dimension of depth is obscured. 28

It may seem, says Pannenberg, that speaking of an act of God in such a case is something appended which really has nothing to do with the things that are experienced. There is, however, more to say:

> It is this appearance (of being merely appended) which is deceptive; and such deception can arise out of a lack of understanding of the inner basis of speech about God generally. Namely, in the moment in which we grasp, by means of a single event, the totality of the reality in which we live and around which our lives circulate, there we experience a work of God in the individual event. 29

What Pannenberg stresses here is that although every individual event is capable of mediating an experience of God, we only experience it as such when the event is related to the totality of our experiences. In other words, "speaking of an act of God already presupposes a specific understanding of reality which expresses itself in the manner in which individual events are experienced".[30] This explains why the atheist and the Christian interpret their respective recoveries from surgery in such different ways: it is caused by different views of the totality of reality.

This observation is indisputable, but it does not solve the problem. What gives Pannenberg the right to say that the understanding of the atheist (or a Buddhist for that matter) is perhaps "less appropriate" and "more superficial", or that it obscures the depth-dimension of an event? It may appear so from the Christian point of view, but it is a view shaped by faith in a God whose existence the atheist cannot accept (the logical inconsistency!) I am not persuaded that Pannenberg has produced such evidence and has argued the case for Christianity so stringently that the latter's superiority over all

alternatives has been established as an indisputable and unavoidable conclusion.

Furthermore, Pannenberg holds that our view of the totality of reality may change, or even be replaced when it is tested against subsequent experiences. At this time, I do not know with what experiences I will be confronted and how they will affect my view. Since a drastic change cannot be ruled out of the question, must I not reckon with the possibility that I may be compelled some day to accept a completely different point of view? I think that Pannenberg would assure me that this cannot happen because God already revealed himself in the resurrection of Christ. If that is the case, then my Christian perspective contains an element that is more than just provisional, but once again everything depends on the question whether or not I believe that Jesus really rose from the dead. It seems then that the whole of Pannenberg's argumentation rests ultimately on one single point: the resurrection of Jesus as a historically established fact. This has now become a matter of greatest importance, for should he fail to establish the facticity of the resurrection, all else fails as well.

We turn our attention to Pannenberg's proposal that we think of God, not as an existent being, but as the coming God. He feels it is necessary to suggest such a 'profound revision' of the traditional idea of God in order to make room for human freedom. The problem to be solved is: how can this freedom be maintained if God is an existent being acting with omniscience and omnipotence? Pannenberg argues, that such a being could not be God, i.e., the power which determines everything

since, rather than determining the freedom of man, he would be transcended by such freedom.[31] Thus he finds himself in wholehearted agreement with the atheistic criticism at this point; if we accept human freedom as an undeniable datum, it follows that the basis of this freedom cannot be a "being that already exists, but only a reality which reveals to freedom its future, the coming God".[32]

Pannenberg adds that this is not an attempt to disarm the opposition, "This idea of the futurity of God is not mere subterfuge invented to evade the atheist criticism. We cannot save the well-known divine being simply by slipping it into a vague future ...."[33]

Still, there are some questions to be asked with respect to the idea of the coming God. To begin with, Pannenberg develops his proposal along two different lines. The first of these is of an anthropological nature. Put in abbreviated form, it runs like this: (1) to be human means to be free, (2) to think of God as an existent being would negate man's freedom, consequently (3) God is not to be thought of as a being that exists.

One may ask if this procedure does not threaten the freedom of theology and no less the freedom of God. Does Pannenberg not give the impression that he allows anthropological considerations to dictate how we are to think of God, or, in this case, how we are not to think of him? How can he, using this kind of argumentation, refute Feuerbach's thesis that God is a creation of man? This problem becomes all the more urgent when we hear Pannenberg say that the new intellectual situation "not only warrants but demands rethinking our idea of God".[34]

These questions make the second line of Pannenberg's argumentation all-important. It is of a theological nature; that is to say, Pannenberg attempts to show that the concept of the futurity of God is a biblical concept which thus far has received little or no attention. If he can prove this point, then he would have shown indeed that anthropology merely supports what the Bible has been saying about God all along, and the charge that he plays into the cards of the atheistic opposition would appear to be without ground.

Pannenberg reasons as follows: the history of religions makes clear that the primary characteristic of the divine has always been sought in the possession of power; in other words, God, in order to be recognized as God, must prove himself to be master of all. From a biblical point of view, says Pannenberg, the being of God and the kingdom of God are identical. Now, since the kingdom or lordship of God has not yet been fully realized, it follows that we should think of God's being as "in the process of coming to be".[35] Avoiding misunderstanding, Pannenberg reminds us that the aspect of power must not be stressed at the expense of the love, justice and wisdom of God.[36]

This brings us to the question: even if we grant that God cannot be God unless he is all powerful, may we say that the Scriptures think of him as the God who 'in a sense does not exist at present' because his kingdom is yet to come? It cannot be denied that Jesus announced the coming of the kingdom and turned the attention of his listeners to what was soon to be, but does Pannenberg not substitute somewhere along the line the lordship of God (which belongs to his being)

for the open demonstration of this lordship (which does not belong to his being)? To be sure, God has not yet shown the power of his rule before the eyes of all mankind, but may one draw the conclusion from this that the 'God who is in the process of coming to be' is a biblical concept? Could it not be that the expectation of the demonstration of his lordship perhaps expresses no more than the thought that God is the One "who is, and who was, and who is to come"?[37]

What complicates matters enormously is Pannenberg's insistence - and that in spite of all that has been said so far - that God is not to be thought of exclusively in terms of the future. He makes a distinction between what exists and what is real, and argues that something does not have to exist in order to be real or effective. Indeed, what belongs to the future does not yet exist, nevertheless it already determines present experience, for men always experience their present and past in the light of the future. In this way, Pannenberg seeks to explain how the God who does not exist can be conceived as the all-determining reality.

What he does not explain, however, is <u>how</u> the future exerts its power over the present, and since he fails to do so, he seems to offer no more than a highly speculative assertion.[38] Pannenberg speaks in this context of the future which we hope for or which we fear. We agree that such hopes and fears influence a man's decision, but although they are related to the future, they do not as such belong to the future; as experiences they belong to the present. In other words, it is not the future <u>per se</u> that shapes the present: "It is not the future itself which influences our choices in the present; rather it

is our ideas of what the future might be like which influences present choices, but these ideas, of course, are altogether present realities".[39]

We come now to the purpose Pannenberg has in mind. His revision of the traditional concept of God shows his concern to present God as the origin of - and not as a threat to - human freedom. It remains unclear, however, how his proposition would solve the tension between the idea of God and the freedom of man. The problem is that the God who is "in the process of coming to be" is also the One who determines all reality. The futurity of his being apparently does not mean that he is not present in a very real sense. As Pannenberg sees it, it is precisely as the coming God that he lets the present go forth from himself and thus history is led toward its consummation from the direction of the end. But what have we gained? If God is the One who determines all reality, no matter where we 'locate' him, how would there be room for human freedom and what sense does it make to speak so emphatically of man's openness to the world which is only possible on the basis of this freedom?[40] Pannenberg tries to solve the problem by stating that the work of God and the actions of men are not opposed to each other. Rather, God must be thought of as acting through men's actions, or as freely making use of them.[41]

It is interesting that Pannenberg offers a solution that has already been advocated by theologians of the past. They spoke of concursus which means that God allows man to act in such way that he is fully responsible for whatever he does, and yet, ultimately, human activity cannot but serve the purpose God has in mind.[42] A very striking example can be found in Peter's sermon to the Jews: on the one hand,

he accuses his listeners of having put Jesus to death by nailing him to the cross; on the other, he maintains that Jesus was handed over by God's set purpose and foreknowledge.[43]

Now, if this concursus solves the problem, then we may ask why it should be necessary to think of God as non-existent at present. It seems there are simpler ways to safeguard human freedom. As Kolden observes, "If freedom comes from God, as traditional theology has said in many ways, then such freedom could just as easily come from a present God as a future one. Indeed, in view of all the difficulties cited regarding Pannenberg's future God, such freedom could more easily come from a presently existing God."[44]

In conclusion: although Pannenberg shows a certain kinship with the process theologians, praising them for incorporating time into the concept of God, he rejects the notion of a development in God. This point constitutes the difference between him and Whitehead, for, says Pannenberg, what will turn out to be true in the future will then appear as having been true all along.

In the light of the foregoing, this is a most curious statement. It almost seems as if Pannenberg, after traveling far and wide, in the end returns safely to the fold of the more traditional theologians. Whatever the case, is Pannenberg not contradicting himself? First he branded the idea of God as an existent being as a monstrous concept, but now he asserts that God will reveal himself as the One who always existed. These statements seem to disagree with each other and only one explanation can reconcile them: "In some way, according to our

experience, the reality of God is still in process for every finite point of view. This does not mean that it is in the same way a process on its own terms".[45] Perhaps it is true that Pannenberg tries to accomplish epistemologically what he is unable to do ontologically;[46] even so, if God does not exist only from the finite point of view, how would this assure us that he, as he is in himself, forms no threat to the freedom of man?

It seems to me that Pannenberg's proposal not only solves but at the same time raises some problems. Furthermore, the assertion that God in the end will appear to be what he always has been can only be understood as a statement of faith which is unsupported by any anthropological findings. Thus, once again, Pannenberg is doing the very same thing that he criticized in Barth.

(B) Revelation as History

The contrast between Barth and Pannenberg comes to its sharpest expression when the latter argues that the Christian faith is not to be based on an authoritative Word 'from above' but instead on the historical events through which God revealed his power over all things. To assert that one has to bring faith to such events in order to understand their meaning puts both the believer and the theologian in an extremely precarious position and renders them helpless against the accusation of sheer subjectivism. What must be shown, says Pannenberg, is that the faith of the Christian is founded on historical happenings which are there "for everyone who has eyes to see" and "which speak their own language".[47] Thus, faith is not a condition for discovering God's

revelation in history; rather, an open and honest appraisal of actual events will spark faith.

How do we obtain knowledge of the revelatory events on which our faith is founded? Pannenberg's answer to this question is simple and clear: in the same way and by the same means we gain knowledge of any other historical fact; i.e., through the application of the historical-critical method. The idea that we are dealing in this case with a special kind of history (Heilsgeschichte or whatever one may want to call it) is to be rejected, for such a special history would be accessible only to those who are blessed with supernatural insight, and for Pannenberg "every last vestige of supernaturalism must be effaced".[48]

As we have seen, the reason for this rejection on the part of Pannenberg is that the claim to supernatural knowledge is ultimately based on nothing but a subjective assertion and leads inevitably to authoritarianism, both of which have become unacceptable in our time. In order to avoid these pitfalls, it is absolutely necessary to show that there is no specific Christian knowledge from which the non-believer naturally would be excluded. In fact, what the Christian claims to know belongs to the realm of rational knowledge and is available to everyone.

This means, according to Pannenberg, that a Christian can argue his case. He is in a position to explain why he believes without having to resort to individual experiences (which lack general validity) or to an authoritative revelation 'from above'. Instead, he can point to objective, historical facts which form the basis for his trust in God and invite the skeptic to examine these facts for himself. Perhaps

more importantly, however, the Christian, too, needs the assurance that things are in order with the ground of his faith. He would continuously be assailed by doubt if he had nothing to fall back on but his own subjective decision. This makes it so urgent, says Pannenberg, that we can show the solidity of the foundation on which our faith rests; this foundation is not mere subjectivity but God's historical acts whose reliability is vouched for by the historical-critical method.[49]

Would it be correct to say that Pannenberg simply exchanges one form of authoritarianism for another? Is the believer now made to depend on the authoritative word of the professional historian, rather than on the Word of God?[50] Pannenberg denies that this is the case, for the believer is not required to accept without questions whatever the historian may tell him. He can weigh and challenge the arguments offered to him and decide whether he finds them convincing or not.[51] Still, even though this possibility exists in theory, in practice the large majority of Christians would find it extremely difficult (and probably wholly unnecessary)[52] to evaluate the merits of a viewpoint expressed by a historian. Such evaluation requires a level of education and competence which most do not posses. Pannenberg himself appears to be aware of this difficulty when he says that believers do not have to do this kind of research if they feel they are not qualified. They may leave it to the theologians whose task it really is, but at least they can rest assured that the ground of their faith is not just an opinion offered by an individual teacher. Thanks to historical research, they are able to share in the feeling that their faith is founded on

events whose historical probability can be sufficiently demonstrated.

What Pannenberg seems to overlook is the fact that, at a most crucial point, historians are sharply divided. Many deny the historicity of the resurrection of Christ; at best they may admit that the disciples believed in all sincerity that their Lord had risen from the grave, but at the same time these historians will declare that the phenomenon never actually happened or at least cannot be known to have happened. Pannenberg has some very important things to say about the prejudice of historical scholars and the improper use they make of the principle of analogy, but his argumentation is not sufficient to assure the Christian that the facticity (or probability) of Christ's resurrection has been confirmed through historical investigation. It is precisely the disagreement among scholars with respect to Jesus' resurrection that has created a feeling of unreliability, and it is not clear how such a situation would strengthen the Christian in his conviction concerning the objectivity of the ground of his faith. Whom is he to believe: Barth or Bultmann, Pannenberg or Troeltsch?[53]

There is another question that must be raised in this context. Pannenberg is confident that the process of historical research will uphold the resurrection of the Lord as an event that actually took place. On the other hand, he admits that this kind of investigation could threaten faith with the loss of its foundation. If Pannenberg is serious about this threat, how can he be so sure that believers have nothing to fear from the historical-critical method? He may express the hope that historical scholars will show more constraint and less

prejudice, but how can he tell to what results the research will lead? While professing to accept the method, does he not violate one of its first principles by taking for granted what is yet to be established?[54]

According to Pannenberg, historical research does not only provide us with reliable knowledge of the past, it also must determine how events are to be understood. He objects strongly to an approach that separates the meaning of a historical fact from the fact itself, since, in this way, the interpretation lacks an objective framework against which it can be tested. In such a case the interpretation would be nothing but a subjective opinion that is arbitrarily superimposed on the event. In order to overcome the dichotomy of fact and meaning, Pannenberg emphasizes the unbreakable bond between an event and its inherent significance. He denies that one has the freedom to ascribe to a historical fact whatever meaning one wishes. Since the meaning originates from the fact, he must also deny that faith, or the Word of God, or the Holy Spirit, add anything substantive to the events through which God reveals himself. Against Althaus, he maintains that both the facticity and the content of revelatory events can and must be established by historical research.[55] He reasons that if the knowledge of the content is only given with faith, then faith is made to rest upon an unsupported insight and thus it is unable to defend itself against the charge of being a projection of pious imagination. For this reason, faith must not be seen as a magic key that unlocks for us the secrets of a knowledge inaccessible to reason. Quite to the contrary, says Pannenberg, the original significance can be discovered in the events

themselves, provided that they are understood in their context.

One would like to know: who are the targets of Pannenberg's critique; which theologians can be accused of augmenting revelatory events with a meaning that does not originate from them? I am not sure if Bultmann falls within this category,[56] but Barth certainly does not. True, he denies that historical investigation can uncover the content of the resurrection-event - that is only given in faith - nevertheless, he would deny just as strongly that faith determines this content and thus dictates to us the meaning of the event. One can safely say that he would wholeheartedly support Pannenberg's protest against separating meaning from fact. Thus, the difference between the two theologians concerns the accessibility of the content but not the inseparableness of content and event. As I will show shortly, even with respect to the question of accessibility Pannenberg is not all that far removed from the Barthian position.

The next question we have to consider is: if the revelatory acts of God are there "for anyone who has eyes to see", and if their language can be heard regardless whether one is a believer or not, how do we account for the fact that so many neither hear nor see? Pannenberg answers that one must use his reason in order to see correctly.[57] What does this imply? Does Pannenberg mean that those who do not see as he does fail to make proper use of their intellectual faculties? If that is the case, it would not only seriously undermine his claim to objectivity and rationality; it would, once again, make one wonder whether he would allow the historical-critical method to

reach any conclusions that contradict what Christians believe. "We may", writes Iain Nicol, "with reasonable justification enquire whether the results of the investigation are not to some extent already assured and decided in advance; whether it is this which also encourages Pannenberg to believe that further historical research cannot seriously impair the historical basis of the Christian faith".[58]

There is more to be mentioned in this context: Pannenberg speaks of the unwillingness and blindness of those who do not see, and applies to them the words of the apostle Paul: "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers ...."[59] This was for Helmut Gollwitzer a reason to say that "a moralizing moment" had entered into the discussion.[60] Although 'moralizing' may not be quite the proper word, one might say that Pannenberg's statement does contain a moral judgment. Indeed, so do many statements in the writings of the New Testament: "From the biblical point of view man refuses to believe ... because he is morally and spiritually corrupt".[61] The difficulty is here how such a judgment, evidently based on insights of faith, fits in a theology of reason.

Furthermore, one may ask with Gollwitzer,[62] if Pannenberg does not give with one hand only to take back with the other. He demands that we let the facts speak for themselves, but he adds that events must be understood in their historical context. This means that the significance of Jesus' resurrection can only come to light when this happening is viewed in connection with the apocalyptic expectation of a general resurrection of the dead. The history of the transmission of

tradition is therefore of vital importance to the interpreter; it provides him with the setting, the spiritual and cultural climate, in which the event took place, and thus it communicates to him the significance inherent in the event together with subsequent interpretations.

Now there is no doubt that in the Christian Church the proclamation of the Word formed an essential part of the transmission of tradition. If this is correct, then we must ask if one did not have to hear and to believe the proclaimed Word in order to appreciate the resurrection of Jesus as a revelatory act of God.[63] The story of Christ's encounter with the travelers to Emmaus [64] points unmistakably in this direction. These disciples had heard reports of the resurrection but its meaning remained hidden. This 'blindness' did not stem from an intellectual defect;[65] rather, it was caused by their 'tardiness' to believe the Scriptures. Hence the rebuke: "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken". The risen Lord overcomes this 'foolishness' by opening the Scriptures: "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself". In Luke's account, the Word is like a light that illuminates the event, a conditio sine qua non for understanding. When Pannenberg stresses the importance of the Ueberlieferungsgeschichte, he appears to think along the same lines; at least, he contends that there can be no proper understanding without knowledge of the tradition which accompanies the event. But in doing so, does he not weaken his thesis that the facts speak for themselves and does he not, to a considerable degree, narrow the distance that

separates him from the theology of the Word?[66]

We turn our attention to a third aspect: namely, the relation between faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. William Hamilton has raised the question whether it is not a "verbal luxury" to declare that God reveals himself since he can be discovered in history by the right kind of method. At any rate, Hamilton charges that this approach is far removed from Calvin's doctrine of the Holy Spirit: "In Pannenberg it almost seems as if the proper methodology has been substituted for the Holy Spirit".[67]

It was not difficult for Pannenberg to show that Hamilton had misunderstood him. "Knowledge of history", he says in reply, "has to do with the truth and reliability of that on which faith is grounded, these are presupposed in the act of trusting and thus logically precede the act of faith".[68] He continues with explaining that the act of trusting itself requires indeed the work of the Spirit. Illumination is necessary to overcome the prejudgments which "stand in the way of unencumbered perception of the event that reveals God ...."[69]

Pannenberg's answer shows sufficiently that he does not regard the work of the Spirit as a superfluous element for which there is no room in his theology. At the same time, there is an unresolved tension: if there are prejudices which man himself cannot overcome, and if he needs the persuasive power of the Spirit in order to believe (i.e., to trust) in God, how can Pannenberg say that the <u>events</u> have transforming power (<u>überführende Kraft</u>) and that the <u>events</u> spark faith? Helmut G. Harder and W. Taylor Stevenson touched on the very same point with the

following observation: "Stated most simply, the fundamental ambiguity in Pannenberg's theology is his description of the transition from the historical fact to faith. The transition is not so straightforward as some of his statements would lead us to believe. It seems to us that Pannenberg pushes the point that faith is based on the facts of history too far".[70]

In addition the question could be posed: how far does Pannenberg's concept of the work of the Holy Spirit differ from Barth's? The latter probably would have found the term 'prejudice' less than adequate since man's blindness is rooted in his rebellion against God. More important is the fact that both agree on this point: the obstacles which prevent men from turning to God in trust can only be removed by the Spirit; therefore, divine illumination is indispensible in order to come to faith. As far as Pannenberg is concerned, it raises the same question of ambiguity. If man is blinded by prejudice, how can it be stated that God's revelation in history is there for anyone who has eyes to see? Is it perhaps correct to assume that Pannenberg operates with two kinds of prejudice? The first would stand in the way of an objective evaluation of the facts of history on which the Christian faith is founded and this type can be overcome by making proper use of one's intellect. The other hinders the transition from the knowledge of the facts to a faith that <u>trusts</u> in God, and this obstruction can only be swept aside by the Holy Spirit. However, is there any justification for such a distinction? If man can know God's revelation without special divine illumination, why can he not learn to trust God without the aid of the Spirit? Conversely, if prejudice of 'the second kind' affects man's capacity

to believe, why does it not affect his capacity to know God?

Further, is Pannenberg consistent when he says that we have come to faith because the Spirit proved to be stronger than our prejudices? Does he not appeal here to a supernatural element that he cannot possibly explain to an unbeliever? One cannot avoid the impression that Pannenberg, also at this point, returns to a way of doing theology which he has himself repeatedly called 'irrational'.[71] Pannenberg apparently struggles to free himself from the theology of the Word but fails to present us with an alternative to Barth that is as distinct and different as he obviously thinks it is.[72]

After having discussed Pannenberg's view of revelatory events in general, we now turn to the event of Jesus' resurrection. To prove the resurrection of Jesus to be a historically probable event is without a doubt the most crucial part of Pannenberg's theological program. Even the convincingness of his anthropological argumentation depends on it and one may say indeed that "the intelligibility of Pannenberg's entire theology hinges on his proof of the resurrection. What he says about the historical Jesus applies equally to his own theology: 'without the resurrection of Jesus his message would have turned out to be a fanatical audacity'...."[73]

It appeared that such a proof requires two things. Firstly, the historian must not allow his judgment to be clouded by the dogmatic assertion that dead men do not rise. It would lead him to reject the documents which report the event even before he had examined them. This procedure, as Pannenberg correctly points out, is indefensible

and should not be followed in proper historical research. Secondly, relying mainly on Paul's account in I Corinthians 15, Pannenberg sets out to show that it is possible to adduce sufficient grounds to assert that Jesus' resurrection is historically very probable.

How convincing is Pannenberg's argumentation?[74] One of the greatest difficulties may be that the reports of the resurrection of Jesus are obviously 'biased'. Far from being neutral observers, those who proclaimed the Easter-event were staunchly committed to the Christian faith and its propagation. It does not necessarily mean that they lied about their experiences - there is a general agreement that they did experience something - however, historians often question the objectivity, and with that the validity, of their accounts. For instance, Pannenberg finds it telling that the Jewish leaders shared the conviction of the disciples that Jesus' tomb was empty. Is it not equally telling that this particular information about the Jews comes to us from a Christian source? Van A. Harvey formulates his misgiving as follows:

> When dealing with an event so initially improbable as the resurrection of a dead man, the two thousand year old narratives of which are limited to the community dedicated to propagating the belief and admittedly full of legendary features, contradictions, absurdities and discrepancies, how could a critical historian argue that since much can be said for it and no convincing evidence exists against it, it is probably historical? 75

With respect to Paul's proximity to the resurrection, which plays an important part in Pannenberg's argumentation, the same author observes:

> Even if we grant that Paul's report is the earliest one, this does not mean that the tradition he passed on was true. It may be true as an account of what the earliest community believed, but whether what they

> believed may be called 'clear, definite historical facts' is quite a different question. 76

Although Pannenberg's defence of the historicity of the resurrection is impressive, it does not appear that the evidence he offers is sufficient to convince the non-believing historian. It seems to me that the convincingness of his argument depends to a large degree on a certain willingness to be convinced. If this is indeed the case, then historical research alone will not attain to the knowledge of the resurrection.[77]

Furthermore, Pannenberg states that the appearance tradition and the empty-grave tradition by mutually complementing each other let the assertion of Jesus' resurrection appear as historically very probable. This means that it is to be presupposed until contrary evidence is found. In other words - Pannenberg seeks here to clinch the argument - since the resurrection is well attested and forms the best explanation so far for the emergence of early Christianity, and since we have no evidence that contradicts the facticity of the event, the historian ought to subscribe to Jesus' resurrection as a historical reality.[78]

Is Pannenberg not demanding too much? Should he not allow the historian the right to reserve judgment on the basis of insufficient data? If a man claims that he lives in a haunted house and offers striking evidence of strange occurrences which have been witnessed by others as well, do I have to accept his claim as long as I am not in a position to prove him wrong? Why should it be improper to say, "I do not know what causes these occurrences, but I am not ready to accept

your ghost-theory"? The non-believing historian is in a similar position. After having examined the evidence, he may well come to the conclusion that, although something must have happened which caused the disciples to believe that Jesus had risen, the exact nature of their experience cannot be determined with any degree of certainty.

Herbert Burhenn points out that the historian is not a judge who must decide whether certain events took place or not: "The historian qua historian lives in an ivory tower: it is both his privilege and indeed his responsiblity to reserve judgment on a historical question when he finds the evidence insufficient".[79]

We encounter difficulties of a different type when Pannenberg speaks of the resurrection as a metaphor. He does not want the term to be understood as the resuscitation of a corpse but as a radical transformation.[80] Such a transformation lies beyond the scope of our present experiences, and for this reason the only possible way to speak about it is metaphorical, using images that belong to the world we know. This, too, has drawn the fire of Pannenberg's critics, for how can an event that defies all definition and analysis be the object of historical investigation?[81] G.E. Michalson charges that Pannenberg is contradicting himself:

> By Pannenberg's own standards, then, the term 'resurrection' hardly refers to something that is ruled out in advance by the principle of analogy. Instead, it refers to a certain linguistic convention (a metaphor) employed by the first Christians as the most appropriate means of expressing a certain dramatic experience. What they experienced could not be expressed directly, but only metaphorically - even by them. Even less, then, could the object of their experience

> become the object of a historical proof today. In other words, what the first Christians experienced is, for Pannenberg as for others, not really a possible object of historical research. 82

Michalson's critique is not convincing because it rests on an unacceptable interpretation of Pannenberg's argument. Firstly, the metaphor of a resurrection does not refer, as Michalson seems to think, to an experience of the disciples but it is used as a means to say something about what the risen Lord experienced; i.e., a form of life that is not (yet) known to us. Secondly, even though the meaning of the resurrection could only be expressed metaphorically, it does not follow that the event therefore cannot be the object of historical investigation. It is certainly incorrect to state that "Pannenberg would commit us to a strategy by which we shall not merely be saying what we do not know; we shall not really know what we are saying".[83]

The use of the metaphor rests on the assumption that the meaning of an event can only be conveyed through images familiar to us; precisely for this reason, it cannot indicate complete incomprehensibility. Complete or absolute incomprehensibility would rule out the possibility of any reference to the event, whether direct or indirect.[84] That, however, does not appear to be the case with the resurrection. Our perception may be dim, and our images inadequate, yet it allows us to say at least something about the transformation which took place when Jesus arose. Ted Peters, I believe, is right when he describes the metaphor as a refinement of analogy:

> Rising from sleep is familiar to our experience but rising from death is not. In this metaphor the familiar experience is used to communicate the

> strange one. In the same way that one is awakened from sleep and rises, so also the New Testament witnesses claim it happened to the dead Jesus. The metaphor relies upon the use of analogy, i.e., matching up the similarities between our awakening from sleep and the event of Jesus' resurrection, but it also points us beyond the analogy to an as yet incomprehensible reality. The event of Jesus' resurrection can be pointed to, but it cannot be fully explained in univocal language as most other historical events seem to be. That does not mean it did not happen. 85

It should be noted that Pannenberg, upon further reflection, appears to be troubled by an exclusively metaphorical characterization of the resurrection. He wonders whether it is not possible to develop a concept of life within which the life that is subject to death would only be a special instance (ein spezieller Fall). Such a concept of life would still not be open to empirical verification, but its semantic intention would no longer be metaphorical.[86] What Pannenberg has in mind is not quite clear, perhaps he means that our present concept of life is dominated by the aspect of death; at any rate, it shows that the matter has not been solved entirely to his satisfaction.

We have to consider one more element in Pannenberg's proof of the resurrection as a historical reality. He contends that the meaning of an event cannot be discovered unless it is viewed within its own historical context. This means with respect to Jesus' resurrection that it must be placed in the light of the apocalyptic tradition. This tradition envisaged a general resurrection of the dead; hence the significance of the Easter-event was immediately clear to those who shared such expectations. They knew that the future - the end of history - had arrived proleptically in this one man.[87]

Now the question is: how can the resurrection of Jesus be understood by people who do not, or no longer, stand in this tradition, and who are naturally inclined to regard such a view of the future as fantastic dreams? Pannenberg attempts to solve the problem by asserting, first of all, that our modern way of thought is a legacy from the biblical understanding of reality as history. But, of course, it is not sufficient to demonstrate that our understanding of reality has its roots in the Jewish-Christian tradition. A second step is required, namely, it must be shown that the tradition of the past corresponds, rather than conflicts with man's present awareness.[88] In order to accomplish such a tour de force Pannenberg once more turns to anthropology. Analyzing man's hope for the future, he comes to the conclusion that hope can only be regarded as a meaningful attitude if there is anything to hope for beyond death. Man is constantly driven beyond the limitations of this life and this world in his search for the fulfillment of his human destiny. Since he never succeeds in finding what he is looking for, it would be foolish to cherish hope if it were true that there is nothing on the other side of the grave. In other words, the attitude of hope carries within itself the presupposition of life beyond death.

It is not difficult to detect the weak link in Pannenberg's train of thought. Few will deny that man's hope always reaches beyond his present situation. As Paul says, "Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently".[89] However, is it true that hope in

order to be meaningful must reach beyond death? To a Christian, the argument makes sense; a non-believer, on the other hand, may object that Pannenberg presents him with presuppositions which he finds impossible to recognize as his own. Indeed, what compelling reasons are there to assume that one's hope cannot be confined within the boundaries of this life and this world? From a Christian point of view, a strictly this-wordly hope may be called foolish; nevertheless, "Just because we must locate our destiny beyond each finite condition is not in itself a basis for the claim that we must locate our destination beyond the totality of finite conditions".[90]

Further, with respect to Pannenberg's assertion that the apocalyptic tradition in essence corresponds with modern awareness, it is clear that the resurrection of the dead can only be conceived as an act of God. Consequently, the hope of life beyond death requires a view of reality that includes the reality of God. Does it not mean that only those who believe in God can appreciate the convincing power of Pannenberg's argument? Jürgen Moltmann detects here a vicious circle:

> The thesis that this event of the raising of Jesus must be 'historically' verifiable in principle, would require us first of all so to alter the concept of the historical that it would allow of God's raising the dead and would make it possible to see in this raising of the dead the prophesied end of history. To call the raising of Jesus historically verifiable is to presuppose a concept of history which is dominated by the expectation of a general resurrection of the dead as the end and consummation of history. Resurrection and the concept of history then contain a vicious circle for the understanding. 91

Moltmann's point is that Pannenberg's proof of the resurrection depends entirely upon the concept of a universal history that will be concluded

with a general resurrection of the dead. This means that without such a concept of history Jesus' resurrection remains unintelligible. Conversely, it is only on the basis of the resurrection of Jesus that we can conceive of history as a process moving towards its completion.

Pannenberg, in my opinion, did not succeed in showing convincingly that there is indeed a correspondence between the essential elements of the apocalyptic expectation and the awareness of modern man.[92] People who do not believe in a God who raises the dead cannot possibly recognize in the apocalyptic tradition something that corresponds with their own awareness. This would also mean that for many of our contemporaries the resurrection of Jesus is an event without recognizable content and, applying Pannenberg's own standards, it would thwart any attempt to prove its historical probability to them.

Finally, we ask one more question: what is the cognitive value of the resurrection of Jesus? Karl Barth, in one of the very few comments he made with regard to Pannenberg, wondered if his former pupil was not "building his house on the quicksand of yesterday and on the historical reckonings of probability which are so common today? Was not his Christ merely the symbol of the presuppositions of a general anthropology, cosmology, and ontology?"[93] It would not be difficult for Pannenberg to show that Barth's fears were unfounded. The resurrection of Jesus, to limit ourselves to that point, has indeed cognitive value for it means that God approved of the man who had been condemned as a blasphemer, and it establishes retroactively Jesus' identity as the Son of God.[94] Pannenberg's attempt to show a correspondence between the

Christian faith and modern awareness does not mean either that man, apart from Christ, can know a great deal about God and the future, provided that he examines the presuppositions implied in our existence as human existence. On the contrary, without the revelation in Jesus, God can only be thought of as a mysterious entity after which man inquires:

> We do not first know who God is and then also something about Jesus, but only in connection with Jesus do we know that the ground of all reality about whom every man inquires, openly or concealed, consciously or unconsciously, is in its real essence identical with the God of Israel. We know this - to repeat it once again - because the end that stands before us and all things has already happened in Jesus as an event produced by Israel's God. 95

One question remains: did Pannenberg succeed in establishing a correspondence between the hidden presuppositions of modern awareness and the apocalyptic-Christian expectation of the end? It seems to me that the convincingness of Pannenberg's argument depends also here on the view one has of history, i.e., on the question: is man its bearer or the God who raises the dead? In other words, it seems to depend to a significant degree on whether one is a Christian or an non-believer, and that is precisely the kind of argumentation Pannenberg seeks to avoid and to replace. At any rate, he failed to demonstrate in a purely rational fashion that proper historical research can establish the probability and meaning of Jesus' resurrection and thus provide the Christian faith with an 'objective' foundation.

(C) Conclusions

Barth, as we have seen, strongly opposed the notion of any natural knowledge of God and denied the existence of a possible point of contact between God's self-revelation and what man already knows. This is in line with what the Reformers taught, but Barth went beyond them by rejecting a general revelation on account of which man's ignorance of God would be inexcusable.[96] Since theology must start with the Word of God, behind which one is not to inquire, Barth could not allow any room for a deliberate apologetics based on rational argumentation. There are, however, indications that Barth at a later stage modified his views in such a way that one perhaps may speak of a correction.

Nevertheless, leaving this correction aside for a moment, Barth's earlier stance deserves the criticism levelled against it. When the Church addresses non-believers, it does so on the assumption that they are able to understand what it says. As J. Baillie pointed out:

> The Christian preacher today knows fully well that his task in endeavouring to lead men to a saving knowledge of God in Christ would be a very different one were he called upon to preach to stocks and stones or to beings not already endowed with reason and some sense of distinction between good and evil and some sense of awe before the holy thing .... Nobody who has ever heard a Christian preacher plead with his audience could fail to suppose that he was appealing to something that was already present in their souls. 97

Pannenberg, although his critique of Barth is sometimes unnecessarily severe, is correct in demanding that theology, in order to meet the challenge of atheism, must be able to give an account of the Christian

faith, rather than simply appealing to an authoritative revelation. It is a conviction which he shares with many theologians of the past and present, but he adds a distinctly new feature to it with his proposal that such an account requires a rational argumentation; i.e., an argumentation the validity of which does not depend on a priori commitment to faith.

Pannenberg's strength lies in his critique of obstructions that stand in the way of a meaningful dialogue between Christians and non-believers. I think in particular of his answers to Feuerbach and Fichte, of his attack on the 'omnipotence' of the principle of analogy in historical research and on the dogmatic prejudice which historians often exhibit in their rejection of Christ's resurrection as an actual event. His work in these areas is brilliant, showing an analytical mind that searches out the weaknesses in the argumentation of the opponent.

Although I find Pannenberg's work impressive in many ways, I think that he expects too much of the power of his own rational argumentation. He claims that he has no intention of formulating proofs similar to those we find in the natural sciences; nevertheless, his arguments often take on the form of some kind of proof that aims at no less than the logical demonstration of the truth of the Christian faith. Thus, the impression we receive is one of a theologian-philosopher who seeks to show that a rigorous use of reason will uphold rather than contradict the things Christians believe. Our examination of Pannenberg's arguments revealed, however, that they are not quite as compelling as he seems to think. No doubt, his (Christian) interpretation of anthropological data

(man's openness to the world, his freedom and his hope for the future) makes a great deal of sense. But it cannot be shown to be the most logical and therefore the best possible interpretation.

It cannot be denied either that Pannenberg presents a strong case for the facticity of Jesus' resurrection but, again, not to the extent that historians would feel compelled to accept its historical probability.

It seems to me that the convincingness of Pannenberg's 'proofs', in the area of anthropology as well as in the realm of historical research, depends largely on the position one takes with respect to the Christian faith. It is to be expected that believers will appreciate the force of Pannenberg's rationality while confirmed atheists will remain unimpressed. There are, however, also those among our contemporaries who are not prepared to accept or to reject Christianity. It could very well be that they find the insights which Pannenberg offers helpful and illuminating. Whatever the case, his defence deserves better than to be ignored.

The center of Pannenberg's critique of Barth lies in the area of God's revelation. Over against the 'Theology of the Word' he presents 'Revelation as History' as a more sensible alternative. The main thrust of this approach is that God reveals himself in historical events which, with respect to their content and facticity, are accessible to reason. Hence, faith as trust in God is not opposed to reason but is founded on a reasonable knowledge that can be attained without supernatural aid.

It is Pannenberg's purpose to overcome the alleged subjectivism and authoritarianism of Barth's theology, but we noted several times a remarkable ambiguity. It appears that Pannenberg frequently turns away from Barth only to circle back (be it not completely) to a position he rejected. For example: the bold thesis that the facts speak a language of their own is softened by the additional thesis that this language of the facts requires the history of the transmission of traditions in order to be heard and understood. The interpretation of historical facts as revelatory events presupposes a certain knowledge of the God who reveals himself in them. The idea of the resurrection is unthinkable without the idea of a God who can and will raise the dead. The transition from rational knowledge to faith cannot be accomplished by man alone but must be understood as the result of the illuminating activity of the Holy Spirit.

In view of this ambiguity one may ask if Pannenberg's rationality eliminates the 'deficiencies' of Barthian theology. It does not appear that he succeeded in what he set out to do.

There is one final question to be answered: do we have to choose between fideism and rationality? Fortunately, this is not the case. We have already noticed that Pannenberg's critique of Barth loses its radicality in the process, which brings him closer to the position he attacked. Barth, on the other hand, affirmed in a new and unexpected way that God has indeed not left himself without witnesses in this world. To be sure, this implacable foe of natural theology never altered his stand that there is no knowledge of God apart from Christ, a thesis

with which Pannenberg agrees. Nevertheless, in one of the last volumes of his Church Dogmatics[98] we find a section under the heading "The Light of Life", in which Barth fully acknowledges the existence of other lights that shine in this world. Reflecting on the relationship between these lights and Christ, Barth states that Christ, and he alone, is the Light of life.[99] But this does not mean that in the Bible, the Church and the world there are no other words and lights and revelations; nor does it follow that every word spoken outside the Bible and the Church is untrue. In fact, there are no good grounds to deny the possibility that certain words which attest and correspond to the one Word of God may have been spoken extra muros ecclesiae.[100] Of course, since only the Word can attest to the Word, other attesting and corresponding words must have been acknowledged by Christ: it must have pleased the Word to allow itself to be reflected and reproduced in the words of man. We know, says Barth, that the human creature does not have to capacity to know God and the one Word, but how can we possibly think that Christ cannot speak, and that his speech cannot be attested outside the narrower sphere of the Bible and the Church? Indeed, Jesus Christ has the power to create human witnesses whenever and wherever he wants, and their witness should be gratefully accepted.

Next, Barth turns his attention to the lights and truths in the cosmos. He discusses (1) the persistence or constancy of the creature, (2) its dynamic yet orderly rhythm, (3) its inner contrariety, (4) its natural and spiritual laws, (5) its freedom, i.e., the freedom of man, and (6) its depth or mystery. All this in itself

has nothing to do with the knowledge of God, claims Barth. These created lights tell us nothing about God the Creator and Lord, nor do they tell us anything about man in his relationship to God. And yet, man's sin and pride and sloth do not extinguish these lights. However corrupt he may be, they illumine him, and even in the depth of his corruption he does not cease to see and understand them.[101] In a for Barth truly remarkable statement he declares that,properly understood, even such fatal expressions as 'revelation of creation' or 'primal revelation' are not to be totally rejected, provided that they are used only very sparingly.[102] Whether or not this may be called Barth's secret correction,[103] it is a fact that Barth speaks here more positively than he ever did before.

Now, if the Church must reckon with words and lights extra muros ecclesiae, and if it gratefully discerns Christ's prophetic power in them, then one does not see why Christian theology should not appeal to these witnesses when it addresses non-believers. I submit that Barth's 'correction' in principle opens the door to a defence of the Christian faith on rational grounds such as Pannenberg has in mind.

It appears then that we can learn from both theologians. What is to be appreciated in Barth is his emphasis on the freedom and grace of God whose revelation comes as a surprising and undeserved gift. Pannenberg shows us that the Church can do more than protest or keep silence in the face of atheistic criticism. We learn from Pannenberg's actual theological-philosophical practice - as distinct from his explicit claim about such practice - something about what might be called

'soft-apologetics'. That is, while it may not be possible to give hard, absolutely conclusive arguments in support of Christianity, it is not the case that the only alternative to doing so would be a fideistic-authoritarian approach. Pannenberg's example can encourage one to develop a way of uniting faith and reasoning and of showing that Christianity presents man with a plausible answer to the mystery of human existence, and that it is therefore worthy of serious consideration.

NOTES

NOTES

CHAPTER I

[1]Cf. Acts 2:14-26; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 13:16-41.

[2]G. Schrenk regards the "Erfüllungsgedanke als Kern urchristlicher Schriftauffassung", TWNT, Vol. I, p. 758.

[3]"Man bewies aus dem A.T., dass das jüdische Volk im Unrecht sei und einen Bund mit Gott entweder nie besessen oder doch verloren habe, dass sein Verständniss der Gottesoffenbarungen falsch sei, und dass es daher mindestens jetzt keinen Anspruch auf ihren Besitz habe." A. von Harnack, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte[5], Band I.(Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1931), p. 196.

[4]Romans 3:1,2. Later apologists would make the Church the sole possessor of the words of God. The advantage of being a Jew is worked out in chapters 9-11.

[5]Rom. 11:2.

[6]Rom. 11:26.

[7]A. Richardson points out that there is necessarily a defensive element in all Christian preaching, and that it is often impossible to say at which point defence passes into counter-attack. Cf. his Christian Apologetics, (London: SCM Press, 1955), p. 27. (Note)

[8]A. Dulles, A History of Apologetics (Corpus of New York:Westminster of Philadelphia, Hutchinson of London, 1971), p. 19.

[9]Cf. I Cor. 1:24, "Christ crucified who is a stumbling block to Jews and folly to gentiles", G. Stählin comments: "Die Torheit des Evangeliums macht die Griechen, seine religiöse Anstössigkeit die Juden zu Ungläubigen", TWNT, Vol. VII, p. 354.

[10]Acts 14:8-18.

[11]Phil. 2:6 speaks of Christ as being made in human likeness. It is clear that incarnation is a much more profound concept than that of a metamorphosis.

[12]Acts 17:12-31.

[13]The source of the first quotation is uncertain, the second is from Aratus' Phaenomena.

[14]Natural theology and natural knowledge of God are closely related, since both are concerned with the question in how far there can be a certain knowledge of God apart from his revelation in Christ. J.F. Anderson attempts to distinguish between them with the help of the Aristotelian relation between matter and form: "It is clear that a certain pre-philosophical knowledge of God is the indispensible matter out of which some formal philosophical knowledge of him may be developed". J.F. Anderson, Natural Theology, The Metaphysics of God.(Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1962), p. 4.

[15]Apologia I, 44. For translations of Justin and Tertullian, see The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vols. I and II. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, (editors) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903).

[16]Apologia I, 46. Cf. also Apologia II, 10, 13.

[17]The logos spermatikos means the Word disseminated among men.

[18]Justo L. González, A History of Christian Thought, Vol. I. (Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 105f.

[19]Cf. Apologia II, 45.

[20]Cf. A. von Harnack, op. cit., p. 511. See also E. Gilson, Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), p. 16.

[21]J. L. González, op. cit., p. 178.

[22]De Paenitentia, 1.

[23]Apologeticum adv. Gentes, 47.

[24]De Anima, 3.

[25]De Praescriptione Haereticorum, 7.

[26]De Anima, 20.

[27]Cf. Gonzáles, op. cit., p. 188.

[28]De Anima, 2.

[29]Apologeticum, 17.

[30]Cf. J.L. Gonzáles, A History of Christian Thought, Vol. II, p. 17.

[31]Ibid., p. 19.

[32]De Doct. Christ, Book II, Ch. XI. Quoted by A. Richardson, op. cit., p. 229. (Note).

[33]D. Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought. Vintage books published by A.A. Knopf Inc., 1962, p. 262.

[34]E. Gilson, op. cit., p. 16.

[35]Epistle CXX, 3-4. Quoted by A. Richardson, op. cit., p. 25.

[36]Ibid.

[37]E. Gilson, op. cit., p. 18.

[38]Soliloquies, I, I, 3. The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Vol. VII. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Grand Rapids: Wms. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956).

[39]A. Richardson, op. cit., p. 114 (Note).

[40]D. Knowles, op. cit., p. 36.

[41]Whether his 'proof' retains its validity without faith as the starting points is still a matter of debate.

[42]Cf. E. Gilson, op. cit., p. 69.

[43]Ibid., p. 73.

[44]Cf. D. Knowles, op. cit., p. 262.

[45]F.C. Copleston, Aquinas (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penquin Books Ltd., 1975), p. 56.

[46]Summa Theologica Ia, 1, 1. Cf. also Summa contra Gentiles, XXXIX.

[47]There is a difference between "dem was die Philosophie ihrem Wesen nach vermag und dem, was die faktisch vorliegende Philosophie vermag. De jure kann die Vernunft von der Schöpfung her Gott erkennen (Röm. 1, 20); damit ist aber nicht gesagt, dass sie de facto diese Erkenntniss vollzogen hat". N.H.Søe, Religionsphilosophie (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1967), p. 20.

[48]Cf. Søe, op. cit., p. 21.

[49]F.C. Copleston, op. cit., p. 59.

[50]O. H. Pesch, The God Question in Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther (E.T. G.G. Krodel) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. 7. Pesch argues cogently that Aquinas' "five ways" are not the work of an autonomous philosopher, but that with these he has already entered upon the theological doctrine of God.

[51]N.H.Søe, op cit., p. 23. Rational reflections "machen das Ja des Willens zum Worte Gottes zu einem vernünftigen Gehorsam".

[52]H. U. von Balthasar, The Question of God and Modern Man (E.T. Hilda Graef) Seabury Paperback Edition (New York: The Seabury Press, 1967), p. 63.

[53]E. Gilson, op. cit., p. 85.

[54]Ibid., p. 86. See also D. Knowles, op. cit., p. 328.

[55]Ibid., p. 87. This interpretation of Ockham is contradicted by P. Boehner who argues that Ockham allows the demonstration of some truths, e.g. the truth that God exists. Cf. P. Boehner, William of Occam (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1976), p. XLIII.

[56]Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, Karl Barth, Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie. (Köln: Verlag Jakob Hegner, 1951), p. 275.

[57]The corresponding canon pronounced an anathema on those who deny the "certo cognosci posse". Cf. H. Bouillard, The Knowledge of God (E.T. S.D. Femiano) (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 32.

[58]E. Gilson, op cit., p. 12 f.

[59]In his 98 Thesen gegen die scholastische Theologie.Luther asserts: "Keiner wird Theologe, wenn er es nicht ohne Aristoteles wird". "Der ganze Aristoteles ist, verglichen mit der Theologie, wie Dunkel gegen Licht" (Theses 44 and 50). Quoted by N.H.Søe, op cit., p. 11.

[60]Thesis 29.

[61]G. Ebeling, Luther, An Introduction to his Thought (E.T. R.A. Wilson) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. 87.

[62]"Was Luther abwies war die Metaphysik, die Spekulation über die Prinzipien der Dinge, und ausserdem natürlich das, was die Philosophen über die ethischen Fragen vortrugen." N.H.Søe, op cit., p. 12.

[63]M. Luther, A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (Philadelphia: Smith, English and Co., 1860), p. 316.

[64]Ibid., p. 152.

[65]E.A. Dowey, Jr., The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 4.

[66]Institutes III, 2,7.

[67]Inst. I, 3, 1.

[68]Inst. I, 3, 3.

[69]Inst. I, 4,1.

[70]Inst., I, 5, 1.

[71]Inst. I, 5, 14.

[72]Inst. I, 5, 15.

[73]Inst. I, 6, 1.

[74]Inst. I, 6, 2.

[75]Inst. I, 8, 1-12.

[76]Inst. I, 7, 3.

[77]E.A. Dowey, Jr., op. cit., p. 138.

[78]K. Barth, No (E.T. Geoffrey Bless). In: J. Baillie, Natural Theology (London: The Century Press, 1946), p. 101.

[79]K. Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation (E. T. J.L.M. Haire and Ian Henderson) (London: Hodder and Stoughton Publishers, 1938), p. 9.

[80]Cf. G.C. Berkouwer, General Revelation (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955), p. 47. "For Calvin the solution does not lie in identification but in separation between general revelation and the knowledge of this revelation, so that the acceptance of general revelation does not automatically open the door to natural theology".

[81]H.M. Kuitert, The Reality of Faith (E.T. Lewis B. Smedes) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968), p. 26 f.

[82]"Ich musste also das Wissen aufheben, um dem Glauben Platz zu bekommen". Kritik der reinen Vernunft, p. 25.

[83]Quoted by G.C. Berkouwer, A Half Century of Theology (E.T. Lewis B. Smedes) (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1977), p. 23.

[84]Cf. the title of one of his most important works, On Religion, Speeches to its Cultured Despisers (E.T. John Oman)(New York: Harper and Row, 1958).

[85]Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith. Edited by H. R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), p. 12.

[86]On Religion, p. 33.

[87]Ibid., p. 36.

[88]The Christian Faith, p. 76.

[89]Cf. H.M. Kuitert, The Reality of Faith, p. 33.

[90]K. Barth, "Evangelical Theology in the 19th Century", The Humanity of God (E.T. Thomas)(Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 19.

CHAPTER II

[1]E. Busch, Karl Barth, His life from letters and autobiographical texts (E.T. John Bowden)(London: SCM Press, 1976), p. 81. See also Barth's own comment: "In despair over what this indicated about the signs of the time, I suddenly realized that I could no longer follow either their ethics or dogmatics or their understanding of the Bible and of history. For me, at least, 19th century theology no longer held any future". The Humanity of God, p. 14.

[2]T.F. Torrance, Karl Barth, An introduction to his early theology, 1910-1931. (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 17.

[3]K. Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (E.T. Edward C. Hoskyn) (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 29f.

[4]Ibid., p. 241.

[5]Ibid., p. 258.

[6]K. Barth, Die Kirkliche Dogmatik, III, 4, p. ix. Translations of the German text are mostly my own.

[7]Busch, op. cit., p. 418.

[8]Cf. Torrance, op cit., p. 88: "Until the 'No' had done its work ... there could be no fruitful or possible affirmation of the union of God and man". Barth himself explains that, "A genuine revision in no way involves a subsequent retreat, but rather a new beginning and attack in which what previously had been said is to be said more than ever, but now even better". The Humanity of God, p. 41f.

[9]Romans, p. vi. H.U. von Balthasar says that "der erste Römerbrief gebraucht ... ein Begriffskleid, das nicht primär der Schrift, nicht einmal Luther und Calvin, sondern Plato, einem theologischen Rechtshegelianismus und einem religiösen Sozialismus entstammt". Karl Barth, Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie, p. 71.

[10]Busch, op. cit., p. 173.

[11]K.D. III, 4, p. viii.

[12]The Humanity of God, p. 21.

[13]K. Barth, Anselm, Fides Quaerens Intellectum (E.T. John W. Robertson)(London: SCM Press, 1960), p. 16f.

[14]Ibid., p. 24.

[15]Ibid. p. 15f. Pannenberg is of the opinion that the 'ontological' argument can be fruitfully employed to establish the religious dimension of human nature without first requiring a faith commitment. See below p. 88.

[16]K.D. I, 1, p. 41.

[17]K.D. I, 1, p. 1.

[18]K.D. I, 1, p. 11.

[19]K.D. I, 1, p. 16f.

[20]K.D. I, 1, p. 18.

[21]K.D. I, 1, p. 120.

[22]K.D. I, 1, p. 114. Cf. K.D. I, 2, p. 589

[23]K.D. I, 1, p. 112.

[24]K.D. I, 1, p. 116.

[25]K.D. I, 1, p. 202: "Gottes Wort ist nicht mehr Gnade oder Gnade selbst ist nicht mehr Gnade, wenn man dem Menschen eine Hinordnung zu diesem Wort, eine ihm selbständig und an sich eigene Erkenntnismöglichkeit diesem Wort gegenüber zuschreibt."

[26]K. Barth, "The Christian Understanding of Revelation". Against the Stream (E.T. Stanley Godman) (London: SCM Press, 1954), p. 219f: "The knowledge, understanding, and interpretation of the revelation of God is in fact bound up with the same of the texts of the Bible."

[27]K.D. I, 1, p. 320.

[28]K.D. I, 1, p. 318.

[29]K.D. I, 1, p. 329.

[30]Cf. K.D. I, 2, p. 7.

[31]K.D. I, 2, p. 34: "Die Möglichkeit der Offenbarung ist tatsächlich aus ihrer Wirklichkeit in Jesus Christus abzulesen".

[32]K.D. I, 2, p. 222.

[33]K.D. I, 2, p. 269.

[34]K.D. I, 2, p. 270.

[35]K. Barth, Dogmatics in Outline (E.T. G.T. Thomson)(London: SCM Press, 1949), p. 17.

[36]K.D. IV, 1, p. 13.

[37]E. Brunner, Revelation and Reason (E.T. O. Wyon)(Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 12.

[38]K.D. I, 1, p. 29.

[39]K.D. I, 1, p. 29f.

[40]K. Barth, Theology and Church (E.T. L.P. Smith)(London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 198.

[41]K. Barth, Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century (E.T. Brian Cozens and John Bowden)(London: SCM:Press, 1972), p. 442.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid., p. 444.

[44]Ibid., p. 446.

[45]Against the Stream, p. 215.

[46]K.D. I, 1, p. 29: "Es hat aber noch nie eine andere wirksame Apologetik und Polemik des Glaubens gegen den Unglauben gegeben als die Ungewollte ..., die dann stattfand, wenn Gott selbst sich zum Zeugnis des Glaubens bekannte".

[47]E. Brunner, Nature and Grace (E.T. Peter Fraenkel) in: J. Baillie, Natural Theology, p. 56. It would be interesting to explore the similarities and differences between Brunner and Pannenberg. This would lead us however beyond the scope of this thesis. With respect to the conflict between Barth and Brunner, one might consider Pannenberg's rejection of a discontinuous relationship between Christology and history (cf "The Christological Foundation of Christian Anthropology". (E.T. David Smith). Concilium, 6, No. 9, p. 87. Edited by C. Geffré (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973).

[48]No. p. 123.

[49]Ibid., p. 127.

[50]Dogmatics in Outline, p. 32f.

[51]K. Barth, Evangelical Theology, An Introduction (E.T. Grover Foley)(New York-Chicago-San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 182.

[52]Institutes III, 23, 7.

[53]K.D. II, 2, pp. 63, 111.

[54]Ephesians 1:4

[55]K.D. II, 2, p. 111.

[56]K.D. II, 2, p. 124.

[57]K.D. II, 2, p. 125.

[58]K.D. II, 2, p. 133.

[59]K.D. II, 2, p. 134.

[60]K.D. II, 2, p. 177: "In der Erwählung Jesu Christi, die der ewige Wille Gottes ist, hat Gott dem Menschen das Erste, die Erwählung, die Seligkeit und das Leben, sich selber aber das Zweite, die Verwerfung, die Verdamnis, und den Tod zugedacht".

[61]K.D. II, 2, p. 181.

[62]K.D. II, 2, p. 360.

[63]K.D. II, 2, p. 354.

[64]K.D. IV, 1, p. 61.

[65]The Humanity of God, p. 53. Cf. "The Christian Understanding of Revelation", p. 216: "But one thing is certain: no denial of revelation is capable of upsetting the objective facts. Paganism of all kinds, indifference and error are possible, but cannot be taken seriously by those who know what revelation really is, since every human denial is subject from the very outset to the promise of the affirmation of the Word of God. Resistance to the Word of God is bound to fail in the end".

[66]Die Botschaft von der freien Gnade Gottes, p. 8. Quoted by G.C. Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth (E.T. Harry Boer)(London: The Paternoster Press, 1956), p. 115.

[67]"Christian Understanding," p. 216. Barth is not very convincing at this point. As Brunner pointed out: with Barth, the seemingly perilous sea turns into shallow waters in which no one can perish. Cf. E. Brunner, Die Christliche Lehre von Gott, Dogmatik Band I. (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1946), p. 379.

[68]No., p. 71.

[69]K.D. II, 1, p.74.

[70]K.D. II, 1, p. 81f.

[71]K.D. II, 1, pp. 93, 140.

[72]K.D. II, 1, p. 94.

[73]K.D. IV, 1, p. 173.

[74]K.D. II, 1, p. 93: Natural theology is "im Grunde diskussionslos unmöglich".

[75]No., p. 75f.

[76]K.D. II, 1, p. 143.

[77]Ibid.

[78]K.D. II, 1, p. 150.

[79]K.D. II, 1, p. 151.

[80]K.D. II, 1, p. 175. Barth believed that the gratuitous character of grace left him no choice but to oppose the way in which Brunner advocated the idea of a point of contact. Brunner spoke of man's "Wortmächtigkeit", using this term to describe the fact that man is endowed with the gift of speech and understanding. (Cf., E. Brunner, Man in Revolt (E.T. O. Wyon) (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), p. 527.) This gift, and then also man's subjectivity and responsibility constitute what Brunner called the "point of contact". It is to be understood as the purely formal possibility of being addressed. (Cf. Brunner, Nature and Grace, p. 32.) Barth retorted: "The Holy Spirit does not stand in need of any point of contact but that which he himself creates. Only retrospectively is it possible to reflect on the way in which he makes contact with man and this retrospect will ever be a retrospect upon a miracle". (No., p. 121.)

[81]K.D. I, 1, p. viii.

[82]Cf. W. Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I (E.T. G.H. Kehm) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p. 221.

[83]S. Th. I, q. 13, a. 5.

[84]Ibid.

[85]Cf. H. Bouillard, The Knowledge of God, p. 103.

[86]S.Th. I, q. 4, a. 3.

[87]Cf. G.C. Berkouwer, General Revelation, p. 70, n. 37.

[88]K.D. I, 1, p. 40.

[89]K.D. II, 1, p. 90.

[90]K.D. II, 1. p. 91f.

[91]K.D. I, 1, p. 411. Cf. K.D. II, 1, p. 87.

[92]Dogmatics in Outline, p. 23. This would be Barth's answer to Pannenberg's claim that human existence presupposes an infinite ground on which man and his world depend.

[93]Ibid., p. 52.

[94]K.D. II, 1, p. 92. H.U. von Balthasar claims that Barth quietly changed his position, for not only did he speak more and more of an analogy between God and man, but there are also many instances where he describes the relation between God and man with the classical formulations of the analogia entis.(H. U. von Balthasar, Karl Barth, p. 178). Pannenberg, too, is of the opinion that Barth "suspended" his critique of the analogy of being. (W. Pannenberg, Basic Questions I, p. 214). However, Barth fully realized that the use of the concept of analogy brought him within a 'hair-breadth' of the Catholic teaching, and remarked, "But also and precisely in this close proximity must our teaching be altogether different from theirs." (K.D. I, 1, p. 252).

[95]K.D. II, 1, p. 154f.

[96]K.D. I, 1, p. 257.

[97]K.D. II, 1, p. 200.

[98]K.D. II, 1, p. 259.

[99]K.D. II, 1, p. 218.

[100]K.D. II, 1, p. 256.

[101]K.D. II, 1, p. 247.

[102]K.D. I, 1, p. 86.

[103]K.D. I, 2, p. 817.

[104]K.D. I, 2, p. 819.

[105]K.D. I, 2, p. 821.

[106]K.D. I, 2, p. 823.

[107]Evangelical Theology, p. 90.

[108]Ibid., p. 114.

[109]Ibid., p. 118.

[110]K.D. II, 1, p. 7.

[111]K.D. III, 3, p. 280f.

[112]K.D. IV, 2, p. 350.

[113]Evangelical Theology, p. 92.

[114]K.D. I, 1, p. 131.

[115]K.D. III, 2, p. 21.

[116]K.D. III, 2, p. 26f.

[117]K.D. III, 2, p. 36.

[118]K.D. III, 2, p. 47.

[119]K.D. III, 2, p. 55.

[120]K.D. III, 2, p. 58: "Wir haben auch unsere menschliche Natur als solche ganz und gar von Jesus her".

[121]Cf. G.C. Berkouwer, Man: The Image of God (E.T. Dirk J. Jellema) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962), p. 92.

[122]K.D. III, 2, p. 162. Barth speaks here of man's godlessness as an ontological impossibility, "Gottlosigkeit ist infolgedessen keine Möglichkeit, sondern die ontologische Unmöglichkeit des Menschseins. Der Mensch ist nicht ohne, sondern mit Gott".

[123]K.D. III, 2, p. 134f.

[124]K.D. III, 2, p. 141.

[125]K.D. III, 2, p. 134.

[126]With respect to the early Barth, F.H. Klooster is justified in saying that "Barth ended with a view of the Gospel hovering above history like a flying saucer which never really comes down into history". (Quests for the Historical Jesus. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977, p. 26). The unsatisfactory element in Klooster's critique is that it does not take into account the unmistakable modification in the later Barth. This is particularly clear when Barth comes to speak of the passion of Christ, which "took place in our time, in the center of the world-history in which our human life is played out. That the Word became flesh means also that it became temporal, historical". (Dogmatics in Outline, p. 109.)

[127]K.D. III, 2, p. 43f.

[128]K.D. I, 2, p. 64.

[129]K.D. IV, 2, p. 40.

[130]K.D. IV, 1, p. 370f.

[131]K.D. IV, 1, p. 317.

[132]K.D. IV, 1, p. 345.

[133]K.D. IV, 1, p. 347.

[134]Hebrews 13:8.

[135]H. Zahrnt, The Question of God (E.T. R.A. Wilson) (London: Collins, 1969), p. 113f.

[136]K.D. IV, 2, p. 331.

[137]K.D. IV, 2, p. 140.

[138]K.D. IV, 2, p. 141.

CHAPTER III

[1]E. Frank Tupper, The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 22.

[2]Richard John Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg: Profile of a Theologian", TKG, p. 15.

[3]Other members of the circle were: Rolf Rendtorff, Klaus Koch, Ulrich Wilckens, and Dietrich Rössler. They were later joined by Martin Elze and Trutz Rendtorff. Eventually the group dissolved due to a difference of opinion with respect to the resurrection of Christ.

[4]Clark H. Pinnock, "Pannenberg's theology: Reasonable Happenings in History", Christianity Today 21 (Nov. 1976), p. 19.

[5]Neuhaus, op cit., p. 50.

[6]BQ II, p. 201.

[7]Reformation, p. 21. Pannenberg states: "It is obvious that the impact of the Reformation on the course of modern culture is far more evident in the perspective opened by the issue of freedom than in entering into the technicalities of the doctrine of justification". "Freedom and the Lutheran Reformation", Theology Today, Vol. 38 (Oct. 1981), p. 288.

[8]Reformation, p. 17.

[9]Cf. BQ II, p. 184f.

[10]Cf. Idea, p. 82.

[11]Ibid., p. 83. See also AC, p. 22. Pannenberg does not think that the principle of inertia is self-evident: "If the stuff of the universe is finally made up of events rather than of solid bodies and if the latter are already the products of the regularities of events, then their inertia or self-persistence is no more self-evident than any other natural regularity". "Theological Questions to Scientists", Zygon, Vol. 16, No. 1 (March 1981),p. 70.

[12]Cf. BQ II, p. 185f.

[13]L. Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity (E.T. George Elliot) (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957), p. 7.

[14]Ibid., p. 11.

[15]Ibid., p. viii.

[16]Ibid., p. vi.

[17]Cf. BQ II, p. 186.

[18]AC, p. 18.

[19]Cf. BQ I, p. 16.

[20]Reformation, p. 8.

[21]Ted Peters, "Truth in History: Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Pannenberg's Apologetic Method". Journal of Religion, 55, No. 1 (Jan. 1975), p. 37. This is why Brunner preferred the term 'eristics' (from eris-strife) rather than 'apologetics'.

[22]B.J. Walsh, Futurity and Creation: Explorations in the Eschatological Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg. (Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies, 1979), p. 6. Pannenberg himself speaks of an "argumentative theology". Cf. GdT, p. 59.

[23]Don H. Olive, Wolfhart Pannenberg (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publishers, 1973), p. 13.

[24]Cf. FaR, p. 57f. JGaM, p. 29. AC, p. 44.

[25]"Gott wird nur durch Gott erkannt. Dieser Satz Karl Barths behält an dieser Stelle sein Recht". GF II, p. 134.

[26]BQ II, p. 28.

[27]Ibid., p. 54.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., p. 60.

[31]Ibid., p. 62.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., p. 64.

[34]Ibid., p. 51. Cf. GF II, p. 249: "Jedenfalls, wer angesichts der prinzipiellen Überflüssigkeit der Berufung auf Autorität zur Feststellung des in der Vergangenheit Geschehenen trotzdem an autoritativen Instanzen festhalten will, tut das auf Grund seiner eigenen subjektiven Entscheidung: das Begründungsverhältnis von Autorität und subjektiver Zustimmung kehrt sich um. Die Zustimmung erfolgt nicht mehr wegen des allgemeinen Ansehens der Autorität, sondern die Autorität verdankt nun ihr Ansehen der subjektiven Zustimmung des Einzelnen".

[35]"Response", TaH, p. 226.

[36]BQ II, p. 30.

[37]"Offenbarung als Geschichte und Glaube", Theologische Literaturzeitung, 87 (Mai, 1962), p. 325.

[38]BQ II, p. 31.

[39]AC, p. 108. Cf. BQ I, p. 149: "Inquiry behind the kerygma, behind the New Testament texts to the historical Jesus himself, is theologically unavoidable". For Pannenberg's view of the historical-critical method and the principle of analogy see below pp. 131-148.

[40]BQ II, p. 33.

[41]"Glaube IV. Im prot. Glaubensverständnis". LThK, IV, p. 925. (Translation my own).

[42]BQ I, p. 38.

[43]Allan D. Galloway, Wolfhart Pannenberg. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1973), p. 46.

[44]See above, p. 32f.

[45]Idea, p. 88.

[46]TPS, p. 329.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Idea, p. 87.

[49]BQ I, p. 146f.

[50]TPS, p. 330.

[51]Cf. Ibid., p. 29f.

[52]Ibid., p. 29.

[53]Cf. "Response", TaH, p. 228.

[54]TPS, p. 330.

[55]Idea, p. 101f.

[56]BQ II, p. 189f.

[57]Cf. Ibid., p. 203.

[58]Idea, p. 102. [59]Ibid., p. 104.

[60]BQ II, p. 53f. It is not entirely clear what Pannenberg has in mind when he calls the American 'Death of God' theologians the heirs of Barth and Bultmann. What he seems to assert is that the idea of God becomes logically untenable if it is founded solely on divine revelation. It is true that Van Buren agreed with Barth in the matter of natural theology (cf. Paul M. Van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1963, p. 98), but this is hardly sufficient to prove Pannenberg's point. Pannenberg may be of the opinion that Barth responded inadequately to the present crisis-situation, but I am not convinced that one may accuse the theology of the Word of spawning a way of thought so radically opposed to it.

[61]BQ II, p. 207.

[62]Barth, Romans, p. 383.

[63]Ibid., p. 282.

[64]BQ II, p. 209. E. Busch thinks that the question-answer problematic does not have the same function for Barth as it has for Pannenberg: "dass ... der Fragende schon for der göttlichen Antwort steht, ist bei Barth nur im Kontext seiner Kritik an der 'Religion' verständlich. Mir scheint, dass man sich für das Problem der Frage des Menschen nach Gott nicht auf Barth berufen kann, wenn man es ablöst vom Problem der Frage Gottes an den Menschen. vom Gedanken des 'Gerichts'". E. Busch, "Der Weg der Theologie". Parrhesia. (Zürich: EVZ - Verlag, 1966), p. 55 (n. 13).

[65]See above, p. 42.

[66]Idea, p. 87.

[67]Helmut Gollwitzer, Die Existenz Gottes im Bekenntnis des Glaubens (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1963), p. 112.

[68]Cf. Ibid., p. 80.

[69]BQ II, p. 205.

[70]Cf. Idea, p. 88.

[71]Cf. TPS, p. 323.

[72]Idea, p. 120.

[73]Ibid.

[74]S. M. Daecke writes: "Wenn die Theologie unter Berufung auf die göttliche Offenbarung auf ihrer Positivität beharrt, auf der Behauptung, dass hier etwas völlig Anderes und mit anderen Religionen Unvergleichliches vorliege, so verzichtet sie auf jede intellektuelle Legimitierung ihres Anspruchs auf Allgemeingültigkeit. Doch dieser Anspruch darf nicht nur behauptet, sondern muss ausgewiesen werden, und daher muss die Theologie die Überlegenheit des Christentums über andere Religionen, die nicht vorausgesetzt werden darf, ausdrücklich erweisen durch eine Theologie der Religionen". S. M. Daecke, "Soll die Theologie an der Universität bleiben?" In: W. Pannenberg et.al., GdT, p. 19.

[75]See above p. 32.

[76]See for Scholz's requirements TPS, p. 270. Cf. GdT, pp. 21, 29.

[77]Cf. K.D. I,1, p. 7.

[78]GdT, p. 33.

[79]TPS, p. 326.

[80]Ibid., p. 13. Cf. S.M. Daecke, op. cit., p. 23. Theology should keep its place at the university "um der Kirche und um der Gesellschaft willen und für die anderen Wissenschaften, die das interdisziplinäre Gespräch ebenso brauchen wie die Theologie selber".

[81]TPS, p. 19.

[82]Cf. TaH, p. 65.

[83]AC, p. 10.

[84]Cf. "Response", TaH, p. 269.

[85]Cf. BQ II, p. 32.

[86]Ibid., p. 33. Cf. David McKenzie's explanatory comment: "I submit that Pannenberg wants to link natural knowledge and revelation. In other words, it is possible for faith to be based only on the revelation of God ... just in case revelation is a self-unveiling of God which can be appropriated by any ordinary, objective observer through his historical knowledge. So conceived it is true that revelation is the basis for faith; and, since revelation can be appropriated by human knowledge, it is also true that faith presupposes knowledge." D. McKenzie, "Pannenberg on Faith and Reason". Dialog. 18 (Winter 1979), p. 223.

[87]BQ II, p. 34.

[88]Reformation, p. 22.

[89]BQ II, p. 43.

[90]Ibid., p. 34.

[91]AC, p.131.

[92]Ibid., p. 133.

[93]Cf. , "Im Glauben geht es um die Teilhabe des Glaubenden selbst an dem, woran er glaubt, und das ist durch kein Wissen zu ersetzen". GuW, p. 89.

[94]BQ II, p. 45.

[95]"If asserted authority cannot prove itself convincing to our reason, then acceptance is only possible as a sacrifice of the intellect ...." (BQ II, p. 52). It is undoubtedly true that Barth does not allow faith to rest on anything outside the Word of God, but does this necessarily lead to a sacrifice of the intellect? Barth does not say that we must accept God's revelation whether we are convinced of its truth or not. We believe because the content of God's revelation convinced us of its truth. This is something quite different from a merely subjective, arbitrary decision. Faith, according to Barth, is not blind; it sees after the eyes have been opened by the God who made himself known in Christ. That is why he rejects any suggestion of a sacrificium intellectus (see above p. 45f). In connection with this; theology must indeed be obedient to the Word of God, but such an obedience is not forced on it against its will; rather, Barth sees it as the grateful acceptance of the truth which became evident in Christ. I do not think that Pannenberg does justice to Barth's theology by calling it subjectivistic and authoritarian, for the authority of the Word is not imposed, but recognized and accepted on the basis of insight of its truth. G.C. Berkouwer puts it well: "Authority, real as it is, cannot be a darksome power that compels us to subject ourselves without reason. It is rather a reality 'over against' us that offers perspective, joy and hope. 'Over against' - this is a key phrase. The biblical notion of authority does not relativize the radical character of this reality. Nor does it tone down the call to obedience (cf. 2 Cor. 10:5). There is an authentic subjection and obedience (Acts 26:19). There is an 'intervention and supervention' (Barth) from above, an apriority that cannot be denied; but this is another sort of 'other' than is usually meant by 'external' authority.

Something happens in revelation that is totally different from the way authorities on earth coerce people into servile obedience. And the difference begins with the content of that which is 'over against' us. (A Half Century of Theology, p. 158f.). Speaking of Christian behavior, Pannenberg expresses himself in a similar vein. "The Christian has ... been transplanted into a sphere of power in which his behavior is no longer subject to his own decision, but which is nevertheless experienced as freedom, not compulsion." (JGaM, p. 77). This is precisely what Barth and Berkouwer have in mind.

[96]See notes 60 and 95 of this chapter.

[97]K. Barth, "Ludwig Feuerbach". In: Theology and Church, p. 235.

CHAPTER IV

[1]For instance: "The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology" (BQ II pp. 119-183) appeared in 1959; "Redemptive Event and History" (BQ I, pp. 15-80) is a revision of a lecture given in the same year. "Types of Atheism and their Theological Significance" (BQ II, pp. 184-200) is a lecture originally delivered in 1960. Offenbarung als Geschichte was published in 1961, Was ist der Mensch? in 1962. "Hermeneutic and Universal History" (BQ I, pp. 96-135) was originally published in 1963. One must keep in mind that the articles which appear in Basic Questions, Vol. II are not necessarily of a later date than those we find in Basic Questions, Vol. I.

[2]It makes no sense to speak of the revelation of God as long as the idea of God is considered to be irrational.

[3]BQ II, p. 137f.

[4]Ibid., p. 138. Cf. AC, p. 38.

[5]BQ II, p. 171.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid., p. 139.

[8]Idea, p. 128.

[9]Cf. AC, p. 22f.

[10]AC, p. 23.

[11]Idea, p. 84.

[12]Ibid., p. 86.

[13]BQ II, p. 191f.

[14]Idea, p. 106.

[15]Ibid., p. 86. Pannenberg argues here that as long as the elevation to the idea of God is not shown to be inevitable and necessary, the starting point of the ontological proof is an arbitrary and purely subjective idea without any real power to convince.

[16]Ibid., p. 94.

[17]TPS, p. 309.

[18]Pannenberg intends to discuss at this stage the very same material with which philosophy is dealing. "Der Stoff der theologischen Anthropologie ist kein anderer als der der philosophischen, nämlich die Phänomenalität des menschlichen Daseins. Die Theologie nährt sich nicht aus einer übernatürlichen Materialzufuhr". "Zur Theologie des Rechts". Ethik und Ekklesiologie. (Göttingen: VandenHoeck und Ruprecht, 1977), p. 21.

[19]Since Max Scheler, 'Weltoffenheit' has been adopted by Arnold Gehlen (Der Mensch[6] Bonn: Athenäum Verlag, 1958, pp. 38ff), and by Michael Landmann (Philosophische Anthropologie[4]. Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1976, pp. 161ff). Helmuth Plessner speaks of man's "exzentrische Position" (Philosophische Anthropologie. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1970, pp. 41ff). He stresses that man has a relation to his environment, particularly to his body. But, as Pannenberg remarks,"this characteristic does not stand in contrast to the idea of openness to the world, but in substance presupposes it". (WiM, p. 3, Note 1.).

[20]WiM, p. 4.

[21]Ibid., p. 3.

[22]Ibid., p. 15.

[23]Cf. Ibid., p. 9.

[24]BQ II, p. 220, Note. 82.

[25]M. Landmann, op. cit., p. 173: "Das Tier, könnte man sagen, ist von der Natur in höherem Masse vollendet worden als der Mensch. Fertig geht es aus ihren Händen hervor und braucht bloss das in es Gelegte zu aktualisieren. Den Menschen dagegen hat sie gleichsam halbfertig in die Welt gestellt; sie hat ihn bis zu einem gewissen Grade unbestimmt gelassen."

[26]BQ II, p. 217.

[27]Cf. WiM, p. 10.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Cf. "Zur Theologie des Rechts", p. 28. Cf. also BQ II, p. 102f: "As long as this kind of argument deals only with statements about the structure of human existence, the question about the independently existing reality of God or of divine powers remains still open".

[30]BQ II, p. 223. Cf. Idea, p. 95: "General anthropological considerations can never take us further than the assertion that when man's being is fully aware, man is conscious that he is dependent upon a reality which surpasses and sustains everything finite, and is in this sense a divine reality".

[31]BQ II, p. 224f.

[32]Cf., WiM, p. 26.

[33]BQ II, p. 225.

[34]Ibid., p. 220f.

[35]Ibid., p. 225. Cf. BQ II, p. 103: "If is belongs to the structure of human existence to presuppose a mystery of reality transcending its finitude and to relate oneself to this, then in actuality man always exists in association with this reality."

[36]Ibid., p. 225.

[37]See above, p. 23f.

[38]See above 25f.

[39]See above p. 49.

[40]BQ II, p. 104.

[41]Ibid., p. 105.

[42]Ibid., p. 79.

[43]Cf. Ibid., p. 81.

[44]Ibid., p. 89.

[45]Ibid., p. 118.

[46]Ibid., p. 115. Cf. Ibid., p. 233: "The history of religions appears in this light as a history of the questionableness and neediness of man, but also as a history of man's dealings with the reality of God, even as a history of the self-disclosures of the true God, which, to be sure, have been 'held down in unrighteousness', as Paul says".

[47]AC, p. 47. Cf. AC, p. 53. Cf. also Pannenberg's statement that even though for Christians in Christ the ultimate eschatological criterion is given how near or far each man is in relation to the future of God, "so bedeutet das doch keineswegs, dass alle Menschen, die Christus einmal als die Seinen anerkennen wird, Christen werden müssten". "Einheit der Kirche und Einheit der Menschheit". Um Einheit und Heil der Menschheit. Herausgegeben von J. Robert Nelson und Wolfhart Pannenberg. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 1973), p. 10.

[48]BQ II, p. 115. It would be hard to prove that monotheistic religions such as Judaism and Islam show a tendency to find God in that which is finite, since "all these religions lay claim to a revelation of the divine as infinite". D. McKenzie, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Religious Philosophy (Lanham, M.D.: University of America Inc., 1980), p. 68.

[49]BQ II, p. 101.

[50]TPS, p. 299.

[51]BQ II, p. 102.

[52]Ibid., p. 104. If God is the only origin of man and his world, then "his revelation should provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of our experience regarding man and his world". W. Pannenberg, Human Nature, Election and History (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), p. 14.

[53]Chronologically, Pannenberg deals with theology as a science at a later date. Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie (=TPS) was published in 1973, Grundlagen der Theologie in 1974.

[54]Van Huyssteen finds it strange that Pannenberg rejects a rationalistic concept of reason and still insists on verification. He detects here an inner tension that has not been solved. Cf. J.W.V. van Huyssteen, Theologie van die Rede. Die funksie van die rasionele in die denken van Wolfhart Pannenberg. Kampen: Kok, 1970, p. 142. However, van Huyssteen overlooks that the idea of verification does not stem from the Enlightenment, as he claims, but can already be found in ancient Israel. "You may say to yourself, 'How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?' If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him". (Deut. 18:22; cf. 13:1).

[55]TPS, p. 331

[56]TPS, p. 332.

[57]TPS, p. 327. Cf. "Jeder Behauptungssatz (ist) seiner sprachlogischen Struktur nach als Hypothese zu verstehen. Daraus folgt, dass auch theologische Aussagen und sogar schon die vortheoretischen Aussagen des Glaubens als Hypothesen verstanden werden müssen, wenn sie als Behauptungen, als Assertionen, ernstgenommen und nicht nur als Ausdruck der Emotionalität des Redenden aufgefasst werden soll." W. Pannenberg, "Antwort auf G. Sauters Überlegungen". Evangelische Theologie, No. 40 (März-April, 1980), p. 170f.

[58]TPS, p. 36.

[59]As quoted by Pannenberg, TPS, p. 38.

[60]As quoted by Pannenberg, TPS, p. 37.

[61]Ibid., p. 39.

[62]Ibid., p. 336.

[63]Ibid., p. 315. See also p. 333, Cf. GdT, p. 72f: "Ich verstehe schon die Aussagen des Glaubens selbst - nicht erst die theologischen Aussagen - als Hypothesen. Das bedeutet, dass ihr Inhalt sich noch bewahren muss im Fortgang der eigenen Erfahrung und im Fortgang des Lebens der Kirche und der Christenheit .... Die Hypothesen,die die Theologie formuliert, sind anderer Art, aber haben mit diesem hypothetischen Charakter der Aussagen des Glaubens etwas zu tun, weil diese ihr Gegenstand sind".

[64]Generalizing Heidegger's critique of Dilthey, Pannenberg says that "statements expressing essences (Wesensaussagen) and, indeed, all designations of essential contents (Sachbenennungen) whatever, depend upon anticipations of a future that has not yet appeared". BQ I, p. 168.

[65]TPS, p. 343.

[66]Idea, p. 111.

[67]Cf. AC, p. 27.

[68]J.G. Fichte, "Über den Grund unseres Glauben an eine göttliche Weltregierung." Sämtliche Werke: Bd. V, 187. Quoted by Pannenberg, BQ II, p. 227, n. 97. Cf. Gf. II, p. 86: "Die Vorstellung eines persönlichen Gottes erklärt Fichte als Ausdruck unserer beschränkten Vorstellungskraft, die die Verhältnisse des Endlichen auf Gott übertrage. Diese Argumentation, die den sog. Atheismusstreit auslöste, bildet eine Wurzel der Projektionstheorie Feuerbachs".

[69]As quoted by Pannenberg JGaM, p. 182.

[70]John 12:15.

[71]Cf. "Person", RGG[3], Vol. V., col. 232: "Die Einheit Gottes wurde so als die in der wechselseitigen Hingabe der drei Personen sich vollbringende Einheit der Liebe erfasst".

[72]Ibid. Cf. AC, p. 28. n. 48.

[73]TKG, p. 57.

[74]Ibid., p. 58. Cf. BQ II, p. 245.

[75]BQ II, p. 228f. Cf. Gf II, p. 94: "So haben die alttestamentlichen Ansätze zum Gedanken der unantastbaren Personwürde des Menschen ihren Ursprung im Gedanken seiner Gottebenbildlichkeit".

[76]FaR, p. 42.

[77]BQ II, p. 229.

[78]Ibid., p. 245. God's freedom and ours are related in such a way that God "precestines us to be free and open to the future through the constant introduction of novelty into the universe ...." D. McKenzie, "Pannenberg on God and Freedom", Journal of Religion (July 1980), No. 60, p. 319.

[79]Idea, p. 112. Cf. AC, p. 29.

[80]"Das Wort Person bezieht sich auf das ganze Leben eines Individuums. Person werden wir noch, obwohl wir es immer auch sind. 'Person' bezieht sich auf das die Gegenwart des Ich übersteigende Geheimnis der auf dem Wege zu ihrer besonderen Bestimmung noch unabgeschlossenen Totalität seiner einmaligen Lebensgeschichte". Gf. II, p. 91.

[81]Pannenberg objects to Barth's 'modes of being', for as a result "sind dann die drei Seinsweisen als Momemte dieses (göttlichen) Ich zu verstehen. Dann ist es bei aller Betonung der gleichen Göttlichkeit der drei Seinsweisen kaum mehr vermeidbar, den Vater als die ursprüngliche Gestalt des göttlichen Ich und als 'Urheber seiner anderen Seinsweisen' zu denken". Gf. II, p. 100.

[82]See for a thorough discussion of this problem G.C. Berkouwer, The Providence of God, pp. 137-172.

[83]Idea, p. 93.

[84]Ibid., p. 108.

[85]Ibid., p. 109. Cf. BQ II, p. 241.

[86]Ibid., p. 131.

[87]Ibid., p. 110.

[88]TKG, p. 56.

[89]Idea, p. 110.

[90]TKG, p. 56.

[91]Ibid., p. 55.

[92]Ibid.

[93]BQ II, p. 240.

[94]Ibid., p. 243.

[95]TKG, p. 59.

[96]BQ II, p. 244.

[97]TKG, p. 67. Cf. AC, p. 38.

[98]Cf. BQ II, p. 232.

[99]BQ II, p. 162.

[100]Ibid., p. 161.

[101]Cf. BQ II, p. 244.

[102]Cf. TKG, p. 62.

[103]WiM, p. 74.

[104]D. McKenzie, "Pannenberg on God and Freedom", p. 328.

[105]Cf. "A Theological Conversation with Wolfhart Pannenberg". Dialog, XI (Autumn, 1972), p. 294.

[106]TKG, p. 63.

[107]W. Pannenberg and Lewis Ford,"A Dialogue about Process Theology". Encounter 38 (1977), p. 319.

[108]"Auf diese Weise gibt die Prozesstheologie dem Scheitern und Leiden der Geschöpfe im Gottesgedanken selber Raum, und das ist sicherlich einer ihrer eindrucksvollsten Aspekte. Aber dabei geht der Prozesstheologie zugleich die Absolutheit Gottes verloren, indem er zu einem Faktor im Universum neben anderen und in Wechselwirkung mit ihnen gemacht wird". Gf II, p. 119.

[109]Ibid.

[110]Cf. Gf II, p. 120.

[111]Cf. Ibid., p. 142.

[112]Cf. Ibid., p. 143.

[113]Cf. Ibid., p. 144.

[114]Idea, p. 114.

CHAPTER V

[1]"Response to the Discussion", TaH, p. 225f.

[2]Cf. RaH, p. 137.

[3]"Response", TaH, p. 227.

[4]Ibid., p. 228.

[5]Pannenberg acknowledges in particular the work of Rolf Rendtorff and Ulrich Wilckens. It is a fine example of cooperation among theologians from various disciplines.

[6]Cf. RaH, p. 125 ff. I used the translation of Carl E. Braaten (History and Hermeneutics, p. 28f).

[7]John H. Gingrich explains what Pannenberg means by 'indirectness' as follows: "Indirect communication about God is characterized by the absence of God as the content in any direct manner. Initially, there is some other content to be communicated than that which reflects God's activity. It is only through an act of reflection upon the initial content that one can see God as the originator of the event". The Structure of Faith in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg. Claremont Graduate School, Dissertation 1973, p. 85f.

[8]FaR, p. 56.

[9]Pannenberg claims that in the N.T. "none of the terms rendered as 'to reveal' have God as unqualified object; he reveals 'something' or 'someone', never precisely 'himself'." RaH, p. 8.

[10]FaR, p. 52, Cf. RaH, p. 9.

[11]Cf. Exodus 3.

[12]Cf. RaH, p. 9.

[13]Cf. FaR, p. 53.

[14]FaR, p. 55.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Isaiah 40:9.

[17]FaR, p. 55. Cf. also Gf II, p. 192f.: "Die Blickrichtung des Israeliten der vorexilischen Zeit war in der Regel immer noch auf die Heilssetzungen Gottes in der Vergangenheit gerichtet .... Erst die Prophetie lenkte die Hoffnungen des Volkes von den vergangenen Heilssetzungen - von der Errettung aus Aegypten, der Heilsgabe des Landes, dem Bundesschluss am Sinai und der Zionserwählung - weg auf die Zukunft, weil nämlich diese alten Heilsgrundlagen durch die Sünden des Volkes und seiner Könige zerstört worden waren und nach der Ankündigung der Propheten dem Gericht verfallen sollten".

[18]"The Revelation of God in Jesus", TaH, p. 122.

[19]Cf. RaH, p. 145. See also FaR, p. 57.

[20]Cf. Matthew,3:2.

[21]Cf. RaH, p. 145f.

[22]AC, p. 50.

[23]"Revelation of God", TaH, p. 111.

[24]According to John, Jesus defended his claim by referring to his work: "For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me". John 5:36. See also John 14:11.

[25]JGaM, p. 67.

[26]FaR, p. 58.

[27]For Pannenberg's acceptance and critique of Hegel's view of history see below, p. 153.

[28]RaH, p. 134.

[29]FaR, p. 59.

[30]Ibid., p. 60.

[31]Cf. RaH, p. 114f. See also JGaM, p. 129: "When someone has disclosed himself ultimately in a definite, particular event, he cannot again disclose himself in the same sense in another event different from the first. Otherwise he disclosed himself in the first event at most partially".

[32]FaR, p. 59.

[33]Herbert Neie, The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg. (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), p. 52. As we will see later, Neie's critique is valid, but not with respect to the problem veiling-unveiling.

[34]"Unenthüllbarkeit, Verborgenheit, gehört aber zum Wesen dessen, der in der Bibel Gott genannt wird." K.D. I, 1, p. 338.

[35]Cf. RaH, p. 4.

[36]BQ I, p. 235.

[37]Ibid., p. 236. Cf. also "Response", TaH, p. 239f.: "If the God of Israel can be revealed as the power over everything and thus revealed in his divinity only in the totality of all events, but if on the other hand the course of history is not yet complete and all events are not yet gathered up in their totality, then the divinity of the God of Israel is, strictly speaking, not yet revealed but still hidden".

[38]See above p. 62.

[39]"Chez des auteurs comme Pannenberg et Moltmann, on assiste à un retournement complet: c'est la révélation qui devient un prédicat de l'histoire." C. Geffré, Un Nouvel Age de la Théologie. (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1972), p. 83.

[40]"Response", TaH, p. 253, For Pannenberg's defence against Moltmann's charge of an eschatological transformation of the cosmological proof of the existence of God see "Response", TaH, p. 254, note. 61.

[41]Barth abandoned the idea of "Urgeschichte" in his later works, but Pannenberg is doubtful whether it constitutes a fundamental change. Cf. BQ I, p. 41, note 73.

[42]M. Kähler, The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historical Christ (E.T. Carl E. Braaten) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964).

[43]Cf. M. Kähler, op. cit., p. 29.

[44]Cf. Ibid., p. 27.

[45]Cf. Ibid., p. 30.

[46]Cf. Ibid., p. 74.

[47]Cf. JGaM, p. 21.

[48]Cf. "Response", TaH, p. 247f.

[49]BQ I, p. 56.

[50]Ibid., p. 60.

[51]"Es gibt keinen Unterschied zwischen der Sicherheit auf der Basis von guten Werken und der Sicherheit, die auf objektivierendem Wissen beruht. Wer an Gott glauben will, muss wissen, dass er selbst sozusagen in einem Vakuum steht. Wer jede Form der Sicherheit aufgibt, wird wahre Sicherheit finden. Der Mensch hat immer leere Hände vor Gott. Wer jede Sicherheit aufgibt und loslässt, wird Sicherheit finden". R. Bultmann, Jesus Christus und die Mythologie. (Hamburg: Furche-Verlag H. Rennebach KG, 1964), p. 100. Pannenberg asserts that it is Bultmann himself who is moving toward work-righteousness: "The believer who thinks that he can give the answer to the trial of gnawing doubt through the act of faith itself is already on the road to such a self-deceptive works-righteousness". "Response", TaH, p. 270.

[52]BQ I, p. 16.

[53]Ibid., p. 40.

[54]Ibid., p. 56. Pannenberg quotes with approval Troeltsch's 'famous prediction' : "The sensational disavowals will disappear when one works objectively with these things". Cf. also FaR, p. 73: "Christians must have confidence that the reality of Jesus' resurrection will constantly stand the test particularly of historical research and that historical doubt will constantly be overcome with the progress of research".

[55]"Response", TaH, p. 274. This seems to contradict Pannenberg's statement that intellectual honesty demands a faith founded on established historical facts. Would building on a better knowledge in the future not amount to a sacrificium intellectus since faith would no longer rest on knowledge accessible to reason?

[56]BQ I, p. 56f.

[57]Cf. AC, p. 97.

[58]FaR, p. 72.

[59]JGaM, p. 109.

[60]AC, p. 110.

[61]JGaM, p. 98.

[62]E. Troeltsch, Gesammelte Schriften II. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1913), p. 732. The translation is Carl Braaten's.

[63]Ibid.

[64]BQ I, p. 46.

[65]Ted Peters, "The Use of Analogy in Historical Method", Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 35, No. 4 (October 1973), p. 478.

[66]"Response", TaH, p. 264, note. 75.

[67]Cf. Peters, op. cit., passim.

[68]BQ I, p. 44.

[69]Peters, op. cit., p. 480.

[70]BQ I, p. 48f.

[71]Ibid., p. 49.

[72]Idea, p. 62.

[73]JGaM, p. 96.

[74]Peters, op. cit., p. 481.

[75]JGaM, p. 89.

[76]Cf. Gal. 1:18.

[77]JGaM, p. 91.

[78]I Cor. 15:17.

[79]W. Pannenberg, "Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?", Dialog 4 (1965), p. 128.

[80]John 11:38-44.

[81]"Did Jesus Really Rise", p. 135.

[82]JGaM, p. 76.

[83]Ibid, p. 75.

[84]Ibid., p. 95.

[85]Ibid., p. 101.

[86]Ibid., p. 110, note 117.

[87]Ibid., p. 105.

[88]"Als Heranführung zur Erkenntnis möchte, ja muss es so etwas allerdings geben". K.D. IV, 2, p. 167.

[89]Ibid.

[90]RaH, p. 135.

[91]RaH, p. 137.

[92]Ibid. 'Added' is an awkward translation; 'complemented' would be better.

[93]BQ II, p. 38.

[94]RaH, p. 137. Cf. FaR, p. 62.

[95]"The Revelation of God", TaH, p. 126f.

[96]This question is also raised by Kendrick Grobel in his article, "Revelation and Resurrection", TaH, pp. 161ff.

[97]BQ II, p. 42.

[98]JGaM, p. 174.

[99]BQ II, p. 43.

[100]Cf. WiM, p. 59f.

[101]BQ II, p. 40f.

[102]RaH, p. 137.

[103]BQ II, p. 39.

[104]BQ I, p. 68f.

[105]Hans-Georg Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik.[2] (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1965), p. 286.

[106]Ibid., p. 288.

[107]Ted Peters, "Truth in History: Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Pannenberg's Apologetic Method", Journal of Religion, 55 No. 1 (Jan. 1975), p. 49.

[108]Cf. BQ I, p. 22f. See also WiM, p. 21f.

[109]Pannenberg argues against Gadamer: "The text can only be understood in connection with the totality of history which links the past to the present, and indeed not only to what currently exists today, but also to the horizon of the future ... because the meaning of the present becomes clear only in the light of the future". (BQ I, p. 129). Pannenberg further objects to Gadamer's use of a personal conversation as a model for understanding the text. See BQ I, p. 122f.

[110]"Response", TaH, p. 242f. H. Zahrnt says that "Pannenberg makes one think of an architect who draws a blueprint of a house and hands over the keys and assures you that the building is finished while the builder has not even begun to dig out the foundations. (The Question of God, p. 290). Zahrnt, however, ignores the arguments Pannenberg offers for the concept of a universal history. One can hardly blame him that he has not worked out all the implications so far. See "A Theological Conversation with Wolfhart Pannenberg", Dialog, 11 (Autumn, 1972), p. 292.

[111]FaR, p. 74.

[112]Cf. WiM, p. 43.

[113]BQ I, p. 167.

[114]WiM, p. 49f.

[115]BQ I, p. 167.

[116]Cf. WiM, p. 51.

[117]WiM, p. 80.

[118]Idea, p. 198.

[119]Cf. WiM, p. 52f.

[120]FaR, p. 76f.

CHAPTER VI

[1]See above p. 75.

[2]Idea, p. 114.

[3]Idea, p. 95.

[4]WiM, p. 10.

[5]Idea, p. 95.

[6]Eberhard Jüngel raises similar questions with respect to Pannenberg with his comment "dass es immer etwas misslich ist, eine nicht geringe Zahl von Zeitgenossen (und noch dazu von Mitmenschen, die durchaus als intellektuell wache Köpfe gelten dürfen) für schlafend erklären zu müssen, um die eigene These nicht unwahrscheinlich werden zu lassen". (E. Jüngel, Gott als Geheimnis der Welt.[2] Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1977, p. 16f, note 6). Jüngel goes here too far. Pannenberg does not base the credibility of his thesis on the assumption that atheists lack proper awareness. At best, the question can be raised whether his argument does not imply such an assumption. I would not have drawn the attention to it were it not for the fact that one gets the same uneasy feeling when Pannenberg argues that one must be brought to reason in order to see revelatory events. See below p. 188.

[7]WiM, p. 10.

[8]I asked Dr. Pannenberg if he had received any reactions from secular anthropologists. He replied, "I am sorry to say that secular anthropology does not regularly take account of what theologians write. This is part of the situation created by dialectical theology. Publications by theologians are just not taken seriously in the discussions of the human sciences, and even if somebody took notice, he would consider it in many cases as against his reputation to refer to a theological publication in his own writings." (Letter to this author dated July 23, 1982).

[9]At this point a number of very difficult questions arise. Walsh asks, "If finitude is a 'veiling' of the infinite, and the eschaton is the unveiling of the infinite, then what really happens to the finite? If man can endure an unveiling of God at the eschaton which he could not endure in his finitude, what could this possibly mean except that man merges with the infinite? And if temporality is constitutive to finitude, and salvation lifts man out of transitoriness and temporality, would this not entail ceasing to be finite?" (Futurity and

Creation, p. 105f).Pannenberg has answered this last question in Gf II, p. 152f.: "Die Beseitigung der Endlichkeit des Menschen schlechtin würde die Beseitigung der Differenz zwischen Gott und Geschöpf bedeuten. Selbst in der eschatologischen Vollendung, in dem Prozess der Verherrlichung als einer fortschreitenden Teilnahme an der Herrlichkeit Gottes wird die Endlichkeit des Verherrlichten ebensowenig beseitigt werden wie der auferstandene Christus etwa aufgehört hätte, Mensch zu sein".

[10] WiM, p. 54f.

[11] Alvin Plantinga, God and Other Minds. A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God.[3] (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 115.

[12] H.J. McGloskey, "God and Evil", Philosophical Quarterly X (1960), p. 97. Quoted by Plantinga.

[13] Nothingness is not nothing "weil und indem nicht nur Gottes Wollen, sondern auch Gottes Nichtwollen kräftig ist und also nicht ohne reale Entsprechung sein kann". K.D. III, 3, p. 406. See also G.C. Berkouwer, The Triumph of Grace, pp. 218-223.

[14] "Ihm (Heidegger) ist das Nichts keine furchtbare, keine scheussliche, keine finstere, sondern eine fruchtbare, eine heilsame, eine Lichterfüllte und Licht ausströmende Tiefe". (K.D. III, 3, p. 400). Barth's conclusion is, "So muss doch sehr bestimmt festgestellt werden, da sie (Heidegger and Sartre) mit sehenden Augen nicht gesehen haben, dass das was sie sichten, beschreiben und verkündigen, dieses wirklich Nichtige nicht ist ...." (Ibid., p. 398).

[15] The lines quoted are from Pannenberg's "Postscript" to Tupper's book, p. 304. One cannot say, as Traugott Koch does, that Pannenberg seldom expressed himself on the theme of evil. For Pannenberg's answer to Koch see "Vom Nutzen der Eschatologie für die christliche Theologie", Kerygma und Dogma XXV (1979), pp. 91-96.

[16] Idea, p. 113.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., p. 114.

[20] Ibid.

[21]Burhenn charges Pannenberg with shortsightedness and states that "Pannenberg's designation of the existentialist or Marxist doctrine of man as 'modern anthropology' is an unfortunate example of German philosophical myopia - a failure to recognize that there are many competing anthropologies in present-day Western, and even German thought". H. Burhenn, "Pannenberg's Argument for the Historicity of the Resurrection", Journal of the American Academy of Religion, XL (September 1972), p. 377. However, the anthropologists to whom Pannenberg refers mostly are not existentialists.

[22]For Barth's position on anthropology, see above pp. 46-48.

[23]E. Jüngel cannot see "warum dann nicht methodisch bei der Beanspruchung des Menschen durch die göttliche Wirklichkeit einzusetzen ist. Pannenberg erklärt treffend und schön: 'Die Wirklichkeit Gottes, auf die der Mensch in der Struktur seiner Subjektivität verwiesen ist, begegnet erst, wo er im Zusammenhang seiner Welt in der Erfahrung der Freiheit sich selbst geschenkt wird'. Dann begegnet Gott aber erst da, wo er als Schenkender sich zu erfahren gibt. Genau das nenne ich Offenbarung". (Op cit., p. 20f).

[24]M. Kolden, Pannenberg's Attempt to Base Theology on History. (Chicago: University of Chicago Dissertation, 1976), p. 3. Cf. also, p. 199f.: "His (Pannenberg's) is certainly not a position which claims to argue from only 'secular' assumptions for any understanding of man or God, for he clearly begins with a biblical understanding. What he does try to show is that this biblical understanding constitutes the most nearly adequate interpretation also of modern data concerning man and the world."

[25]In defence of his position, Kolden quotes Pannenberg's words: "It is not primarily the 'modern world' that is to be brought to an acknowledgment of the truth of Christian claims with regard to history, but rather Christians themselves who must live in an atmosphere of the reliability of the Christian message". (Revelation as Word and History", TaH, p. 88f.). Kolden overlooks, however, that Pannenberg speaks here of a reliable knowledge of the historical events on which the Christian faith is founded. His primary concern with "Christians themselves" must not be taken out of context so as to include all his other writings. It cannot be denied that Pannenberg (also) speaks to secular non-believers in articles such as "The Question of God", "Speaking of God in the Face of Atheistic Criticism" and "Anthropology and the Question of God".

[26]D. McKenzie, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Religious Philosophy (Lanham, M.D.: University Press of America Inc., 1980), p. 64.

[27]H.M. Vroom, De Schrift Alleen? (Kampen: Kok, 1978), p. 212. Vroom points out that the culture in which we live, the upbringing we received, the course our life has taken, the concerns we have are all at work in the way we evaluate our experiences. Pannenberg does not deny this, of course. See for this problematic also Harvey W. White, "A Critique of Pannenberg's Theology and the Philosophy of Science", Studies in Religion, Vol. II, No. 4 (1982), pp. 433ff.

[28]BQ I, p. 228f.

[29]Ibid., p. 229.

[30]Ibid., p. 233.

[31]Cf. Idea, p. 109.

[32]Idea, p. 93. According to McKenzie, Pannenberg does not mean "that the present experience of an omnipotent God is incompatible with human freedom, and thus in order to preserve freedom, we should think that God does not exist, at least fully, at present but will finally exist with full power in the future". (op. cit., p. 113; see also McKenzie's article "Pannenberg on God and Freedom", The Journal of Religion, 60 (July 1980), pp. 307-329. McKenzie states that such an interpretation is obviously incorrect (a faux pas) because (1) it implies the impossible notion that God is now in the process of gaining power over the universe, and (2) what is to become of human freedom when God finally exists fully and completely. If McKenzie were correct, Pannenberg's elaborations of the 'coming to be of God' would be quite superfluous. Why should he then speak so emphatically of the coming God, who, in a sense, does not exist? What McKenzie has shown is not that the interpretation mentioned above is incorrect, but what difficulties arise from the concept of the coming God. However, I must admit that Pannenberg does not shrink from statements which seem to contradict each other. Cf.: Gf.II, p. 170.: "Die Zukünftigkeit der Gottesherrschaft impliziert also, dass in irgendeinem Sinne das Sein Gottes selbst noch zukünftig ist". And then Gf.II, p. 171: "Aber nun bedeutet die Zukünftigkeit Gottes in der Botschaft Jesu ja nicht, dass Gott gegenwärtig noch nicht ist".

[33]TKG, p. 56.

[34]TKG, p. 55.

[35]TKG, p. 56.

[36]"Response", TaH, p. 232, note 10.

[37]Rev. 1:4.

[38]Cf.: M. Kolden, op cit., p. 221. "God as the power of the future exists only in the same way that the future is powerful over the present. But how is the future powerful over the present? Pannenberg only asserts here; he does not spell it out". We may add to this Burthenn's critique, "This instance (i.e., the resurrection of Jesus) does not fit comfortably with his (Pannenberg's) description of God as the power of the future, who acts on the present from the future. The examples Pannenberg gives of the future acting on the present simply do not present the kind of action involved in raising a man from the dead". (Pannenberg's Doctrine of God", Scottish Journal of Theology, 28, No. 6 (December 1975), p. 542.).

[39]D. McKenzie, Wolhart Pannenberg and Religious Philosophy, p. 125. L. E. Schmidt denies that Pannenberg really leaves the future open: "If, as Pannenberg claims, the future determines the present, and the future has already taken place proleptically in the past, then the past clearly determines the present. And if the end towards which all things are moving has already taken place, then the future is not really open but determined by the proleptic event of the past". (L. E. Schmidt, Historical Process and Hermeneutical Method in the Theologies of John Macquarrie, Schubert Ogden and Wolfhart Pannenberg. (Toronto: St. Michael's College (Diss.), 1975, p. 195f.)

[40]D. McKenzie, op. cit. p. 137 "Whether the determinative power of God is placed, then, in the future ... or in the past and present ... changes little, for human beings are not free in the critical sense".

[41]Cf. GF. II, p. 116: "Göttliches und menschliches Handeln stehen sich nicht auf gleicher Ebene gegenüber. Nur ein schlechter Gottesbegriff führt zu Konsequenzen, die das menschliche Handeln seiner Eigenart berauben und einem Zwang unterwerfen würden. Dem Wirken des Schöpfers steht die Tätigkeit seiner Geschöpfe nicht entgegen. Er handelt durch sie, bedient sich ihrer frei, so sehr sein Handeln zugleich die Zwecke der Geschöpfe übersteigt". See also BQ I, p. 79.

[42]Berkouwer is not in favor of adding the aspect of concursus: "The term as such does not sufficiently avoid the appearance that we begin with human activity and then see God as co-operator or co-runner (concurrence) with already active man". (The Providence of God, p. 141f). Pannenberg might have the same objections against the term concursus, especially because he stresses that God, not man, is the bearer of history.

[43]Acts 2:23.

[44]M. Kolden, op cit., p. 280f.

[45]"A Theological Conversation with Wolfhart Pannenberg", p. 294.

[46]Ted Peters writes, "I believe Pannenberg operates with a subtle distinction between ontology and epistemology, so that what he is unable to do ontologically he can accomplish epistemologically through his recognition of the provisional nature of all human knowledge". "Truth in History: Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Pannenberg's Apologic Method", Journal of Religion, 55, No. 1 (Jan. 1975), p. 50. note 54. See however, what Pannenberg writes in JGaM, p. 136, "To that extent it is not a special case that Jesus' essence is established retroactively from the perspective of the end of his life, from his resurrection, not only for our knowledge but in its being". (added emphasis). Could this have bearing on the being of God?

[47]See above p. 149.

[48]Carl Braaten, "The Current Controversy on Revelation - Pannenberg and his Critics", The Journal of Religion, 49 (1965), p. 229.

[49]Jüngel does not see (with respect to Pannenberg's proposal) "warum Gott vom Glauben zwar als der den Glauben (fiducia) bewirkende Grund verstanden werden muss, warum Gott aber zuvor von der Vernunft als Gott oder zumindest doch als ein existierendes X gewusst werden soll". (Entsprechungen: Gott - Wahrheit - Mensch. München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1980, p. 172). Apparently, Jüngel misunderstands Pannenberg. Faith does not require that we know God first as a mysterious entity. There is, however, a correspondence between our knowledge of the God in whom we trust and what is present as a presupposition in man's openness to the world. Pannenberg then uses this correspondence as an argument for the reasonableness of the Christian faith.

[50]G.C. Berkouwer thinks that Pannenberg cannot avoid making believers dependent on historical research. (A Half Century, p. 175.) This seems to be true, at least as far the verification of revelatory events is concerned. The same fear is expressed by J.W.V. van Huyssteen (op. cit., p. 144 note).

[51]Allan Galloway is of the opinion that Pannenberg "tries to make history to do too much for him. He tries to make history settle metaphysical questions" (op. cit., p. 136). Pannenberg would retort that faith and the knowledge of its foundation are two different things. Still, since we can only obtain reasonable certainty concerning the revelatory events (facticity and meaning) by means of historical research, Galloway's remark cannot be dismissed that easily.

[52]E. Jüngel, op cit., p. 228: "Wer einer Sache gewiss ist, bedarf der Sicherstellung nicht. Und wer einer Person gewiss ist, bedarf der Sicherung erst recht night. Sicherstellung ist die methodische Konsequenz des Zweifels und die existentielle Folge des Misstrauens. Gewissheit ist hingegen das Implikat eines Vertrauens, das - im Blick auf Personen - seinerseits vom Vertrauen dessen getragen ist, dem vertraut wird. Wo aber Vertrauen von Vertrauen getragen wird, bedarf es der Sicherstellung nicht". Pannenberg proves precisely this point when he writes that a person who gets on a plane will trust that it is in proper condition and that the ground crew has done its job, (Cf. WiM, p. 30). Is it not true then that the demand for verification may be a sign of mistrust?

[53]Cf. Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 101: "When one reads the modern historical investigations of the Easter traditions, whether conducted by the negative or the positive critics, he will scarcely be tempted to rest his faith upon their results."

[54]Cf. H.G. Geyer's comment: "Prinzipiell wäre Pannenberg nun zu dem Satz genötigt, dass als Grund des christlichen Glaubens nur fungieren kann, was nach dem Urteil der historischen Kritik als tatsächlich geschehen gelten darf. Wenn er aber statt dessen erklärt: 'Der Glaubende kann nur vertrauen, dass die Tatsächlichkeit des Geschehens, auf das er sich gegründet weiss, sich im Vortgang historischen Forschens immer wieder durchsetzen wird', so verstösst er damit zwar eklatant gegen die Logik seines Entwurfs. Denn er konzediert, was das System verbietet, nämlich eine von historischer Kritik nicht purgierte Behauptung von 'Tatsächlichem'". ("Geschichte als theologisches Problem", Evangelische Theologie, XXII (1962), p. 103). See also below p. 187.

[55]BQ II, p. 37: "Thus, it does not correspond to the Reformation concept to say ... that the 'historical faith' is 'not yet knowledge of God's revelation in the events'. The limit of the 'historical faith' is not that the significance of the events is inaccessible to it, so that it is able to view these events only as bare facts."

[56]According to Bultmann, the resurrection is not a historical event, but indicates the rise of the Easter faith of the disciples.

[57]BQ II, p. 40: "For this reason I have said that men must first be brought to reason in order that they may also really perceive the event that reveals the truth of God's deity."

[58]Iain G. Nicol, "Facts and Meaning: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Theology as History and the Role of the Historical-Critical Method", Religious Studies, 12, No. 2 (June 1976), p. 139.

[59]2 Cor. 4:4.

[60]Cf. H. Gollwitzer, Die Existenz Gotts im Bekenntnis des Glaubens. (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1964), p. 115.

[61]J. Robert Ross, "Historical Knowledge as Basis for Faith", Zygon, 23, No. 3 (September 1978), p. 223.

[62]Cf. H. Gollwitzer, op cit., p. 115.

[63]Gollwitzer contends, "Dass ein Geschehnis Tat eines Täters ist, welches Täters und mit welchem Sinne, das ist ihm oft nicht unmittelbar anzusehen, das ist den Ereignissen, die zu Gottes Offenbarungsgeschichte gehören und die im Kreuze Jesu ihre Zusammenhaftung und Bestimmung finden, sicher nicht ohne Weiteres anzusehen, sondern dies wird nur durch das Wort des Täters offenbar und zugeteilt. Nicht die Tatsache vermittelt das Wort Gottes, sondern das Wort Gottes offenbart die Tatsache als Tat Gottes und vermittelt diese Tat sowohl hinsichtlich der Erkenntnis wie der Aneignung". Op cit., p. 116. In view of Pannenberg's assertion that God reveals himself through the medium of historical events, F. Konrad remarks: "Die anderen Offenbarungsvorstellungen der Schrift (i.e., appearances, name, word, law) werden also überhaupt nicht daraufhin untersucht, ob nicht auch ihnen eine selbstständige Bedeutung hinsichtlich einer indirekten Selbstoffenbarung zukommt bzw. eine Bedeutung, die nicht ohne weiteres unter den Begriff der Geschichte subsumiert werden kann". Franz Konrad, Die Offenbarungsverständnis in der evangelischen Theologie. (München: Max Hüber Verlag, 1971), p. 285. Cf. op cit., p. 348: "Es wäre doch einem nichtgeschichtlichen Element, nämlich den prophetischen Visionen und Auditionen, die Fähigkeit zugesprochen, jenen notwendigen Verstehenshorizont zu eröffnen, der die Sprache der Tatsachen erst zu einer allgemein verstehbaren Sprache macht".

[64]Luke 24:13-35.

[65]Cf. G.C. Berkouwer, De Heilige Schrift I (Kampen: Kok, 1966), p. 143.

[66]At this point I tend to agree with Herbert Neie's critique. See above p. 130.

[67]TaH, p. 188.

[68]"Response", TaH, p. 269.

[69]BQ II, p. 42.

[70]Helmut G. Harder and W. Taylor Stevenson, "The Continuity of History and Faith in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Toward an Erotics of History", Journal of Religion, 51, No. 1 (Jan. 1971), p. 51. J. Gingrich raises the same point: "If conflicting influences confront the person which question the truth of the Christian proclamation, it is not necessarily the case that the most convincing evidence would be this objective, factual information". John H. Gingrich, The Structure of Faith, p. 204.

[71]When Pannenberg speaks of the irrationality of the theology of the Word, he does not mean that Barth et al, talk incoherently. Rather, what these theologians intend to say can perhaps be understood, but to a non-believer it does not make sense, since it is based on presuppositions which he does not share. That is why Pannenberg says that the theology of the Word demands a sacrificium intellectus. For Barth's position see above, p. 45f.

[72]Pannenberg states in a letter (see note 8 of this chapter) that there is no absolute opposition between his understanding of the work of the Spirit and Barth's. He then continues, "As I was a student of Barth's it is little surprising that my theology has much more in common with Barth than has been recognized in the usual reactions I got. Those reactions noticed only what is different, but tended to overlook at what points I continued Barth's work". I do not think that the critics, including myself, can be blamed for this. Whenever Pannenberg refers to Barth, it is usually only to dissociate himself from him; thus he gives the impression of running a continuing battle. In view of his strong criticisms, one is indeed somewhat surprised to find him (after all) relatively close to Barth.

[73]G.E. Michalson, Jr. "Pannenberg on the Resurrection and Historical Method", Scottish Journal of Theology, 33 (1980), p. 346f.

[74]Braaten asks skeptically, "If no one has yet come up with convincing historical proofs of the resurrection, one cannot escape the haunting suspicion that it can't be done. And in the case of alleged proofs, if they are not convincing to the sound historical scholars who already believe,how will they convince those who do not yet believe?" ("Pannenberg and his Critics", p. 233).

[75]Van A. Harvey, The Historian and the Believer, (New York: MacMillan, 1966), p. 109.

[76]Op. cit., p. 110. Harvey argues here against Zahrnt and von Campenhausen. His remarks apply with equal force to Pannenberg.

[77]Braaten comes to the same conclusion, "I simply cannot believe that a historian's judgment would lean weightily in favor of the historicity of the resurrection, unless, inter alia, he were motivated to appreciate the historical basis of his actual faith knowledge of the risen, present Christ. I agree with Alan Richardson, who says: 'Apart from faith in the divine revelation through the biblical history, such as will enable us to declare with conviction that Christ is risen indeed, the judgment that the resurrection of Jesus is an historical event is unlikely to be made, since the rational motive for making it will be absent'". (History and Hermeneutics. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966, p. 102).

[78]Pannenberg argues that to suspend judgment in this case means "renouncing the possibility of understanding the origins of Christianity". (AC, p. 113).

[79]H. Burhenn, "Pannenberg's Argument", p. 373. Cf.: I. Berten, Histoire, Révelation et Foi. Bruxelles: Editions du CEP, 1969, p. 73). "Sommes-nous par là nécessairement conduits à affirmer avec Pannenberg: la résurrection est un fait historique? Pas nécessairement. L'historien peut simplement être conduit à affirmer: quelque chose s'est passé dans la vie de ces hommes après la mort de Jésus, ce quelque chose est une pure inconnue".

[80]Michalson is of the opinion that Pannenberg's attack on the prejudice that dead men do not rise raises the expectation that he will defend the notion of the resurrection of a corpse. "But the supposed correspondence between the attack and the proof never materializes; instead of the resuscitated corpse that we have been led to expect, we get a metaphor". (Op cit., p. 358). This critique is a little far fetched. Pannenberg seeks to remove an obstacle that prevents a serious investigation of the resurrection. That some of his arguments perhaps could be used in favor of the notion of the resuscitation of a corpse does not mean that the rejection of this notion forms an inconsistent element.

[81]Cf. Berten, op. cit., p. 41: "On peut cependant se demander s'en tenir à la pure métaphore ou 'métaphore absolue'. L'hésitation de l'historien semble, somme toute, assez fondée. Si l'expression métaphorique est seule possible et si cette expression échappe totalement à l'emprise d'une analyse proprement rationnelle, l'affirmation n'est-elle pas du même coup vidée de tout contenu?"

[82]Michalson, op. cit., p. 358.

[83]Ibid., p. 357.

[84]Clark M. Williamson's comment is certainly to the point: "Furthermore, to claim that we have no experience, even remotely analogous, to events attested as historical, is to raise grave questions as to the intelligibility or meaningfulnes of claiming historicity for any event, however singular". ("Hegel in Modern Dress", Interpretation, 26 (Jan. 1972), p. 87). However, the very fact that a metaphor is being used indicates that the event is not completely incomprehensible.

[85]"Jesus' Resurrection, An Historical Event without Analogy", Dialog, 12 (Spring 1973), p. 116.

[86]"Dennoch ist es mir zweifelhaft geworden, ob nur in einer Sprache, deren semantische Intention metaphorisch ist, von der Wirklichkeit des Auferstandenen gesprochen werden kann. Wäre es nicht möglich, einen Begriff des 'Lebens' zu bilden, innerhalb dessen unser organisches und mindestens in höher organisierten Gestalten todverfallenes Leben nur einen speziellen Fall darstellte? .... Ein solcher Lebensbegriff wäre nicht durchweg empirisch kontrollierbar, er wäre vielleicht auch durch Ausweitung eines engeren Begriffes von Leben und insofern durch einen Übertragunsvorgang entstanden, aber seine Gegenstandsintention, sein Bezeichnungssinn wäre nicht mehr metaphorisch". (Gf. II, p. 168, note 4).

[87]Whether the influence of apocalyptic thought was as great as Pannenberg suggests is a question I am not competent to judge.

[88]Konrad stresses that "im modernen Denken selbst muss etwas der alttestamentlichen Verheissung Entsprechendes aufgezeigt werden können, wenn es mit dem biblischen Verstehenshorizont zur Deckung gebracht werden kann ...." (F. Konrad, op. cit., p. 309).

[89]Rom. 8:24:25.

[90]D. McKenzie, op. cit., p. 98.

[91]Theology of Hope (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 82.

[92]According to W. Logister, the apocalyptic tradition made the future 'extra-historical'; i.e., salvation lies, not within, but outside the horizon of this world. Thus God is no longer viewed as immanent in history, he is expected to come from 'beyond'. Logister thinks that Pannenberg's positive evaluation of this expectation conflicts with his anti-authoritarian attitude. (Cf. W. Logister, "Het Eschatologisch Probleem bij W. Pannenberg, Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift, 24, (1969), p. 284). Pannenberg, however, calls it a misunderstanding that he dogmatically assumed 'apocalyptic' as the authoritative horizon for

the meaning of Jesus' person and history, and particularly of his resurrection. Emphasizing the hypothetical character of the statements he made in JGaM, he writes, "At the same time many reviewers have perceived the concept of apocalyptic used here as too all inclusive, and a more differentiated consideration of the Jewish context of the time of Jesus' activity and of the beginnings of early Christian Christology would perhaps be desirable". "Afterword to the Fifth German Edition", JGaM[2], p. 401.

[93]E. Busch, Karl Barth, p. 487. Konrad expresses the same concern, inasmuch as "sich schon die alttestamentliche Geschichtserfahrung und vor allem auch unser heutiges Daseinsverständnis als proleptisch strukturiert erwiesen, scheint die zentrale Bedeutung der Geschichte Jesu Christi in einer allgemeinen Geschichtsanalyse nivelliert zu werden". (F. Konrad, op. cit., p. 373f).

[94]For the retroactive force of Jesus' resurrection see JGaM, pp. 135-138.

[95]JGaM, p. 130. Cf. RaH, p. 137: "In this respect, no one comes to knowledge of God by his own reason or strength. The message of the events brings man to a knowledge he would not have by himself".

[96]It is Barth's contention that Paul in Rom. 1:20 is not dealing with a revelation of God in creation, but with the fact that the gentiles are viewed in the light of Golgotha. They appear to have sinned against a truth that was well-known to them. "Indeed, they are without excuse, as the apostle says, for objectively they stand in a positive relation to the truth, even though they deny it". (K.D. II, 2, p. 133). Barth is virtually alone with his exegesis, and one cannot help wondering if he does justice to the text. The inexcusability of man is evidently not related to Jesus' death, but to God's invisible qualities which clearly can be seen from what has been made. Brunner already suspected that the root of Barth's questionable exegesis was to be sought in his concept of revelation: "He (Barth) refuses to recognize that where revelation and faith are concerned, there can be anything fixed, permanent and, as it were, natural. He only acknowledges the act, the event of revelation, but never anything revealed". (Nature and Grace, p. 48f). To this one may add that Barth fails to offer an explanation why man's rebellion against God leads him to idol worship. A 'general' revelation would make clear why man began to worship created things rather than the Creator.

[97]John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 25f. Per Lønning holds the same view: "Wenn der Herr sich vorstellt: 'Ich bin der Herr, dein Gott' - dann wird mit dieser, alles Weitere bedingenden Redeweise vorausgesetzt, dass mir

das Wort 'Gott' wirklich etwas sagt, d.h. Erinnerung weckt an etwas mir schon Bekanntes.... Dass sich Gott als Gott vorstellt, heisst, dass er einen bedingungslosen Anspruch auf den erhebt, dem er sich vorstellt. Wäre das nicht logisch begreifbar, dann wäre die biblische Selbstpräsentation des Herrn keine Präsentation, sondern ein Abrakadabra". ("Zur Denkbarkeit Gottes: ein Gespräch mit Wolfhart Pannenberg und Eberhard Jüngel". Studia Theologica 34 (1980), p. 68). Considerations such as these reveal the weakness of Barth's position with respect to apologetics. He himself admits that the confession of the Church must be translated in order to be effectual. (See above, p. 36). Is such a translation not already an important and necessary form of deliberate apologetics?

[98] K.D. IV, 3 (1).

[99] Ibid., p. 97.

[100] Ibid., p. 123.

[101] Ibid., p. 157: "Wie verkehrt der Mensch sie auch sehe und verstehe: sie leuchten ihm, er sieht und versteht die auch, er hört auch in der tiefsten Tiefe seiner Verkehrtheit nicht auf, sie zu sehen und zu verstehen".

[102] Ibid., p. 158: "Die fatalen, modernen Ausdrücke 'Schöpfungsoffenbarung' oder 'Uroffenbarung' können hier einen eindeutigen und guten Sinn ... bekommen".

[103] Hans Küng speaks of Barth's "heimliche Korrektur". Cf. his Existiert Gott? (München/Zürich: R. Piper & Co., Verlag, 1978), p. 578. Cf. Ibid., p. 580: "Im Gegensatz zu Römerbrief und Apostelgeschichte offenbaren die Lichter, Worte und Wahrheiten der Schöpfung also Gott nicht durch ihr eigenes Licht, sondern nur gleichsam als ... Rücklichter. Es verwundert deshalb nicht, dass Barth in diesem Abschnitt zwar verschiedentlich die Schrift zitiert, die klassischen Stellen zur Schöpfungsoffenbarung aus Römerbrief und Apostelgeschichte aber verschweigt. Allzu offenkundig wäre es sonst geworden, wie folgenreich (aber letztlich inkonsequent) Barth seine frühere Position korrigiert hat, ohne dies freilich ... einzugestehen".

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