THE THEOLOGY OF W PANNENBERG

A TRINITARIAN SYNTHESIS

TIM BRADSHAW
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by

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ISBN 1-870137-05-1

Published by Theological Students Fellowship
38 De Montfort Street
Leicester LE1 7GP

First published February 1988

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This is not an exhaustive list of Pannenberg's publications but a note of his major works with some comment on which will give an introduction to his theology.

*Revelation as History.* A symposium edited by Pannenberg with two seminal essays by him outlining his position on this topic. (New York/London, 1969)

*Theology and the Kingdom of God.* Four essays by Pannenberg of which chapter I is a fine overview of his system, edited by Richard John Neuhaus who gives a good profile of Pannenberg by way of introduction. (Philadelphia, 1969)


*Jesus - God and Man.* Pannenberg's classic Christology, heavyweight and very worthwhile. (London, 1968)


*Theology and the Philosophy of Science.* Pannenberg's large work examining mutual scientific, hermeneutical and theological presuppositions and their mutual interplay. (London, 1976)

*Anthropology in Theological Perspective.* Pannenberg's magnum opus on man. (Philadelphia/Edinburgh, 1985)

*Grundfragen systematischer Theologie, band 2.* A very important collection of essays, as yet not translated, emphasising Pannenberg's trinitarianism. (Gottingen, 1980)

*Theology as History.* Edited by Robinson and Cobb, these essays form a dialogue between Pannenberg and several American critics, with a very useful introductory appraisal from Robinson. (New York, 1967)

INTRODUCTION

This booklet aims to provide a wide-ranging account of Pannenberg's theological system and to offer some critical appraisal of it. His theology demands attention on several counts, not least of which being his great effort to unite the orthodox Christian tradition with radical modern thought. Pannenberg wants to 'break the mould' of theology, to get away from the conservative versus liberal division, and to make a new type of system incorporating the best of both worlds. Anyone with so serious an aim and such learning as this Lutheran thinker must be listened to attentively. As a post World War II German theologian he stands for something distinctive and new. Often linked with Moltmann, who is Reformed as opposed to Pannenberg's Lutheran affiliation, they both seek to reinterpret Biblical apocalyptic for today in a way which takes history seriously. Pannenberg has a philosophical gunnery to match his biblical and dogmatic learning, and he often targets his criticism upon the philosophy of atheistic secular man: such a world-view, for Pannenberg, is untenable. His work has therefore an apologetic strain running through it: he is convinced that theology can and must appeal to 'the cultured despisers of religion', to the head as well as the heart. Behind this lies the conviction that God is the 'all-determining reality', the maker of all things and events including our reason and interpretative capacity. Faith and reason, therefore, should not be rent asunder, on theological grounds as well as philosophical.

In his justly famous Jesus - God and Man Pannenberg uses the slogan 'from below' to describe this concern to unite reason and revelation, to reconnect what he feels has been torn asunder. But Pannenberg is no old-style liberal, reducing revelation to the efforts of purely human thought and value. Pannenberg's theology never was 'from below' in the common liberal sense of making human autonomous reason and value the criterion of theology. Pannenberg's theology of 'above' and 'below' never permitted this possibility: he has always stressed in the strongest possible way that these two aspects of reality are not to be seen as divorced or as isolable. Indeed his whole theological programme may justifiably be regarded as a consistent attempt to integrate the human and the divine while doing justice to both. The dimension of 'below' itself already involves the 'above' or the divine dimension, although as we shall soon see this model of below and above is itself radically reworked by Pannenberg.

The way he proposes to beat out this apparently new and exciting path in theology is through a particular world-view, a particular way of understanding the inter-relatedness of everything. Divine and human, faith and reason, past and future, general history and revelation history, all these are examples of polarities welded together in Pannenberg's synthesis. Perhaps the best introduction to this view, a view with roots in German idealist thought, is to plunge the reader
into the last pages of the first edition of his *Jesus - God and Man*:

‘At the same time, Jesus in his dedication to the Father and to his mission to humanity is also in some sense exemplary for the structure of every individual event. Everything is what it is only in transition to something other than itself; nothing exists for itself. Every particularity possesses its truth in its limit, through which it is not only independent but is also taken up into a greater whole.’

Pannenberg teaches that every datum of reality and truth is inwardly related to all other such ‘events’ in the continuum of the whole of world history; the boundaries of being and thought are really porous. Moreover the whole is not merely the sum of these individual parts but, on the model of something organic rather than mechanical, the whole breathes life and meaning into the individual particulars while the latter are of the very essence of the former.

The passage continues: ‘Through giving up its particularity, everything is mediated with the whole, and transcending its finitude, with God who nevertheless wanted this particularity to exist within the whole of his creation.’ The individual particulars of historical being and thought go beyond themselves to be taken into the source of life. ‘That which lives must go outside of itself in order to maintain itself; it finds its existence outside itself,’ continues Pannenberg in this elaboration of his dynamically unitive synthesis: all individuality is qualified very radically in favour of the whole and this total finite fabric cannot be assigned any final independence over against the absolute which draws all things into its essence. It has always been Pannenberg’s contention that human thought is, likewise, essentially related to objective being; as in all versions of Hegelian thought the real is rational and humanity participates in the objective rationality of the universe rather than standing over against it. He continues developing his doctrine of the relativity of being by applying it consistently to knowing as well as to being, to epistemology as well as to ontology: ‘At the highest level the same is true of human subjectivity, namely it must empty itself to the world and the “Thou” in order to win itself in the other. Jesus’ saying about losing and finding life... has universal ontological significance.’

This demonstrates with crystal clarity Pannenberg’s doctrine of the relatedness of all being and all knowing, of the ‘below’ and the ‘above’, of the finite and the infinite. His whole system depends on this radical relativity and his special impress on this worldview is that all things and ideas originate in the future and flow from there into the present. Indeed on this basis Pannenberg interprets God’s relationship to the world in a trinitarian way. This monograph will seek to show that Pannenberg’s more recent works,
notably the collection of articles in the (untranslated) *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie* band 2 emphasise strongly his own brand of a trinitarian framework and the vital place it has in his system. Pannenberg has not changed his position in this respect but is rather spelling out more obviously what has been true all along. It is probably important to say now that Pannenberg's trinitarianism is of a quite different type to that of classical theology.

In order to follow Pannenberg's train of thought let us start by explaining his idea of revelation.
A PANNEBERG'S CRITIQUE OF ANCIENT AND MODERN VIEWS OF REVELATION

Pannenberg threw down the challenge of his new theological orientation in the symposium he edited entitled Revelation as History, which contains essays from various theological disciplines each articulating a common theological programme. Pannenberg's should be read together to gain the clearest exposition of the programme of the 'Pannenberg Circle'. The title of the book gives us the basic thrust of the approach: revelation and history are not to be treated as two entirely different entities separated by an infinite qualitative distinction, the one breaking into the other. For Pannenberg they are rather two sides of the same coin; history is at once sacred and profane.

The weakness of modern theological method for Pannenberg is that it adopts a narrowly individualistic, experience-based world view. Such a theological base has sold out to modernism of the kind that refuses to consider anything not measurable in terms of sense experience and has turned inwards to find any ground for Christian talk of God. It had become academically unfashionable in such circles to speak of an objective God with a real involvement in the world. Our religious experience alone, cut away from its traditional objective roots, was left as the content of faith and as its own anchor. Pannenberg regards much contemporary theological method, therefore, as having funnelled itself back into the narrowest possible experiential standpoint. It has cut itself off from the truths to be gained from studying history and nature, and from the objective revelation of God.

In particular the kerygmatic theological approach of the Bultmann school, depending on the individual's sense of the 'Word event to me now', coupled to a dogmatic historical scepticism over the New Testament, has emptied the historical content of revelation and its multiform significance into individual experience. Bultmann's programme of demythologising reinterprets the text in terms only of the impact of the Gospel message in the heart of the listener, exclusively in terms of the feeling of being justified by faith, while cutting away the objective source of this experience. We seem to be left with the Lutheran experience of judgement and grace minus the Lutheran reason for it! In terms of our knowing, or epistemology, this is reductivist: it reduces what is divinely revealed and understandable to a mere product of human pietistic feeling, and exalts secularist thinking. In terms of being, or ontology, such theology imports a hidden form of deistic dualism because God in himself is banished as a reality from the world and from history. Pannenberg's analysis here is keen and telling: the inheritance of
the Enlightenment and of Kantian thought has been both to exalt man as the yardstick of the universe and also to divorce man from true contact with the world of nature and history. The logical outcome can readily be seen, for example, in the work of Don Cupitt. This is the terrible anthropocentric plight of modern theological method, for which revelation can only amount to a blik, a highly individual conviction about individual authenticity which cannot be reasonably supported by reference to the world about us, nor is it given as an objective revelation by a God who makes himself known. ‘The emancipation of historicity from history’, he says in his critique of the existentialising method, ‘the reversal of the relationship between the two so that history is grounded in the historicity of man - this seems to be the end of the way which began when modern man made man instead of God the one who bears history.’

Moreover, modernist theology has used the reductivist razor to pare away the unusual or miraculous from the content of revelation in history. Pannenberg vigorously criticises the naturalistic grid imposed on revelation history by the existentialist theology and by liberalism. He rejects the doctrine that nothing can in principle happen in time which is new or unique. On the contrary, he argues that history is constantly bringing the unpredictable into being and that it is not a logical presupposition that all events must conform to a monochrome type. ‘The cognitive power of analogy depends upon the fact that it teaches us to see contents of the same kind in non-homogeneous things. If the historian keeps his eye on the non-exchangeable individuality and cogency of an event, then he will see that he is dealing with non-homogenous things, which cannot be contained without remainder in any analogy’. In other words there is room in the world for the new and previously unknown, and indeed we assume this in that we expect to learn and come across fresh ideas and events. Pannenberg does not wish to abolish analogy as a useful historical critical method but declines to accept ‘the omnipotence of analogy’ as a metaphysical principle or systematic view of how things are, because this is to level and make the same the complex variety of history. Yes it is useful and essential to compare ideas and events, to find analogies between them, but this continuity and sameness must not obscure the discontinuities and differences, in particular the previously unknown which breaks the pattern known hitherto. Similarity is acknowledged but Pannenberg attacks the move from there to ruling out on principle what cannot be accounted for on purely ‘natural’ grounds: that is merely another way of saying that an event has not happened before in our experience, and it becomes a claim every bit as dogmatic as that of the most fervent supernaturalist.

Pannenberg here makes the same kind of point against modernist theological method as that articulated by the sociologist Peter Berger in his chapter ‘Relativising the relativisers’, in that he is arguing that the naturalistic or positivistic world view of much Western Twentieth-Century thought ought not itself to become so
privileged as to gain the status of a metaphysical given. The relativity of thought and event, and their similarity, logically is no reason for excluding the previously unheard of. The unpredictability of the history of the world's events and ideas shows that there is room for what is novel.

At the same time Pannenbera is keen to emphasise his commitment to a post-Enlightenment methodology which cannot substitute an a priori commitment of faith for the historical and hermeneutical methods of contemporary critical thought. If he rejects the existentialising of the theology of revelation he is equally severe on conservative theologies of the Word and faith. Barth's theology of the revelatory Word, separated off from any possibility of rational or historical preamble, is judged to be a kind of ghetto mentality or even a version of gnosticism, in that knowledge is asserted which is closed to those outside the privileged circle of faith. This, for Pannenbera, is simply irresponsible and authoritarian; it refuses the responsibility of explaining itself to the world at large. Pannenbera cannot, likewise, accept the claim that the Bible must be accorded a specially privileged status in world literature by a claim of faith. No more can he accept the idea that the history of Israel and the Church ought to be seen as redemption history as a presupposition. It would be a major mistake to think that, because some of his theological and historical conclusions seem to agree with conservative opinion, Pannenbera works with a conservative method. He is as keen a critic of conservatism as of more polemically inclined radical theologians, and his historical-critical approach brooks no claims to immunity. He insists upon an open, unified, universal field of knowledge, and discards the idea that there is a spiritual route to theological knowledge which by-passes or even runs parallel to secular ways.

Pannenbera, then, criticises both ancient and modern views of revelation and theological method. Much of his fascination lies in his effort to go beyond these positions and to reach a new post-Kantian synthesis, taking forward what is valid from all theological enterprise of the past, while rejecting what will no longer stand up to historical and philosophical scrutiny. From the liberal traditions he accepts the need to justify the faith to all cultured despisers of religions in contemporary modes of thought; from the tradition of theologies of the Word, notably the Barthian variant, Pannenbera takes the idea of revelation as crucial. Revelation is best defined as God's self-disclosure, a definition he traces to Barth but beyond him to the absolute idealist school of philosophy of Nineteenth-Century Germany, particularly to Philip Marheinecke.

Pannenbera accepts the theological correctness in holding that God's revelation, his unique self-disclosure, cannot be brought before the bar of human reason for validation: God is God and is not the product of human value or ratiocination. Pannenbera wants to go beyond liberal anthropocentrism, man-centredness, without discarding
unfettered critical thought, and also to go beyond previous notions of a high doctrine of revelation without discarding the deity of status. But how can he begin to hold together these hitherto incompatible thrusts, the rational and the revelational? He poses the question neatly:

'Is there a way out of this dilemma? Obviously there is a way only if the claim of Christian proclamation to derive from an experience of God does not remain a mere assertion but is capable of verification. This need not involve a court of appeal prior to the biblical revelation of God before which the latter would have to legitimate itself. Such a court of appeal would be incompatible with majesty of divine revelation. Christian speech about God can be verified only in such a way that it is the revelation of God itself which discloses that about man and his world in relation to which its truth is proved.'

Pannenberg seeks a theology which allows critical reason to range freely into the ghetto areas of faith, and at the same time he maintains that God's historical revelation cannot be subordinated to human thought. This enterprise of uniting the liberal and conservative concerns in a fresh synthesis is most ambitious. He is trying to do justice to the human and to the divine factors in a way appropriate to the holiness and freedom of God and to the insistent probings of free human enquiry. How can he begin to attempt this? His programme centres around his notion of indirect self-revelation.
B. INDIRECT SELF-REVELATION.

In Pannenberg's opinion, the correct understanding of revelation is that of self-disclosure along the lines of Barth's theology: revelation involves the very essence of God being given to humanity. The act of the self-revealing God is not to be separated from his being. God reveals himself and does not merely pretend to do so. Revelation is the genuine self-expression of God. As Pannenberg puts it:

'One can think of revelation in the strict sense only if the special means by which God becomes manifest, or the particular act by which he proves himself, is not seen as distinct from his essence.'

The medium of revelation is united with its essence. This also means that God's revelation is properly unique in that, if God has revealed himself in essence, any further disclosure is ruled out: revelation implies a fullness because God actually invests his being in his revelatory act. Strictly speaking there can be only a single event of revelation: 'the theologians who speak of a variety of revelations do not take the concept in the strict sense that Barth does.'

So far Pannenberg clearly is heavily influenced by Barth and, most interestingly, regards Barth as drawing from the deep and dark wells of German idealism in his doctrine of the unity of revelatory essence and act. But, as has been said already, Pannenberg cannot go along with theologies of the in breaking Word speaking directly to people. Here therefore he breaks with Barth and seeks to take forward his contribution along with apparently contradictory emphases expressed in the liberal and historicist traditions. This in itself is noteworthy: Pannenberg operates synthetically and is very aware of his place in time: he wants to bring together apparent opposites thrown up in the recent past in the growth of the theological tradition. Pannenberg can now act as a crucible to unify, to go beyond, to carry forward the history of thought into a new form. To refer back to the quotation used in the introduction above, Pannenberg's view is that events in the history of thought and fact are always going outside of themselves and creating new configurations of meaning and truth.

To avoid what he considers the authoritarian irrationalism of the Barthian or Bultmannian stress on the direct encounter of the Word, both of which have cut the links with the everyday field of knowledge in favour of a faith-only position based on the direct impact of divine revelation, Pannenberg argues that revelation is indeed the very being of God disclosing himself to us, but indirectly. This at first seems contradictory because if we know God genuinely, not merely information about God, then we seem bound to accept that our knowledge of God will be 'person to person', 'I and
Thou' knowledge. To know the real God seems to involve an existential directness. This is all the more likely in that Pannenberg insists on the identification of the medium of revelation with the revealer. God reveals himself essentially yet indirectly. 'Instead of a direct self-revelation of God the facts at this point indicate a conception of indirect self-revelation as a reflex of his activity in history. The totality of his speech and activity, the history brought about by God, shows who he is in an indirect way.'

Pannenberg says that the whole of history constitutes divine self-disclosure in an essential or ontological way. This means that revelation is divine self-investment while its content can be perceived only indirectly: the indirectness touches the manner of our perception of God's revelation, which is that of interpretation with all the range of critical and hermeneutical reasoning and appraisal involved therein. Pannenberg has shifted the predominant model of revelatory communication from that of interpersonal, audible speech to that of historical hermeneutical puzzling and brooding over data set in context. The very content of revelation requires careful consideration and reflection to be realised and recognised: this is the indirectness involved in 'revelation as history'. It is the indirectness of reasonable interpretative consideration being exercised upon historical data.

It might be worth noting at this point that this is an element which conservative theology might well wish to underwrite in that it affirms revelation not only as a 'Word event' encountering us 'now', but also as having a cognitive content which requires serious interpretative wrestling; the major difference we can note here is that the conservative, Evangelical or Catholic, has the more narrowly-defined text dealing with a more narrowly-defined stream of history with which to wrestle, in the first instance if not the last.

It must be stressed early that for Pannenberg this indirect appropriation of revelatory universal history is to be carried out with normal human rational powers: he strongly rejects the idea of the illuminating Spirit enabling revelation to be perceived in a special way, a way different that is from ordinary secular understanding. The objective reality of revelation is historical in the universally recognised manner and, correspondingly, the subjective reality of revelation is the same as for general historical understanding and insight. Pannenberg claims that revelation of the essentially active God is read on the face of the record of the process of history; indeed he claims that history does not make sense without acknowledging the free God of the future as the ground of the open and contingent character of history.

Pannenberg teaches that the interpretation of history is no purely arbitrary affair, indeed his whole position depends upon this not being the case: Pannenberg constantly shifts the focus of theology
away from a Cartesian or Kantian kind of subjectivist base, towards a more objective historicist position. An event may be interpreted differently by different people, but Pannenberg holds that an objectively true interpretation can be reached in the light of the facts taken in context. It is crucial to his case that all events have their inherent meanings which are disclosed to correct hermeneutical investigation. This is rather like the view of Aquinas that accurate, well conducted reasoning will lead us to assent to the existence of God, but only good reasoning. Pannenberg's stance on this has met with criticism, notably from Burhenn, who thinks it is wrong to maintain one true interpretation for all events: historians often remain agnostic about the historicity and significance of events, and argues that this option is a perfectly valid one. Pannenberg, on the contrary, says that it is necessary to come to a decision about events under consideration and in particular is this so when considering the resurrection of Jesus. The doctrine that history bears an inherent meaning in itself is vital to Pannenberg's whole programme of historical objectivity. Revelation does not depend upon the subjective creativity of the interpreter but is mediated through human cognition, thus indirectly, and hence the content of revelation is objectively given. For Pannenberg events evoke their proper interpretation: the stimulus to the rational reflection 'derives from the event itself'.

History is therefore a hermeneutical process and the human interpretation of its events brings forth in speech its current significance by means of rational reflection on the data. This is central to Pannenberg's attempted synthesis of a high view of revelation with freely operating rationality: the matrix of the synthesis is the stream of history, bearing revelatory meaning within its events. Freely ranging enquiring reason and objective revelation are united in the nexus of history in such a way that Pannenberg can argue his case that 'Christian speech about God can be verified only in such a way that is the revelation of God itself which discloses that about man and his world in relation to which its truth is proved.' The point is that Pannenberg shifts the centre to what history teaches and away from man's arbitrary constructs: the flow of history is revelatory and it includes human thought formulating the intrinsic significance of events as they arise. As time goes on events will be seen in a different light and gain fresh meaning, and their interpretation develops accordingly. In this way Pannenberg builds provisionality into his doctrine of indirect self-revelation as history. Again this emphasises the determinative importance he accords to the flow of history incorporating the history of thought to 'thematise' or formulate the developing meaning of the whole process. Revelation as history is both objectively given but, since it is as yet incomplete, our insights remain provisional and subject to amendment from the open future.

Pannenberg teaches that revelation is unique and unrepeatable, the self-disclosure of God without remainder as the totality of the
historical process. But the obvious question arises, that the
totality of history is not available to us; hence, can we claim to
have revelation? No single event can have this status because each
will be superseded by the oncoming future: until the eschaton,
history and its meaning will remain open and subject to unpredictable
twists and turns. Like characters in a novel, we can never be sure
of what will happen on the next page of history. Only the final
paragraph can show us the overall picture of the meaning of the
whole. Particular clusters of events before the eschaton are always
provisional and will be taken forward into ever new syntheses of
meaning as future discoveries in the flow of human thought cast fresh
light on the past, as the old is incorporated and changed into new
configurations. How can Pannenberg speak of revelation today? His
answer is Christological.
C. THE REVEALATORY PROLEPTIC END - JESUS' RESURRECTION

Pannenberg's theology hinges on his view that Jesus' resurrection gives us the end-time event in advance of the real eschaton, hence it affords us the key to the meaning of the whole of the process of history. It is as if the characters in the middle of the novel are given access in advance, or proleptically, to the final sentences of the book. He seeks to argue this, as has been made clear, on the basis of historical analysis and hermeneutical reflection and wholly without claims to inner illumination or special revelation. The matrix of his argument is the apocalyptic thought world against which the resurrection must, says Pannenberg, be interpreted. Pannenberg argues that Jesus' life and fate were played out in the Jewish cultural context stamped by the apocalyptic and prophetic expectation that God would act decisively at the end of time to vindicate himself and his people. The end, therefore, is the place where the overall meaning of history will be finally revealed: the eschaton gives the overarching horizon of meaning for gaining the significance of all things; this is the 'moment of truth' when we shall see God's revelation with crystal clarity. The prophets and apocalyptic seers looked to the eschaton for ultimate revelation. It was to be marked by the resurrection of the dead and the last judgement.

During his life Jesus looked to God for vindication; he trusted the God of the apocalyptic future to uphold his messianic claims in whatever way chosen. His resurrection vindicated his pre-Easter claims and constituted his identity as the revelation of God. Pannenberg argues that since the resurrection of Jesus occurred against the background of apocalyptic hope, and since that hope contained the expectation of resurrection, therefore his resurrection must be understood as the eschatological event, given that it actually did occur. Jesus' resurrection foreshadows the final general resurrection of the dead, and thus constitutes the end time occurrence in advance. This occurrence is also regarded as the revelatory event in apocalyptic thought, therefore Jesus resurrection is to be identified with revelation, which is now defined as God's self-disclosure. Pannenberg thus argues that Jesus must be interpreted as divine revelation, inseparably united in essence with God. This is his brilliant argument for the identity of the man from Nazareth. Jesus is God's self-revelation in advance: we have an end-time perspective now because we have access, through the historical data understood in its context, to the history of this man. All this depends strictly upon the historical fact of the resurrection and on Pannenberg's contention that event plus context yields meaning which is ontologically decisive.

It is plainly important to give a rough account of Pannenberg's historical-critical argument for the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, as Pannenberg rests his case on it: 'general historical considerations', he says, 'already show that the proclamation of the news of Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem, which
had established the Christian community, is hardly understandable except under the assumption that Jesus' tomb was empty. On strictly historical critical grounds, Pannenberg thinks that the tradition of the appearances of Jesus to the disciples is independent of the tradition of the empty tomb: 'the return of the disciples to Galilee took place independently of the discovery of the empty tomb.' The very fact that these two traditions came into being separately, for Pannenberg, constitutes a significant argument in favour of the historicity of the resurrection: 'They let the assertion of the reality of Jesus' resurrection appear as historically very probable, and that always means in historical enquiry that it is to be presupposed until contrary evidence appears.'

Pannenberg reaches a conservative conclusion as to the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus in a way which is quite double-edged for conservative theological method, in that he uses analysis of tradition history to reach a positive verdict on the historicity of the resurrection, while this analysis denies the gospels' overall picture of the train of events. Pannenberg is fully consistent with his own procedure in holding that his verdict on the resurrection must be provisional because it rests upon historical evidence: should powerful counter-evidence arise in the future, he would be obliged to alter his position. This, we may note, is the obverse of Bultmann's view that historical data is irrelevant to matters of faith: Pannenberg cannot abide such a dualist frame of knowledge. Conservative theology should seek the best of both worlds in this! As the former Anglican Evangelical Bishop of Durham, Handley Moule, so neatly put it:

'And need I say that this is no argument in a circle? I ask the Bible to witness to the Bible; but I ask the Bible as literature, as history, to witness to the Bible as revelation, oracular, authoritative, divine. As history, capable of verification, it shows me Jesus Christ, God and Man, living, dying, rising, proving Himself to be profoundly, ultimately, trustworthy. But this same Jesus, as presented in the same historical mirror, is seen laying one hand upon the Prophets and the other upon the Apostles, and bidding His followers regard with an altogether unique attention their uttered messages. And I attend accordingly to those messages. And I find in them disclosures and intimations as to the quality and authority of the Biblical writings as the oracles of God...'

Conservative theology should maintain the links between critical history and revelation while not making the latter purely conditional on the former, particularly in view of the changing state of historical opinion. The 'pending tray' is entirely appropriate for the Christian who is puzzled by new historical-critical developments. The Scriptures prove themselves trustworthy to the mind, conscience
and spirit of the believer in his knowledge of God. He will therefore not be irrational in declining to deny, at the behest of a critic pointing out a difficulty, what his own historical judgement, now encompassed in personal faith, has proven not only intellectually but also 'existentially' to be true. Knowledge from inside faith includes purely secular analysis, but goes beyond it because its 'knowing' has become 'I-Thou' knowing as well as, and embracing 'I-it' knowing, and because Jesus' baptism of the Scriptures has become normative in this knowledge of God. This position is rejected by Pannenberg but it adds another dimension or level to his view which can take up and use some of his insights.
D. HISTORY AS HERMENEUTIC

Another way of stating Pannenberg’s doctrine of ‘revelation as history’ is ‘history as hermeneutic’. The whole process of history read, from its point of consummation, constitutes revelational meaning and essence. It is startling to ears dulled by the dogma of secular materialism, the empiricist metaphysic, to hear Pannenberg claim that an anticipation, or ‘prolepsis’, of the end-time event is necessary for us to understand the universe. Without some clue to the overall process of history we are in the ‘night in which all cows are black’. Revelation is, then, not just a ‘faith’ idea but is rationally necessary for thought in general. Here we see how radical Pannenberg is in his efforts to achieve a new synthesis. He has set himself the target of upholding both the freedom of critical reason and the normative majesty of divine revelation, which alone can provide the yardstick of verification for speech about God. Revelation and history are two sides of the one coin: revelation is going to be recognised in the final future as the whole plan of history’s meaning; history will be seen at the eschaton as having been God’s essential revelation all along. In the meantime, the overall meaning to be given by this event has been anticipated in the life and fate of Jesus, and therefore Pannenberg does make his claim upon the intellectual decision of the historian and of the philosopher as well as the theologian. We are not operating in two realms, one of secular history and one of revealing grace: we are in a single frame of reference and knowledge, and the claim on the mind must therefore be pressed. Pannenberg thinks that it behoves people to make up their mind about the resurrection of Jesus one way or the other.

Faith is required by the logical historico-hermeneutical considerations of the facts. Faith is no blind leap but is the most sensible conclusion and response in the light of reasonable reflection. At the same time, Pannenberg contends, these conclusions are to be held, logically, as provisional in the light of the possibility of fresh counter evidence. On the face of it, here is a new type of the classical ‘natural theology’ which builds a superstructure of faith upon a foundation of reason, and this must be the cause of the criticism made by some that Pannenberg practises a form of ‘rationalism’. No doubt Pannenberg has sought to reclaim the secular realm of reason for the theological realm of faith and demonstrates a reasoned approach to matters of theological concern, but he is not a classical type of natural theologian because he emphasises the inseparable mutuality and integration of revelation and history. Pannenberg’s system does not permit the idea that faith builds onto reason as if the two were initially separate and needed to be introduced. The two are closely related, and we might say that for Pannenberg reason has the same structure as faith and that faith is suffused with reason: again, two sides of the same coin. Pannenberg holds that, psychologically, the Christian has certainty in his faith; logically, he must admit that because, the evidence
for the resurrection is probable, (as is the case for all historical occurrence), his faith is yet provisional.

The key to Pannenberg's doctrine is that human cognitive and intuitive processes are woven into this whole process. History has its ongoing rationality in the stream of human consciousness, history synthesizes the real and the rational, fact and and theory, it is, to use Toulmin's phrase 'a field encompassing field' for Pannenberg, indeed the only such field. Nothing stands proud of the web of universal history: truth, reason, faith, morality all are functions of the historical-temporal whole, which is still in process. This total fabric is a 'semantic network' of reality and truth on its way to fullness of meaning. Human interpretation is that element of this whole which consciously reflects on its significance by taking up insights from the past into the future in the hermeneutical tradition of the history of thought. Reasoning capacities do not therefore stand over against history so much as reflect its truth on the way to the final revelation of its overall meaning. Reason springs from history and subserves its unfolding significance. Pannenberg says that events contain the stimulus to reflective reasoned interpretation within themselves: we are not at the mercy of subjective fancy in the hermeneutical enterprise; sound interpretation will prove itself by the test of time.

Pannenberg is only rationalistic, therefore, in a quite unusual sense, unusual to the Anglo-Saxon empiricist tradition at any rate, because his rationalism, if it be such and it must be a contested point, comes in objectivist form.

"As I understand it, this would describe reason, not as a priori capacity, but in its historical structure of sketching and reflecting, but thus also in its essential (not however always factual) openness to a truth always presupposed but never grasped in the act of thinking out the sketch."^{11}

Rationality is woven into the fabric of the universe.

For Pannenberg, as for H R Niebuhr, 'time is in reason and reason is in time', reason is not an absolute raised above temporal history and independent of it. Because this is so, reason shares the structures of historical experience. All our understanding, he says, requires that we project provisional overall pictures or world-views, within which reason operates: we sketch out, albeit often unconsciously, a plan of the shape of how things are as a pre-requisite for any analysis or interpretation. Moreover the stimulus for this comes from the new events and advances in thought which the future brings. Hence the projecting is also reflecting the intrinsic dynamic at the heart of events. History is hermeneutical, and our consciousness participates in this process of the development of meaning. Faith has the same kind of structure in that it trusts the God of the unpredictable future: hope is its overarching presupposition or
world-view, within which it grapples with the difficulties thrown up by events. Jesus is the great example of a faith in the God of the apocalyptic tradition to vindicate his trust. Pannenberg also thinks that science depends on just such a structure of understanding, sketching out horizons within which theories can be tested, and indeed which will need revising as fresh evidence brings down the current theory, or projection, of how things are.

This structure of reason, or of human experience, in the flow of time generally, is, for Pannenberg, thoroughly biblical, especially in the apocalyptic tradition, which looked to the ultimate future for its hope to make sense of the state of the world. The final eschaton will gather up all the foreshadowings of the end and will show how all the preceding events mesh together. Indeed the preceding events of significance point ahead and derive from that future to which they point: the apocalyptic-tradition, according to Pannenberg, engaged in just this 'sketching and reflecting' hermeneutic with its hallmark of trustful humility towards the future in all its inscrutability. In addition, emphasising the totality of history constituting divine revelation, Pannenberg originally holds to the future orientation and determination of all things. Truth is in process and is prophetically structured: it lives from its future to the future. Human interpretation likewise, an integral element in the rolling forwards of all truth, is controlled by this future-orientated historicist system. We may refer to the quotation cited in the introduction as a key passage, which clearly states that this synthesizing dynamic applies to human subjectivity as it loses itself in the whole and in the future. The present must bury itself in the future humbly, and be ready to revise currently held opinions. This is what Jesus did and what he lived out:

'The understanding of reason and knowledge here indicated means that both live in anticipation in regard to their relationship to truth. This prophetic structure, which determines the form of all acts of knowledge, is proper to the knowledge of the Christ-event also precisely in view of its content. All knowledge of this event, the more precisely it is aware of the nature of the event, will appreciate so much more its own provisional character and will press forward so much the more insistently beyond itself towards faith as the relevant attitude of man to God's revelation in the Christ event... Aware, however, of the prophetic quality of the the revelatory event which is its basis, faith will take seriously the provisional character of the knowledge on which it rests.'

Pannenberg offers a very objectivist, systematic, historicist world-view, an interpretation of the shape of reality which is holistic, unifying and intent on softening, or removing, absolute barriers of fact and thought. Pannenberg abhors dualism and delights in synthesizing apparent opposites.
The Christ-event is the revelation of God in advance and at the same time it is the philosophical clue to the universe. The proleptic structure of the resurrection closes the structure of all thought and reality. The very epistemological or hermeneutical process involved in reaching this conclusion about Jesus, that is historical-critical exploration, gaining meaning from an event against its current thought context, then projecting an overarching horizon of universal interpretation, this procedure holds good throughout Pannenberg's work. Bearing in mind that this hermeneutical enterprise is not only the construction of man but is stimulated by the meaning inherent in the clusters of events, we can see how revelation as history is the same as the hermeneutical process of history. Our provisional, human sketch-plans of the whole shape of things are also God-sent, inspired intimations of the beyond. They are fully human, fully divine! 'The reality of God is always present only in subjective anticipations of the totality of reality, in models of the totality of meaning presupposed in all particular experience. These models, however, are historic, which means that they are subject to confirmation or refutation by subsequent experience.' As one of Pannenberg's commentators, David McKenzie, correctly says: 'I submit that Pannenberg wants to link natural knowledge and revelation.'

This is exactly the case: indirect self-revelation is the hermeneutical course of history finding true formulation through good, reasonable interpretative exploration of the facts in context. Because of this, I suggest, it is not helpful to see Pannenberg as ever having operated a theological method 'from below' in the normal sense. Rather he has used an integrating method: reason and faith share the same structure and fasten onto the same content. Faith could not begin without hermeneutical reason, the indirect filtering element in Pannenberg's doctrine of revelation as history. Revelation is, for Pannenberg as history: 'above', is not distinct from 'below'; the sacred and secular, the 'eternal' and the temporal, enjoy a deep integration in Pannenberg's system. Human projections and divine mediation of fresh insight are correlated through the flow of time. 'In that man's existence is animated by the question about his destination and fulfilment, he is already borne by the reality at which such inquiry is directed'; human projected answers to the question of reality are not merely subjective creations, but are also evoked by the power of the future, the beyond. Nature and grace very much interpenetrate in the single continuum of history.

Pannenberg's very systematic epistemology rests upon his holistic ontology; his view of faith, reason and revelation depend on the shape of the universe and its origin in the free and faithful God of the open future. Knowing reflects being: the enlightenment heresy, that our knowing somehow fashions the world, is attacked and turned round. Our derivation of meaning from events is not simply an anthropocentric enterprise rooted in arbitrary subjectivity but it
is evoked by history. Pannenberg teaches, in effect, that historical meaning determines being, and that it does so from the future, giving rise to freedom and unpredictability in our universe. History determines being, but this is no merely fatalist world view because this history comes to us from the open future, not as a result of an iron law unfolding out of the past. Pannenberg's insistence that all truth and interpretation is provisional, in the light of the new insights yet to come from the future, is based on this ontology of the future constantly revising the past and taking it forward into fresh configurations. We noted this in the case of the evidence for the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, and the principle applies to this example hermeneutically too: the meaning of God's self-revelation in Jesus is also subject to future development, indeed its meaning will fill out as time goes on. At the true eschaton we will see how the Christ-event always presented, in microcosm, the pattern of everything, the truly universal plan of reality.

Our earlier quotation from *Jesus - God and Man* puts in a nutshell Pannenberg's dynamically interrelating view of the universe: all things gain their being from outside themselves, all truth and reality is open, open to its neighbouring counterpart and to its opposite. Whereas, says Pannenberg, modern man regards the essence of things to be in himself, biblical tradition affirms the source of all life to be objectively outside ourselves. At the very end of time we shall see the whole revelation of God as history; we shall see that it was all along a meaning inseparably informed by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We shall see that all history gains its unity from that which was always beyond and free, yet always the indwelling source of historical vitality and significance, the God of the open future.

The whole and the future are the overarching concepts in Pannenberg's historicism. The whole will be seen to embody the fullness of divine self-disclosure. The future is the source of all things, informs everything with freedom, and is the goal towards which all things tend. Within this overarching framework, a tension, or dialectic, is constantly at work: the past and present are the thesis to which the future forms the antithesis, thus making a fresh synthesis, which then in turn constitutes the new present. This dialectical dynamic of history is at the core of Pannenberg's system and forms the basis of his interpretation of apocalyptic theology:

'In the development from the Jahwistic tradition to the apocalyptic literature it is not just the extent of events proving the deity of God that is increasing, but also the content of revelation that is revising itself. What had previously been the final vindication of God is now seen as only one step in the ever increasing context of revelation.'
Freedom, released from the future as the life of history, draws the meaning of the past forward, into the present and towards the future, the source and destiny of everything. This is how things are, the shape of all reality. This scheme of things presupposes a free God who constantly involves himself as the basis of all being. We now turn to examine Pannenberg’s idea of the God of history.
A. 'THE ALL-DETERMINING REALITY'

We have seen that Pannenberg regards the continuum of history as the single unit of reality and truth, turning what he sees as the Greek metaphysic of an 'upstairs-downstairs' cosmology on its side to make a "flat" open-ended model. History is, for Pannenberg, the field encompassing field epistemologically, that is for the order of knowing, and also ontologically, for the order of being. It flows from the future into the present dialectically, taking up existing historical being to refashion it. The idea is very dynamic: to see it as a model rather like a stalagmite on the horizontal plane in a way helpfully illustrates the oncoming future forming the body of history; but in another very important way it is misleading in that it gives the impression of a static corpus of history. In Pannenberg's vision, time is constantly gathering its past up into fresh meaning in the light of new events. The idea is fundamentally hermeneutical: meaning, deriving from the historical process, continually reconstitutes being and truth. Pannenberg has constructed a system to take in the doctrines of creation, revelation, reason and all other dogmatic loci, including the doctrine of God. Finitude comes from the God of the open future who sustains it and reveals himself through its totality, which is proleptically available in the life and fate of Jesus. The reign or rule of God permeates all things, and, to avoid giving the impression that he is offering a mechanistic future-oriented determinism, in so doing sustains the possibilities of genuine freedom in finite reality. An important point he makes is that without a free God behind and involved in the world there would be no possibility of creaturely freedom: all would be decided rigidly from the past.

God, then, relates to the universe as the future to the past; but this is more than an analogy in Pannenberg's theology: God is the open future, the source of all things. The future is free over against the past, but also the future is never without its past. Pannenberg teaches that God is wholly free over against the world but at the same time is inseparably related to history. Here again we have a subtle dialectic: God is the free sovereign agent conveying time from the future, and yet we cannot conceive of God floating free of the finite order.

'This approach to an eschatological doctrine of creation culminates in the idea of divine love. God in his powerful future separates something new from himself and affirms it as a separate entity, thus, at the same time, relating it forward to himself. The autonomous event does not exist in isolation but is creatively related to the freedom of the future. The past is not the dead past. Because of this activity of divine love,
we are justified in calling the God of Jesus the living God. He has no unity or being apart from the activity of his life in which he separates another being from himself while still keeping it alive by maintaining its relation to himself.

Pannenberg holds that God is 'the all-determining reality', in control of the universe, and that this God of the open future is utterly free while at the same time, again dialectically, he holds that God freely depends upon what he brings into being. Indeed, as we can already say from our consideration of 'revelation as history', God will at the eschaton be seen to have identified his essence with the continuum of time, or better, to have invested himself unreservedly into the whole process.

Pannenberg speaks of God's love and faithfulness, as well as his freedom and mystery, in these terms: God maintains the structures of history in stability, in faithfulness, as well as bringing the new and freely contingent events into time. The sustaining activity of God in evoking existing past life towards new configurations of meaning is the loving aspect of God. Pannenberg merges what traditional dogmatics have separated: the doctrines of creation and providence on the one hand, and revelation and grace, on the other. For Pannenberg God acts in the same way in nature as in grace; the two are wholly integrated, and the fundamental reason for this is that God is the all-determining reality of the open future. Finitude receives its being from this reality and is oriented towards it.

Indeed it is probably misleading to use the term 'finite' in Pannenberg's system because everything comes under the category of the temporal, the historical: even God is defined according to the distinctions of time, of the future, the present and the past. Pannenberg talks of a single continuum of history in which the all-determining reality is involved, of which this deity is the originating future. Total history will emerge as the divine revelatory essence. Pannenberg wants to get away from the Greek notion of God the unchanging eternal principle not truly involved in the realm of nature, change and the process of time. It is more biblical, he thinks, to adopt a view of God far more coloured by what happens in history and far less controlled by abstract Greek ideas of the eternal and the finite. Pannenberg teaches a model of God and the world in which the process of time affects the divine essence in a real way. God ruling over history is also coloured by it and bound to it. This is not, however, a 'process' view because Pannenberg insists on the freedom of God as well as on the immanent self-investment of God, and also because his vision of the universe is not that it is gradually enriching God's essence cumulatively, bit by bit. Pannenberg is more subtle and must be classed among idealist theologians: the particulars of the cosmos do not add together like lego-bricks; rather, they are all constantly gaining fresh identities as they merge with what they receive from the future. Again the introductory quotation demonstrates this. The whole permeates the
particulars and they in turn provide the variety and diversity of the totality. The parts do not merely make up the whole in a computative way for the idealist, the totality qualitatively goes beyond the sum of the particulars. Edward Caird, in a classic exposition of Hegelian idealist thought, put the matter as follows:

‘The life of the body is not a principle that dominates over dead members and uses them as instruments to realise itself; it is in all the members, so that each of them in turn may be regarded as means and end to the others. There is, no doubt, a unity of the whole that subordinates all the parts, but it only subordinates them, so to speak, by surrendering or imparting itself to them, and giving them a certain independent life, - a life which, though embraced in a wider circle, is still centred in itself. Now a self-determining principle, as such, is necessarily of this sort; it is not like a law which is imposed on a foreign matter, for its only matter is itself. In determining, it determines itself; in producing differences, it produces itself in them.’

Pannenberg's system belongs to this family of metaphysics, hitherto very unfashionable in this century. Just such an organic, idealist concept lies behind Pannenberg's system of God and the world, always given Pannenberg's novel revision of the orientation from and towards the open future. The 'all-determining reality' is the unitive life principle of the whole, giving unity to the whole because the final point of history will harmonise all things and all truth in a perfect integration. The all-determining reality is within the totality and yet, dialectically, is not merely an item like all the other particulars in the process. 'The problems raised by the concept of a totality of everything real - or even everything finite - can be solved only by another category which transcends the opposition of whole and part.' Pannenberg cannot tie himself to a position holding that the unifying principle, the all-determining reality, is simply outside the whole of all reality, because then he would be returned to the old-fashioned orthodoxy of God external to the historical process, a clear contradiction to his overriding concern to abolish what he sees as dualism of God over against the world and insufficiently woven into it. Pannenberg's deity indwells the whole, unifies all items of history, on the Cairdian model, like the life in the body: conveying vitality, differentiation, particularity, dynamically from itself and not as an external law on isolated material units.

God is the 'beyond in the midst'. He is not constituted, helplessly as in the vision of Process theology, by temporal events. On the other hand he is not exterior to them. Divine 'essence' is involved in the flow of time, yet God remains the all-determining reality, never one among the multitude of principles found in the universe of thought or reality. This effort to sail his theological ship between the Scylla of what he sees as externalising orthodoxy
and the dissolving Charybdis of Process theology explains the apparent paradox that his theology at times gives the impression of a radical immanentism and at others of a high transcendentalism. He can say for instance that, 'it is necessary to say that, in a restricted but important sense, God does not yet exist'. By this he means not only that the future will be the decisive revelation of God but also that God is not to be found in the universe as are other existing beings. God transcends our concepts while he is their very ground of being. Indeed his theology here is similar to that of Macquarrie, another theologian heavily indebted to the idealist tradition, who speaks of 'Being' behind beings and moves further in Pannenberg's direction by defining 'Being' as 'Letting-be' to avoid the static connotation of the concept of Being.

Pannenberg's position is dialectical: on the one hand God is free and did not have to bring forth a finite universe; but, on the other hand, given that he has done so then he cannot be thought of as ever having been without it, or external to it. The premise that essence is inseparable from activity, revelation from history, being from expression, underlies this argument. Pannenberg knows that a doctrine of the inner relativity of God's very being with history is beset with problems and he is very aware that philosophically he is opening up issues which occupied much Nineteenth-Century debate, in particular Kierkegaard's protest against Hegel:

'Kierkegaard feared Hegel's liquefying of the concept of God in the movement of a history which overlaps the distinction between God and the world would mean the loss of the eternity and thereby the divinity of God. For Hegel, however, the notion of a history of God did not exclude his eternal self-identity.... In spite of these problems which give ground to the justice of Kierkegaard's criticism, there remains, in the nature of the case, the unavoidable task of attempting to think out the being of God and the history of his activity as a unity. Such an attempt is also demanded of theology by what the Bible has to say about God as the truth of his historical activity which becomes apparent only in history.'

Pantheism, the over-identification of God with the world, lurks on the one side and, for Pannenberg, unbiblical external and static ideas of God on the other. How should we go forward? 'How can God be thought of as the truth of history when truth itself is historical? What does that mean for the being of God? Is he himself to be thought of as becoming in the history of his deeds?' The way ahead lies with an Hegelian doctrine of the Trinity, suitably revised in the light of the priority of the principle of the future: 'The solution of this task of thinking of God's being and the history of his activity as a unity is the condition, moreover, for thinking of God's relationship to the world as absolute, not confined to it but completing it through himself. And the doctrine of the Trinity, indeed, as Hegel suggested, offers a key to this.' This is
Pannenberg's method of upholding his new synthesis of the real relations of God and the world together with the sovereign freedom and mystery, of God.
B. THE TRINITARIAN SYNTHESIS

(1) Trinitarian metaphysic

The whole system of revelation as history, history as hermeneutic, the free all-determining reality related somehow inwardly or essentially to the process of history, implies a Trinitarian pattern and indeed Pannenberg stated this as early as 1967. The past, present and future are taken up and constantly reconstituted in the stream of time in such a way that the present is the appearance of the freedom of the future, its appearance revising, not destroying the past concretisations of the former future. The meaning of the present, gained by our projections of the shape of the whole scheme of things, always taking up previous insights, cannot be split from the question of being: the identity of anything or anyone is decided by what its true meaning turns out to be. In the end, the final end, the meaning of the whole of history will be seen to be God's self-revelation in the strong ontological sense. God is expressing himself through and in the totality of the time process. But how is pantheism to be avoided? Surely this system leads to the 'secret identification of God with man', so feared by Kierkegaard and in this century by Barth?

Pannenberg’s answer lies in the distinction within the unity of the whole process of history. These distinctions are themselves temporal, the difference between the past, present and future all encompassed in the overarching totality. God is the freely sovereign open future, never at the disposal of humanity, utterly non-manipulable and thus also what we must call 'personal'. But God releases history into the present, away from himself. In so acting, God distinguishes creation from his own free being (or 'letting-be') continually, while the two are ever in the relation of future to present, of freedom to form. This is the relation in distinction. God and the world exist in the single continuum of history including the future: Pannenberg unites the two realms of orthodoxy, the eternal and the temporal; all is historical in its widest sense. God's activity and essence are united in this 'Fatherhood' aspect of God, always the free God of the open future.

As the future invests itself into the present and past, God is not thereby left out of the historical concrete process, - far from it! God is the beyond in the midst, immanently permeating history and the ground of all creaturely freedom and contingency. From the creaturely angle, facing the open future, the present is always bringing the past forward into fresh syntheses. New meanings are found in the old theories and personalities. The old transcends itself as it marches into the future, and the reason that it can so transcend itself is the immanent Spirit within the dynamic process. The Sonship of God in the temporal continuum is the principle woven into the historical fabric that 'Jesus' saying about losing and finding life... has universal ontological significance'.

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past is represented by the Sonship of God, in that it faces the
future, trusting to the vindication of the open future; 'faith in the
incarnation means that the future will not destroy the past.' The absolute and the relative, the divine and the creaturely, are
correlated in their union in distinction: God is ever the free
future, but always the future of the already formed body of time.
The initiative is with the future but the future is inconceivable
without its past and present. This is what is meant by saying that
Pannenberg operates a dialectic: on the one hand God, the free
future initiates everything, and on the other hand this future is
inseparable from history. God relates to the world in this way: the
future passes into the present, ever free, yet ever inwardly united.
Quoting what we called a seminal passage once again, 'At the same
time, Jesus in his dedication to the Father and to his mission to
humanity is in some sense exemplary for the structure of every
individual event. Everything is what it is only in transition to
something other than itself; nothing exists for itself. Every
particularity possesses its truth in its limit, through which it is
not only independent but is also taken up into a greater whole.'
The Jesus principle of 'die to live' is structural for all history.
This again is characteristically idealist teaching, and it is
apparent in the passage cited earlier from Edward Caird which
continues in speaking of the 'life in the body' that, 'Its
assertion or manifestation of itself is, therefore, in a sense a dying to live,
a giving of itself away. Its life is a dying to live.' Jesus'
life and fate manifests this cosmic principle: the past is being
taken up into newness of meaning and potentiality.

Because of this Trinitarian scheme, Pannenberg can argue that he is
not presenting an identification of God with history; rather God is
always free; the world is Spiritually indwelt universally, and
structured according to the proleptic Jesus principle. The world is
'a macrocosm made up of microcosms, which is all in every part'
disclosed in the life and fate of Jesus. Buried within the temporal
process lies the divine structure of Sonship oriented towards the
Father, self-giving as a cosmological principle. God distinguishes
the world from himself while maintaining his immanence in it. This
Trinitarian unity and distinction is Pannenberg's proposed bastion
against the possibility of his system collapsing the world into God
in a monistic identification of the divine with the historical
process. God is always freely sovereign and radically immanent,
inwardly related to and affected by, the historical process. This is
an immensely subtle and powerful attempt to relate God to the world
in an inward way while seeking to preserve the divine freedom.
We have spoken of the all-determining reality, the Fatherhood of God, but Pannenberg is particularly famous for his Christology, to which we now turn. Jesus is the revelation of the eschaton in advance. This is gleaned from an examination of the face of the record of universal history. The resurrection means that his life and fate constitute him the divine Son. Jesus is the self revelation of God and hence shares in the divine essence, since revelation is inseparable from the divine being. Revelation is the central category of Christology for Pannenberg, displacing the pre-existent Logos as the starting point. This accords entirely with his ontology of the future: a pre-existence idea means that Christology is controlled from the wrong place, from eternity over against time, whereas Pannenberg's thrust is from the future as the source and goal of all things. Indeed we might say that if he goes on with his tentative discussion of renewing 'Logos Christology', surely the Logos will be the future principle which Jesus discloses and which itself must come under the logic of itself, that of provisionality, of openness to the future. In any event the Johannine Logos, already in being before the foundation of the world, is banished from Pannenberg's system. He criticises traditional Christology for making the Logos external to world history and having to break in from the realm of the eternal, therefore never really integrating with human historical life.

Christology takes its rise from the life of Jesus the Jew whose 'fate' means that he is divine, however unique and without precedent it may be. The being of Jesus is primarily human, wholly so: Jesus is a product of history and therefore also and at the same time of the 'all-determining reality'. He is fully human but has the meaning of deity in that humanity. Here it is easy to begin to try to stick labels on Pannenberg's Christology over-hastily: his position is different from either modern liberal or conservative views. I suspect that he would have been recognised more easily a hundred years ago when 'right-wing Hegelians' were at their height, names like Dorner, Rothe, Biedermann and in Britain the Cairds, T H Green and the 'Oxford Idealists' influenced by him. Pannenberg's Christology is certainly no mere humanitarian 'degree Christology' of 'Jesus the visual-aid for divine value'. Jesus, in Pannenberg's Christology, is fully human but is also actually, ontologically, divine; he is the Son of the Triune God. Pannenberg criticises the liberal type of Christology for failing to take the question of truth seriously, the question of the truth of Jesus' teaching and expectation about God in particular. It is, he says, a profound mistake to try to understand Jesus apart from his historical context and apart from his own view of God. It is especially fallacious to introduce ideas of God foreign to Jesus' understanding into Christological consideration and to let these become the controlling norm. This is fairly obvious in the case of modern anthropocentric efforts, but Pannenberg turns this criticism on the classical
Chalcedonian Christology also: this, he thinks, presupposes an unbiblical Hellenistic doctrine of God which externalises God from history and results in the traditional incarnational doctrine failing to achieve real integration of the divine into the human. Pannenberg insists that Christology concerns the true and real appearance of the God of the future in Jesus. We recall that for Pannenberg, God's revelation involves divine essence; divine act and being go together Christologically.

Jesus' being is decided, like that of everyone else in history, by his final meaning or identity. In his case this destiny or definition was decisively, yet (formally) always provisionally, revealed as that of the Son. Jesus was constituted the Son by the resurrection and this was without prejudice to his true humanity. Here again we have a dialectic: Jesus was a product of history, truly human throughout his life, advancing forward in obedient trust towards the God of the open future; but the resurrection constituted him the Son of God retroactively so that the deity works backwards through the humanity. It is important to stress that Pannenberg is not simply talking of a retrospective insight whereby Jesus always was divine but the resurrection event disclosed it first. Pannenberg is talking not just of the order of knowing here but of the order of being as well. The resurrection made Jesus the Son ontologically and from the future backwards, consistently with the whole metaphysic of the future: 'It is not a special case that Jesus' essence is established retroactively from the end of his life, from his resurrection, not only for our knowledge but also in its being.' This is plainly taught by Pannenberg, however difficult an idea it might appear at first sight, and it seems strange that some commentators refuse to find the retroactive principle in Pannenberg's work. The end result is what Tupper accurately calls a Christology 'from before': Jesus lived as nothing but a man with a unique destiny and yet he always was, retroactively, the divine Son. The dialectic moves from the past into the future as historical humanity pure and simple, and again from the future, the resurrection, backwards into the past as the divine definition of Sonship.

The dialectical character of this Christology also works from the order of being to the order of knowing and vice-versa: 'The perception of Jesus' Sonship as dialectically identical with his humanity is based noetically upon the particularity of just this human being in his relation to the divine Father; ontologically the relation is inverted, for the divine sonship designates the ontological root in which Jesus' human existence, connected with the Father and nevertheless distinguished from him, has the ground of its unity and of its meaning.' In our knowing we work from the particular man Jesus; in terms of being we work from the universal, absolute, divine Son. There are two movements or moments in the one reality of Jesus the Son. This man Jesus has the significance of the normative microcosm, of the truth of the macrocosmic whole of
history: on the one hand the finite particulars are progressing into their defining destiny of the open future, on the other hand the 'all-determining reality', the universal and absolute, is permeating everything from the future and taking up the past into unheard of new meanings and possibilities. Pannenberg spells out a kind of two-stage Christology, a dialectical Christology aiming to unite God and man, the universal and the particular, by means of a novel time system: again the future and its past are the poles of the relation in distinction. This, for Pannenberg, is more biblical than that of classical Western theology and its effort to put together an eternal and an historical, rather like trying to mix oil and water!

Jesus' Sonship is marked, says Pannenberg undisputably, by his sense of dependence on the Father, his filial dependence. Jesus was constantly praying to his Father and sought to live out his life in filial obedience and trust. This correlates with the 'revelational unity of essence' bonding Jesus and the Father. Jesus and the Father were at one. But this unity contains a distinction, a differentiation, in that Jesus lived a life of humble self-denial, he sacrificed himself in the service of the Father. Jesus distinguished himself from God, distanced himself from divine status, 'did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped' in this attitude of humble serving. The very distinction between Jesus and God must be included in the revelational essence disclosed in the relation of the Father with the Son. Within the unity of essence is a dialectical relation. The Son characteristically differentiates himself from the Father in humility and self-abnegation, as he seeks to be totally open to God's will. Union in distinction describes Jesus' relation to the Father, and because Jesus participates in the essence of God, this union in distinction is itself discovered to be of the very divine being. 'If Jesus' history and his person now belong to the essence, to the divinity, of God, then the distinction that Jesus maintained between himself and the Father also belongs to the divinity of God. The relation of Jesus as Son to the Father may be summarised with primitive Christianity as "obedience". It is therefore a relation proper to the essence of God himself..." Jesus' unity with God is fulfilled by his self-differentiation from God, in opposition to the self-deification of most men. God's being includes self-humbling and this is the divine Sonship.

The Triune Son is not the pre-existent Word who subsequently assumed historical humanity; for Pannenberg the Son is the human Jesus whose particular destiny always was to be divine. This has been criticised as an inversion of the classical doctrine of enhypostasia because the human being serves as the hypostasis of the divine Son. This criticism has much force but it does not do full justice to Pannenberg's position by ignoring its full retroactive aspect and its dialectic. Pannenberg says that at the eschaton Jesus will be seen always to have been the divine Son and yet never to have been independent of his manhood. 'God himself has come out of his otherness into our world, into human form, and in such a way that the
Father-Son relation that—as we know in retrospect—always belonged to God's essence now acquired corporeal form. The past tense is ruled out of Pannenberg's Christology in favour of the future perfect. The divine Son will be seen, will be ratified, as always having been God, the universal and absolute, and also man, the particular, relative and limited. Jesus is a man with a unique meaning and destiny. The subtlety of Pannenberg's position is that Jesus is a product of history but that this does not rule out the possibility of his also being divine because meaning and identity come not only or mainly from the past but from the open future. Biblically committed theology can learn from Pannenberg's insight that the human historical does not exclude the unique nor the divine. He breaks the deistic and naturalistic grid which dogmatically lays down the intrinsic incompatibility of God with man. Pannenberg teaches that Jesus is fully human in every sense, but at the same time will be seen to be of the very essence of God.

The deepest worry about this Christology is that, like all systems borrowing from Hegel, it tends to merge the Son with the creation. History will emerge as the ontological self-revelation of God at the eschaton, released from God and returning to God; Jesus, entirely historical himself, is the revelatory end-time event in advance therefore enjoying the revelatory unity of essence with God as the Son, united yet distinct from the Father. The whole of history appears to be equated with the revelatory divine essence and with the Son, whose particular expression is the man Jesus. This criticism needs to be made carefully because Pannenberg can say the Jesus is no mere cypher: his individuality is unique as the Son. But his logic of revelation compels the conclusion that we have sailed into pantheistic waters and that the Son is over-identified with the whole of history, which in turn looks like an expression of the divine life sent forth to return enriched by the temporal process. This is far from Pannenberg's intention but it results from using a fundamentally idealist metaphysic.
The Spirit

In his *Systematic Theology: an Historicist Perspective*, Gordon D. Kaufmann gives this opinion:

‘The doctrine of the Trinity, then, as developed through analysis of the historical character of revelation, is not an esoteric item of information about the peculiar internal structure of some transcendent being up in the heavens. Rather it expresses the structure of history, (as apprehended in Christian faith) in relation to its ground, and conversely, the way in which transcendent reality is bound up with history.’

This is very close to Pannenberg’s view: the transcendent free Father is the power of the future, the focal, particular revelation of deity is the Son, and the universal immanence of God in all things is the Spirit. We shall try to follow the grain of Pannenberg’s thought in explaining his doctrine of the Spirit.

The Universality of the Spirit

Pannenberg criticises traditional theology for making a dualism in its doctrine in this area also. We ought not to divide the creative activity of the Spirit from the redemptive or revelatory. This has been implicit in his treatment of revelation as history and his insistence on the universal field of history over against a special strand of salvation history. This dualism has led, he thinks, to a subjectivising interpretation of the Spirit’s activity, to an unduly pietistic control of pneumatology both for the conservative and the radical. This he sees as the baneful influence of the Cartesian legacy persisting in theology. The Spirit must be first and foremost understood as the pervading presence of the ‘all-determining reality’. There are no private and privileged areas of Spiritual activity; God is the all-determining reality. This is the obverse of his doctrine of indirect self-revelation: human reason in the flow of time can interpret history so as to reflect the meaning of it coming from the future, from the beyond: ‘revelation’, we recall, ‘is open to anyone who has eyes to see. It has a universal character.’ All reality and truth in a sense is spiritual.

The Spirit as the Subjective Reality of Revelation

Instead of the doctrine of the Spirit breaking into the human person with new understanding and light, which for Pannenberg is close to gnosticism, we are offered a doctrine which correlates the sacred and secular, again very consistently with all Pannenberg’s procedure. On the one hand, ordinary historical rational processes gain us knowledge of God’s self-disclosure particularly in the proleptic Christ event; on the other hand, ‘by God alone can God be known’; the absolute Spirit must be at work if we are to have knowledge of the transcendent. This is, once more, Pannenberg’s dialectical
interpretation. The universal Spirit is at work in all true knowing, unbeknown to most people, but the Christian becomes aware of the Spirit because of the objective revelation given by the resurrection. We deduce the fact of the Spirit from that of revelation: since God has revealed himself in the historical Christ-event, therefore God must be at work in and through our hermeneutical labours which lead us to this conclusion, and from it, on to trust the God of the open future. 'Only through the Spirit who unites with Jesus and thus with the revealed God do Christians know of God; for to the extent that men really know of God in Christ they are already bound to him through the confession, they already have the Spirit of Christ'.

The process of reaching the view of Jesus as God's self-disclosure must be informed by the Spirit as well as being unaided normal historical-critical hermeneutic. The spiritual is simultaneously the rational.

This fits in with Pannenberg's rejection of the idea of the eternal God 'above' the created universe: the Spirit is not therefore breaking into the world redemptively, rather he indwells all things and comes to conscious realisation in the mind of the believer confessing Jesus as Lord. The way the Spirit works is the same for sacred and secular. It is the content of the Christ-event which gives the Christian mind this insight that the Spirit exists and must be divine. 'The Spirit belongs essentially to the event of God's revelation and thus to the divinity of God himself. For what belongs to God's revelation also belongs to the essence of God, if the revelation reveals God himself'. Biblical theology must agree that the Spirit is constantly at work creatively and providentially and works through the created capacities rather than violating them. But because he totally does away with the distinction of nature and grace Pannenberg is left with quite an Hegelian doctrine, blending the Spirit with human cognitive and intuitive processes. The truth revealed in Jesus is gained rationally, in the widest sense, and this very process of understanding is in itself spiritual. In this particular case, in the analysis of this man Jesus, we perceive that the Spirit is mediating revelation to us. Pannenberg himself thinks that here he is close to a pantheistic welding of human cognition with divine Spirit. The Spirit seemingly bubbles up to self-awareness in the finite understanding of the Christ event. Human cognition and the Spirit are two aspects of the one reality.

Once again Pannenberg thinks his Trinitarian distinctions enable him to avoid collapsing into a monism:

'Because God is not only the Father and Son but Spirit as well, he is not only the object of our consciousness but takes us up into his own reality. Thus he is beyond the subject-object dichotomy, not by excluding both but by uniting both. That is the true "nonobjectivity" of God. The differentiation of the Spirit from the Father and Son thereby prevents our taking the
wrong path, pantheism, which appears to lie close at hand. The Spirit of the knowledge of God in Jesus is the Spirit of God only insofar as believers distinguish themselves in such knowledge from God as creatures and from Jesus Christ as "servants" of the Lord: precisely in the humility of this self-differentiation from God that avoids all mystical exuberance, believers prove themselves to possess God's Spirit and thus to participate in God himself. 66

Pannenberg perceives that his theology is here in danger of evaporating human conscious apprehension of revelation of the divine essence into divine Spirit. Indirect self-revelation means that normal interpretation appropriates revelatory truth but, because revelation is of the divine essence and only the divine can know the divine, the Spirit is in the human hermeneutical process. Taken as a whole, the process of history is, on the one hand, the development of meaning by finite interpretative insight, and on the other hand, the history of the Spirit in, or as, human understanding of revelation. The Trinitarian distinctions avowedly protect Pannenberg's system from a monistic identification of human interpretation with the infinite Spirit, but since these Trinitarian distinctions themselves are reflections of the tenses of created time, it is hard to see how they achieve the necessary barrier against equating the ongoing process of historical insight with the unfolding of the divine Spirit. The orthodox doctrine of the Spirit in this regard has no such difficulty since it hold that the Spirit is transcendent and personal, coming in to the hearts and minds of the faithful to illuminate, redeem and renew their understanding; the activity of the Spirit in the world creatively and providentially does not have this personal intimate nature. These different modes of the God's activity by his Spirit, more and less personal, rule out the possibility of any secret identification of the human spirit and the divine. It is just because Pannenberg dissolves the barrier between creation and redemption that he makes himself vulnerable to charges of evaporating the process of human historical reason into the divine.

The 'ecstatic' Spirit: self-transcendence
The Christ-event, Pannenberg has told us, gives us the decisive clue to the structure of history: all truth and reality is an anticipation of what it will turn out to be; everything will gain its final identity only at the eschaton. Another way Pannenberg expresses this is in terms of Tillich's concept of the 'ecstatic' structure of all being. Being has its ground outside itself in the beyond, it is 'eccentric' with its centre of life in the future, in the 'letting-be' of the free God. Pannenberg regards Teilhard and Tillich as helpful in focusing on this cosmological characteristic but he amends them with his future orientation. Both these theologians hold that the Spirit is the animating power of all life, not just of the human psyche, and that nature is constantly going beyond its present state. Pannenberg agrees with this analysis of
the self-transcending nature of things: we cannot explain the developing cosmos by reducing the new and unpredicted to their past. Naturalistic evolutionism fails to give an account of developments which bring about a self-transcending change, a qualitative leap forward.

The Spirit of the all-determining reality is the logical and real ground for such movements going beyond mere repetition of the previous states of things: something beyond the fixed and already formed is needed for the phenomenon of ongoing qualitative development; this is the philosophical application of the 'genetic fallacy' in quite a powerful way for any Christian apologetics. The self-transcending structure of life holds good for all degrees of being, 'every living organism lives beyond itself, for every organism needs an appropriate environment for the activity of its life. When kept in isolation, no organism is fit for life... A particular aspect of this ecstatic character life is to be found in its relation to time: every organism relates itself to a future that will change its present conditions.'

But in human consciousness we reach an intensified form of self-transcendence because humanity is aware of its ecstatic structure and can reflect on himself and on other beings knowing that he is taking a stand outside himself. 'This ecstatic element of the life of the mind, says Pannenberg, I call "spirit". In this connection', he goes on, 'one consequence of the reflective self-transcendence of man is extremely important: in taking a stand beyond himself, the human mind is no longer himself the unity of his experience, but is looking for something beyond himself that gives unity to his experiences. We experience the particular only within a wider horizon of meaning which is anticipated as some sort of unity.'

Here we are near the centre of Pannenberg's view of the Spirit; the Spirit is the life uniting the poles of what currently exists with the free future potentialities of history. Form and freedom are dialectical poles but the Spirit integrates them dynamically, preserving the past yet bringing into it the new and forming ever fresh syntheses. This spirituality of the cosmos, reaching the highest degree in human mind, is the ground for the constant interpenetration of all things into their neighbouring beings. Pannenberg's universal history is a dynamic continuum of movement from and to the future with the Spirit as the unitive and the differentiating life of the whole. Spirit transcends the formed corpus of history at the same time as it integrates ever new events into it, thus taking up what went before and preserving it in development. The Spirit reaches across the division of existing and future events: from the angle of the present and past it brings in the new, from the angle of the future it brings freedom to birth as formed finite history in a kind of ongoing kenosis of the God of the open future. It is important for Pannenberg that the Spirit is not constrained so to act or be; it is of pure freedom that this goes on.
What should we say of the relationship between the divine Spirit and the human creaturely spirit?

'The element of transcendence in spirit', Pannenberg says of human spiritual ecstasy, 'suggests that it might be neither necessary nor wise to admit a fundamental distinction between a human spirit and a divine spirit. The ecstatic, self-transcendent character of all spiritual experience brings sufficiently to bear the transcendence of God over against all created beings. The spirit never belongs in a strict sense to the creature in his immanent nature, but the creature participates in the spirit - and I venture to say: in the divine spirit-by transcending itself ie by being elevated beyond itself in the ecstatic experience that illustrates the working of the spirit. We remember: the spirit is not the mind, but the human mind comes to life only when he is touched by the spirit. And the same seems to be true of all living creatures.'

The spirit is very closely identified with the moment of self-transcendence or ecstasy, and for Pannenberg this spirit is both transcendent and immanent. The spirituality of the historical process is that of freedom becoming form, future becoming present, uniting both while distinguishing both. This moment has a finite side and a divine side, just as history is also revelation. The distinction between the infinite spirit and the finite is deliberately qualified; it ends up as a purely dialectical distinction, two aspects of a single reality. Here is an idealist type of doctrine of the world spirit expressing itself in the creaturely mode; the spirit incessantly polarises itself into the rich variety of the universe just as in Caird's picture of the life in the body. The life is inwardly related to and the source of the particular organs of the whole body without being reducible to one of their number, yet the life cannot be conceived of without the bodily parts, any more than the meaning of the whole can be imagined apart from the particulars.

To press this line of conservative hesitation with Pannenberg's doctrine in this area, we must ask what happens to the spirit-world distinction at the end of temporal history? When the dynamic union in distinction ceases, when the present finally catches up with the future, how can the infinite be differentiated from the finite? When temporal differences end, will we be faced with the prospect of the divine spirit having run its dialectical course, having enriched itself through finite self-realisation, finally to reach rest in identification with the corpus of history - which will be revelation, the divine essence put forth as history? As his teaching stands, the end product of history emerges as the one continuum, at once spiritual and finite, rather than the covenant of two ontologically quite different beings, God and humanity, face to face, the latter
transformed into the likeness of the former but not identified with it.
C. THE TRINITARIAN LIFE OF GOD

(1) The Trinity and Creation

Galloway comments on Pannenberg’s thought: ‘The eternal communion within the Godhead between the Father and the Son is not some ghostly metaphysical transaction. It is precisely what took place between them in the birth, life and death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.’ God relates to the world by the Trinitarian relationship so far described. That is, the transcendent freedom releases beings into existence and draws them back to himself by the Spirit permeating everything. From the world’s perspective God is the mysterious source of life and freedom who can be trusted to sustain things in stability while injecting novelty into the developing progress of history. From the angle of the future, God invests his freedom into form, simultaneously being the spirit of the self-transcending process. Without this Trinitarian ontology God would be pushing the finite away from himself but not informing it with his essence. Creation, in short, needs the Triune relationship for its life of free union in distinction with God.

This is quite a change from the classical doctrine of creation with its basic idea of an act of God rather than an emanation of his being. Pannenberg teaches that the two are not separable. God’s activity and his essence go together, both subsumed under the category of freedom, and he invests his freedom into finite form to create his creaturely partner. The model of the artist or craftsman controls the traditional doctrine so that God’s character is reflected in the finished ‘artefact’, but it is creation ex nihilo: the essence of deity is strongly distanced from the stuff of the universe. Pannenberg opts to soften this difference between the divine being and creaturely being. For his theology God’s triune relation constitutes the structure of history, and indeed it is highly questionable whether God would be triune without the existence of historical finitude, since the Trinitarian distinctions derive from the difference of past, present and future.

(2) Trinitarian Self-Mediation

Pannenberg teaches that creation is brought into being by virtue of God’s own self-differentiation as Father, Son and Spirit. This again is consistent with his doctrine of revelation as history, since the whole web of history will turn out to be the expression of the divine essence, proleptically given in the Sonship of Jesus. ‘Through the self-differentiation of the Father from the Son and Spirit... God as Father simultaneously gives a particular existence to the creatures, an existence which from the very beginning has not lost the chance of autonomy through being dependent on a continuously working omnipotence...’
Creaturely life, which is free and therefore open to the abuses of freedom issuing in suffering, sin and death, results from the Trinitarian life of God as can already be seen from the fact that Jesus’ Sonship is the relation of Jesus of Nazareth to the Father, constituted as such by the event of the resurrection. Indeed Pannenberg goes further by asserting, perfectly logically, that ‘the resurrection of Jesus is thus just as constitutive for the Godhead of the Father as it is for the Sonship of Jesus. Without Jesus’ resurrection the Father proclaimed by Jesus would not be God.’

The history of the Son affects the Father’s deity as well as that of the Spirit.

This amounts to stringing out, through the span of history, the classical inner-Trinitarian being and life of God: God has cast himself forth through time, always maintaining his transcendence by virtue of his futurity but investing himself also into temporal reality. ‘The doctrine of the Trinity, as Hegel suspected, is the condition for thinking of God in relationship to the world as absolute, not confined to it, but completing it through himself.’ Pannenberg rejects the orthodox Trinitarian theology for which the Trinity ‘was conceived before all historical connections between God and the world’, because this means that ‘The God of the classical doctrine of the Trinity is still only secondarily the God of history and of historical revelation.’ By his radical integration of divine life with temporal life, Pannenberg reaches the doctrine that God is ‘inwardly’ affected by history even as he determines it from the future. The Trinitarian persons convey their being to and through each other, ‘so for the Father, the reality of his own Godhead, that is the reality of his kingdom, depends on the operation of the Son and the Spirit’; the Father has his divinity conveyed to him through Jesus’ total obedience and worship. The Sonship of Jesus comes through his surrender to the free Father and his refusal to ‘be as God’, the only qualification for Sonship, and this self-differentiation is the work of the Spirit.

The Gospel of John reads Trinitarian relations from and into the historical relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit but insists on the pre-existence of these relations prior to their existence in history. Pannenberg teaches that the identical divine relations are simultaneously and exclusively historical. He is subtle and rather difficult to pin down here, arguing that at the end of history God will always have been the Triune God manifested in history. But until then ‘in the work of creation itself the Father remains dependent for its completion on the Son and the Spirit, which completion will glorify the Father, as the creator of the world, by the arrival of his kingdom.’ We are left with a dialectic: God’s essential life is constituted by the Trinitarian persons’ historical operation and interaction, deity being inwardly affected by finite events; on the other hand God controls this process of his own vulnerability to history! Pannenberg’s metaphysic of the future
perfect tense is very over-worked and cannot really bear the strain imposed on it to cope with this paradoxical tension.

(3) Essential Trinity?

The crucial issue is whether Pannenberg allows for the 'essential' Trinity, God's Triune life independent of creation. If he does not then we do seem to have toppled into a monistic system on Hegelian lines, so powerfully criticised by Feuerbach's dictum: 'God becomes man, man becomes God.' The vision of the divine expressing itself in the finite form then returning to itself, having revealed itself to itself, is inconsistent with the biblical faith of God in covenant with creation which is not a mode of deity but wholly different in being.

Pannenberg's system does adopt the Hegelian notion of God's relationship to the world and seeks to revise it by the future orientation, and by this adaptation Pannenberg thinks he has safeguarded his theology from the ills of German idealism, especially from the idea of God being a prisoner of the system. The God of the future is free - that is basic to Pannenberg - and he insists that God did not have to create a world. Given the fact that there is a world, however, we must say that God would not be the same God had he not so acted: divine essence and activity are fused. We must therefore regard God as the free God of history, the God whom we cannot imagine without history. By this essential logic Pannenberg imports finitude into deity as the form of freedom, as the body subordinate to life. God is no prisoner but he is always related to the universe as its free lord. This relativity is so close that Pannenberg thinks that God's inner being is affected by the outcome of history, the whole of history which is controlled by the future God.

On the one hand, then, God is free and will be seen at the eschaton always to have been the Triune deity, hence the 'essential' Trinity; on the other hand the process of history is so integrated into the divine history, and the 'dualistic' classical two realms model is so strongly abolished, that it is hard to give any content to the Trinitarian independent life of God without contradicting Pannenberg's basic tenets. The most we can say is that Pannenberg's 'essential' Trinity is distinguished from his historical Trinity 'dialectically' and logically, but not really.

The cosmological principle of this system holds that all things and thought are falling into each other as they are taken up in constantly new syntheses in their spiritual self-transcendence. This is a Christological principle because Jesus' life was poured out to others and to God in self-abnegation: this is the fullest expression of the ecstatic nature of the universe and, at the same time, of God's life as Father, Son and unitive Spirit. This application of Jesus dying to live leads us to ask about the difference between the
Son and the world he sprang from and lit up. The Son comes from the Father in the same way as does the world for Pannenberg; the great difference is that the Son's identity is divine because of the significance of the resurrection, although this remains provisional until the final eschaton ratifies the proleptic end event. The Son is never defined as a supra-historical being, always as a human and specifically not the pre-existent Logos. He is Jesus, in parallel with conservative orthodoxy, but his deity rests in his revelational unity of essence, encompassing his self-abnegating refusal to see himself as divine, derived from the meaning of the resurrection. At the eschaton, however, all history will be constituted as revelation, and therefore will enjoy revelational unity of essence with God.

This highlights the problem of a sufficient distinction between the Son and creation in Pannenberg's system. The Son is dialectically man and God, always human and retroactively divine in that his destiny or definition is uniquely that of the Son. He is both the particular and the universal because his meaning so qualifies him and his life, death and resurrection give us a universally valid structural principle of cosmology in microcosm. But Pannenberg's metaphysic of universal relativity, of all things moving into each other as they move into their common future, 'dying to live', means that Jesus cannot be divided off from the rest of reality in any hard and fast way. The cosmos must participate in him essentially, indeed it already shares the proleptic structure he strikingly disclosed. All humanity relates to him and yet is distinct from him - dialectically! Is this a sufficient distinction for biblical Christianity? Can the constant use of a logical dialectic erect the necessary differential between the divine and the creaturely, or will the union in distinction pattern simply take everything up the dialectical ladder and sublimate all finitude into deity? Pannenberg is in danger of merging the world and the Son. That must be a prime worry about his system, as indeed is the case for the Spirit. What is the content of these Trinitarian persons excluding the finite world? Does Pannenberg's system allow for any such content?
3. **HUMAN BECOMING**

**A. MAN'S FUTURE ORIENTATION**

Human nature itself has no privileged position over against the flow of history. We have learned how Pannenberg strives towards the synthesis and attacks absolute barriers of being; the whole process is decisive for meaning and therefore for being, and the whole of history flows from the future towards the future. This applies strongly in Pannenberg's anthropology. He attacks the modern notion that man's core is his own subjective consciousness and will. Modernity has absolutised the ego since the Enlightenment and Kant. Pannenberg wishes to take up this aspect of humanity as crucial, but to place it in a wider ontological context. Tillich has said that existentialism has no legs and offers us no base for human free decision and awareness: Pannenberg would heartily agree and seeks to give humanity ontological 'legs', the necessary metaphysical ground for freedom and creativity. He attacks the crashingly anthropocentric fundamentalism which makes man the master of his own destiny alone and which makes man his own creator 'out of nothing'! Pannenberg wishes to do away with the the notion of the human ego as the ultimate core and base of reality and truth. There is much here that a conservative theology and philosophy can take to heart.

Humanity is not simply self-defining and self-creating. Indeed, we never even know ourselves independently of the world around us and of what gives us and the world existence. All our self-awareness is mediated through our surroundings, which fact is simply ignored or uncritically presupposed by modern obsession with the subjective consciousness as the final point of reference. The German term Pannenberg has used for his notion of humanity is *Weltoffenheit* which means 'openness to the world' but also has his connotation of human openness to the beyond, to the source of the universe. The open texture of everything, the fact that 'everything is what it is only in transition to something other than itself... That which lives must go outside itself in order to maintain itself', produces an anthropology emphasising the whole of humanity in its necessary context of all reality under the hand of the determinative power of the future.

'No man is an island', said Donne, and this is a central plank of Pannenberg's teaching, a vital part of what he means by our *Weltoffenheit*. There is no such thing as a wholly insulated human being: we depend upon the world around us and society for our existence; we live only inside the historical frame of reference by which we gain our identity and against which we distinguish ourselves as individuals. In the beginning was not the core ego but rather the web of relations in history in which we find ourselves. This is the anthropological application of Pannenberg's open-textured cosmology.

The novel aspect of Pannenberg's treatment of this view is his
ontology of human becoming. According to his ontological framework, the future decides our being and true identity. We saw this plainly in Pannenberg's consideration of Jesus' resurrection: Jesus the Nazarene was retroactively constituted the divine Son by this event and this in turn will be ratified by the real eschaton. Until that end of history the meaning of Jesus will be both provisional and will be filled out as thought and interpretation progress. Jesus' identity lay before him and came from the future. This applies to all of us; our real meaning is not yet settled and therefore, according to Pannenberg's ontology, neither is our final destiny or definition. This must have more than a grain of truth in it. We can think, for instance, of some of the characters painted by C S Lewis in his *The Great Divorce*, some of whom serve as fearful warning of how we 'incarnate' our responses and habits as we grow older. The crabby or self-pitying character in old age has crystallised his moral actions into himself so that there is no longer any distinction between who he is and his characteristics. Pannenberg is not saying precisely this because he knows that the future is always coming up with new possibilities and that the past is not fully determinative. There is always the possibility of newness breaking into our personalities; we are not prisoners of our biographical histories. Here he might have improved Lewis's picture!

Pannenberg teaches that we are free and yet await events: we aspire and strive, but we are also inspired and given life by the God of the future.

Pannenberg has produced a doctrine of the person along these lines. The 'person' is an overarching category stretching into our futures where we will finally be defined, when we will reach our destinies. We are in the process of gaining our personal identities. Within this overarching entity is the subjective 'ego' and also the objective 'self'. The ego is not our integrating factor holding together all that comes to us in life; this is the role of the self which Pannenberg sees as the anticipation, the preliminary pre-figuration, of the final person. The self integrates our kaleidoscopic experiences felt by the ego. Pannenberg here seals his rejection of Kantian subjectivism: our selves are objective entities served by our experiential egos. 'It is not the "I" ego which postulates itself... but the self integrates the "I", and only through this gives it identity.' Pannenberg includes man's subjectivity within an objective concept of human nature. Human beings are growing into what awaits them as their true essence and destiny. As we go forward so we find ourselves being given new possibilities from the future, reconstituting our past for fresh becoming. It is a question of being, not just of knowing, that the future to which we move is at the same the source of this dynamic and final point of our definition. Pannenberg synthesises human activity, advancing into the future, with the divine grace-like bestowal of being, letting-be, from that future.

He claims that this is consonant with the emphasis of apocalyptic
thought upon humanity in the unpredictable flow of events and divine purpose running through them. 'Person refers to the mystery which goes beyond the presence of the I, the mystery of the as yet incomplete totality of his life history, the totality on the way to its particular definition...'. Just as God is not graspable in the world but always transcends it, this is so for man too! We remain something of a mystery, not yet completed but dependent on the outcome of the historical process, as indeed is God.

Pannenberg applies his doctrine of person, self and ego to Christology and the Trinity: the Son is the proleptic objectivity of the Father oriented towards the Father whom he experiences in the Spirit; for the Father, the Son is the realisation of his deity in that the resurrection gives the end of history in advance and therefore discloses the person of God in the self of the Son. Pannenberg has produced a triadic doctrine of person which avoids reducing humanity to a substance while not defining him purely as experiencing subjectivity. Here again he shows his remarkable originality of thought. Humanity is free and yet receives his being from the hand of God day by day, 'implicitly directed to God'.

'Man is thus in his question about himself referred to God and thus is on his way to God whether or not this becomes thematic to him. The Bible has described this as "being in the image of God". This accounts for the elusive quality of humankind and its intractability in the face of efforts to subdue it and treat it as mere substance not as living spiritual history from a free source.

Commentators who find that Pannenberg's great range of learning and exploration render his work diffuse need only look to the central Trinitarian dynamic to find the constant background to his interpretation of all aspects of reality and truth.
B. ESTRANGEMENT AND SIN

Man is free because his being comes from the free God, the only ground for any freedom: this is Pannenberg's position, and again it presents interesting possibilities for conservative theologians to exploit in their own different framework. He has not been fully understood by critics, who think he is offering contradictions in holding to divine freedom and to human freedom. The very point is that human freedom requires divine freedom if it is to exist at all. The two are not absolute opposites but the one includes the other and makes it even possible. It is this human freedom which is the reason for sin and alienation from God, for the suffering and misery of history. Man tries to be as God, arrogates to himself control of the universe, and refuses to humble himself before the God of the open future. Human sin is being self-centred rather than being centred in the open future, or as Pannenberg puts it, 'eccentric'.

Jesus was fully open to the future, and denied himself, did not grasp at equality with God, but took the path of obedient service. Sin is the reverse of this Christ-likeness. Again the problem of the distinction of the Son from the rest of humanity raises its head here, because if mankind were not sinful does this not mean, logically, that all would have the status of the Son? If all humanity enjoyed the revelational unity of essence including Christ-like self-denial, then logically the race itself would seem indistinguishable from the Son. This point must be taken further in that sin almost might be said to be the distinguishing factor between the Son and the created race of humanity, and one is prompted to ask whether created reality needs to be defined by Fall and sin if it is to be differentiated from God? How else can Pannenberg distinguish the putting forth of the Son from the future and the releasing of creation into dependent being? Does Pannenberg need sin as the quality of creaturely reality in its exercise of freedom against God? Tillich, another theologian deeply indebted to idealist thought, says that 'Creation and Fall coincide in so far as there is no point in time and space in which created goodness was actualised and had existence... Actualised creation and estranged existence are identical... Creation is good in its essential character. If actualised, it falls into universal estrangement through freedom and destiny.' Because Pannenberg has merged what classical theology kept apart, divine activity in creation and in redemption, because creative activity is simultaneously revelatory in the Trinitarian relational pattern, he leaves us with the uneasy feeling that the whole history of the race would be equivalent to the divine Son were it not for human sin.

God's Trinitarian activity, we remember 'draws the present into itself and, through enduring the pain of the negative, reconciles it with himself'. The uniting of the past with the future is a reconciling process, God bearing the rebellion of the negative human
attitude and bearing human suffering into himself. This is worked out in particular microcosm in Jesus' death as the inclusive, universal substitutionary reconciliation of all humanity to God. 'Under the presupposition that there is an element of substitution active in all social relationships, one is permitted to understand Jesus' death as a vicarious event in view of the unique reversal that the one rejected as a blasphemer is, in the light of his resurrection, the truly just man, and his judges in contrast, are not the real blasphemers.' The law of dying to live, of the inner relationship of everything, is a doctrine of cosmological reconciliation lived out unto death by Jesus. His death is, for all humanity, the proleptic event of reconciliation in advance of the future time when God will have borne the pain of the negativity of human sin and suffering.

This vision of the world's freedom acting against God is Pannenberg's Trinitarian theodicy. It is also bound up with his epistemology. The reason why God's existence will continue to be contested and debated until the eschaton is precisely that history contains much sin and suffering resulting from human rebellious pride and, until the whole picture becomes available when history is complete, ambiguity will remain. God is completing and reconciling the universe to himself through himself, as has been communicated to us in advance through the life and fate of Jesus.
C. MAN'S WORLD-VIEW: THE TRIADIC DYNAMIC

The process of history - its triadic proleptic structure - defines the shape of all truth and reality as it goes forward into the future. Pannenberg has constructed a Trinitarian ontology which is constitutive and normative for all events. We have just seen how his anthropology is controlled by the triadic movement of the self, the ego and the person, integrating the past into the present and living from the future. Human understanding of the world has exactly this shape too: we project overarching horizons of meaning which we have to revise as fresh truth arrives from the future causing the previous world view to be revised. The actual point of meaning, the final future, mediates new horizons to us and these interlock with our projections, which are accordingly both human and divinely given. Our new syntheses include the insights from previous theories, and these in turn are superseded. This is the hermeneutical reflection of the ongoing triadic dynamic from the past through the present and into the future. We need to make a picture of the whole, we all presuppose some such world view, within which we understand the particular phenomena thrown up in life. Even secular projections of the whole share in truth about the overall shape of things, truth sent from the future. Pannenberg stresses what he calls the 'co-givenness' of divine with human in the projected models of reality by which mankind exercises dominion over the world. This another way of making the point that history is self-transcending because of the Spirit's presence uniting the past with the future without destroying either but creating new syntheses.

Pannenberg's notion of human mastery and interpretation of history is superbly paralleled in E H Carr's view:

'The absolute in history is not something in the past from which we start; it is not something in the present, since all present thinking is necessarily relative. It is something still incomplete and in the process of becoming - something in the future towards which we move, which begins to take shape as we move towards it, and in the light of which, as we gradually move forward, we gradually shape our interpretation of the past. This is the secular truth behind the religious myth that the meaning of history will be revealed in the Day of Judgement.'

Carr's opinion coincides closely with Pannenberg's system and it vividly articulates Pannenberg's dialectical hermeneutic from, and to, the future. Pannenberg takes up Gadamer's notion of the merging of horizons as the normative model for interpreting history: the past horizon fuses into that of today as the future provides their common focus and source of inspiration. The present is the crucible welding the past into the future just as the Spirit unites the Son with the Father. Pannenberg's whole interpretative model is Trinitarian and this is only to be expected given the original
premise of revelation as history; human understanding sketches and reflects meaning inherent in events, particularly in the Christ event.

This proleptic or ecstatic nature of our understanding, at once spiritual and rational, accounts for Pannenberg’s doctrine of analogy and doxology. Pannenberg rejects the classical doctrine of analogy whereby finite reason makes partial analogies on the basis of the nature of the world to speak about God. There are various related reasons for his rejection of the doctrine, all stemming from his ontological framework. In the first place, God himself, according to Pannenberg, remains as yet dependent upon the process of history for his final definition, hence it is impossible logically to make analogies applicable to him. In the second place, man, in exactly the same way, is also a product of the ongoing process, even to the extent that his mind does not have a standpoint clear of the flow of reality, a standpoint needed from which to make abstractions from the world for analogies of God; in short, man is also too bound in to the temporal flow and not a sufficiently independent agent over against the whole system. Man has no independent critical point over against the semantic web of history, history which is always developing and changing the current state of understanding. For Pannenberg, man himself in a strong sense is in process, is not constituted to make abstractions from the process but rather to reflect it.

In keeping with this framework Pannenberg brings in his doctrine of doxology to replace the classical role of analogy. Our language of God, according to Pannenberg, is the finite reflection of the meaning woven into history from the future. The ongoing development of ideas, models and pictures of God is not simply arbitrary human creation but comes from God. Our ideas of God must be seen as divine gift meeting mankind as man quests for God throughout history. Human seeking intertwines with divine self-revelation. We truly speak of God only because of this gracious self-mediation of God to us in human historical ideas developing in time. We truly speak about God as we open ourselves to God, as we sacrifice ourselves and our ideas to the future so that God can refashion our thought as he wills. This is the 'doxological' structure of language which Pannenberg substitutes for the classical doctrine of analogy; it is the epistemological application of the 'die to live' principle lived out by Jesus. As our ideas develop and stand the test of time we can know their validity, albeit a provisional one. This expresses the idea of indirect self-revelation in a slightly different way. It depends on our openness to the future and the permeating presence of the Spirit according to the structure made manifest by the Son. 'At the place where the old doctrine of analogy asserted a correspondence of the word used to name God with God himself, there stands in our view the concept of revelation.' Having dispensed with the 'upstairs downstairs' model of God and the world, he logically does away with the idea of analogy, because the world is neither separate enough nor static enough as a basis for even partial comparisons,
analogies, to be drawn.

This also explains why Pannenberg does not claim to offer a 'natural theology' in the traditional sense. We have neither the standpoint from which to erect a natural theology from the world to God, nor is God static enough, or even completely identifiable until the eschaton, for this enterprise. God is not yet subject to demonstration or description; he is always future, the beyond, never 'at hand'. But God is also too radically immanent for natural theology because history and nature cannot be set against God, as Pannenberg protests: 'As if the finite, that which is brought forth by God's action, could at the same time be something in itself, independent of him over against God's action.'

Humanity is already fully encompassed by, and integrated into, the circle of the divine life. There is not the room for the creature to master the whole system; his calling is to sketch and reflect the shape of the ongoing process in the knowledge that these insights themselves are from God. Pannenberg is committed to the reflective structure of thought that was worked out along the way that led from Fichte to Hegel. 'Every insight is but a stage to a new insight.' Truth is an historical continuum of which we are a particular conscious moment and our insights will in turn be taken up into the whole as time goes on. This is a necessary aspect of the initial programme of revelation as history and indirect self-revelation.
(1) Individual eschatology

Because meaning decides being from the future backwards (as illustrated by the resurrection of Jesus deciding his divinity) Pannenberg logically holds that man’s death is not the final determining point for his meaning and therefore of his being or identity: ‘even with the death of an individual the totality of his life is not yet manifested. This is because the meaning of the individual life as a whole is also conditioned by its context in the life of the society of which he is a member. Thus the image of the dead, as is most clearly seen in the case of the great figures of mankind, continues to change after their death as the interpretation of their life and work continues to develop.’ There can be no greater demonstration that Pannenberg defines being from meaning than this doctrine! Here he shows just how much he reverses the Cartesian anthropology of ‘I think, therefore I am’! Pannenberg teaches a radically objective doctrine of man and, inseparably, of man’s eschatological destiny. The future holds the truth about an individual but the individual is all the time moving towards that destiny of his final definition or identity. This is the dialectical dynamic again: the present moves toward its future, always reconstituting its past, while the future is the evocative, creative impetus to newness and ultimately to fulfilment.

Pannenberg says that this is what apocalyptic writing teaches when it talks of the truth of time being hidden in God’s future, ‘the future resurrection of the dead will reveal what already forms the secret of our life history for the eternal God who is present in our life.’ This, he thinks, expresses the proleptic structure of life, but he insists that any talk of the eternity of God must include the fact that God himself is dependent on the outcome of world history for his own identity. Human existence after death is therefore temporal yet in a transfigured way akin to the glorified Jesus’ transformed life or resurrection body: continuous with temporal being, yet fully attuned to the spiritual secret within. Temporality is certainly included in the resurrection life or else, Pannenberg believes, we are returned to the dreaded Greek timeless, frozen notion of eternal life.

Pannenberg has passages which teach a doctrine of final judgement according to whether the individual has realised his destiny: ‘our present life... will either perish at the judgement of God under its contrast to its human destiny or will be immortalised and glorified through participation in his immortality and glory.’ Tupper comments that ‘Pannenberg has consistently refused to espouse universalism unequivocally’ But it is hard to square his notion of Jesus’ inclusive substitution for all humanity with any people in world history not, somehow, participating in Christ’s atoning reconciliation. Pannenberg’s whole thrust lends itself far more
consistently to a doctrine of universal harmony and unity, God having borne the pain of the negative into himself as he has wrought new syntheses out of evil situations by his Spirit.

(2) Final unity of humanity

The doctrine of the resurrection of all the dead and last judgement implies the corporate destiny of humanity: 'without a general resurrection of the dead and a Last Judgement - that is to say without the participation of all individuals - there is no kingdom of God, and mankind is not perfected.'66 This correlates with Pannenberg’s open textured ontology of all individuals inwardly related to all others and to the open future. Individuals only exist in the wider context of society and of the widest context of world history. Indeed a person’s very identity continues to be formed by this wider entity even after death. From the divine aspect also, the Spirit operates always to unify and synthesize in love and harmony, and the mysterious open future is the point of final unity for the protean variety of history. The eschaton will unify all of history by taking up the meaning of the past ages through to their final identity, presumably a common one, at the very end. ‘For the kingdom of God embraces the earlier generations of mankind as well as the coming ones... it is directed towards the transfiguration of all epochs of human history through the fire of the divine judgement, which is one with the light of the glory of God.’ 66 Here the final judgement seems to be a purging reality through which history is finally brought into reconciliation with God and a mutual harmony.

This theme of the unity of humanity largely controls Pannenberg’s doctrine of the Church, which, he says, anticipates the goal and destiny of all mankind as the eschatological community living out the rule of God in unity. Society needs to be increasingly unified, but only by love and care, in order to be conformed to the rule of God. Pannenberg is closely associated with Moltmann and Kung in the contemporary theological concern for liberation and political theology, and this coheres with his view that the Trinitarian all-determining reality is equally God of the world and the Church; he can say that ‘if the present social structures were adequate, there would be no need for the Church. For then the Kingdom of God would be present in its completeness.’ 67 Behind this lies his Trinitarian doctrine of God and history, the dialectical dynamo of his entire theology, the God who simultaneously differentiates creation into being and brings it all back to a great reconciliation, a harmony of blending individuals, a symphony of inner relativity. The thrust of Pannenberg’s system is towards the totality which is always prior to the individual, and this is certainly so in his eschatology.
4. A THEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL OF PANNEMBERG'S SYSTEM

A. BEGINNING AND ENDING

Pannenberg has offered a brilliant fresh theological system seeking to use the long-despised Hegelian tradition and apocalyptic thought to oust the existentialising theologies so dominant on the Continent. He has sought to breathe new life into the great classical doctrines of the creeds and in particular the doctrine of the Trinity. No one could fail to profit from reading his works which are always stimulating and often an education in the history of thought. Because he has punctured the skin of the dogmatically naturalistic world view chaining so much modern thought he must be regarded as a resource from which conservative theology can draw.

But how are we to appraise his overall system, what kind of judgement should we make on it? The major sorts of hesitations with it have been expressed en route through this monograph, and they are the hesitations attaching to Idealist metaphysics. It must be stressed that here is a system more subtle, by quite a degree, than the Process school of theology. Pannenberg can always point to a transcendent deity, the mysterious and free open future, never 'domesticable' and not merely a prisoner of the world process, because of his freedom. God is inwardly related to the historical continuum but at the same time is freely sovereign over it from the future. The Trinity is so crucial here, allowing him to build a doctrine of God completing the world through himself, God determining himself through the finite world which he freely controls! The picture is rather like a boomerang released into flight, turning over and over to return to its source of energy: the dialectical dynamic at work in the advance of history towards its goal is the dialectic of the Son and Spirit from and to the Father.

The overall vision discards the traditional two-tier structure of a divine reality and a qualitatively different finite reality. Instead he proposes an open-textured, porous world process, which, as a totality, will constitute the essential divine self-revelation, a world dependent on God but actually contributing to the divine being. This is a doctrine of inner relations between God and the world. The way Pannenberg differentiates them is dialectically: Edward Caird's picture of the life pulsating through the bodily organs is helpful here. The life is the free vital principle but it is the life of the body; the life, while transcending the sum of the parts, is not separable from them. For Pannenberg, God is the future of the historical continuum, superior to it but integrated into it. The great question is whether this distinction between God and the world is sufficient. Finite history seems often to be a form or mode of divine freedom, rather than God's qualitatively distinct covenant partner. The very notion of revelation, in Pannenberg's strong sense which involves divine being, seems to result in God revealing himself, in finite form, to himself. Closely linked with this broad
problem affecting Hegelian interpretations of Trinitarianism is the over-identification of the finite stream of time with the Son, both of which are expressed from the free deity in the same kind of way. This conflicts with traditional dogmatics' careful distinction between the generation of the Son from the essence of God and the act of creation, basically external to God but producing a world reflecting the hand of its maker. The distinction between the man Jesus and the rest of the race cannot be absolute because Pannenberg teaches that 'Everything is what it is only in transition to something other than itself' in his synthesising structure. The distinction lies in the different meaning attaching to Jesus and to everyone else, but is this sufficient to prevent the cosmos becoming identified with the Son as God's self-expression in finite form? At the end when, history is seen to be God's self-revelation, Christ seems to be swamped in the revelation of the whole process.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the the temporal distinctions of past and present over against the future, so heavily relied upon in this system to differentiate the divine from the finite, indeed, its very foundation, just cannot bear the weight imposed on it. The simple question about the start and finish of time lays bare the weakness. Can Pannenberg give an account of the beginning of the world's history without contradicting his central tenet rejecting the classical two-tier model? Before finitude existed presumably only an undifferentiated freedom, God, not the pre-existent Trinitarian life of Father, Son and Spirit, existed. God must then have brought creation into being. This must either return Pannenberg to admitting that God enjoys an eternal pre-existence over against creation, or else holding that the finite is a form of the infinite, potentially or ideally always in God. But Pannenberg attacks a merely planned or ideal creation in the mind of an eternal God, subsequently brought into being, because this is the very two-tier model he strives to dissolve into the single continuum of history. If he is determined to reject the craggy, classical doctrine of creatio ex nihilo, he would seem committed to some form of eternal finitude, since the very being of the world, for Pannenberg, logically means that we cannot conceive of God ever having been without it. Essence and act merge together in this system. Idealism always finds initiating and terminating the material creation an intractable difficulty and this is so here.

The status of finitude is the complementary problem. Given that Pannenberg envisages a start to finitude, what was its nature? The freedom which is God did not 'make' the world external to his divine essence by a miraculous act. Rather freedom invested itself into form, the form of historical process; freedom constantly distanced itself from this developing form while being its inner dynamic of life. Divine essence releases itself as history in Pannenberg's model for creation, and history turns out to be in the end a mode of deity, the self-revelation of God, indeed helping God to define himself. This is why the Trinitarian distinctions are so crucial to
Pannenberg's system: they are the means of differentiating the historical process from the free God within the one continuum of reality. But the world ends up insufficiently independent of God as is seen when time runs its course and the Trinitarian distinctions, resting on the difference between past, present and future, then cease to keep God and the world properly apart.

The issue of the divine being is the other end of the problem. How are we to conceive of God's life before creation? Clearly the controlling idea is that of pure freedom; but this seems very abstract and empty without creation and without a pre-existent Triune life. Freedom requires form against which it is defined! Pannenberg has rejected the pre-existent Logos, he cannot say that the Son was before creation and it is no answer to say that at the eschaton the Son will always have been so all along, because the very issue is about the beginning; Pannenberg cannot be allowed to oscillate dialectically from the start to the end and back again as an answer to this obvious question. The same unease must be expressed over his doctrine of the Spirit: was there a pre-existing Spirit apart from finite history? If so then Pannenberg needs to tailor his system unrecognisably to give an account of this divine reality united in essence yet in differentiation from pure freedom. To say this would mean that Pannenberg reinstates the pre-existent Trinity before the world was, and this would take him back to the 'two tier' model he rejects.

Correspondingly, when history runs out, when the future is no longer the future, how does Pannenberg define God and the finite? Temporal distinctions fail here. When the future is no longer future, when freedom has been caught up by the completed world process, how is God separated from the creation then? Once more we are returned, it seems, to the stark choice between absorption into God in pantheistic manner or else the God-world 'two tier' structure Pannenberg so heartily rejects. The greatest possible qualitative difference between God and the world is demanded, but we end up with the totality of history as revelation, finite as infinite, rather than with God in communion with a quite different entity, however penetrated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. We need a genuinely creaturely entity in covenant with God, and however much that created entity is transfigured eschatologically by its resurrection body it remains creaturely and not a mode of deity.

Pannenberg does speak of God being in a covenant relationship with the creation as a result of the Trinitarian self-differentiation occurring throughout the course of history. But this fails to convince when history is completed and the Trinitarian life is finally faced with a finished creation. Is the final corpus of history somehow spun clear from the Triune life to emerge as more separate at the end than during the process of its formation? Unless this is so, and it runs against Pannenberg's whole drift, then at the end point when the future is no longer future to the world what is to
prevent creation collapsing into a mode or form of God rather than being a relatively independent covenant partner? At the end God will have poured himself forth from freedom into finite form: what will be left of the future-defined freedom to set over against the formed creation? We seem to be led to agree with Feuerbach’s diagnosis of Christianity: not that God becomes man, man becomes God, so much as that God becomes history, history becomes God.

The totality of history is identified with revelational divine essence. The creating process is the releasing from the Father of new life to the past, exemplified by Jesus’ life and fate, as the Spirit knits the new into the old. The Trinity, therefore, is previously undifferentiated divine life realising, enriching and finding itself through the whole flow of history. Pannenberg specifically holds that the divine identity is indeed being worked out in free dependence upon the temporal continuum. God is free in relation to the form of history, and yet is freely dependent on the outcome of history. At this final outcome, God, if he has not absorbed creation, as the logic of Pannenberg’s system would seem to press, has freely made himself dependent upon it for his own identity: in other words, God the Father relates to the world in the same way that the Father relates to the Son in classical theology, in a way affecting the very being of God, even defining that being. The completed universe gains a status almost exactly the same as that of the Son. Pannenberg urgently needs to provide a more solid ground for distinguishing the divine from the creation than the difference between the past, present and future since that difference itself is temporary.
B. INDIVIDUALITY

The same problem of blurred distinctions occurs in the area of anthropology. Pannenberg attacks the atomistic idea of humanity as so many insulated billiard balls knocking together as individuals. For him, we exist firstly as social becomings, inwardly related in being to each other in our contexts. Indeed our identities are not just of our own subjective intentional making: our meaning changes, hence for Pannenberg’s metaphysics, our essence or identity. As time goes on, the future alone will tell who we really are. Truth and meaning are never absolute but are foreshadowings of the final point of eschatological clarity when all will not only be revealed but will be retroactively constituted. Truth is taken up from the past into the future as well as coming from the future as the process moves towards its quintessential moment of ultimate meaning.

The issue raised here is that of the status of the individual mind over against the whole, the system. It is Kierkegaard’s problem with the Hegelian system, his protest in the name of the individual. Here we must be careful to do justice to Pannenberg’s subtlety in building an idealist-type framework to include existentialist individual concerns. Nevertheless, because the individual is so constituted by his overall place in the whole; because he is presently an incomplete, proleptic becoming awaiting his own ‘person’ at the end; and because the character of individual rationality and insight is reflective, bringing the ecstatic structure of the Spirit to consciousness, the great weight of Pannenberg’s teaching leads us to question whether the individual has enough substantial standing vis-à-vis the totality and God. At the eschaton, when individuals have been drawn through their past into true unification with each other and with God, because the idea of the conscious ‘core ego’ has been so reduced in human definition by Pannenberg, has Pannenberg left sufficient room for separate individuals fully to experience God, or are we left with a corporate consciousness of the totality of divine self-revelation?

Indeed this can be pressed further because Pannenberg declines to separate the human spirit from the divine. This means that at the eschaton the totality of human consciousness is gathered up and drawn together in divine Spirit, which has clothed itself or developed itself through the history of finite thought. By God alone can God be known, indirectly through the medium of human mind as the process of history goes on. The radical nature of Pannenberg’s holism may catch up with him here: even consciousness cannot, in his system, stand against the whole: the whole is not the aggregate of individuals ‘externally’ related, rather each individual is in transition, melting into its future and into its neighbour and into the overall context. Individual mind, experience and morality is insufficiently substantial vis-à-vis the process, and seems logically to be swamped by the historical organism, evaporated into the totality of meaning. Pringle-Pattison said that the radical error of
Hegelianism 'is the identification of the human and the divine self-consciousness, or to put it more broadly, the unification of consciousness in a single self'. This is far from Pannenberg's intention but his revision of Hegel by the future orientation does not alter the basic Hegelian metaphysic of inner relativity, of the individual mind being taken up into the totality of historical meaning, the totality which itself is the divine essence revealed and defined through this process. Pannenberg thinks that his revision gives freedom, contingency and uniqueness to individuals, and this is so as long as history is in train perhaps; but when temporal distinctions end, then the totality sucks meaning into a unified whole, the parts meld into a unity as must all creaturely individuals. Individual minds lack sufficient substance and permanent status to resist this 'melt-down', or to use another image, to avoid being evaporated up into the one whole mind or Spirit. Is God, then, revealing himself to himself via the process of human historical consciousness? Unless Pannenberg provides a more substantial doctrine of created individuals against the process, then he seems unable to avoid these pitfalls of Hegelian pantheism.
C. COSMOLOGICAL CONTROLS

Our final comment is that Pannenbera offers us a system or cosmology which challenges received ideas both modernist and orthodox in the name of the divine involvement in history. He cuts away the basic distinction used by classical Trinitarianism between the way God acts in creation and providence on the one hand, and in revelation and redemption on the other. For Pannenbera the being of God is expressed in his relation with finitude in the same kind of way throughout. Pannenbera insists that the Triune life of God is the key to history and that God has freely conditioned his essence by the process of temporal events. God is the God of history in the most realistic way possible. In effect Pannenbera, like Macquarrie, has opted for a form of idealist emanationism as against the classical, and biblical, notion of creation by a miraculous act of God. Because Pannenbera has rejected any externality of relation between God and the world he ends up with major problems convincing us that creaturely reality is authentically 'qualitatively distinct' from divine life.

The system merges redemption with creation, thereby reducing the evangelical thrust of sin and grace. God does not break in to history in a decisive act of salvation; rather, history itself is revelational, is messianic and redemptive. Classical Trinitarian theology knows that God, as well as sustaining the cosmos, is also 'outside' it, independent of it in absolute holy aseity, an aseity from which he breaks in to save sinful creation. By placing this central biblical drama at hazard Pannenbera sacrifices what evangelical theology preserves most jealously, believing that the whole tenor of the Hebrew Christian Bible teaches a God whose being is not 'inwardly' tied into that of the flow of time save in the life of the incarnate Lord. God must be held to be complete over against the world process and prior to it, as well as utterly committed to it and providentially sovereign over it. This is why orthodoxy has been forced to say that the activity and presence of God is of a different order in salvation, where it is utterly personal, and in creation, where it is at the very least less so.

It would be churlish, however, not to close on a note of thanks to this great Lutheran theologian for his extraordinarily fresh and creative attempt to reinterpret themes of Christian theology in a way which takes up apocalyptic and to reappropriate objective history against the prevalent anthropocentrism. Pannenbera's Christology will remain a rich resource for conservative theology as well as a challenging conversation partner. Pannenbera clearly aims to provide a Trinitarian doctrine of Jesus, avoiding what he sees as the errors of liberalism and orthodoxy, errors of failing to integrate the divine and the human in their respective Christologies. His philosophical critique of the secularist, naturalistic world view is often devastating. His determination rigorously to work biblical studies into systematic theology is an example to theology; and it is
worth repeating that he is a thoroughly critical exegete who has come up with thoroughly conservative conclusions. This fact must be another strong reminder that the philosophical framework of avowedly 'neutral' critical scholars cannot be ignored and must be carefully examined because it will have a major bearing on the conclusions reached. Pannenberg's philosophical frame is unusual, immensely stimulating and worth wrestling with. Here is a theology not be be neglected by any contemporary evangelical theology, even if his system overall may fail to convince.
Footnotes

2. ibid.
3. ibid.
4. ibid.
5. Galloway saw this early on when he said that without the Trinitarian framework already implicit in Pannenberg's work his 'doctrine of revelation as history would be mere metaphor.' *Wolfhart Pannenberg*, p112. Burhenn, on the other hand, clearly thought that Pannenberg's early work had no time for a Trinitarian base... *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1975) 28,6, p535. Likewise, more recently, Clayton thinks that Pannenberg has altered position with his stress on the Trinity in his latest works see his review article of *Grundfragen Systematischer Theologie, band 2*. P Clayton, 'The God of History and the Presence of the Future', *Journal of Religion* (Jan 85) 65. 1, p99. Galloway's view is surely better, that Pannenberg's system has always assumed and needed the Trinitarianism now being made very explicit.
7. ibid, p46.
8. *A Rumour of Angels*.
11. ibid, p6.
12. ibid, p13.
17. ibid, p105.
18. ibid.
22. ibid, p199.
29. *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, p70.
31. *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, p305.

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33 Theology and the Kingdom of God, p56.
35 Grundfragen systematischer Theologie, band 2, p122.
36. ibid, p118.
37. ibid, p122.
38 Jesus, God and Man, p12
40. supra p3.
41. Caird op.cit., p179.
42. ibid.
43 Jesus, God and Man, 'Postscript to the Fifth German Edition'.
44 Grundfragen systematischer Theologie, band 2, p129.
45 What is Man?, pvi.
46 Jesus, God and Man, p136.
48. Jesus, God and Man, p337.
49. Jesus, God and Man, 159-60.
51. Jesus, God and Man, p156.
52. p101.
53. Revelation as History, p135.
54. Jesus, God and Man, p175.
55. ibid.
56. ibid, p176-7.
57. Faith and Reality, p32.
58. Spirit, Faith and Church, p18.
59. ibid, p18.
60. ibid, p19.
61. ibid, p21.
63. Grundfragen systematischer Theologie, band 2, p126
64. ibid, p123.
65. ibid, p122.
66. ibid, p123.
67. ibid, p124.
68. ibid.
69. supra p3.
70. Grundfragen systematischer Theologie, band 2, p91
71. ibid, p91-2.
72. ibid.
73. ibid.
76. Jesus, God and Man, p269.
77. E H Carr, What is History?, p121.
78. Basic Questions in Theology 1, p237-8.
79. Theology as History, p252.
80. Basic Questions in Theology 2, p60.
81. ibid, p202.
83. ibid, p175.
86. ibid, p178.
87. *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, p82.
90. Pannenberg knew very well that, because his ontology or world view is different, his opinions would be misunderstood and rejected by those who hold to a man centred secularism: ‘may whoever finds enjoyment in it continue to measure my talk about knowledge and reality with a standard of a positivistic understanding of being and knowledge in order to discover in this way its inappropriateness, to his surprise.’ *Jesus, God and Man*, p12
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ISBN 1-870137-05-1