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Pannenberg: A Post-Enlightenment Theologian

Peter J. A. Cook

WHEN AN IMPORTANT new name appears on the theological horizon thinking Christians experience a natural though probably an unwise urge to classify the newcomer in terms of established labels, so that his contribution might the more readily be assimilated into current church thinking. In the case of Wolfhart Pannenberg this would seem to be a mistake. Not only is his theology still only roughly sketched out, but he has shown himself to be a synthetic thinker flexible enough to incorporate widely differing insights and capable of avoiding extreme positions. Peter Bide, reviewing two recent books on Pannenberg by Allan Galloway and Frank E. Tupper¹ feels his work is a reminder that today's theological issues remain those raised by the Enlightenment but to which theology has still not formulated an adequate response. Pannenberg asks: (i) which Enlightenment critical postures does theology need to take to heart: (ii) which need to be challenged and exposed: (iii) what is the correct theological response that does justice to the rich heritage of the Christian tradition? His aim is to help counter the deepening crisis of confidence that has overtaken theology during the last two hundred years, thus enabling it challenge in a new way the apparently secure premises held by secular atheism. Rather to the surprise of many theologians he seeks to do battle by opening up a whole range of philosophical and theological issues that had until recently been widely regarded as settled. Inevitably his approach is seen as a direct attack on the whole Barth-Bultmann tradition. His theology represents a swing of the pendulum as Carl Braaten has observed. 'When one generation turns to the kerygma and faith, the next may be expected to return to history and reason.' Although he can share many of Barth and Bultmann's concerns he feels that dogmatic theology's biggest mistake has been to flee from the fiery encounter with biblical and historical criticism, seeking as it has done its various refuges: theologies of 'the Word'; 'Kerygmatic theology' and existentialism; or 'Salvationhistory'. In a way that goes beyond even the Heilsgeschichte theolo-

gians he seeks to pursue theology as history in such a way that will reunite the classic concerns of dogmatic theology with the modern historico-critical tradition. He seeks to explore the meaning of history in a way that allows it to be open to the movement of truth as universal history, to what he calls the 'historicality' of faith and knowing. Pannenberg the historical and the hermeneutical problems are congruent. Not that his concern for universal history means he can be dismissed as Hegelian, because, unlike Hegel the horizons of his thinking are eschatological and hence kept deliberately open. Boldly accepting Schweitzer's early challenge that theology must take eschatology seriously or perish, he thrusts eschatology to the forefront of his thinking. He sets himself the monumental task of erecting a theology of history in which the ontological principle is 'futurity', the futurity of God's coming kingdom. He believes that God reveals himself in the whole of history and through various religions, but that Jesus as the Christ represents the final (though proleptic because provisional), manifestation of the coming God. Confirmation of Christ's claim that the end time has dawned is found in the resurrection event. As an actual historical event the resurrection is as important for being the basis of Pannenberg's Christology as it is his key to the interpretation of history itself.

Hermeneutics and the Universal Scope of Theology

A WRONG response to the Enlightenment, says Pannenberg, was the response of Schleiermacher and Neo-Kantian Ritschlians who sought to retreat from the rational onslaught into their respective ghettos of theological subjectivism, thus denying the universal scope of Christian truth. By contrast the universality of theology is unavoidable whenever theology speaks of God. 'The word "God" is used meaningfully only if one means by it the power that determines everything that exists. . . . It belongs to the task of theology to understand all being in relation to God, so that without God they simply could not be understood. That is what constitutes theology's universality.'^a

Taking as his hermeneutical example how theology can reopen its proper debate with philosophy, Pannenberg turns to the task the Patristic writers attempted when they sought to appropriate the best of Greek thinking for their own use. He feels that modern theology should attempt a similar task with respect to the Enlightenment. For the Early Apologists the fundamental task was to demonstrate that the self-revelation of the Jewish-Christian God constituted the universal truth about God, in a way which surpassed the worth of even the best Greek thinking. Today the fundamental hermeneutical task is to reassure thinking churchmen of the universal validity and reliability of Christian truth. Pannenberg does not share Harnack's view that the

task as attempted by the Apologists in itself subjected the gospel to hellenisation. Such a judgment can only be considered in relation to its outcome, not to the venture itself. Nor would he agree with Barth that a similar modern debate necessarily involves a commitment to natural theology. What such debates often achieve, says Pannenberg, is a sharpening of basic theological doctrines through the abrasion that comes with close philosophical contact. A modern illustration of this might be the way his own theology rises to the atheistic challenge that the idea of God tends to deny rather than explain the basis of human freedom. No theology worth its salt, he feels, can afford to be silent on such occasions.

In a similar fashion Pannenberg finds Greek philosophy at the time of Middle Platonism apparently well satisfied with its own formulations concerning the origin, the unity and the otherness of God. Entering the lists at this challenge, the Early Apologists were, in some cases, fairly quick to break through the limitations of philosophical concepts. For example, by rejecting the idea of matter existing eternally with God, the philosophical idea of God could develop at this point and become monotheistic, and the ex nihilo goodness of creation could be affirmed. On other issues such as the incomprehensible otherness of God, or his immutability, Pannenberg feels the Apologists were not as successful as they might have been. On the particular question of God's otherness, although Greek thinking conceived of God's essence as other, it had difficulty thinking of the activity of his will in anything but human categories. Here the Apologists perhaps failed to distinguish the spirituality of God from the spirit-body dualism of Platonic anthropology. Pannenberg feels this issue also highlights a general failure in that they were too ready to adopt the Greek philosophical method of reasoning by causal inference, and without subjecting it to sufficient critical enquiry. Had they been more cautious they might have avoided describing the essential nature of God in terms of purely Greek concepts, a procedure which, according to St. Paul, constituted a perversion of man's knowledge. What its wholesale adoption did mean was that they experienced continual difficulty safeguarding key doctrines against the logical pressure exerted by the Greek method, as for example in safeguarding the biblical view that God has a free, living side to his personality reserved for special revelation, and which relates specifically to history. Such a conception was unthinkable to the Greek mind, which tended to see the divine as a proximate or necessary cause of the material world.8

Despite problems Pannenberg feels that the hermeneutical achievements of the Early Apologists were by no means negligible. On the whole they adopted he feels the best of the philosophical concepts available and they tried, at least in principle, to set the historical freedom of God above philosophical considerations as to his essential nature. In their attempt to reach a universal understanding of theology, meta-

physics was in principle subordinate to redemptive history. But, and in so far as they failed to retain a firm grasp of Hebrew concepts they did allow certain gaps to open up between the incomprehensible 'essence' (later to harden into the philosophical 'supreme being'), and the historical 'action' of God. Similarly they tended to lose sight of the ground of historical revelation in the complicated debates over the trinitarian problem. Finally, and referring back again to the otherness of God. Pannenberg feels the early church laid aside this difficult notion far too readily. (Here Pannenberg echoes a complaint Barth makes against later Protestantism, and its attitude to God's hiddenness.)11 Had the Apologists pursued Tertullian's point that one comprehends God only in knowing him to be incomprehensible and that only Christ's presence makes this paradox endurable, then the concept of God's essential otherness might have been recast in terms of the ever new historical acts of the personal Lord; just as also a concept such as God's immutability might have been deepened to show God's faithfulness; or his timelessness been seen as God's Lordship over time.18

Pannenberg believes that some such hermeneutical venture as was attempted by the early church is necessary for every age, if the faith as originally delivered is to maintain its universal relevance. Yet he feels that the modern hermeneutical task has become increasingly divorced from its historical origins.18 Whereas early Protestant doctrine could still unite a concern for both the Bible's textual reliability and the selfauthenticating nature of revealed truth, by Kant's time Gotthold Lessing's 'ugly ditch' had begun to separate the hermeneutical truths of revelation from the historical science of textual exegesis.¹⁴ Lessing, in the eighteenth century, taught that the eternal truths of revelation and reason were far too valuable ever to be permanently confined to the fragile earthenware of history. Henceforth, the concerns of dogmatic science to expound on revealed truth, and the historico-critical sciences, were to pursue ever diverging paths. Whilst the nineteenth century's quest for the historical Jesus only found him constantly disappearing behind the presupposed barriers of apostolic subjectivism, the dogmatic search, maintains Pannenberg, has become equally impossible when divorced from its proper historical background. Theologies which demythologise the historicity behind the text (Bultmann); which dissolve the past into the ethos of the present (Liberalism); or submerge the present into the world-view of the past (Fundamentalism): can only fail in their hermenuetical programmes. By contrast and taking the image offered by Gadamer of 'merging horizons', he feels that the historical horizons of the present need to be enlarged so that they encompass the historical horizons of the text.15 Just as the hermeneutics of the new historical quest seeks a correlation between dogmatics and history, so Pannenberg also seeks to overcome the distinction between hermeneutics and history. Yet here Pannenberg clearly reverses the solution offered by Heinrich Ott, when Ott says that it is the existential confrontation with the text that absorbs the historical question.¹⁶ Pannenberg's view is that objective history itself opens up the meaning of the past. The key to the hermeneutical problem is history itself, since it is only from the standpoint of the ultimate historical horizon, its end point, that hermeneutics can be resolved. For Pannenberg, history's ontological status stands prior to that of hermeneutics.

The Idea of God and the Nature of Truth

IT is Pannenberg's view that most of theology's operational problems stem from the fact that modern man no longer presupposes that God represents the truth about what is ultimately real, something which both the Greeks and the Hebrews presupposed.17 Lying behind the severance of hermeneutics from history from the time of Lessing and Kant was the more radical question about truth. Pannenberg feels that the question of truth became a radical one for Kant, because he 'wanted to present "theoretical" truth as independent of the presupposition of God';18 thus contradicting the view Hegel came to adopt, namely that theology ought always to safeguard both the totality and the unity of truth. Sharing Hegel's concern Pannenberg feels theology has to assert: 'Without the presupposition of God, truth is no longer conceivable in terms of agreement. . . . The agreement of human thought with extra-human reality, and thus its truth, is possible only on the presupposition of God.'10 The scope of this problem is such that ultimately it threatens not only the truth about God but also the truth about man.

Pannenberg feels that two long-standing trends in western thought helped produce Kant's dilemma. (i) Since Augustine truth has come increasingly to be regarded as a creative possibility for man as such, a view which grounded itself in the biblical notion that man exists in God's image. 20 (ii) There has occurred what he calls 'the anthropologisation of the idea of God'. This change is largely to be attributed to the growth of modern science, which saw a steady undermining of the cosmological unities presupposed by Greek thinking as uniting the natural world and God. By the time of Kant 'There was no assured way leading from nature to God, and that therefore the whole burden of proof of the truth of faith in God falls upon the understanding of man, upon anthropology'. n Not only did these two developments weaken the truth of the transcendent 'idea of God', they encouraged theology to adopt subjective stances which could stress only the divine immanence of God. Such a response could only threaten, as Hegel was quick to see, the twin notions of the totality and the unity of truth.

What Hegel realised, says Pannenberg, was that along with the collapse of the arguments for the existence of God, went also the factor uniting the transcendent 'idea of God' with 'the truth of man'. Henceforth the notion of 'absolute truth' would no longer have a natural point of reference for man. The problem here was the problem of subjectivism. Hegel regarded the decisive step in this direction as already having been taken at the Reformation, when Luther isolated the question of individual righteousness.22 Comments Pannenberg: 'It was faith independent of all human authority that was bound also to lead to the autonomy of reason in the Enlightenment.' It was also Hegel's view that the rationality of the Enlightenment, which knew nothing of its own historicality and which was content to know nothing except what concerned man's finitude, would ultimately lapse into 'sheer insipidy'. Allowed to reign unchecked, and here Hegel indeed spoke prophetically, rationalist criticism would eventually empty the idea of God of all meaning: 'the bitter pain which finds expression in the cruel words, "God is dead"." In his essay on Hegel Pannenberg points out that Hegel did not consider it to be the task of philosophy to pursue absolute truth in the way that absolute truth was the natural and proper concern of religion.24 But the burden inevitably fell on his philosophical shoulders once theology decided to escape the pressure of the Enlightenment by withdrawing into the subjective realms of emotion and ethics. In the event Hegel gave as good a philosophical defence of the question as he could.

As far as Hegel was concerned there were only two ways in which the situation could be remedied. (i) The idea of the totality of truth would regain its natural reference point for man only if absolute truth could be regarded as the history of truth. On this issue Pannenberg feels that a true understanding of Hegel's argument was made difficult by his identification of his own historical standpoint as the end point from which total truth could be stated. Not, as commentators on Hegel have pointed out, that this represents sheer stupidity on Hegel's part. He rightly saw that it was only from the perspective of the end that such a judgment could be made. 25 Pannenberg feels that his failure here lay in not incorporating an eschatological dimension into his philosophy of history. Only this could have prevented confusion between his philosophical understanding of the triune life of God and the Hegelian historical process itself. Ultimately such a confusion could lead to either the deification of the human species, or of one historical section of it (Feuerbach and Marx); or to the deification of the nation state (fascism). (ii) To restore the unity of truth, a new attempt would need to be made to bridge the gulf between the finite and This would require a restatement of the ontological the infinite. argument. On this issue Hegel tried to restore the argument's usefulness by adding to it the critical element of negation. Under his presentation, the existence of the infinite is asserted precisely on account of the 'transitoriness of the finite'. ** Pannenberg claims that what we see in Hegel is God himself becoming the starting point of the proof, so that the form of the proof becomes a description of God's proof of himself. Here, Hegel's restatement of the ontological argument would seem to represent the best philosophy can do in arguing not for the existence of God per se, but for the possibility of God's self-revelation. As such it obviously gives Pannenberg much of what he wants from Hegel on the subject of God's revelation seen as history.

To those critics who have always maintained that Hegel's God is basically pantheistic, in that God's relation to the world is one of logical necessity. Pannenberg replies that they fail to see the extent to which he tried to do justice to the personality and freedom of God. That he failed, thinks Pannenberg, was less a condemnation of himself than of the weight of orthodox misconceptions he inherited. Ever since the early church had used Greek concepts to describe God; or the Latin church had set the supreme essence of God above his properties; or philosophy had postulated a supreme being over and against the created world: Orthodoxy had had difficulty conceiving the freedom of God as anything other than something additional to the being of God. Pannenberg concludes that: Hegel can scarcely be reproached for exploring more rigorously the question of God, including Orthodoxy's built-in misconceptions, than Orthodoxy had done itself." What theology subsequent to Hegel needs to learn he feels, is that: (i) an eschatological dimension needs to be added to the notion that absolute truth is found only as the total history of God's truth; (ii) the misconception that freedom represents only an attribute of the concept of God needs to be reversed, so that the basic concept, or idea of God, itself equates with the freedom of God. To those who might object to such radical departures. Pannenberg replies that they are necessary if the doctrine of God is to escape from its captivity to static Greek conceptions, and finally recover something of the Hebrew dynamic of truth.

Because Hegel's sturdy defence of the truth of the idea of God was largely ignored, Pannenberg seems to regard the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the period of theology's selling out to intellectual atheism. The stress on subjectivity, and abandonment of any serious interest in metaphysics meant that atheism made easy gains and important apologetic positions were lost. So much so that now 'secular atheism, that is, life and thought without God is evidently the given premise on which even the question of God is being debated today'.²⁸ From Feuerbach atheism first laid the groundwork of its own atheistic metaphysics and began to lay claim to the notion that the idea of God threatens rather than affirms the idea of the freedom of man.²⁹ From Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will it was able to proclaim a new 'atheism of freedom'.³⁰ Against this Nietzschean attack, Pannenberg feels that the Neo-Kantian theology of the Rits-

chlians was particularly defenceless since it shared precisely the same presuppositions as Nietzsche, namely, the validating will represents the source of all value judgments, religious or otherwise. Nor does Pannenberg feel that the Barthian leap into supernaturalism was any better as an answer to Nietzsche, since that too depended on a subjective decision of faith. In the twentieth century the atheism of what Pannenberg describes as 'empty transcendence' has led to further attacks on the possibility of truth being associated with the idea of God. the modern metaphysics of subjectivity . . . the binding of all contents of consciousness to the finitude of the consciousness meant . . . that he can no longer in any way imagine the deity of the infinite.' Thus Pannenberg finds it only logical when, from the extremities of the Bultmann position, Herbert Braun calls for the final demythologisation of the idea of God, although, as Helmut Gollwitzer rightly, though helplessly, laments from within the Barthian camp, this will mean the end of theology.33 Too late Barthians such as Gollwitzer have understood Hegel's warning that the truth value of the very idea of God needs to be defended if theology is to be possible at all. Paradoxically, although he too has experienced the 'empty transcendence', it is Heidegger who pointed the direction of a possible solution, when he called for a radical inquiry into the nature of being. For Pannenberg, theology can meet the atheism of empty transcendence only if it returns to a radically new consideration of the question of God, and in particular: 'only if it thinks through in all its consequences the biblically grounded idea of the hiddenness of God.'34 Or again, has the modern age successfully managed to break away from Christianity, or is it simply using up the hidden capital on which all life's God given vitality depends?35 Does the idea of God represent the threat to human freedom that atheism claims, or is it not the truth of the matter that God constitutes the basis and possibility of freedom?

Although Pannenberg's approach to the problem of truth is considered original and creative, it tends to depend on a basic contradistinction between Greek and Hebrew forms of truth. Whereas for Israelites 'Truth is reality that is regarded as history . . . that which will show itself in the future', for the Greeks truth is that which 'in some way or another lies under or behind things'. 36 That Pannenberg commits himself to the Hebrew notion is clear from comparing him with Heidegger. Whereas Heidegger looks for that primordial truth that is ontologically prior to the appearances of the present, 87 Pannenberg conceives his ontological priority as relating to the *future*. question of his attitude to Greek philosophy Allan Galloway feels it is a little odd that although he clearly has Middle Platonism in mind when he talks of Greek truth, he 'often talks about "Greek philosophy" as though it were a single tradition'. 33 More seriously. Galloway thinks that his contrast between the basic 'Greek' and 'Hebrew' minds tends rather to obscure the deeper tensions within finite reasons that these

labels may well have come to symbolise: 'centredness' and 'openness', tensions between 'identity' and 'change', 'singular' and 'universal', 'self' and 'world', etc. Perhaps this also explains another weakness. So far Pannenberg has been content to discuss the history of truth without sufficient regard for its ontological structures. He has not yet spelt out how his concept of truth relates to truth as 'judgment', as 'logic', 'certainty' or 'laws of intellect'. Perhaps it is in this respect that Galloway suggests his is 'a theology in search of a metaphysic'. There needs to be much more metaphysical thinking from him. Finally, because his Hebraic conception of the dynamic nature of truth leans heavily on Hegelian insights, it is never quite clear what value the experience of truth has in corroberating historical truth. Pannenberg tends to underplay the experience or subjectivity of truth.

Theology as History

PANNENBERG says that it was Israel who first presented the reality of God in terms of historical activity, just as it has been Hegel who reminded theology that 'universal history' offered the best dimension for understanding the Christian faith.41 'History is the most comprehensive horizon of Christian theology' says Pannenberg.41 He rejects theologies that have allowed a weakening of theology's basic commitment to history: for example the existentialist dissolution of history into the historicity of existence (Bultmann); the Barthian incarnational emphasis on 'pre-history'; and the tradition that stems from Kähler and includes 'redemption-history'.42 He condemns them not least because modern historians themselves, from Dilthey and Collingwood on, have rejected that positivistic approach to history that so frightened theology at the beginning of the twentieth century,44 and they now rightly stress the role of creativity and imagination from the historian, in understanding the historical past. The Heilsgeschichte theologies of Cullmann and Althaus he rejects because, although they profess to take history seriously, they fail to traverse Lessing's gulf between 'fact' and 'interpretation', in that they do not show how revelation and history connect. In reply the Heilsgeschichte school claim that Pannenberg overreacts against Dialectic and Kerygmatic theology. They say that although history is the sine qua non of faith it can never be its authoritative foundation, and that in the last resort even Pannenberg will have to take his historical evidence on trust.45 However, expressing general approval of Pannenberg's standpoint, Carl Braaten comments: 'Pannenberg is boldly trying to reverse the irrationalist trend in theology since Schleiermacher, which derives revelation from the experience of faith rather than from reason's knowledge of history.'46 Looking on the other hand more sceptically at the venture, C. F. Evans observes with equal justification, that for

those schooled within the historico-critical method to observe the gap between fact and interpretation, Pannenberg's historical approach demands 'something of a conversion'.47

Commenting on his programme. Klaus Koch says that Pannenberg sought to overcome the gulf between historical-critical research and dogmatic theology by discovering from biblical history itself history's real nature. Finding that most of the New Testament had been commandeered by the Kervematic theologians he felt impelled to return to the Old Testament where clear historical conceptions still presented themselves.48 He found stated in the work of von Rad the basis he was looking for: 'Israel's faith is grounded in a theology of history. It regards itself as based upon historical facts, and as shaped and reshaped by facts in which it saw the hand of God at work.'41 However, he felt von Rad's emphasis on the typological interpretation of history was not sufficient to unite the Old and New Testaments on more than a superficial historical level. Turning to R. Rendtorff he found a more developed notion of the meaning of history and historical consciousness, in that 'the working out of the "interpretation" is itself an historical event'. 30 At first Pannenberg had been content to describe history as 'event suspended between promise and fulfillment'. By 1961 he says that he incorporated 'the history of the transmission of the tradition', since this included 'a hermeneutical process involving the ceaseless revision of the transmitted tradition in the light of new experiences and new expectations for the future'. 11

At this point one ought to mention that his emphasis on 'tradition history' has not gone unchallenged. Moltmann feels that his reliance on tradition does not constitute a genuine new historical category with which to challenge the transcendental subjectivity bequeathed to theology by Kant and his successors. 41 However, one suspects that Moltmann's criticism might be more relevant to Form-criticism than to Pannenberg. Whereas Form-criticism did indeed rely on subjective interpretations to explain the origin of the tradition (e.g. D. E. Nineham: 'the locus of revelation is in fact the events-as-interpreted-bythe-inspired-writers'),52 Pannenberg's conception of tradition would seem to operate at a far deeper historical level. For him 'the history of the transmission of traditions, including the origins of the traditions and the concrete occasions of their changes, is itself treated as a historical object, and can hardly be treated in any other way'.54 The basic core of Pannenberg's historical conception would seem to include at least the following: revealed promise, real historical occasion. origin of the historical tradition, transmission and criticism of tradition. looking forwards to future historical fulfillment. Another important feature clearly implied here is the notion of the 'provisionality' of historical knowledge. He allows for historical relativity without this constituting grounds for historical judgment lapsing into mere relativism. Under his conception, God's revelation relates in measure to all religions. Similarly he believes there are real historical interchanges between religions. (Against this view he believes the phenomenological approach towards world religions tends to arise from, and further promote, a shrinkage of genuine historical interest in formulating its dogmatic concerns). Doubtless it is this general type of historical programme that leads F. E. Tupper to hope that Pannenberg may well be pointing us towards solutions of the historical problems which have afflicted theology since the Enlightenment: 'Against Immanuel Kant (philosophically) and Martin Kähler (theologically), Pannenberg affirms the intrinsic unity of event and interpretation, fact and meaning; furthermore such dynamic unity discloses the ongoing significance of an event along the expanding horizon of universal history.'

Whilst most commentators freely acknowledge the originality of his historical conceptions for theology, his programme has not been received uncritically. A frequent objection is that he seeks to keep theology in a historical ghetto, researchable and interpreted only by trained historians; though doubtless this is equally a criticism that ought to be levelled against form- and redaction-critics. 57 R. W. Jenson regards his as a 'monistic view of history'; 58 whilst Tupper concludes that all Hegelian approaches to history tend to interpret history primarily from God's standpoint and to minimise the role of man 'as a creative participant in the making of history'. 50 C. F. Evans regards 'universal history' as posing similar weaknesses as contained in the older arguments from natural theology; o whilst Herbert Burhenn feels that, offered as a theological programme, 'universal history' is at present in no better repute than speculative metaphysics. 41 However, Burhenn feels that something of what Pannenberg is looking for might be found in A. Danto's work in the field of analytical philosophy of history. Danto, who has developed the category of 'narrative sentences' as a way of describing two time separated events, has as his general thesis the view that our knowledge of the past is limited by our ignorance of the future. Some future reference point is necessary for any true historical perspective. Any definitive knowledge of the past requires a knowledge of the future, in that the historian needs to know those future events to which a past event could and should be related. •2 It could well be that such a thesis would support the open-ended Hegelian view of history that Pannenberg is intent on presenting.

Eschatology as related to History

PANNENBERG'S Heidelberg associate Klaus Koch says that his attention to Old Testament history increasingly led him in the direction of inter-testamental apocalyptic literature, since this seemed to offer that open dimension to universal history that Hegel lacked. For Pannenberg the importance of apocalyptic thinking lies in the emphasis

it places on God's futurity. God represents the 'power of the future'. Commenting here F. E. Tupper feels that this is a difficult notion to appreciate, since it is not easy to picture the future as being prior to the past. As a conceptual model, however, Pannenberg would say that it expresses something of the Hebrew dynamic of historical thought. The idea that time flows 'from the future' to the present and into the past. Pannenberg has claimed, may sound radical but it has similar roots to the notion that revelation springs from God. 83 He feels that the apocalyptic notion that the future possesses an 'ontological priority' over the present offers important possibilities for theological thinking, particularly in relation to the doctrine of God. He proposes to abandon the Greek idea of God possessing a timeless eternity, and replace it by the notion of 'the eternity of a comprehensive future'. Commenting on this proposal, Herbert Burhenn states that it is not yet certain whether Pannenberg means us to regard God himself as not fully existent. 4 He observes that Pannenberg has praised Whitehead for incorporating the idea of time into the idea of God, though he has rejected the Whiteheadian notion that this implies some kind of development in God, as is the case for Process theology. Pannenberg claims that with regard to the future of God: 'What turns out to be true in the future will then be evident as having been true all along.'65 What is not clear for Burhenn and others is whether Pannenberg is speaking ontologically about God, or merely stating the epistemological deficiencies of human knowledge. Galloway says that he is prepared to give Pannenberg the benefit of the doubt here, and considers that he does not radically depart from 1 Corinthians 15: 28 where God is eventually seen as 'all in all'.44 Tupper too feels that the extent to which he means us to think of God as not yet existent is 'very restricted', since Pannenberg regards Whitehead's doctrine of God as hardly compatible with biblical affirmations. or At present this represents a largely uncharted area of Pannenberg's thought and clearly important ontological considerations are at stake. Galloway's own opinion is that ours is an age which must struggle to understand the ontological implications of the meaning of 'time', just as Heidegger's generation had to struggle with the concept of 'being'. Perhaps an important test of Pannenberg's stress on the ontological priority of the future of revealed truth is whether he can gather up with it Heidegger's opposite consideration, in giving ontological priority to what he calls 'primordial truth'. ** Success here would have important bearings on his treatment of such doctrines as Creation and the Incarnation.

Describing Pannenberg's role in promoting apocalyptic thinking recently, Klaus Koch reminds us that it was Karl Barth who was saying in 1921: 'A Christianity which is not entirely and simply and wholly eschatological has entirely and simply and wholly nothing to do with Christ.' Barth was actually to go further than this when he later criticised the note of immanentism still present in his thinking at that

time, and he criticised his own failure to take more seriously the question of God's futurity.70 But clearly Pannenberg's attention to eschatological thinking cuts across Bultmann's desire for an eschatology of the present; or reverses Dodd's preference for a realised eschatology; and probably surpasses Fuller's case for an inaugurated eschatology. Yet despite Pannenberg's growing impact on the theological scene, Koch readily admits that apocalyptic thinking is far from normative in either Germany or America. According to Tupper and Galloway the role of eschatological thinking needs considerable clarification. Even in Pannenberg's own thought there remains much clearing of the metaphysical ground to be done.ⁿ Jurgen Moltmann for instance, stimulated by the atheistic thinker Ernst Bloch, allows his eschatological considerations to move in a quite different direction to that of Pannenberg. Where Moltmann relates apocalyptic to history in such a way as to scent revolution, Pannenberg prefers to observe instead a past and future connected by progress and continuity.78 So precisely how does he intend to relate historical time to the notion of the future or eternity of God? Or again, how does he intend to relate the question of eschatology to Jesus' own understanding of the kingdom of God? On this issue salvation-history theologians usually prefer to follow Norman Perrin's line, which states that Jesus rejected an apocalyptic understanding of history and the Kingdom in preference for a prophetic one.78 Finally, as in the case of Hegelian conceptions of history, there is the danger that an emphasis on eschatology could eclipse the largely personal aspect of a great number of doctrines. Here Pannenberg has admitted that he has more to say on such matters.74 Yet despite the metaphysical difficulties here, including the fact that metaphysical thinking has not yet regained its respectability, it has been observed that Christianity contains admirable structures of meaning (e.g. God's coming kingdom), which are well suited to explore an ontology that relates to the 'totality of the future'.78 After all, it has been rightly observed by Karl Rahner that Christianity represents 'the religion of the absolute future'.

The Resurrection as a Basis for Christology

THE sharpest test for Pannenberg's understanding of history in any universal and eschatological sense is undoubtedly the question of the resurrection. Pannenberg wants to assert the basic facticity of it as an historical event and its hidden proleptic significance for the future of God's kingdom. He also wants to make it the historical basis of his Christology. This is clearly a heavy burden to lay upon it and he has not been without his critics.

With regard to the basic historicity of the resurrection event, he has felt it necessary to challenge those historical a-priori assumptions made

by historians, and which relate to the basic homogeneity of events. Scientific history has to preclude the possibility of miracles precisely because they contradict all known analogies from human experience of otherwise similar events. Faced with this general ultimatum theologians have either tended to speak metaphorically of the resurrection as an occurrence but hardly an 'event' within history (Barth);76 to assert open agnosticism as to whether historical science can ever validate such an event (Künneth);" or to bow before the necessary demands of the historical method and reject its facticity altogether (J. Robinson). By contrast Pannenberg claims that unless Christ's resurrection can be seen as an historical event then the historical truth of the Christian message falls hopelessly apart." Scientific history is wrong to dismiss the miraculous out of hand. 'That a reported event bursts analogies with otherwise usual or repeatedly attested events is still no grounds for disputing its facticity.'80 If well reported events are to be dismissed in this fashion, such dismissals can only be described as a 'fantastic transgression' of the limits of human knowledge. 81 However, on the level of purely historical argument for the resurrection, theologians have not so far been convinced by Pannenberg's handling of the issue. C. F. Evans feels that he speaks more of resurrections in general than the case of Jesus in particular, and that the boldness of his general approach to history is not matched by adequate boldness on this crucial item, a view that is shared by R. H. Fuller and others. Evans feels that he argues his case with far too much hesitation and reserve, since he appeals less to the evidence for the appearances of the risen Christ than to the need to explain the disciples' evident change of heart. 82 P. Hodgson feels that his 'empty tomb' discussion is particularly weak; and even John Cobb, who admits that Pannenberg poses the question in a way best suited to his case, thinks that unique events of the past ought to require more detailed evidence than ordinary events. 82 Yet despite historiographic shortcomings, what is certainly not in dispute is Pannenberg's commitment to serious historical investigation. Like a number of recent scholars he does not subscribe to the view that the resurrection can be both theologically true yet historically false. The question behind the historicity of the resurrection is, as Braaten has observed: 'Whether the principles of historical research can go into the "holy of holies" of Christian faith, or must be left behind while faith prepares itself for a leap to an a-historical level.'84 Perhaps a balanced judgment on Pannenberg's progress so far is Galloway's view that it is important to first think one's way into Pannenberg's apocalyptic pattern of thought. Then the abundance of evidence for the resurrection need not be dismissed as an a-priori impossibility. In fact the historical evidence then becomes convincing. 85

As to its Christological significance, Pannenberg says that the resurrection is central to the validity of Jesus' authority and claims: 'Apart from Jesus' resurrection it would not be true that from the very

beginning of his earthly way God was with this man. This is true from all eternity because of Jesus' resurrection, 'as Until the resurrection God's truth about Christ was hidden. The resurrection constituted God's ultimate decision about the man Jesus. At the same time, because God represents the power of the future, the resurrection possesses 'retroactive force for his pre-Easter activity'. 87 Likewise, and looking ahead from the resurrection, through Jesus, essentially future Jewish apocalyptic expectations broke into the world. In this sense Pannenberg considers the resurrection of Jesus to be anticipatory or 'proleptic' in character, and thus anticipating a still only hidden future. ** 'In the destiny of Jesus the End of all history has happened in advance as prolepses.' The criticism that many commentators would wish to make at this point is whether his eschatological interpretation of the resurrection will support the weight of theological interpretation he places upon it, since it is a weight far greater than present day systematic theology would be inclined to allow. F. Herzog asks why should a resurrection tell us more of God than a cross.80 Nor is it at all clear asserts Koch, whether his early disciples would have been as convinced of the immediate implications of the resurrection as Pannenberg seems to assume. Koch thinks that the ascension and exaltation might have played a greater role in this respect.** Against this barrage of criticism there would seem to remain only the fact that both historically and theologically. Paul himself in 1 Corinthians 15 allowed similarly heavy burdens to rest on the resurrection.

In more explicitly christological terms, Pannenberg feels that it has been the supposed historical problems surrounding the resurrection that have prevented its being made the basis of Christology before. He says that he is content to fashion his Christology after the example set by Luther, i.e. a Christology 'from below'. Pannenberg feels that either one presents a Christology from below, starting with Christ's humanity as Luther did: or taking seriously the problem of the historical Jesus as Ritschl did: or including as Pannenberg would the question of the resurrection; or, he says, one fashions a Christology 'from above'. 11 This latter course was the one adopted by the older dogmatics which concentrated on the exalted Lord; it was the case in Barth's incarnational Christology (though Pannenberg feels his conception of the incarnate Son's descent and return relate suspiciously to gnostic redeemer myths); it was also the course with the tradition stemming from Schleiermacher which posited a divinity of Christ based upon his own subjective self-consciousness. Pannenberg feels that the problem with Christologies 'from above' is that they start from a pre-conceived notion of Christ's divinity, one which is likely to undermine the significance of the history of Jesus. Also, priority is given to incarnational thinking in such a way as tends to obscure the first essential question that it is the business of any Christology to concern itself with, namely, the question of Jesus' unity with God. Here the problem is one of

fusing together their pre-conceptions as to Christ's divinity with a genuine humanity of Jesus. He feels that Christologies 'from above' can easily lead to the 'two natures' problem of the early church debates, with the possibility of all kinds of hybrid unities and heretical solutions, in an attempt to resolve Christ's divine human unity. In a slightly different way, modern Christologies from above that operate from the subjective basis of Jesus' own consciousness of his divinity, tend to over-internalise the discussion, and likewise divorce Christology from history. In both cases the God-man relationship within the person of Jesus is artificially internalised to the exclusion of genuine historical considerations.

By contrast, Pannenberg finds that a Christology conducted 'from below' enables him to externalise the Christological debate. Pannenberg's case Jesus' essential unity with God is able to be vindicated by what actually happens to Jesus on the outer plane of history itself. Jesus would have been aware that God would vindicate his authority and establish it by his own action, as indeed occurred in the resurrection. 93 For Pannenberg this partly explains why Jesus did not have to go around claiming to himself various christological titles, in order to resolve an internal identity crisis. In a similar fashion, Pannenberg's general historical approach also enables him to externalise the trinitarian debate, so that instead of it being a subject for 'otiose speculation about a heavenly, metaphysical danse-a-troise' as Galloway deftly puts it. 14 it can extend its frame of reference to become a genuinely relevant doctrine, both in its historical and its social implications. Within his conception of the Trinity, God represents the coming God, the power of the future: Jesus represents the proleptic appearance of this coming God as anticipated from within history; whilst his Holy Spirit looks like being freed from purely limiting subjective considerations, to include wider categories of life and energy. (He has shown an interest in relating Teilhard de Chardin's notion of 'radial energy' with relativity theories, as a way of describing the Spirit's work of energising life and creation.) Pannenberg's trinitarian thinking, though as yet scarcely mapped out, seeks to open out the revelational contact that God has with man into the whole of human and created history. However, a relevant criticism here is Herbert Burhenn's complaint that Pannenberg shows no interest as yet in relating his doctrine of God to trinitarian thinking. Perhaps the answer to Burhenn lies in the fact of the still open texture of his theological debate about God. Just as trinitarian thinking was held open for several centuries in early church thought, so his fertile use of apocalyptic categories necessarily holds open his own consideration of the trinitarian question. One danger, however, that he will need to continue to guard against is the Hegelian one of identifying the triune God too closely with the historical process itself. Otherwise he might prepare the ground for a theology of divine 'freedom' every bit as open to abuse as was the fate of Hegel's thinking at the hands of Feuerbach and Marx.

Lessons for Anglicans

HAVING surveyed the major areas of his work, we ask what Anglicans especially can hope to learn from Pannenberg. Perhaps in so far as it has always been an Anglican tendency to think realistically about their own traditions and to accept, when valid, the findings of rational enquiry, they can learn a great deal. This is because, speaking as he does from the standpoint of post-Enlightenment thinking, vet also as one who has a strong regard for the rich heritage of Christian tradition. he is saving quite clearly that theology can never be quite the same after the Enlightenment as it was before. Such a strong note of realism must surely have important implications for any who might cherish fond hopes of a straightforward return to Reformation principles or a recapture of its spirit. Whilst he clearly rejects the retreats into subjectivism that theology made in response to the Enlightenment, he also accepts that certain hitherto well established theological methods of proceedure must now be abandoned. Firstly, the attempt to let speculative reason undergird theology, or to argue the truth of God's nature or existence must be abandoned. If the truth gap between the finite world of man and the infinite God is to be bridged, it will only be done by reaching a fuller understanding of what it means for God's truth to reveal itself in history, and through the historical process. Secondly, the attempt to build theology on the abstract notion of divine 'authority' must also be abandoned. With the rise of the new atheistic rationalisms, purely abstract notions of authority, whether ecclesiastical or scriptural, are extremely vulnerable. To exalt such doctrines in relation to scripture would be just as indefensible now as would a blind acceptance of ecclesiastical authority have been to Luther at the time of the Reformation protest. Henceforth, the authority undergirding Christian truth, inspiration of scripture, or historicity must, in Pannenberg's view, vindicate itself at the grass roots level of critical enquiry. At all levels of hermeneutical understanding the Christian tradition must have the confidence to stand before the bar of historico-critical enquiry. There is no reason to believe that it will fail to overcome this challenge. Thirdly, the questions being raised by metaphysical atheism concerning 'freedom' must be taken more seriously (as well as any others that are raised). This is because the spirit of free enquiry that supports their opposition to the Christian faith is itself part of the spiritual heritage of free enquiry released by the Reformation, and which later flowered in secular areas of enquiry, including the Enlightenment. Only on an appreciation of this fact can theology return to its proper debate with

secular atheism, and having a renewed confidence that God does indeed represent the necessary presupposition of all truth, including the ultimate truth about man and his own freedom.

Bearing in mind the fact that Pannenberg is still a young man and only in his forties, there are inevitably gaps and areas of his thinking that need further attention. For example, it has been observed that so far he has said nothing about the cross, soteriology, or the problem of evil in human history. In his own defence Pannenberg has said that so far he has felt it more important to stress those positive foundations of faith, which will help theology to regain its confidence in pursuing its traditional apologetic tasks. Many will no doubt welcome his sturdy apologetic stance in the face of atheistic challenges. Many churchmen will no doubt welcome his stress on the unity of truth, though they may be anxious to see what is in the small print when he comes to talk about the 'historicality' of faith and knowing. Is truth no longer to be authoritative? Must it be relative to history? again, on the question of history, many will welcome his bold defence of the historicity of the resurrection. However they may also wonder whether in accepting his thinking about universal history we are not being offered a re-wrapped package of Hegelianism. And if this is so, how can we be sure that at last we have a theologian who has made Hegel safe for consumption? Does 'universal history' mean that we have to abandon the view that God's spirit performs a special work in terms of 'salvation-history'? Or again, whilst many would welcome his stress on the Hebraic notion of God's freedom as an agent within history, what does he mean by the 'futurity' of God? Must we abandon the orthodox notion that God is perfect and eternally constant? His Christology too certainly has a breathtaking quality, but should we not at least shed a tear for the loss of Chalcedon's hard won formula on the 'one person' but 'two natures' conundrum? In these and many other areas there will be questions. But despite this his theology will surely be welcomed by all those who realise that every generation needs to understand its own reasons for the future and very real hope that is within us.

Allan Galloway, Wolfhart Pannenberg (Allen and Unwin, 1974), and Frank E. Tupper, The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg (SCM, 1974). Cf. Peter Bide's review Theology, September 1975, pp. 486f.
 Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics (Lutterworth, 1968), p. 51.

Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. 1 (SCM, 1970), p. 1. Hereafter abbreviated to $BQ\widetilde{T}$.

BQT, Vol 11, pp. 119ff.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 142ff.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 147ff.

⁷ Ibid., p. 157.

⁸ Ibid., p. 124.

[•] Ibid., pp. 178ff.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 181ff.

¹¹ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. 11, Part 1, pp. 185ff.

¹⁸ BQT, p. 180.

- 263 PANNENBERG: A POST-ENLIGHTENMENT THEOLOGIAN ¹⁸ Cf. On Historical and Theological Hermeneutics, BQT, Vol. 1, pp. 137ff. ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 142. Cf. also Hermeneutics and Universal History, BOT, Vol. 1, p. 96. 15 The Crisis of the Scripture Principle, ibid., p. 9, also ibid., pp. 115ff. 16 Cf. C. Braaten, op. cit., pp. 140-142, R. W. Jenson, Knowledge of Things Hoped For (OUP, 1969), p. 218. What is Truth?, BQT, Vol. 11, pp. 1ff. 18 Ibid., p. 17. 10 Ibid., p. 18. 20 Ibid., p. 14. ²¹ Anthropology and the Question of God, BQT, Vol. 111, p. 82. 32 The Significance of Christianity in the Philosophy of Hegel, BQT, Vol. 111, pp. 150f. 28 Ibid., p. 154. Ibid., p. 158.
 Ibid., p. 158.
 C. Braaten, op. cit., p. 31.
 BQT, Vol. 111, pp. 84f and 162.
 Ibid., p. 173.
 The Question of God, BQT, Vol. 11, p. 202. * Types of Atheism and their Theological Significance, BQT, Vol. 111, pp. 186ff. ⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 192ff. 81 Ibid., p. 194. ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 196. 38 The Question of God, BQT, Vol. 11, pp. 205ff. 84 Ibid., p. 199, Pannenberg's italics. 35 Christianity as the Legitimacy of the Modern Age, BQT, Vol. 111, pp. 178ff. 36 BQT, Vol. 11, p. 3. ⁸⁷ Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 225. ⁸⁶ A. Galloway, op. cit., p. 89. ⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 137. 40 Theology as History (Harper, 1967), p. 239. 'Immediate religious experience cannot "by itself alone" establish the certainty of the truth of its content. . . If one is justified in speaking of God as the power over everything, it is only in view of the "whole" of reality, and not of certain special experiences. ⁴¹ BQT, Vol. 11, pp. 21-26. ⁴⁸ BQT, Vol. 1, p. 15. 48 Ibid. 44 For example, Tillich's expressed belief that theology ought to prepare for the total abandonment of its historical base, in view of the destructive research into the historical Jesus. Systematic Theology, Vol. 11, p. 121. 45 Cf. discussion in F. E. Tupper, op. cit., pp. 264f. C. Braaten, op. cit., p. 47.
 C. F. Evans, Resurrection and the New Testament (SCM, 1970), p. 179.
 K. Koch, The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic (SCM, 1972), p. 102.
 Kerygma and History, BQT, Vol. 1, p. 88.
 Cf. Discussion in C. Braaten, op. cit., p. 113. ⁵¹ BQT, Vol. 1, p. xvii. J. Moltmann, Theology of Hope (SCM, 1967), p. 81.
- ⁵² D. E. Nineham, The Study of Divinity: An Inaugural Lecture (London, 1960), p. 16.

⁵⁴ BQT, Vol. 1, p. 93.

- 6h Towards a Theology of the History of Religion, BQT, Vol. 11, pp. 65ff.
- ⁸⁸ F. E. Tupper, op. cit., p. 293. 57 J. Moltmann, op. cit., pp. 181ff., also P. Althaus, The So-called Kerygma and the Historical Jesus (Oliver and Boyd, 1959).

⁵⁸ F. E. Tupper, op. cit., p. 276.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 301. ⁶⁰ C. F. Evans, op. cit., p. 179.

- ⁶¹ H. Burhenn, Pannenberg's Doctrine of God (Scottish J. of Th., 1975, Vol. 28), p. 547.

 A. Danto, Analytical Philosophy of History (CUP, 1965).

68 F. E. Tupper, op. cit., p. 286.

64 H. Burhenn, op. cit., p. 539.

65 Theology and the Kingdom of God (Phil. 1969), p. 62.

- 66 A. Galloway, op. cit., p. 96.
- ⁶⁷ F. E. Tupper, op. cit., pp. 204, 287.
- 68 M. Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 225.
- Cf. K. Koch, op. cit., pp. 99f.
 Church Dogmatics, Vol. 11, Part 1, pp. 634ff.
- ¹¹ F. E. Tupper, op. cit., pp. 297f. Allan Galloway, op. cit., pp. 102ff., 122f.
- K. Koch, op. cit., p. 108.
 Cf. F. E. Tupper, p. 298. Also Norman Perri. Teaching of Jesus (Westminster, 1963), pp. 177f. Also Norman Perrin, The Kingdom of God in The
- 74 F. E. Tupper, ibid., p. 304.
 75 H. Burhenn, op. cit., pp. 542f.
 76 K. Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (Oxford Paperbacks, 1968), p. 30.
- W. Künneth, The Theology of the Resurrection (SCM, 1965), pp. 13-33 and p. 80.
 J. Robinson, Kerygma und historischer Jesus, p. 14.
- ⁷⁹ BQT, Vol. 1, p. 8. ⁸⁰ Ibid., 48f.

- bid., p. 52.
 C. F. Evans, op. cit., pp. 179f. For Pannenberg's argument see Jesus God and Man (SCM, 1968), pp. 88ff.
 Cf. discussion in F. E. Tupper, op. cit., pp. 278-281.
- 84 C. Braaten, op. cit., p. 46. 85 A. Galloway, op. cit., p. 76.
- 86 Jesus God and Man, pp. 321.
- 87 Ibid., pp. 135-138.
- 88 *Ibid.*, pp. 53-66.
 89 F. E. Tupper, *op. cit.*, p. 274.
- ⁹⁰ K. Koch, op. cit., pp. 106, 151.
- ⁹¹ Jesus God and Man, pp. 33ff.
- 98 Ibid., p. 284.
- 98 *Ibid.*, pp. 135ff.
- A. Galloway, p. 111.
- ⁹⁵ The Doctrine of the Spirit and the Task of a Theology of Nature, pp. 13-21.
- ⁹⁶ H. Burhenn, op. cit., p. 113. Cf. earlier reference to Hegel in the section of the Idea of God and the nature of truth.