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gnostic syncretism and idolatrous politics. All remain today and require a particular response on the part of God's people. At the same time, the mind-set which has produced today's social problems are the world structures of economic injustice and exploitation based on greed and the desire for power and security;

(iii) today's empirical Church demonstrates itself as belonging to God's people when it takes relevant action against each one of these manifestations of the *kosmos*, by proclaiming a Gospel of free grace, which is not cheap grace, and by struggling systematically to lessen the injustices of the social order (could we say that these actions are dependent respectively on a 'priestly' and 'prophetic' hermeneutic?);

(iv) the criteria of recognition cannot be given by the empirical Church (for it is not the Kingdom), but only by the signs of the new age manifested as the contradiction of the *kosmos*, represented as both *asebeia* and *adikia*.

The effective and ultimate bridge between the horizons, to whom the hermeneutical task has been committed by the Lord of the Church, is the people of God, the messianic community. On the one hand, the existence of the text presupposes the people of God and the Bible as already part of God's liberating acts in history; and on the other hand, the contemporary Church recognizes her true identity as she continually consults the original text about the meaning of her mission in the world. In between the two horizons the Church acknowledges a long tradition of Biblical interpretation and hermeneutical practice which may act as either a guide, or a warning, to her task.

The bridge between the horizons can be established, therefore, when this particular people of God listen to the text's communication through the input of the hermeneutical key of the two ages, or the Kingdom, and through the challenge of particular empirical manifestations of the rebellious *kosmos* today.

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Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: a Critical Evaluation

by CLARK H. PINNOCK

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 has come out in strong defence of several major themes of classical theology, including the deity, vicarious death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is projecting the most rigorous and ambitious programme 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 20th century Christian thought.

Whether we like it or not, German theologians have played a leading role in the creative theology of modern times and will go on doing so, at least until others of us challenge their leadership with work of equal quality and power. Meanwhile, the best thing evangelicals can do, if we hope to mature in thought and reflection, is to engage theologians of Pannenberg's stature in dialogue so as to sharpen our own tools and commitments. Pannenberg welcomes this interaction. He maintains an admirably open spirit toward criticism of his thought and an evident willingness to change in the interests of the truth.

Although he writes with clarity and force, Pannenberg is a formidable thinker for the average person to grasp. He often expresses his thought in long essays devoted to a single aspect of a question, subtle in argument and richly documented. Therefore we are deeply indebted to E. Frank Tupper, a professor at Southern p. 22 Baptist Seminary in Louisville, for giving us a serious, readable, systematic report on the full range of Pannenberg's ideas *Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Westminster, 1973). The book enjoys Pannenberg's own seal of approval. The simplest way for the initiate to get a direct introduction to the texture of Pannenberg's thought would be to read his book entitled *The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Today's Questions* (Westminster, 1972), the title of which points to his central concern: to submit historic Christian commitments to the test of critical thought. All that I can hope to accomplish in this short article is to highlight a few of the basic themes important both to Pannenberg and to us evangelicals.

A THEOLOGY OF REASON

Pannenberg's advocacy of a theology solidly based on reason is an identifying feature of his position. (His major study entitled *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* is, regrettably, not yet available as I write.) This emphasis is attributable in part to the fact that he underwent a rigorously intellectual conversion from atheism in his university days. Like C. S. Lewis and Malcolm Muggeridge, he travelled a path to Christ that entailed more rational reflection than Christian nurture or emotional crisis. Certainly, his concern from the first has been to oppose all forms of authoritarian theology and to espouse what we might call a 'university theology', open to criticism and intellectually aggressive. To use his own words, he wishes to demonstrate the powers of Christian truth 'to encompass all reality' and 'gather together everything experienced as real' (*Basic Questions in Theology,* II, 1f.). He is deeply hostile to the revolt against reason that has for decades characterized theology and made it a matter of interest only to a ghetto of initiated believers. His basic concern was expressed in another generation and context by L. Harold De Wolf in *The Religious Revolt Against Reason* (Harper, 1949).

Although he studied with Barth, Pannenberg reacted against him sharply on this question. Theology, Pannenberg insists, must subject its truth claims to the canons of rationality operative in the larger human community. It must be able to point to evidences supporting faith instead of only a bare, subjective decision. He is convinced that authoritarian claims are not acceptable in either political or intellectual life. Such claims in theology, he says, clothe p. 23 human ideas in the splendour of divine majesty and place them beyond the reach of critical examination. The result is that the content of theology becomes arbitrary and subjective. We must not, he insists, make the knowledge of God's truth dependent on a private revelation, available only to the members of an esoteric society with its own in-group linguistic symbols. To do this does not exalt the sovereignty of the self-revealing God, as is supposed; it simply directs attention away from God's

objective truth to man's own subjective understanding. Pannenberg's critique crashes down on all versions of dialectical theology; however, it is equally hard on evangelical theology, in so far as it too is often presented in the guise of an authoritarian claim.

Debate has been swirling around this matter of the relation between faith and reason for centuries. Pannenberg has simply emerged on one side of the discussion with a forceful and subtle proposal, attempting to reverse the irrationalist trend from Schleiermacher to Barth that derives revelation from the experience of faith rather than from reason's knowledge of history. If faith is placed in faith, and not in truth, how is faith to be distinguished from superstition or illusion? For Pannenberg, faith and reason are *co-essential dimensions* of the act of a total person. A split between them, or even a ranking of one over the other, is intolerable. He does not leave us under the tyranny of the expert, or with the arbitrary situation of faith projecting its own basis; he wants only to assert the legitimacy of reason's role in the decision of faith.

Pannenberg insists that the Hebrew concept of truth not be suppressed by the Greek view. He does not contrast Hebrew thought with Greek in a simplistic manner but rather calls our attention to the fact that truth for the Hebrews is something that *happens* and is not merely thought out. God's truth is proved to be true to the extent that his promises are realized. Truth thus shows itself in history, and is historic in a manner foreign to the Greek conception. Although the Israelite did not search for truth as a timeless reality behind appearances, he expected it to be proven reliable by the outcome of the future. In the light of this, it would be more accurate to say that Pannenberg has developed a theology of *historical* reason rather than reason *per se*, a point that becomes obvious in his view of revelation as history.

Before moving on to that point, we should note that, paradoxical though it may seem, even Pannenberg's stalwart defence of the p. 24 bodily resurrection of Jesus derives not from his orthodoxy but from his rationality! He is not motivated at all, as evangelicals often are, by a reverence for classical beliefs just because they are Biblical and traditional. He defends Christ's resurrection solely because it seems more reasonable to defend it than to deny it. The demands of the same reason that place him in opposition to a host of other critical scholars also lead him to reject the virgin birth of Christ, to consider many of the Christological titles in the Gospels as post-Easter intrusions, and to be sceptical about various and sundry details in the resurrection narratives.

Just because he insists so strongly that faith must rest on rationally tested foundations, Pannenberg must devote time to the doctrine of the Spirit, which many of his opponents in both dialectical and evangelical circles have used to support the notion of certainty that is inwardly experienced but not externally verified. He is convinced that the doctrine of the Spirit has been misused as 'a fig leaf to protect the nakedness of the Christian tradition from the questionings of modern critical thinking' (*Apostles' Creed*, p. 131). He thinks that scholars have appealed to the Spirit in order to immunize traditional positions against having to face up to critical objections, and to offer believers a cheap certainty indistinguishable from fanaticism.

It is clear that Pannenberg does not wish to deny that faith is the gift of God. What he is concerned to say is that faith cannot be indifferent about its basis, and should not be perverted into blind belief in some authority claim. By recognizing the objective truth content of faith, we rescue faith from the danger of perversion and acknowledge it to be a decision on the sound basis of reliable knowledge. The Spirit is not to be thought of as authenticating an otherwise unconvincing message, or adding to it the plus of personal inspiration. The Spirit of illumination does not create new truth but rather leads us to the truth that already exists in the proclamation of Jesus.

REVELATION AS HISTORY

A second major defining characteristic in Pannenberg's theology is the important shift from the self-authenticating *word* in dialectical theology to verifiable *history* as the key to the nature of revelation. Besides being directed against Barth's central emphasis on the Word P. 25 of God, this move is a rejection of both the liberal mysticism of religious experience and the orthodox idea that revelation consists chiefly of infallible doctrinal propositions.

In the seminal book that he edited entitled *Revelation as History*, originally published in 1961, Pannenberg expounded his concept of the indirect revelation of God through history, final and complete only at the end, but indicated in advance by Jesus and the vindication of his claim by the resurrection. He sets forth his highly original yet deeply convincing notion of revelation as history, open to all, located at the end, but realized in advance in what happened to Jesus. God does not unveil his essence to man directly but demonstrates his deity in historical events so that he may be recognized and trusted. In Pannenberg's words, 'In the destiny of Jesus the End of all history has happened in advance, as prolepsis.'

Lest we suppose that he fails to answer the inevitable criticisms raised against such a view, let us look deeper. What about the interpretations placed upon historical events? Do they not amount to a set of doctrines existentially derived?

Not according to Pannenberg, who rejects the sharp distinction between event and interpretation. For him the meaning of events inheres in them. Facts are always experienced in a context in which they have a made-to-order significance, which we discover by casting about in the context of the events themselves. For example, we discover the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus, not by producing an authoritarian interpretation, but by asking what resurrection signified in the Hebrew tradition and to Jesus. Of course, the same event may mean different things to different people, but the process is still not merely a subjective one, because there are objective methods by which to determine and settle the various interpretations offered.

Pannenberg's aim in this is not to deny the importance of word alongside event but to dispute the commonly held idea that the word has a non-historical and basically experiential origin. In this, he is lining up with the theology of Gerhard von Rad, who also advocates seeing the acts of God in the context of the history of Israelite traditions. Pannenberg wishes to refute the idea that the revelatory meaning of the activity of God in history is available only to faith and not inherent in the activity itself, which would make it autonomous and finally ahistorical. Rather than conceiving revelation as the union of event with a supplementary illumination p. 26 by the Spirit, he sees it as Spirit-directed events, already defined in their original context and continually explicated in the history of the transmission of traditions. Pannenberg does not reject the category 'Word of God' except in its isolated use, outside the unity of event and word. To split up the detection of facts and the evaluation of them is intolerable to him: it makes the Christian message ultimately a human subjective interpretation, and it is the result of a poor historical method.

The startling result of Pannenberg's argument is to make an ally rather than an enemy out of critical history, a *tour de force* by any standard. He intends to rest faith firmly upon historical knowledge rather than upon private revelations or authority claims that have no solid basis. He is well aware that the results achieved by the use of historical evidence are only probable at best, but he holds probable knowledge to be the basis of all human decisions and compatible with the trustful certainty of faith. In any case he cannot see how religious experience or authority can come up with anything more certain or more

probable than this. As for the standard sceptical argument that miracles do not occur and that no amount of evidence could convince the person who is sceptical of the resurrection of Jesus, Pannenberg simply unfolds a carefully wrought historical methodology of his own in which he shows the *a priori* and therefore unacceptable character of such a historical dogma. Again, he defends the possibility of miracle, not in the name of orthodoxy, but with the tools of a properly conceived rationality.

REVELATION AS SCRIPTURE

Although the evangelical reader appreciates Pannenberg's integrating of word and event into the unity of divine revelation, he is forced to ask further about the *locus* and authority of the word-component. He does this not just because it is the conservative's reflex to do so, but because he sees a weak concept of Scripture leading into the very subjectivity that Pannenberg abhors.

Pannenberg repudiates Biblical infallibility on two grounds. The first is that he interprets it in terms of an authoritarian commitment to the sacrosanct truth of the Bible, independent of rational checks. He opposes, not verbal revelation *per se*, but verbal revelation vouchsafed to a select community that alone recognizes it as p. 27 such on the basis of an inward experience. Were he to confront Warfield's position that, just as Jesus' claim to authority was confirmed by his resurrection, so also was his claim for the divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures—an extension of Pannenberg's own historical apologetic—I cannot believe his position on infallibility would be so decisive.

Nevertheless, we cannot overlook his second reason for rejecting it: that critical difficulties in the text also preclude understanding the Bible as the infallible Word of God (*Basic Questions in Theology*, I, 1–14). The only way to dispel his fears on this point is to show by means of patient Biblical scholarship that the difficulties that arise in connection with the text do not refute Biblical infallibility, which is itself soundly based on the testimony of accredited Biblical spokesmen, including Jesus himself (cf. J. W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, Inter-Varsity, 1972).

A lingering doubt in the evangelical's mind over the theology of Pannenberg relates to a certain depreciation of the category 'Word of God'. It is not that he eliminates it from his thought; in fact, he includes it together with event in an integral way that may improve our own understanding. The problem is that, because of his unnecessary equation of verbal revelation with authoritarianism, he has difficulty giving full weight to the concept of revelation as word, which is nonetheless as prominent in Scripture as revelation in history is. It is simply impossible to subsume under his category 'revelation as history' substantial portions of the Bible such as the wisdom literature, or to incorporate in it so central an experience as God's speaking to Moses before, during, and after the historic deliverance called the Exodus.

My reservations about the 'revelation as history' formula are intended not to invalidate it but to call attention to event and word, which are both genuinely God's acts, the twin foci of his redemptive dealings with mankind. Event and word are to be kept inseparably together and each given full weight and value. The fully Biblical concept of revelation includes the mighty acts of God in history, transmitted through a uniquely inspired medium of interpretation by accredited prophets and apostles. Not to do justice to this full Biblical pattern will lead, almost inevitably, to an undercutting of dogmatic theology through a dissolution of the canon that gives it its norms.

Pannenberg is right to insist, as Warfield also allowed, that even p. 28 without inspired Scripture a true knowledge of the divine purpose would still exist as a result of the impact of the divine actions that have irrevocably taken place already in world history. But he is

wrong to imply that divine revelation in fact exists without such an inscripturation when the promise and reality of this divine gift, too, is abundantly plain. Because of his refusal thus far to acknowledge the normativity of the Scriptures over human thought, Pannenberg is forced to make his own reconstruction of the event and meaning of revelation canonical, with all the uncertainty and subjectivity that implies, at least for us.

We evangelicals do not ask that Pannenberg forsake his stance of critical honesty, which we ourselves strive for. We ask simply that due respect be granted to the gift God has so evidently given: inspired written Scriptures, the capstone of that anticipatory revelation which has come to light through Jesus.

JESUS AND THE KINGDOM

In his theology Pannenberg places tremendous stress on the future, seeing in the concept of the coming Kingdom of God the most important truth about reality, a truth that overshadows all others. According to Jesus' message, the future is not an enemy to be feared but the blessed goal toward which history is moving under the hand of God. For some time New Testament scholars have been aware of the apocalyptic element in the teaching of Jesus, but they have been uncertain what to do with it. The idea of an end event in which all the dead are raised and the glory of God is finally revealed for all to see seemed strange to modern thinking and a point of embarrassment to the exegetes.

True to his calling as the reverser of theological trends, Pannenberg has intervened in the discussion, arguing boldly that this very motif in the teaching of Jesus must be recovered as the key of the whole Christian message even for today. Jesus was open to the future God had promised, and calls all men to faith and hope. In a final event at the end of history, God will be vindicated as God of all peoples, and the hopeful longing of all the ages will finally be realized.

Pannenberg has managed to hoist apocalyptic out of oblivion and give it an honoured place in a systematic theology of universal history. One might hope that the centres of interest in prophecy and p. 29 apocalyptic in North American evangelicalism will take note of Pannenberg's contribution in defence of their concerns, and allow him to teach them how to relate their insights to a broader theological context and in a more obviously intelligible and relevant way.

As to the person of Jesus, Pannenberg insists that we develop a 'Christology from below'. This simply means that, instead of starting with preconceived notions derived from authoritative sources such as creeds or even epistles, we should begin with the man Jesus himself and strive to understand what he proclaimed about his own significance. Fortunately Pannenberg, unlike Bultmann, is quite optimistic about what we can discover about the life and ministry of Jesus. The knowledge gained in such an investigation is clear and definite enough, he thinks, to permit confident conclusions that can serve as an anchor for reasoning faith. As a result of his study, Pannenberg presents Jesus asserting a claim to divine authority in the context of preaching the Kingdom of God, a claim that had to be either blasphemy or else the true fulfilment of the promises of God. But this claim to an authority belonging only to God was linked to Jesus' expectation that God would vindicate him in the near future by the coming of the Kingdom and the resurrection of the dead; it was not a bare authoritarian claim devoid of all truth conditions.

Pannenberg's handling of the death of Jesus is much less satisfactory. Although I am grateful for his emphasis on vicarious substitution, I am troubled by his insistence that Jesus had no clear preconception of the significance of the death that lay before him, and was not an active agent in that death. The theology of atonement and sacrifice in the Gospels was read back into the life of Jesus by the post-Easter community, Pannenberg

claims. This view exposes not only Pannenberg's slight regard for apostolic Scripture but also the depth of his radical criticism, which can excise from the text of the Gospels as fundamental an element as the suffering-servant-of-God motif in the life of Jesus. Jesus' final visit to Jerusalem apparently was not to offer himself as a sacrifice for sins; it was only to precipitate a decision regarding his claim about the nearness of the Kingdom and about his own centrality in anticipation of it. The interpretation of his death in terms of atonement was arrived at later. Therefore, Pannenberg strives to expound the meaning of that death on the basis of severely edited Gospels and apart from the rich teaching about the cross in canonical p. 30 Gospel and epistle. Given that limitation, I suppose we should admire the results all the more!

But this view leaves Jesus' execution basically unforeseen, and therefore unclarified in its essential relation to what Jesus did proclaim and, strictly speaking, unnecessary to his mission. It cannot satisfy those who glory in Christ's cross and treasure the teaching of the apostles and, we trust, of Christ himself on it. It does not seem reasonable to me, if I may appeal to Pannenberg's norm, to divest Jesus of the awareness he so obviously possessed as the soon-to-be-offered sacrificial lamb of God.

ON THE THIRD DAY ...

On the subject of the bodily resurrection, Pannenberg's optimism about the results of 'life of Jesus' research extends to unheard-of lengths, at least in the circles of academic theology. He boldly contends, to evangelical applause, that the resurrection of Jesus can be validated by historical research. In this he contradicts a virtual dogma held by liberal critics, dialectical theologians, and every shade of fideist. Before Pannenberg, the most a prominent theologian could be expected to say was that the resurrection was an event of history; that alone would win him a chorus of abuse from the Bultmann school and other sceptics in the Church and outside it. But to go on and say that the resurrection can be proved to have occurred is breathtakingly bold: it refutes all positivists who see history as a closed system of natural causes and effects and at the same time rebukes a multitude of timid Christian thinkers who retreated decades ago into the safe haven of unverifiable 'salvation history'. For this single achievement, Pannenberg deserves our undying praise and gratitude. Of course, some evangelical scholars have said as much before, but critical scholarship was affected by our weak initiatives about as much as a lion is terrified by a BB gun. At last a major, respected theologian has said it.

And Pannenberg, being the scholar that he is, does not leave it at the level of a bare assertion. He pursues the point at great depth, offering an extensive historical argument in defence of the resurrection and detailing an entire alternative historical methodology that makes room for such a case *(Jesus—God and Man*, Westminster, 1968, Chap. 3). While not suggesting that the issue is beyond controversy, Pannenberg believes that the historical evidence sustains p. 31 the credibility of the Christian message beyond reasonable doubt. Furthermore, he rejects the cynical objection—by Schubert Ogden, for example—that the resurrection, even if it did happen, would mean nothing to modern man. Pannenberg argues strongly for its significance: it validates Jesus' claim, signifies the inbreaking of the Kingdom, and shows that the covenant with Israel is now open to all the nations. Above all, it signifies fulfilment to man, whose being is structured in such a way that he hopes for salvation beyond death.

Obviously, according to Pannenberg, Jesus is a unique person if he claimed divine authority, was raised bodily from the tomb, and is expected to reign in judgement in the coming Kingdom of God. What then is Pannenberg's understanding of the person of Jesus?

The title of his weighty book on Christology, *Jesus—God and Man*, shows quite clearly that he wishes to affirm the two natures of Christ in one person. However, his method of working from Jesus outward, rather than starting with creeds or even epistles, means that Pannenberg attempts to formulate his own statement in terms arising from the historical situation of Jesus' mission. We cannot blame him for that; we wish him well. Pannenberg therefore emphasizes Jesus' communion with God, expressed in his utter obedience to him; this relationship exhibits an identity with the eternal Son or Logos, who eternally stands in this position with the Father. In this way Pannenberg hopes to conceive of the deity of Christ without violating his true humanity.

His efforts in Christology, I think we should recognize, spring not from any impulse to deny the orthodox confession but, quite the opposite, from a strong desire to ground belief in the deity of Christ in original Biblical categories rather than veiling it in more dubious Greek terminology. But this effort, coupled with his reluctance to make use of the rich materials on Christology found in the apostolic writings (a reluctance that springs from his inadequate doctrine of Scripture noted above), inevitably results in some hesitancy and unanswered questions. Yet there is no doubt in my mind that Pannenberg views Jesus' relation to the Father as unique, and that he believes we gain a relationship with God only through communion with him and in hope of the resurrection.

What then is his view of other world religions? In a context of increasing pluralism, this is a question that anyone who, like p. 32 Pannenberg, holds to the finality of Jesus must answer. Can the unevangelized, for example, share in the benefits of Christ's reign, or are they automatically excluded from his Kingdom?

Pannenberg develops two ideas bearing on the issue. First, he argues, in a long essay entitled *Toward a Theology of the History of Religions*, that we should regard other religions not as mere fabrications of man's striving after God but as occasions of the appearance of the same God who revealed himself through Jesus, though they may present him in a fragmentary way, even at times resisting the infinity of the divine mystery *(Basic Questions in Theology*, II, 115f.). Secondly, looking to I Peter 3:19 and 4:6, he argues that salvation is made available in the realm of the dead to those who during their lifetimes never encountered Jesus or the Gospel message. The meaning of Jesus' descent into hell in the Apostles' Creed according to Pannenberg is that the salvation he achieved applies also to the vast multitudes who never came into contact with his story. This view point, I suspect, does not divide evangelicals from Pannenberg so much as it divides evangelicals among themselves. I myself find it basically acceptable.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

With Pannenberg there is no 'death of God' nonsense. Everything hinges on the reality of the sovereign God who has raised Jesus and promised to bring in his Kingdom. In another sharp contrast to Barth, Pannenberg also develops a kind of natural theology without calling it that, based not upon the classical 'proofs' of God's existence but on the nature of man as one open to the future and filled with hope for ultimate salvation. In this Pannenberg is endeavouring to establish a universal point of contact, a preliminary knowledge of God that the Gospel can presuppose. Anthropology is the sphere in which he thinks the question of God arises, and Pannenberg is optimistic that a point of contact can be established with all men in this way. We may expect greater development in this area of his thought.

In understanding God's being, Pannenberg is boldly innovative in conceiving God as the 'power of the future', and at the same time soundly traditional in defending an essential trinity in the eternal being of God. If Jesus was raised from the dead, and is a

revelation of the essence of the true God to be finally manifest at the end p. 33 of history, it follows that the distinction experienced between Father and Son in Jesus' earthly life belongs also to the inner life of God. His serious effort at constructing a viable trinitarian dogma for our time is welcome, and it reveals the essential orthodoxy of his theology. Here is no liberal theologian setting aside the Trinity, or treating it as a mere appendix to the system. Pannenberg can fairly be compared with Athanasius and Augustine, Calvin and Barth, for like them he strives to exalt the triune God and to preserve the divine origin of our divine salvation through Father, Son, and Spirit.

But in the same breath, and without withdrawing my respect, I must register a strong protest at some of the unwise modes of expression Pannenberg has used to draw attention to the importance of the future. I have reference to his striking notion of 'the futurity of God,' in which he is determined to connect God's deity with his rule. 'The being of God is his lordship'. Therefore, until the rule of God is universally established, in a certain sense 'God does not yet exist'. *(Theology and the Kingdom of God*, Westminster, 1969, p. 56.) Fortunately, Pannenberg later explains his meaning. The end of history will *reveal* God's deity, which until then will remain wrapped in considerable mystery. The future will make evident what has been true all along. If that is his meaning, he would be wise to avoid expressions that obscure it, especially when process theology delights in seeing God as still developing.

There are rich benefits in store for those prepared to enter into dialogue with Pannenberg. A theological genius of his calibre, particularly one who expresses so strong a commitment to the basic Biblical message and expects it to be vindicated in the face of all criticism, is a rare occurrence. Perhaps we ought to note, too, that his theology is not the labour of a solitary scholar working alone but has developed out of a team effort: he and other scholars from various disciplines met together, especially in the early years, to hammer out their positions. Likewise the evangelical theology we need, if it is to prove adequate for our day, will not be written by a 'prima donna' but will arise out of a communal effort.

In essence, Pannenberg's theology is a creative synthesis of the classical Biblical themes and a modern critical posture. That accounts for both the delight and discomfort we feel in our interaction with him. But evangelical theology, represented by *Christianity Today*, is not a monolithic and normative confessional position that can easily serve as a measuring rod for evaluating a theology p. 34 like Pannenberg's. Our roots are legion: Calvinist, Lutheran, Anabaptist, Wesleyan, dispensational, pentecostal, and others linked together by a shared respect for the givenness of divine revelation and the finality of canonical Biblical teaching and by our experience of the grace and command of the Scriptural God. Because our precious unity masks so much important disunity, we cannot with a single voice reply to Pannenberg's thought. His development of a theology of reason, for example, exposes a considerable rift among ourselves, delighting the wing of evangelical opinion that advocates a strengthening of our rational apologetic, and infuriating a fideistic wing that feels something vital is being lost.

The point most certain to gain widespread approval among evangelicals is one that charges Pannenberg with neglecting the inspiration and authority of the Bible, using it only as a historical source, and not submitting to its full cognitive authority. But in most of the other areas, we should think of Pannenberg not as a theologian to refute so much as a respected teacher in the Church who has a great deal to teach us, not least in the singlemindedness and love of the truth he displays in his pursuit of the theological task.

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Black Theology and African Theology

by BYANG H. KATO

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INTRODUCTION

I AM addressing you as a Christian African. As a Christian, I have had the experience of new life in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ and his Word, the Bible, come first and foremost in my life. This experience is a categorical imperative for me and other Christians. It is an experience that I would recommend to everyone, and it is possible for anyone to share in this experience.

As an African Christian, I empathize sincerely with all my fellow Africans under any type of bondage, be it spiritual or physical. It is my sincere prayer that the exploited Africans under any regime on our continent will soon find justice and liberation. But my greatest concern is for the three hundred million Africans who have not had the experience of Jesus Christ. It is therefore the responsibility of the 60 million African Christians to share Christ with this vast majority so that they might find true eternal liberation. The main purpose of this paper is to re-emphasize the Christian message and its relevance to contemporary Africa, as opposed to the confusing voices we hear today.

Let me first point out that Black Theology is different from African Theology, though the two concepts are not mutually exclusive.

Black Theology which became evident among the blacks of the United States of America in the 1960s seeks to emphasize black consciousness and thereby discover the dignity of the black man. Black consciousness does not necessarily mean the pigmentation of the skin. Rather, it means an awareness that the particular class of people called black, have been oppressed. 'It is the liberating p. 36 effect of this self-knowledge and awareness that we refer to as Black Consciousness,' writes Nyameko Pityana of Fort Hare University, South Africa.[1] Dr. McVeigh of Nairobi University accurately sums up the concept of Black Theology when he says, 'The primary concern of Black Theology is liberation, and one sees considerable attention devoted to defining the implications of Jesus' Gospel for the downtrodden in the face of entrenched political, social and economic injustice.'[2]

African Theology lays emphasis on the dignity of the African by playing up African culture and African traditional religions. It does not stress blackness or liberation as such. Some of its proponents definitely point out that African Theology is different from Christian Theology. Dr. J. K. Agbeti of Ghana writes, 'The idea of "African Theology" seems

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[1] *Black Theology*, p. 60.

[2] *Presence*, Vol. V, No. 3, 1972, p. 2.