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THE RECONCILIATION OF THE WORLD
IN THE THEOLOGY OF W. PANNENBERG

BY HYUN SOO SHIN,
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ABSTRACT

The Reconciliation of the World in the Theology of W. Pannenberg

by Hyun Soo Shin

This study interprets and appraises Pannenberg's intertrinitarian concept of reconciliation, as it relates to the Lordship of God over the world. It is argued that within the framework of the reciprocal self-differentiation of Father, Son, and Spirit as the interpretative key to his doctrine of reconciliation, Jesus' death is the Son's reconciling action as a prolepsis of the coming Lordship of God.

After an introduction presenting the purpose and method of study, chapter one explores the formation of his christology as a background for the subsequent inquiries. The historical and theological contexts of his christology, its significance in the history of the doctrine, and the influence of Barth and other theological and philosophical influences on its shape are concentrated.

Chapters two and three establish the intertrinitarian character of Jesus' divine sonship in relation to God's Lordship. Jesus, by his subordination to the Father and his Lordship on the cross, anticipates the future realisation of the deity and Lordship of God, and thus *is* the Son. Chapter two examines the historical method, the concept of Jesus' personal unity with God, and Jesus' self-differentiation from the Father as the inner basis of his divine sonship. Chapter three analyses the eternal and universal sonship of Jesus, and the historical confirmation of Jesus' divine sonship by his earthly claim to authority and his resurrection.

Chapter four defines the concept of reconciliation as the action of the triune God to achieve his Lordship in universal history. After a clarification of the doctrine of reconciliation in its relationship to soteriology and christology, the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation is examined in terms of the intertrinitarian activity bringing about God's Lordship in *Universalgeschichte*.

Chapter five focuses on the Son's reconciling office. The cross is argued as the active performing by the Son of his reconciling office. This chapter considers Jesus' death as the action of the Son, as a prolepsis of God's future Lordship, as the revelatory activity of the Son, and as the joint action of the Son with the Father, and the office in terms of the *officium triplex Christi*.

Chapter six expounds the Son's *Stellvertretung*. The Son performs his reconciling action in the form of *Stellvertretung*. The primitive Christian interpretations of Jesus' death, the relationship of Jesus' death to the law, the concept of *Sühnstellvertretung*, especially the view of *Stellvertretendes Strafleiden*, and *Stellvertretung* as a universal phenomenon, and *Stellvertretung* as liberation are all discussed.

Chapter seven considers the continuing activity of the exalted Son in the Spirit to bring humanity to the Father's Lordship after the resurrection. The focus is on the completion of reconciliation by the risen Son in the Spirit, the proclamation of the gospel by which the exalted Son works out reconciliation, and the founding of the Church at which the proclamation of the gospel aims.

The concluding chapter sums up the whole discussion of Pannenberg's concept of reconciliation and re-appraises it for a constructive interpretation of the reconciliation of the world.

ABBREVIATIONS

The Works of Wolhart Pannenberg have been abbreviated as follows in the footnotes. For further details please see Bibliography.

<i>AC</i>	<i>The Apostles' Creed: In the Light of Today's Questions</i> (SCM, 1972)
<i>BQiT-I</i>	<i>Basic Questions in Theology</i> , vol. I (SCM, 1967)
<i>BQiT-II</i>	<i>Basic Questions in Theology</i> , vol. II (SCM, 1971)
<i>BQiT-III</i>	<i>Basic Questions in Theology</i> , vol. III (SCM, 1973)
<i>Church</i>	<i>The Church</i> (Westminster, 1983)
<i>CSSC</i>	<i>Christian Spirituality and Sacramental Community</i> (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984)
<i>Ethics</i>	<i>Ethics</i> (Westminster, 1977)
<i>IGHF</i>	<i>The Idea of God and Human Freedom</i> (Westminster, 1973)
<i>JGM</i>	<i>Jesus - God and Man</i> (SCM, 1970)
<i>RaH</i>	<i>Revelation as History</i> (Macmillan, 1968)
<i>ST-I,</i>	<i>Systematic Theology</i> vol. I (Eerdmans, 1991)
<i>ST-II,</i>	<i>Systematic Theology</i> vol. II (Eerdmans, 1994)
<i>TKG</i>	<i>Theology and the Kingdom of God</i> (Westminster, 1969)
<i>TPS</i>	<i>Theology and the Philosophy of Science</i> (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976)

Other Works:

<i>CD</i>	Karl Barth, <i>Church Dogmatics</i> , trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980-1983). The volume and chapter numbers are marked as an example IV/1.
<i>Inst</i>	J. Calvin, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i> , ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973). The volume, chapter, and section numbers are marked as an example, I.i.1.

CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Abstract</i>	1
<i>Abbreviations</i>	2
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	6
<u>CHAPTER I: THE FORMATION OF PANNENBERG'S CHRISTOLOGY</u>	16
1.1. THE CONTEXT OF PANNENBERG'S CHRISTOLOGY	17
1.1.1. <i>The Historical Context: The German Church's Struggle Against National Socialism</i>	17
1.1.2. <i>The Theological Setting: Existential Theology and Heilsgeschichte Theology</i>	21
1.2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PANNENBERG'S CHRISTOLOGY WITHIN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT	23
1.2.1. <i>Theology as Universal Science</i>	24
1.2.2. <i>History as the Most Comprehensive Horizon of Christian Theology</i>	29
1.2.3. <i>The Unique Place of Pannenberg's Christology in the History of the Doctrine</i>	35
1.3. THE INFLUENCE OF K. BARTH	38
1.3.1. <i>The Aspects of Barth's Influence</i>	38
1.3.2. <i>Barth's Response to Pannenberg's Christology</i>	43
1.4. OTHER THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES	45
1.5. CONCLUSION	49
<u>CHAPTER II: THE IDENTITY OF JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD (I)</u>	52
2.1. THE HISTORICAL APPROACH TO THE IDENTITY OF JESUS	53
2.1.1. <i>The Path "from below"</i>	53
2.1.2. <i>The Context of Jesus' Identity</i>	64
2.2. THE PERSONAL UNITY OF JESUS WITH GOD	70
2.2.1. <i>The Impasse of the Two Nature Christology</i>	70
2.2.2. <i>Jesus' Self-understanding</i>	79
2.2.3. <i>Jesus' Indirect Identity with the Son</i>	83
2.3. JESUS' SELF-DIFFERENTIATION FROM THE FATHER AS THE INNER BASIS OF HIS DIVINE SONSHIP	86
2.3.1. <i>The Self-differentiation of the Son</i>	86
2.3.2. <i>The Son's Self-differentiation as Prolepsis of God's Lordship</i>	97
2.3.3. <i>The Self-differentiation as the Content of Jesus' Freedom and Sinlessness</i>	104
2.4. CONCLUSION	109

<u>CHAPTER III: THE IDENTITY OF JESUS</u>	
<u>AS THE SON OF GOD (II)</u>	112
3.1. THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF JESUS	112
3.2. THE UNIVERSAL SONSHIP OF JESUS	117
3.3. THE CONFIRMATION OF JESUS' DIVINE SONSHIP.....	122
3.3.1. <i>Jesus' Claim to Authority in his Proclamation of</i> <i>the Coming Kingdom of God</i>	123
3.3.2. <i>The Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead</i>	131
3.4. CONCLUSION	153
<u>CHAPTER IV: THE CONCEPT OF RECONCILIATION</u>	155
4.1. THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION.....	156
4.1.1. <i>A Formulation of Soteriology</i>	156
4.1.2. <i>A Function of Christology</i>	158
4.2. RECONCILIATION AS THE ACTION OF THE TRIUNE GOD IN HIS INTERTRINITARIAN RELATIONSHIP	165
4.2.1. <i>Reconciliation as God's Sovereign Action</i>	165
4.2.2. <i>Reconciliation Directed to the World</i>	166
4.2.3. <i>Reconciliation: Intertrinitarian in Character</i>	168
4.3. RECONCILIATION AS THE INTERTRINITARIAN ACTIVITY BRINGING ABOUT GOD'S LORDSHIP IN <i>UNIVERSALGESCHICHTE</i>	171
4.3.1. <i>God's Reconciling Action Bringing about his Lordship:</i> <i>intertrinitarian</i>	171
4.3.2. <i>God's Reconciling Action Bringing about his Lordship:</i> <i>universalgeschichtlich</i>	172
4.4. CONCLUSION.....	192
<u>CHAPTER V: THE RECONCILING OFFICE OF THE SON</u>	194
5.1. JESUS' EARTHLY HISTORY AS THE RECONCILING ACTION OF THE SON.....	194
5.2. THE SON'S ACTION IN HIS PRE-EASTER HISTORY AS PROLEPSIS OF GOD'S LORDSHIP	203
5.3. THE CROSS AS THE SON'S REVELATORY ACTIVITY	207
5.4. JESUS' DEATH AS THE CO-OPERATIVE ACTION OF THE SON WITH THE FATHER.....	211
5.5. <i>THE OFFICIUM TRIPLEX CHRISTI</i>	216
5.6. CONCLUSION	229

<u>CHAPTER VI: JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS AS</u>	
<u>STELLVERTRETUNG</u>	231
6.1. THE EARLY CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDINGS	
OF JESUS' DEATH.....	232
6.2. THE RELATIONSHIP OF JESUS' DEATH WITH THE LAW.....	236
6.3. JESUS' DEATH AS <i>SÜHNESTELLVERTRETUNG</i>	242
6.3.1. <i>Sühnestellvertretung</i> for Israel.....	242
6.3.2. <i>Sühnestellvertretung</i> for Humanity.....	248
6.4. <i>SÜHNE</i> AS <i>STELLVERTRETENDES STRAFLEIDEN</i>	253
6.5. <i>STELLVERTRETUNG</i> AS A UNIVERSAL PHENOMENON.....	265
6.6. <i>STELLVERTRETUNG</i> AS LIBERATION.....	277
6.6.1. <i>The Concept of Inclusive Stellvertretung</i>	277
6.6.2. <i>Stellvertretung</i> as <i>Paradigm of Sonship</i>	281
6.7. CONCLUSION.....	284
<u>CHAPTER VII: THE RECONCILING ACTION OF THE SON</u>	
<u>IN HIS POST-EASTER HISTORY</u>	287
7.1. THE SON'S RECONCILING ACTIVITY COMPLETED IN THE SPIRIT....	287
7.2. THE SON'S RECONCILING ACTIVITY THROUGH THE GOSPEL.....	294
7.2.1. <i>The Original Meaning of the Gospel</i>	294
7.2.2. <i>The Gospel as God's <i>dunamis</i></i>	297
7.2.3. <i>The Proclamation of the Gospel as the Event</i>	
<i>of Reconciliation</i>	299
7.2.4. <i>The proclamation of the Gospel and Forgiveness of Sin</i>	301
7.3. THE SON'S RECONCILING ACTIVITY THROUGH THE GOSPEL	
AIMED AT FOUNDING THE CHURCH.....	303
7.3.1. <i>The Proclamation of the Gospel and the Church</i>	303
7.3.2. <i>The Church as the Sign of the Kingdom of God</i>	305
7.4. CONCLUSION.....	323
<u>CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION</u>	325
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	339

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this treatise is to interpret Wolfhart Pannenberg's theology of reconciliation as it relates to the Lordship of God over the world, and then to subject it to a critical assessment. It is argued that within the perspective of the trinitarian reciprocal self-differentiation Jesus' crucifixion is the reconciling *action* of the Son to anticipate the coming Lordship of the Father.

Reconciliation is at the heart of Christian faith. The term "reconciliation" is defined, in a broad sense, as referring to the whole process of the renewal of a right relationship of humans with God in the person and work of Jesus Christ and its realisation through the work of the Holy Spirit. Human life is, according to Christianity, meaningful only in a right relationship with God who is the only source of life. Sin has drastically disrupted this relationship which began in creation. How, then, can this relationship be restored in human life? In the Christian tradition, as F. W. Dillistone points out,¹ this question is associated with Jesus Christ. This is because restoration is essentially not human achievement, but God's, working in the unique person and work of Jesus Christ, particularly his death on the cross. Reconciliation through the Christ-event is one issue which has been fiercely disputed, being regarded as *articulus stantis et cadentis christianae theologiae* within the Christian Church.

¹ F. W. Dillistone, *The Christian Understanding of Atonement* (Herts: James Nisbet and Company, Ltd, 1968), 27.

There are differing views of the reconciling significance of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It has been interpreted from personal, cosmic, corporate, moral, cultural, historical, and political standpoints.² More specifically, there has emerged a tendency to see the cross as a conciliatory device. Viewed in this way, the death of Jesus is merely an external means for establishing a renewed legal relationship with God. At the heart of this view is a separation between Christ's reconciling ministry and his personal identity. In consequence, the person himself who gives the reconciling benefit is overlooked. The substantiation of reconciling union with Christ in all realms of human life is similarly ignored. Christian life is restricted to performing fixed religious practices within the Church.

In this context, two crucial points need to be emphasised for understanding reconciliation. The first is that reconciliation is to be seen in the framework of the trinitarian communion of God. In love the three persons of the trinitarian God by their mutual self-differentiation are united to each other. In this way the triune God reconciles the world to himself. He reveals himself as God in Trinity in his reconciling action for the world.

The second point is that reconciliation should be perceived in terms of God's Lordship over creation. The reconciling action of the triune God in his mutual relations is not separated from his Lordship. It is the one and same action of the trinitarian God to achieve his Lordship. The reconciling benefit cannot be understood apart from its Giver because it is a natural outcome of

² George M. Newlands gives a brief summary of the main types of traditional theories of atonement, *God in Christian Perspective* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 311-315.

union with this Giver.³ The gospel is mainly concerned not with the reconciling benefit itself, but with the Lord himself who gives it. Furthermore, Jesus' death not only establishes the reconciling relationship itself, but aims at continuous substantiation of that relationship in the social, historical, cultural, political, economic, and cosmological dimensions, as well as the spiritual and individual realms of life in this world. It is to be noted at the outset that the term "Lordship" over all things theologically implies both elements: the Giver himself of the reconciling benefit, and the substantial contents of reconciliation.

Viewed from these two points, the cross as the expression of the ultimate *obedience* of the Son to the Father is to be understood as the Son's reconciling *action* to bring humanity under his Lordship which can be identified with the Lordship of the Father until a future culmination.⁴

The primary reason for engaging in the study of reconciliation with reference to the thoughts of Wolfhart Pannenberg is his remarkable insight into the *intertrinitarian* concept of reconciliation *in terms of God's Lordship*. In his recent book, *Persons in Communion*, Alan Torrance argues for a trinitarian "communion model" in his exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity, as an alternative to Karl Barth's "revelation model".⁵ As George Newlands points out,⁶ Pannenberg also articulates the doctrine of the Trinity in the

³ See Trevor Hart, "Humankind in Christ and Christ in humankind: Salvation as Participation in our Substitute in the Theology of John Calvin", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42 (1989): 70.

⁴ Colossians 1: 13 indicates that reconciliation means to be brought into Christ's Lordship.

⁵ Alan J. Torrance argues for this model throughout the whole book with particular reference to Barth's doctrine of the Trinity, *Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996). Particularly, see the concluding chapter, 307-71.

⁶ Newlands, *op. cit.*, 141.

relational dimension. The mutual self-differentiation of Father, Son, and Spirit,⁷ a Hegelian logic of *free differentiation and relation*, is viewed as the mode of the triune inner life.⁸ Within this framework, Jesus, by his self-distinction from the Father in his historical life, particularly on the cross, anticipates the deity and Lordship of the Father which will be realised through the reconciliation of the world at the end of human history.⁹ Thus he *is* the Son of God. This is historically confirmed by Jesus' earthly claim to authority in his proclamation of the coming Lordship of God.

Furthermore, Pannenberg develops the trinitarian reciprocal self-differentiation as the manner by which the triune God reconciles the world to him and brings it under his Lordship over creation. This is because the reality that the trinitarian God achieves in his inner fellowship and the reality that he achieves in the economy of his action for the world are one and the same. Reconciliation is nothing less than the action of the triune God in the mutuality of his trinitarian relations bringing humanity under his Lordship. Within this perspective, Jesus, by his perfect obedient offering to the Father on the cross, reconciles the world to the Lordship of the Father. But he does this only in anticipation of the coming Lordship of the Father, which is worked out by the risen Son in the Spirit through the gospel. The Easter event retroactively enforces this.

⁷ Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg", *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 191.

⁸ Roger E. Olson argues that the main character of Pannenberg's doctrine of the immanent Trinity is eschatological. See "Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983): 213-227.

⁹ See *Systematische Theologie*, vol. I, 337; AC, 61-77; ST-I, 308f.; ST-II, 392.

However, this has not been noticed in earlier studies of Pannenberg's christology. Focusing on the human level of Jesus' history, these studies interpret Jesus' crucifixion as his destiny which he suffered only passively. Thus reconciliation is ascribed only to the action of God the Father. This is the main criticism that Galloway¹⁰ and Pinnock¹¹ make of Pannenberg's view.

Furthermore, these earlier studies have connected the future Lordship of God only to Jesus' resurrection from the dead, not to the cross.¹² For instance, Allan Galloway,¹³ David Polk,¹⁴ and Timothy Bradshaw¹⁵, especially E. Frank Tupper interpret that if God's revelation in the Christ event is spoken of, the future Kingdom, the full realisation of his Lordship, has already become present in Jesus, in his proclamation of the Kingdom, and proleptically in the resurrection. The necessity of Jesus' death between his earthly proclamation of the Kingdom and its *proleptic* presence in the resurrection is thus questionable. Tupper asks, "Was the cross prerequisite to

¹⁰ See Allan D. Galloway, *Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 124, 127.

¹¹ See Clark H. Pinnock, "No-Nonsense Theology: Pinnock Reviews Pannenberg", pt. 2, *Christian Today* 21/19 (November 1976): 14, cited in Stanley J. Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York: Oxford, 1990), 249.

¹² Herbert Nieie exceptionally indicates that the cross is materially related to the Kingdom of God in its openness to the Kingdom of God, *The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1979), 217. But he has not expounded this point further. Moreover, he has not explored the relationship from the perspective of the trinitarian mutual self-differentiation.

¹³ Allan D. Galloway conceives trinity in unity. See his book, *Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 99-115, 77-85.

¹⁴ David P. Polk, *On the Way to God: An Exploration into the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 187-96.

¹⁵ Timothy Bradshaw, *Trinity and Ontology: A Comparative Study of the Theologies of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1988), 148-162. He interprets Pannenberg's christology as trinitarian in character, *ibid.*, 148-233, 274-300.

the eschatological appearance of God's Kingdom", or for justifying the hope for the eschatological Kingdom?¹⁶

Herbert Nieie focuses on the expiatory substitutionary character of Jesus' death.¹⁷ Stanley Grenz refers on occasion to the future reign of God in his overall survey of Pannenberg's doctrine of reconciliation.¹⁸ However, he has not clearly explicated the intrinsic relation of the cross to God's future Lordship. Nor has he grounded the relationship in the intertrinitarian framework. Although Christoph Schwöbel employs the term "the *monarchia*" of the Father in explaining all divine activity in creation, redemption and salvation,¹⁹ he has not treated the correlation of the cross to the eschatological Lordship of God as a central issue.

All these interpretations are mainly based on Pannenberg's earlier works, particularly *Grundzüge der Christologie* published in 1964.²⁰ This monograph is largely concerned with the revelational unity of Jesus with God, established by the resurrection,²¹ and emphasises the break between his pre-Easter work and the events of his death and resurrection.²² But Pannenberg's *Systematische Theologie*²³ suggests the intertrinitarian relationship as crucial

¹⁶ E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 300.

¹⁷ Nieie insists that for Pannenberg the cross is a vicarious expiation in character which can be justified on the ground of the historical reality of Jesus' activities and contemporary *Wirklichkeitsverständnis*, *The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1979), 129-205.

¹⁸ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 125-48.

¹⁹ Schwöbel, *op. cit.*, 193.

²⁰ Cf. Grenz and Schwöbel exceptionally refer to *Systematische Theologie*.

²¹ This is perhaps why there are very limited discussions on Pannenberg's doctrine of reconciliation in the critical literature.

²² Cf. *JGM*, 223 and 210.

²³ German edition, volumes I, II, and III, 1988, 1991, 1993; English edition, volumes I and II, 1991/94; volume III has not been translated into English.

for the understanding of reconciliation.²⁴ This is a new advance in theological articulation over the earlier works.²⁵ He himself suggested this early in the “afterword” to his monograph.²⁶

His intertrinitarian understanding of Jesus’ death as the reconciling action of the Son in terms of God’s Lordship is persuasive. Nevertheless, it is subject to the criticism that his view of the retroactive enforcement of the action of the Son by Jesus’ resurrection, interrelated with the path “from below to above” and the perspective of *Universalgeschichte*, is inconsistent not only with the intertrinitarian framework but also with the historical terms. It is argued that the pre-Easter history of Jesus itself *is* and *reveals* the reconciling action of the Son before the confirmation of the resurrection. Furthermore, his concept is challenged by the critical argument that the crucifixion is, in itself, the all-sufficient reconciling action of the Son to achieve his redemptive Lordship, rather than a *prolepsis* of the future universal Lordship.

This study is divided into eight chapters. After presenting the aim and method of study in the introduction, chapter one explicates the formation of Pannenberg’s christology, necessitated as a groundwork for the following

²⁴ As far as revelation is concerned, Pannenberg, following Georg W. F. Hegel and Karl Barth, *always* insists that the triune God is revealed in the fate of Jesus, *RaH*, 143. Grenz correctly indicates that the heart of Christian theology lies in the doctrine of God, more specifically the doctrine of the Trinity. “This move marks both an advance in contemporary theology and a renaissance of the more classical approach, albeit offered in the context of a new and changed theological climate.” See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 134.

²⁵ See Elizabeth Johnson, “The Ongoing Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg”, *Horizons* 9 (1982): 237-50. Schwöbel and Grenz correctly observe that a distinct aspect of Pannenberg’s development in his dogmatics is that the whole dogmatic conception is formulated in the framework of the Trinity. See Schwöbel, *op. cit.*, 190-95, and 203. Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 111-48, esp. 112.

²⁶ Pannenberg indicates this in the “afterword” to the fifth German edition of *Grundzüge der Christologie* published in 1976 and the second English edition of *JGM*, published in 1977.

discussion. Attention is drawn to the historical and theological context, within which his christology is devised, to the significance of his christology in the history of Christian thought, and to the influence of Karl Barth and other prominent theological and philosophical influences which were responsible for shaping his christology.

The succeeding two chapters establish within the intertrinitarian framework the divine sonship of Jesus as it relates to God's Lordship. Since Jesus as the Son reconciles the world to God and brings it under his Lordship, this establishment is related to, and also the basis of, the interpretation of his reconciling significance. Chapter two first sets out the historical approach to Jesus' identity as the Son, which is characteristic of Pannenberg's method. Then the concept of the personal unity of Jesus with God, which is perceived in terms of his relationship to God in his historical life, is considered by focusing on the impasse of the two nature christology, Jesus' self-understanding, and Jesus' indirect identity with the Son. There follows an exploration of Jesus' self-differentiation from the Father as the inner basis of his divine sonship. This self-differentiation and its relationship to God's Lordship and to the freedom and sinlessness of Jesus are dealt with. Chapter three complements the foregoing discussion. The eternal sonship of Jesus is examined, followed by an analysis of his universal sonship that is articulated from an anthropological perspective. Next, the historical basis of Jesus' divine sonship is presented by clarifying the historical confirmation of this identity by his earthly claim to authority in his proclamation of the coming Kingdom of God and his resurrection.

The following four chapters discuss the reconciling action of the Son in the whole history of Jesus, including his post-Easter history. Chapter four defines the intertrinitarian concept of reconciliation in order to obtain the basis for the argument of Jesus' death as the action of the Son to lead humanity to accept the Lordship of the Father. The nature of the doctrine of reconciliation is first elucidated in its relationship to soteriology and christology. The following interpretation of reconciliation is based on this. The focus moves to examine the concept of reconciliation as the intertrinitarian action in the trinitarian mutual relations. There follows a consideration of reconciliation in terms of the intertrinitarian activity to achieve God's Lordship in *Universalgeschichte*.

Chapter five focuses on the reconciling office of the Son. Jesus' pre-Easter history is first argued as the active performing by the Son of his reconciling office. This is essential for the following discussion and *even the whole study*. The earthly action of the Son is then considered in terms of God's Lordship. The action is concerned primarily with bringing humanity under this Lordship. The Son's action on the cross as his revelatory activity is subsequently clarified. Within the trinitarian thought, the action of the Son is interrelated to the action of the Father in him. How can a tension between them be resolved? The following concern is with a solution to this question. The action of the Son for the reconciliation of the world is finally explicated in terms of the traditional doctrine of the *Officium Triplex Christi*.

Chapter six continues to discuss the reconciling action of the Son by concentrating on Jesus' death as *Stellvertretung*. The Son performs his reconciling office as a representation of the human race so that all humankind

might participate in the process of reconciliation. After an exposition of the primitive Christian understandings of Jesus' death for a biblical groundwork, the nature of Jesus' conflict with the law is clarified. The expiatory character of Jesus' death is dependent upon this nature. Then the universal *Sühnebedeutung* of the cross is elucidated. Following this is an analysis of Pannenberg's view of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden*. The Son by this suffering reconciles the world to the Lordship of the Father. Attention turns to an examination of *Stellvertretung* as a universal phenomenon, on the basis of which Pannenberg justifies his concept of penal suffering. The final theme is the Son's *Stellvertretung* as human liberation.

Chapter seven complements a discussion of the Son's reconciling action in the Spirit in his post-Easter history. In the intertrinitarian perspective the Son continues his *Stellvertretung* in the Spirit to bring the world under the Lordship of the Father. The main themes are as follows: the completion of reconciliation in the Spirit, the apostolic proclamation as the means of the exalted Son's activity in the Spirit, and the founding of the Church at which the gospel proclamation aims.

The concluding chapter presents a brief summary of the whole discussion of Pannenberg's intertrinitarian doctrine of reconciliation, and offers a reappraisal of it for a constructive interpretation of the reconciliation of the world.

CHAPTER I: THE FORMATION OF PANNENBERG'S CHRISTOLOGY

This chapter explores how Pannenberg has formed his christology, which provides a substantial background for inquiries into his doctrine of reconciliation.

In the history of Christian thought Pannenberg's christology is significant in its emphasis on the historical reality of Jesus as the basis for all christological inquiries, and on the priority of future. This new project was devised within the context of the German Church's struggle to defend itself against German National Socialism. It was a natural outcome from his reaction to the existential theology advocated by Bultmann and Gogarten, and *Heilsgeschichte* theology proposed by Hoffman, Kähler, and Barth. There were several prominent theologians and philosophers who provided influential points of contact for the overall shape of the new programme. The influence of Barth together with Hegel's concept of *free differentiation and relation* and *Universalgeschichte* was especially crucial.

The historical context and the theological setting are first clarified. Then the significance of his christology within the history of the doctrine is examined by focusing on theology as a universal science, on history as the comprehensive horizon of Christian theology, and on the unique place of his christology in the history of the doctrine. There follows a consideration of the influences of Barth and other theologians and philosophers upon the shape of his christology.

1.1. THE CONTEXT OF PANNENBERG'S CHRISTOLOGY

1.1.1. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE GERMAN CHURCH'S STRUGGLE AGAINST NATIONAL SOCIALISM

Pannenberg's christology and theology as a whole were formed within the historical context of the struggle of the German church to defend itself against the efforts of National Socialism to control it during the days of the Third Reich.

Pannenberg was born in the period of German totalitarianism in 1928 at Stettin (now Poland), where he spent his youth.¹ The failure of the Weimar Republic to deal with the economic crises following Germany's defeat in the First World War led many Germans to seek the security which they associated with an authoritarian regime. The Nazis (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei*) came to power on January 30th, 1933, the so-called day of the *Machtergreifung* (take-over).

As J. S. Conway indicates, Nazi hostility to Christianity was based on its philosophy of nihilism and its racist ideology. The churches were not allowed to exercise influence over national affairs, and any attempt to the contrary led to persecution. National Socialism sought to destroy the existing order by imposing a new German racial *Weltanschauung*. The totalitarian concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* based on the supremacy of an all-embracing

¹ Richard John Neuhaus presents a detailed biographical portrait of Pannenberg, "Wolfhart Pannenberg: Profile of a Theologian", *TKG*, 9-50. Also, see David P. Polk, *On the Way to God: An Exploration into the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 8-12; E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 21-27.

racial ideal and closely linked with dedication to the will of a single political *Führer*, aimed at establishing a new secular faith of blood and soil, an *Ersatz* of the discredited creeds of Christianity. Such an ideology made the Nazis intolerant of any compromise with the Christian faith, especially the doctrine that all humanity is equal before God.

Open antagonism emerged in 1934, even though at first the churches indicated their support of the regime. Earlier they had resolutely opposed National Socialism but with the rise of Hitler this attitude changed.² For example, on the third of April, 1933, the first National Conference of the Faith Movement passed the resolution: "For a German, the church is the community of believers who are under an obligation to fight for a Christian Germany." Then, in January 1934, the leaders of the Evangelical church pledged their unconditional loyalty to the Third Reich and its leader. Again, after a meeting on March 28th, 1933, German Catholicism dropped its opposition and welcomed "the new and strong" emphasis on authority in the German state. In July of the same year, the papacy signed a concordat with the Nazis, declaring full acceptance of the new regime. It is to be noted, however, that this support resulted mostly from the Nazi shrewd disguise of the real nature of its scheme.

The Nazi antagonism toward the churches was expressed in its restricting of their influences and popularity. The Nazi regime was determined, according to J. S. Conway, to forestall any clerical opposition by branding it as "political and by subjecting it to police supervision or

² John C. Dwyer, *Church History: Twenty Centuries of Catholic Christianity* (Mahwah, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1985), 372.

suppression".³ It prohibited activity of lay organisations that might be used for political agitation or opposition to its totalitarian claims in order that it might drive a wedge between clergy and people. It also restricted all public activities of the churches outside their church buildings, and supervised the activities of the priests under the slogan that "politics do not belong in the church."

From 1934 onwards, it aimed at the total submission of the churches. The scheme, according to J. S. Conway, was conducted along three lines. The first was intended to win administrative control, thus bringing the Protestant church and the Catholic church under the authority of the State. The second was the ideological struggle, aimed at capturing the heart and mind of the whole nation and establishing a new cult to replace the existing influence of Christianity. The last was the method of terrorism and intimidation. The secret police brought in an increasing number of regulations and prohibitions that the churches might gradually be reduced to insignificant remnants.

From 1937 to 1939, Nazi hostility increased. According to Paul Johnson, the Nazi regime persecuted the churches severely. It used the currency laws to punish priests or nuns with contacts abroad. The Gestapo carried out repressive measures whenever it was thought necessary. Except for a few individuals, the clergy were rarely imprisoned for long. Of 17,000 Evangelical pastors, there were never more than fifty serving long sentences at any one time. All religious schools were abolished.⁴

It should be noted here that the churches banded together to defend themselves against such attempts. The obvious outward struggle took place in

³ J. S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-45* (London: C. Tinling & Co., 1968), 67.

Protestant churches. On May 29th-31st, 1934, the Evangelical churches held a synod in Barmen and adopted the Barmen Declaration. The Declaration, of which Karl Barth was a leading drafter on the side of the “*Bekennende Kirche*”, rejected “the false doctrine that the state over and above its special commission should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church’s vocation as well”, but also emphasised the church’s task of being the prophetic witness to the biblical revelation. Furthermore, an illustration of the Catholic resistance to the Nazi regime is Pius XI’s German encyclical, *Mit Brennender Sorge*, smuggled into Germany and read out on Palm Sunday in 1937. It attacked not merely violations of the concordat but National Socialism and its racial doctrines.

The struggle of the German church against National Socialism, especially the Barmen Declaration which states that there is no realm of human life with which Christian faith is not concerned, motivated Pannenberg to articulate christology in a social and political dimension. He was eager to oppose the restriction of the person and work of Jesus Christ to the individual realm.

The German church’s struggle also prompted him to seek a universal relevance for his christology. A sense of shame at the racist ideology of National Socialism drove him to stress the unity of every nation, colour, and race, and thus to participate personally in the ecumenical movement in a very positive way. He has been a member of the Jaeger-Stählin circle, which consists of both German Catholics and Lutherans, for more than thirty years, and in 1980 succeeded Schlink as “academic leader” of the group on the

⁴ Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1976), 488.

predominantly Protestant side. Also, since 1975 he has been a member of *The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches*, contributing to the draft of the ecumenical document, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*.⁵

Furthermore, the German church's struggle actuated Pannenberg to articulate christology and even his theology as a whole within the future-oriented perspective. In light of the coming Kingdom of God, established by God alone, every truth, or every social or political system, is essentially provisional in the sense that it moves towards the future realisation in the Kingdom, the destiny of humanity. As a result, the Christ event is understood as provisional in its essential character. This concept is motivated by his critical response to the readiness of the German church to give support to the Nazi regime without due criticism.

1.1.2. THE THEOLOGICAL SETTING: EXISTENTIAL THEOLOGY AND HEILSGESCHICHTE THEOLOGY

Pannenberg's christology is an outcome of his reaction against existential theology represented by Bultmann, Gogarten, and Braun. In particular Bultmann stresses the proclaimed Christ, rejecting any identification of the proclaimed Christ with the historical Jesus. The only thing to be affirmed is the mere fact that Jesus existed and was crucified. There is thus no demand for searching for details of Jesus' human history.⁶ This, in his view, is in keeping with the Johannine and Pauline views. Bultmann says,

⁵ The World Council of Churches published this book in Geneva in 1982.

⁶ For theologians holding this kind of view, see Gerald O' Collins S. J., *Foundations of Theology* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1971), 176-85.

Paul proclaims the incarnate, crucified and risen Lord; that is, his kerygma requires only the 'that' of the life of Jesus and the fate of his crucifixion. He does not hold before his hearer's eyes a portrait of Jesus the human person, apart from the cross (Gal. 3:1), and the cross is not regarded from a biographical standpoint but as saving event. The obedience and self-emptying of Christ of which he speaks (Phil. 2: 6-9; Rom. 15: 3; 2 Cor. 8:9) are attitudes of the pre-existent and not of the historical Jesus . . . the decisive thing is simply the 'that'.⁷

Christian theology has been concerned with the question of historical issues since Ernst Käsemann laid stress on historical inquiry into the *Kerygma* in his lecture on the problem of the historical Jesus in October 1953. In this context Pannenberg attempts to justify the Kerygma by linking it with the history of Jesus. Without the support of the historical Jesus, there is a danger that the Kerygma will appear only as the product of faith, a view which is in line with Gerhart Ebeling's position.

Furthermore, Pannenberg's christology is made apparent in his reaction to the theology of *Heilsgeschichte* represented by Martin Kähler and Barth, interpreting the Christ event in a "special history", belonging to the realm of faith. For Kähler the apostolic Kerygma is the starting point of christology because the real Christ is the preached Christ,⁸ rather than the historian's picture of Jesus of Nazareth.⁹ Pannenberg applauds Kähler in that "he protests against setting the figure and message of Jesus in opposition to the apostolic preaching in such a way that no sort of continuity between the

⁷ R. Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and Historical Jesus", *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, ed. C. Braaten and R. Harrisville (New York: Abingdon, 1964), 20.

⁸ Martin Kähler, *The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ*, ed. and trans. Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 66.

⁹ *JGM*, 25.

two would exist any longer.”¹⁰ But he argues against Kähler that one cannot simply equate Jesus himself with the apostles’ witness to him because the New Testament testimony to Christ so clearly bears the stamp of the particular contemporary problems of the witnesses.¹¹ Thus Pannenberg seeks to go behind the Kerygma to the historical Jesus. He reasons,

One can and must get back to Jesus himself from the witness of the apostles by trying to recognise, and thus making allowance for, the relation of New Testament texts to their respective situations. It is quite possible to distinguish the figure of Jesus himself, as well as the outlines of his message, from the particular perspective in which it is transmitted through this or that New Testament witness.¹²

1.2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PANNENBERG’S CHRISTOLOGY WITHIN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Pannenberg’s reaction to the existential theology and *Heilsgeschichte* theology within the historical context of the German church’s struggle to defend itself against German National Socialism leads to the approach to christology from the perspective of *Universalgeschichte*. This makes his christology unique within the history of Christian thought. This is clarified after an elucidation of the concept of theology as a universal science, and history as the most comprehensive horizon of theology, which is necessary as a general introduction to his christology.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹² Gerhard, Ebeling, *The Nature of Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961), 46.

1.2.1. THEOLOGY AS UNIVERSAL SCIENCE

Pannenberg defines theology as a universal science. It is universal in scope, and thus not separated from other critical-rational sciences. This attempt to undermine the privatisation of theology leads to a new direction in theological thinking. This concept of theology is attractive in light of its apologetic task. Christian theology must be validated on the basis of a shared rationality with other scientific disciplines. Theological reflection is not simply religious confession, but must concern itself with the universal sphere.

It can be asserted with Pannenberg that the universal character of theology is based on the idea of God as the all-determining reality.¹³ God, as God, is essentially required to prove himself to be the power that determines all things in the world. God is thus the source of all being and truth, thereby the subject of all theological investigation. In this sense, theology is *Wissenschaft von Gott*.¹⁴ This implies that theology as the science of God has to deal with the totality of being, and thus establishes the indispensability of God for all things in the world. As Pannenberg explains,

A theology that remains conscious of the intellectual obligation that goes along with the use of the word "God" will try in every possible way to relate all truth, and therefore not least of all the knowledge of the extra-theological sciences, to the God of the Bible, and to attain a new understanding of everything by viewing it in light of this God.¹⁵

Ludwig Feuerbach maintained that the truth of God can be embraced

¹³ W. Pannenberg, "The Crisis of the Scripture Principle", *BQiT*-I, 1.

¹⁴ *TPS*, 297.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 299.

by human projections.¹⁶ In reaction to this, Barth correctly proclaimed that God can be known only by himself.¹⁷ However, Pannenberg argues against Barth that God reveals himself through his acts as the power over all things in history.¹⁸ As David Polk observes,¹⁹ Barth's retreat into a revelation-ghetto of theology "from above" is thus seen to be inappropriate because humans can no longer claim to possess genuine cognitive import.²⁰ This forces him to seek "to take the responsibility for speaking about God in historical-critical thought."²¹ Theology must always provide convincing verification of the universal validity of the Christian Kerygma.²²

However, it can be argued against Pannenberg that the universality of Christian claims is, conversely, to be established on the basis of God's revelation in his Word. As it is the revelation of the universal God, its implication is not incompatible with the universal validity. In this light, Christoph Schwöbel is correct to maintain that its universal implication can be developed only in terms of a rational reconstruction of its contents from the

¹⁶ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 33.

¹⁷ K. Barth, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl*, trans. Brian Cozens (London: SCM Press, 1959), 358ff.

¹⁸ See Allan D. Galloway, *Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 35-45; Carl E. Braaten, "The Current Controversy on Revelation: Pannenberg and his Critics", *The Journal of Religion* 45 (1965): 225-37.

¹⁹ Polk, *op. cit.*, 246.

²⁰ W. Pannenberg, "Types of Atheism and Their Theological Significance", *BQIT-II*, 189f.

²¹ W. Pannenberg, "Response to the Discussion", in *Theology as History*, New Frontiers in Theology, vol. III, ed. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967), 241.

²² Pannenberg's "verification principle" is indebted to Wittgenstein and the Linguistic philosophers.

perspective of faith, rather than from the perspective of reason.²³

Statements about God are in Pannenberg's view doxological. Doxological statements are presuppositional. This raises the problem: How can they be critically verified, for he does not accept propositional revelation? Hence Carl Henry is correct to point out that Pannenberg's concept of doxological statements undermines the universal validity and cognitive status of statements about God.²⁴

Further, Pannenberg's view lacks the existential aspect of faith.²⁵ Kerygma theology understands faith as a result of a personal encounter with the Christian. Pannenberg, however, condemns it for excluding the possibility of scientific verification. Faith, in his view, rather must be open to the critical confirmation of reason. He says,

Theology has to deal with the presupposition of faith, with the truth and reliability of the "object" on which faith depends. Of course it can do this only in a provisional way. The truth or untruth of faith is not decided primarily in the act of faith; rather this decision depends on faith's object, which contains the promise in which faith trusts, and which is also the object of theological knowledge . . . Therefore it is the business of theological knowledge to confirm the truth which is presupposed for faith and on which it trusts.²⁶

²³ Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg", *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 205.

²⁴ See Carl F. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. 3 (Waco: Word, 1976), 294.

²⁵ See E. G. Obayashi, "Future and Responsibility: A Critique of Pannenberg's Eschatology", *Studies in Religion* 1 (1971): 191-203; P. G. Hodgson, "Pannenberg on Jesus", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 36 (1968): 374-75, cited in Stanley J. Grenz, "The Appraisal of Pannenberg: A Survey of the Literature", *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 26.

²⁶ W. Pannenberg, "Response to the Discussion", 271.

Thomas Parker, however, indicates that Pannenberg's intention is not to neglect the faith dimension, but to caution against the view that faith brings some kind of additional knowledge.²⁷ Even if Parker's interpretation is accepted, as Holwerda points out, Pannenberg's conception presupposes the autonomy of reason. This leads to an internal dilemma: either it assumes an epistemology contrary to his dominant thesis that faith is not an avenue of knowledge or suggests that he has not fully escaped subjectivism.²⁸ Furthermore, as Donald Bloesch asks, how can Pannenberg explain the scriptural witness that God's revelation is disclosed only to the ears and eyes of faith, rather than to general reasonableness?²⁹

The correlation of the truth of God's reality with human reason, for Pannenberg, is grounded in the universality of God. He writes,

The universal claim of the God of Israel first acquired compelling validity for all men by virtue of the fact that first the Jewish and then the Christian mission presented the God of Israel as the true God sought by philosophy. Thus, the claim of the God of Israel to be alone the God to whom all men belong provides the theological basis for the fact that Christian faith has to become involved in the philosophical question about the true God and has to give an account of its answer right down to the present time.³⁰

The universal character of theological articulations, he claims, is

²⁷ Thomas D. Parker, "Faith and History: A Review of Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Jesus - God and Man*", *McCormick Quarterly* 22 (1968): 74-75, cited in Grenz, op. cit., 26.

²⁸ David Holwerda, "Faith, Reason, and the Resurrection in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg", *Faith and Reality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 306-09.

²⁹ Donald Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, vol. II (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 267.

³⁰ W. Pannenberg, "The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology", *BQIT-II*, 136.

evidenced by the assimilation of philosophical concepts of God in early Christian theology. The meeting between the Christian concept of God and philosophical inquiries about God took place in the encounter with Hellenism.³¹ This does not mean, however, that the philosophical conceptuality of God is to perceive God as a radically free originator of the ever new, particularly including God's covenanting with a community of the elect within history as witnessed by the scripture. Thus Christian theology is required to "link up with philosophical idea of God only by breaking through it at the same time".³² As David Polk rightly points out, Pannenberg's intention is not to repudiate the philosophical concepts absolutely, but to *transform* them in the critical light of the biblical idea of God.³³ The truth of God's reality must, therefore, not be separated from the truth discovered in any critical-rational sciences. This concept is related to the Hegelian idealistic world-view that everything is interrelated: divine and human, faith and reason, past and future, critical history and revelation history.³⁴ Pannenberg's whole theological programme attempts to integrate these two contrasting aspects. He reasons,

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

³¹ Ibid., 134.

³² Ibid., 139.

³³ Ibid., 139f. Cf. Polk, *op. cit.*, 248.

³⁴ Timothy Bradshaw, *The Theology of W. Pannenberg: A Trinitarian Synthesis* (Leicester: Theological Students Fellowship, 1988), 3.

up into a greater whole.³⁵

In the light of Christian apologetic task, Pannenberg's attempt to explain Christian truth in terms of its universal validity in the modern intellectual environment is understandable. Yet it raises the question: Is Pannenberg's scheme really interacting with other special critical sciences? According to Harvey White, his proposal does not constitute scientific testing because it entails four problems: the problem of evil, the nature of theological hypotheses, religious pluralism, and the testing of hypotheses.³⁶

Further, the emphasis on the critical scrutiny of Christian claims makes theology be subject to an anthropology. God's reality is perceived only in its intrinsic importance for the questions raised by human existence. As a result, the specific and concrete reality of God is generalised and abstracted, and thus loses God's personal character. Accordingly, theology comes to be a philosophy of religion, not church dogmatics, yet Pannenberg wants to remain a church theologian.

Pannenberg's concept of theology as a universal science is further considered in relation to the role of history in theology which is the subject of the following section.

1.2.2. HISTORY AS THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE HORIZON OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

In his essay "*Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte*" (1959), Pannenberg emphasised the potential of history as the most comprehensive horizon of

³⁵ *JGM*, 395-96.

³⁶ See Harvey W. White, "A Critique of Pannenberg's Theology and the Philosophy of Science", *Studies in Religion* 11 (1982): 419-36.

Christian theology.³⁷ As Christoph Schwöbel points out, he finds the basis of this programmatic conception in the development of Israel's faith that conceives reality in its totality as history.³⁸ History is the single term which embraces all things.³⁹

God's revelation, as noted above, is foundational for all theological reflections. Hegel interpreted revelation as the self-disclosure of the Absolute. Friedrich Schleiermacher locates the self-disclosure of God in religious experience, a form of subjectivism also found in R. Bultmann's existential conception of God's revelation. Barth identifies God's self-revelation with an authoritative "Word of God".⁴⁰ Fuchs and Ebeling perceive the divine self-disclosure as *Wortgeschehen* or Speech-event. However, Pannenberg disagrees with all these views and argues that the divine self-disclosure is *indirect* in its essential character. God reveals himself only through his acts in history. History therefore is the only framework within which all theological issues can be meaningfully discussed.

For Pannenberg, "critical history" is differentiated from the historicity of existence, as proposed by kerygmatic theology,⁴¹ according to which God is conceived of as intervening or acting within the historicity of human

³⁷ W. Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and history", *BQiT-I*, 15.

³⁸ Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg", *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, vol. I (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 265.

³⁹ *TPS*, 311.

⁴⁰ Galloway points out, "Whether Barth means by this the Holy Scriptures, the second Person in the Trinity or the preached word or all three is not always clear.", *op. cit.*, 37.

⁴¹ R. Bultmann uses mythical concepts in the interpretation of the biblical claims for Jesus Christ. Against this, however, Pannenberg argues that the biblical witness to Jesus Christ is concerned with a "non-mythical event in what took place in a human life", "Redemptive Event and History", 68. He continues to argue that according to the biblical tradition, the reality of God is experienced not in the shadows of a mythical primitive history, but is

existence. This is in Pannenberg's view how kerygmatic theology seeks to avoid the conflict between an emphasis on God's acts in history and modern science,⁴² while retaining as a corollary the "wholly other" God of dialectical theology, with its rejection of any link between the divine and the creaturely.⁴³

The "critical history", as Allan Galloway observes,⁴⁴ is also distinct from "primal history" as advocated by Barth and from the special ghetto of *Heilsgeschichte* as advocated by Martin Kähler and O. Cullmann, for whom *Geschichte* is separated from *Historie*. They treat the real content of faith as "supra-historical".⁴⁵ Pannenberg counterclaims that:

God's redemptive acts took place within the universal correlative connection of human history and not in a ghetto of *Heilsgeschichte*, or in a primal history belonging to a dimension which is "oblique" to ordinary history.⁴⁶

Heilsgeschichte and critical history, accordingly, are to be seen in union, not in separation. If the criteria of a fundamental correlation between historical phenomena and analogy are properly utilised,⁴⁷ Pannenberg asserts, God's salvific acts are seen as historical rather than supra-historical. The object of faith, if it is truly the contingent act of God in Jesus Christ, is thus at

inextricably linked to historical events, "The Later Dimensions of Myth in Biblical and Christian Tradition", *BQiT*-III, 1-79.

⁴² W. Pannenberg, "The Crisis of the Scripture Principle", *BQiT*-I, 14.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁴ Allan D. Galloway, "The New Hegelians", *Religious Studies* 72 (1972): 367-71.

⁴⁵ Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History", 15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁴⁷ Michael, Nevin, *The Nature of Religious Language* (Sheffield, 1996), 201.

least in principle susceptible to critical investigation.⁴⁸ In this light, “faith is not something like the compensation of subjective conviction to make up for defective knowledge.”⁴⁹ The *fides iustificans* rather presupposes the *notia historiae*, for it cannot stand firm outside the scope and capability of historical-critical verification. Pannenberg cannot find any room for the critical-historical investigation of God’s salvific acts in either kerygmatic theology or the exclusive theology of *Heilsgeschichte*.⁵⁰

Furthermore, “real history” is not the kind of anthropocentric history as proposed by Ernst Troeltsch, according to which all historical events are fundamentally homogeneous (*Gleichartig*) and thus correlated.⁵¹ Pannenberg’s historicism certainly includes a universal correlation between all historical phenomena. But it is not bound up with an entirely anthropocentric view of history, which sees the totality of history only in terms of human development,⁵² because it leaves room for a transcendent reality and the contingency of individual events.⁵³

What can this “real history” imply for Christian theology? For Pannenberg it implies that all theological articulations must be subject to the canons of critical verification of the post-Enlightenment period. Christian claims, of course, do not exclude critical scrutiny. But his system raises the

⁴⁸ See Ian G. Nicol, “Facts and Meaning: Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Theology as History and the Role of the Historical-Critical Method”, *Religious Studies* 12 (June 1976): 129-39.

⁴⁹ Faith, in Pannenberg’s view, is actually trust in God’s promise, and knowledge of his promise does not make this trust superfluous. See his essay, “Redemptive Event and History”, 65. Nevin, however, raises a question, “Is it not rendered redundant if we *know* it is God’s promise?” See Nevin, *op. cit.*, 201.

⁵⁰ Pannenberg, “Redemptive Event and History”, 16.

⁵¹ See Ernst Troeltsch’s “Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie”, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2 (Tübingen, 1913), 729-53, cited in *ibid.*, 40.

⁵² Pannenberg, “Redemptive Event and History”, 40.

question: What are the grounds for his exclusive appeal to historical reasoning? Human ignorance of God and his reality are not caused by a lack of historical evidence, but spiritual blindness, brought by the Fall.⁵⁴ The spiritual blindness interferes with the rational process and makes the task of perceiving God's reality in history difficult. He ignores this epistemological limitation effected by the Fall.⁵⁵

Furthermore, there is no doubt that God's self-revelation takes place through his acts in human history, but this does not mean that divine revelation must be identified with self-interpreting historical events which convey their own revelatory significance.⁵⁶ However, according to James Barr, Old Testament studies show that in many cases God's acts are accompanied by his words. Thus revelatory significance must be interpreted by persons who are qualified by grace, rather than by the technical historian.⁵⁷ This means that all revelation is not historical. As Clark Pinnock points out,⁵⁸ Pannenberg identifies historical event as the only pattern of revelation,⁵⁹ and consequently

⁵³ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁴ See David P. Scaer, "Theology of Hope", *Tensions in Contemporary Theology*, ed. Stanley Gundry and Alan F. Johnson (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 219.

⁵⁵ See Fred. H. Klooster, "Aspects of Historical Method in Pannenberg's Theology", in *Septuagesimo Anno: G. C. Berkouwer*, ed. J. T. Bakker et al (Kampen, 1973), 126, cited in Grenz, op. cit., 23.

⁵⁶ George W. Stroup, narrative theologian, maintains that *Universalgeschichte* is not the sphere in which God's word is heard. This rather takes place in a particular narrative history. See Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 57.

⁵⁷ See Carl F. H. Henry, *Frontiers in Modern Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1965), 73. See also A. Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 64-66.

⁵⁸ Clark H. Pinnock, "Pannenberg's Theology: Reasonable Happenings in History", part 1, *Christianity Today* 21 (November 5, 1976): 22, cited in Grenz, op. cit., 24.

⁵⁹ Stroup, op. cit., 57.

does not allow the Bible to be seen as divine revelation.⁶⁰

Moreover, one can share with P. Althaus, D. Fuller, D. Holwerda, B. McDermott, and W. Hamilton the criticism that Pannenberg's historical method leaves little room for the illumination of the Holy Spirit. This is because in Pannenberg's view the meaning is inherent in the historical event.⁶¹ It can be said therefore that these weighty issues of sin, special revelation, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit which are too big to deal with here in detail, pose problems for Pannenberg's historical approach.⁶²

How can a particular historical event in the past be perceived as meaningful for humanity now? Pannenberg relates this problem known as "Lessing's ditch" to the concept of *Universalgeschichte*. Theological knowledge is conceived as the whole, which is the Hegelian concept of truth as the whole,⁶³ for God discloses himself through his acts in the whole of human history. It is meaningful only in its relatedness to the whole. It is also provisional since God's reality as history is perceived only in the future, at the end of human history.⁶⁴ Furthermore, it is first constituted by the Christ event, for the whole of history, which is still in the future, has already taken place in

⁶⁰ See Fred. H. Klooster, "Aspects of Historical Method in Pannenberg's Theology", 116, 122, cited in Grenz, op. cit., 24. See also Carl Braaten, "The Current Controversy on Revelation": 234-35.

⁶¹ Especially, according to Daniel Fuller, even though Pannenberg acknowledges the necessity of the "enlightenment" of the Holy Spirit to overcome the prejudices of humans which are obstacles to the knowledge of God mediated by history, it remains simply something contained in history, rather than something supernatural or special. See *Easter Faith and History* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1968), 185-87.

⁶² Grenz presents a good summary of a debate regarding the issues of sin, grace, and the illumination of the Spirit, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York: Oxford, 1990), 30-43.

⁶³ Ronald D. Pasquariello, "Pannenberg's Philosophical Foundations", *The Journal of Religion* 56 (1976): 338-47.

⁶⁴ W. Pannenberg, "Analogy and Doxology", *BQiT-I*, 237f.

this event.⁶⁵ Therefore, statements about God and his reality are *proleptic* in character. Only in this *proleptic* sense, are they related to the whole reality of God, thereby having a universal significance.

Pannenberg's attempt to avoid the ditch is not convincing because the totality of history, upon which the final critical verification of theological conception lies, is not knowable.⁶⁶ Furthermore, as Helmut G. Harder and W. Taylor Stevenson, Ian Nicol, Kendrick Grobel, and David Scaer correctly point out,⁶⁷ Pannenberg's historical method presupposes the necessity of faith for perceiving the historical event, and thus is inconsistent with his thesis that theological knowledge is not subject to faith, only to critical scrutiny.⁶⁸

1.2.3. THE UNIQUE PLACE OF PANNENBERG'S CHRISTOLOGY IN THE HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE

In the context of the history of Christian thought, Pannenberg's

⁶⁵ W. Pannenberg, "What is a Dogmatic Statement?", *BQiT*-I, 205.

⁶⁶ Also see Daniel Fuller, *Easter Faith and History* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 177-87, and David Pailin "Lessing's Ditch Revised: The Problem of Faith and History", *Theology and Change*, ed. R. Preston (London: SCM, 1975), 97-98.

⁶⁷ Helmut G. Harder and W. Taylor Stevenson assert that faith, in Pannenberg's scheme, plays a cognitive role in the very perception of historical fact, "The Continuity of History and Faith in the Theology of W. Pannenberg: Toward an Erotics of History", *The Journal of Religion* 51 (1971): 51-53. Ian G. Nicol, analysing five principles of Pannenberg's historical-critical method, suggests that his historical reconstruction of the fact-meaning complex of the life, destiny and resurrection of Jesus entails an unacknowledged, concealed *a priori* notion of faith, "Facts and Meaning: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Theology as History and the Role of the Historical-Critical Method", 138-39. Kendrick Grobel claims that for Pannenberg the process of understanding of a "brute fact" presupposes "faith", "Revelation and Resurrection", *TaH*, 161. David Scaer asserts that Pannenberg has already brought faith to the resurrection, for his perception of the Christ event as the prolepsis of the future in history is not historical, but theological, "Theology of Hope", 225.

⁶⁸ Galloway gives a brief summary of the issue of faith and history, *Wolfhart Pannenberg*, 46-59. See also C. B. McCullagh, "The Possibility of an Historical Basis for Christian Theology", *Theology* 74 (1971), 513-22; Robert North, S. J., "Pannenberg's Historicizing Exegesis", *The Heythrop Journal* 12 (1971): 377-400.

christology has provided a genuinely new direction: the perspective of *Universalgeschichte*. It is this perspective that determines the uniqueness of his christology.

First, his christology is unique in its stress on the historical reality of Jesus as the basis for all christological inquiries. As Allan Galloway has shown,⁶⁹ Pannenberg has brought critical history, long regarded as irrelevant to Christian faith by a theology dominated by Barth, Bultmann, and Tillich, into the interpretation of the person and work of Jesus Christ. This reflects his theological premise that all theological articulations are to be historico-critically verified in the contemporary atmosphere of the post-Enlightenment era. The main task of christology is thus to show how all statements about Jesus and his significance in the primitive Christian tradition can be historico-critically justified. His primary concern is with the basis for the historico-critical verification of the statements about the identity and ministry of Jesus Christ, rather than with the statements themselves. This basis is in his view the history of Jesus. Therefore he goes behind the New Testament kerygma to the historical appearance and destiny of Jesus. This historical approach to christology naturally plays down the soteriological approach which, in his view, tends to project human longings on the figure of Jesus. The significance of Jesus for humans is grounded in what he *is*, being established by his historical reality.⁷⁰ The character of this christology “from below” is discussed

⁶⁹ Galloway, *Wolfhart Pannenberg*, 11.

⁷⁰ *JGM*, 38-49. For more detail of this theme, see the section on “The Historical Approach to the Identity of Jesus” in chapter two and the sub-section on “A Function of Christology” in chapter four.

in detail later.⁷¹

Secondly, Pannenberg's christology is unique in that it holds to the primacy of futurity. This is perceived from the perspective of *Universalgeschichte*. Universal history is futuristic in character, for the totality of history will be realised only at its end. The future, for him, is not simply an extrapolation and prolongation of past and present as is the view of predominant secular futurologists, but it confronts and runs counter to the present world, including the trends of its development,⁷² and even determines the past and present. In other words, it is the future which will unite all historical events into reconciliation with God. In this sense, the future is creative in character.⁷³

This concept of the primacy of the future is differentiated from Hegel's view of the self-realisation of reason in the final end of human history and Whitehead's view that the futurity of the kingdom of God includes the process of God's self-development. While for Hegel and Whitehead the past and the present develop toward the future goal and end point, for Pannenberg, the final future has an ontological primacy over them.

It follows therefore that all statements about the person and work of Jesus Christ can be meaningfully understood only as a *prolepsis* of future reality. The Christ event is in this sense *provisional* in its essential character.

⁷¹ See the section on "The Historical Approach to the Identity of Jesus" in chapter two.

⁷² W. Pannenberg, "Future and Unity", *Hope and Future of Man*, ed. Ewert H. Cousins (London: The Garnstone Press, 1973), 61.

⁷³ Pannenberg understands creation as eschatological in its essential nature. Creation is the consummation of God's rule "in the end", rather than an initial act "in the beginning". This is why his doctrine of creation is called the doctrine of "eschatological creation". Cf. W. Pannenberg, "Theology and the Kingdom of God", *TKG*, 51-71; "The God of Hope", *BQiT-II*, 243ff.

Pannenberg's christology is not only a decisive *return* to the path "from below", as most of the studies interpret it, but also a *turn* towards the coming future.

1.3. THE INFLUENCE OF K. BARTH

1.3.1. THE ASPECTS OF BARTH'S INFLUENCE

As Richard John Neuhaus points out,⁷⁴ Pannenberg, like Barth, wants to be a "church theologian" who follows the tradition of Christian reflection. Yet, unlike Barth, he maintains that Christian theology must be subject to the canons of rationality operative in the wider community, and thus rejects the notion of a closed and authoritarian revelation. To obtain a positive relationship with the whole of reality, Christian theology must regain its universality through extensive dialogue with general, non-theological thought.

In spite of these anti-Barthian points the strong influence of Barth on Pannenberg's theological reflection cannot be denied.⁷⁵ First of all, his concept of God's self-revelation⁷⁶ is indebted to Barth whose own position can be traced back to Hegel through Philipp Marheineke.⁷⁷ God alone is at one and the same time, author and medium of revelation and thereby the basis of unique revelation. This divine self-revelation which transcends all human inquiry constitutes knowledge of God and the only basis of Christian

⁷⁴ Neuhaus, op. cit., 15.

⁷⁵ Pannenberg studied under Barth in Basel in 1950. Probably, this can be related to Barth's influence on the shape of Pannenberg's christological reflection.

⁷⁶ *RaH*, 5ff.

⁷⁷ Cf. *JGM*, 127ff.

theology.⁷⁸ Pannenberg, following Barth, claims that there is no viable alternative to this theology of revelation. The understanding that theology can be adequately perceived as the expression of human notions about God is thus rejected.

However, he moves beyond Barth in his contention that, according to the biblical traditions, God does not reveal himself *directly* (for Barth, in his “Word”), but *indirectly* through his acts in history. As George Newlands observes,⁷⁹ this is a return to Hegel’s view of revelation, though it is a fresh development. History as God’s self-revelation, in Pannenberg’s view, is not the contingent historical events, but the whole of history. The totality of history will be realised only at its end. Revelation is thus orientated to the eschatological future, from which the whole process of history can be seen universally as God’s indirect self-revelation. This future universality of God’s revelation is *proleptically* actualised in the history of Jesus, particularly, the resurrection. It is precisely in this *proleptic* disclosure of the future self-revelation of God that Jesus Christ is the Word of God.⁸⁰ Only in this sense, can the accessibility of divine self-revelation be extended to history. Revelation as God’s self-demonstration in history is, therefore, as Christoph Schwöbel rightly observes,⁸¹ open for all who have eyes to see, rather than restricted to only a specially privileged group of people.⁸²

⁷⁸ Cf. W. Pannenberg, “Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation”, *RaH*, 125-58.

⁷⁹ George M. Newlands, *The Theology of the Love of God* (London: Collins, 1980), 182.

⁸⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 288ff.

⁸¹ Schwöbel, *op. cit.*, vol. I, 260.

⁸² Cf. Pannenberg, “Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation”, 125-58, particularly, thesis three. For Pannenberg’s response to Paul Althaus’ criticism of it, see “Insight and Faith”, *BQiT-II*, 28-45.

Secondly, Pannenberg follows Barth's basic insight that God's revelation centres in Jesus Christ. "*Solus Christus*" is characteristic of Barth's conception of revelation. The whole of Christian theology is determined by its relationship to Jesus Christ, his being and action, so that no aspect of it can be detached from its christological basis.⁸³ Barth states:

A *Church Dogmatics* must, of course, be christologically determined as a whole and in all its parts, as surely as the revealed Word of God, attested by the Holy Scripture and proclaimed by the church, is its one and only criterion, and as surely as this revealed Word is identical with Jesus Christ.⁸⁴

In the history of Christian thought, Barth's Christocentric theology appears in opposition to Schleiermacher's "consciousness theology", which takes "self-consciousness" as a starting point for inquiry into the knowledge of God in general. For Barth, Christian theology must begin with the reality of God, rather than with the consciousness of man. The revelation of God's reality is totally determined by the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Revealer. The content of the revelation cannot be separated from its form. Only in and through the Christ event can God's reality be perceived.⁸⁵

As previously noted,⁸⁶ for Pannenberg christology must begin with the

⁸³ John Thompson, *Christ in Perspective: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1978), 1.

⁸⁴ *CD*, I/2, 123.

⁸⁵ In the Christocentric character of the revelation of the reality of God Barth stands in the Reformation tradition, in particular Calvin's. Barth declares, "It is our prerogative and duty to turn away from Schleiermacher and go back to the Reformers", Cornelius Van Til, *Christianity and Barthianism* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1962), 4.

⁸⁶ *Vide supra* the sub-section on "The Unique Place of Pannenberg's Christology in the History of the Doctrine".

appearance and ministry of the historical Jesus because the primary task of christology is to demonstrate how christological statements in the primitive tradition are to be historically justified. This contrasts with Barth's christology which asks how the eternal Son [logos] assumed a human nature.⁸⁷ Once again the difference of method should not obscure the genuine impact of Barth in shaping of Pannenberg's christology. Pannenberg's primary concern is with the highly particular and unique fact of the historical event.⁸⁸ He is seeking to begin with a historical inquiry into Jesus of Nazareth, rather than starting from the generality of a soteriological anthropological interest or a christological concept of God-Man-unity, for "otherwise the historical particularity would be concealed at once by general theological or other concepts."⁸⁹ Pannenberg's approach is intended to explicate the life and destiny of Jesus in the changed intellectual climate of the post-Enlightenment era. It can be said, therefore, that despite the differences, his historical enterprise is theologically in line with Barth and opposed to Neo-Protestant anthropocentrism.

Thirdly, Pannenberg is indebted to Barth for the Trinitarian formulation of his christology, less apparent in his earlier than in his later writings. As Christoph Schwöbel observes,⁹⁰ it plays "either a very minor role (as in the essays developing the presuppositions and implications of *Revelation as History*) or is confined to specific *loci* of Christian Dogmatics

⁸⁷ CD, VI/1, 158-357; Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutter Worth Press, 1956), 265-328.

⁸⁸ See W. Pannenberg, "The Letter to K. Barth" in Karl Barth, *The Letters, 1961-68*, ed. & trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981), 350-51.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Schwöbel, op. cit., vol. I, 269-84.

(as in *Jesus - God and Man*).⁹¹ In contrast, however, Pannenberg's *Systematische Theologie*, volumes one and two, show a distinct development in the use of the doctrine of the Trinity as the interpretative key to christology and even to all Christian doctrines. In this he is in accordance with Barth.

Barth's christology is strongly trinitarian.⁹² For him, God, as a self-giving being, both in himself and in relation to mankind, is comprised of the persons of the Godhead in grace and mutual participation.⁹³ As T. F. Torrance points out, everything depends on the indivisible inner relationship in Being of the Son and the Spirit to the Father.⁹⁴ This God is revealed in his saving acts. God is in himself the activity he undertakes for humanity and human salvation. This trinitarian character is further considered.⁹⁵

Similarly, Pannenberg deals with christology in its relation to the doctrine of God, rather than as an abstract doctrine. He says, "In dealing with Jesus we are dealing with God himself."⁹⁶ In this way he intends to

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁹² George Newlands indicates that Barth's doctrine of Trinity must be interpreted in terms of the exposition of reconciliation in Volume Four, rather than the formal expositions in the first sections of *Church Dogmatic*, *God in Christian Perspective* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 138.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ T. F. Torrance, "Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1986): 462. Cf. Alan Torrance indicates that Barth is close to the danger of modalism, for his interpretation is lacking suggestion that "there is a dynamic mutuality in relating and interrelating between the particular *hypostases*", *Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 251. Catherine M. LaCugna designates Barth's doctrine of Trinity as "a form of modalism" since he conceives "God as one personal subject who exists in three modes of revelation, as Father, Son, and Spirit", *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: 1991), 252, cited in *ibid.*, 251. However, Barth rejects this modalism. He says, "We are not saying that the doctrine of the Trinity is merely the interpretation of revelation and not also an interpretation of the God who reveals Himself in revelation. . . . If we are dealing with His revelation, we are dealing with God Himself and not, as Modalists in all ages have thought, with an entity distinct from Him." *CD*, I/1,311(*KD*, I/1, 328-9).

⁹⁵ See the section on "Reconciliation as the Action of the Triune God in his Intertrinitarian Relationship" in chapter four.

⁹⁶ W. Pannenberg, "The Revelation of God in Jesus", *Theology as History*, 101.

demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ of God. For him, “christology deals with Jesus as the basis of the confession and the faith that he is the Christ of God.”⁹⁷

These points are intended to show that his christological reflection is firmly rooted in Barth’s christology presented for the contemporary intellectual context. This is why he might be called a “contemporary” Barth.⁹⁸

1.3.2. BARTH’S RESPONSE TO PANNENBERG’S CHRISTOLOGY

Barth acknowledges the originality of Pannenberg’s christology but severely criticises his method. In his letter to Pannenberg,⁹⁹ he expresses his objection to Pannenberg’s christology “from below” as “horror”. This feeling is based on his view that the method has a considerable limitation in the study of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Barth points out that although H. Vogel scrutinised so substantially “the below”, he failed to attempt to enunciate “the above” from “the below”.¹⁰⁰

Barth accuses Pannenberg of the view that the doctrine of God’s revelation enacted in Jesus is based on the figure of the historical Jesus, and his message and commitment to God, confirmed by his resurrection from the dead.¹⁰¹ Barth admits with A. E. Biedermann¹⁰² that the Easter event may be

⁹⁷ JGM, 21.

⁹⁸ James M. Robinson claims that Pannenberg remains essentially Barthian in his stance, the anti-Barthian polemic notwithstanding in “Revelation as Word and as History”, *Theology as History*, 15-21. Robert Jenson also names Pannenberg as “Barth inside out” in *God after God* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969), 179. Furthermore, Paul Santmire calls Pannenberg an “out-Barthed Barth” in the sense that he takes up the fundamental motifs of Barth’s thought for a new theological synthesis, in a review article in *Dialog* 9 (1970), 142-45.

⁹⁹ Barth, *The Letters*, 177-79.

¹⁰⁰ H. Vogel, *Christologie*, I (Munich, 1949); cited in *ibid.*, 179.

¹⁰¹ In Barth’s view, Vogel scrutinised so substantially “the below” but could not articulate the other part, “the above” reached from “the below” in his christology, *The Letters*, 178.

reduced historically to visions of the disciples and the stark fact of the empty tomb, but questions the tenability of Pannenberg's attempt to base his christology on this historical probability. For this reason, Barth says, it is "to build a house on the sand moving one way yesterday and another today."¹⁰³ Barth continues to argue that the Jewish apocalyptic context, which Pannenberg has taken as the final basis of his interpretation of both the pre-Easter Jesus and the risen Lord, forces him to reason from the general to the particular. Consequently, as far as its positive content is concerned, Barth points out, Pannenberg's christology produces nothing more than "the outstanding example and symbol of a presupposed general anthropology, cosmology, and ontology".¹⁰⁴

Barth does not give any credit to Pannenberg's consistent approach from "below" to "above", or from the general to the particular, starting from the figure of the historical man Jesus. This is because the only historically sure fact for Barth is the New Testament text, rather than the shadowy figure of the historical man Jesus. Thus Barth disagrees with Pannenberg's historical method and argues that the tradition of the primitive church, treading the path from "above" to "below", from the particular to the general, not the reverse, should be followed.

All of these arguments have led Barth to regard Pannenberg's christology "from below" as extremely different from his christology "from above", although Pannenberg's main stream of christology follows Barth's

¹⁰² A. E. Biedermann, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 2nd edition (Berlin, 1885), 417-25; cited in *ibid.*, 179.

¹⁰³ Barth, *The Letters*, 178.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

tradition. Barth considers Pannenberg's new way of christology to be "reactionary".¹⁰⁵

1.4. OTHER THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES

Besides the influence of Barth, Gerhard von Rad's reconstruction of Israel's history as *Traditionsgeschichte* in which the critical history of Israel and the community's confessed faith are interpenetrated,¹⁰⁶ also had a creative impact on Pannenberg. It especially helped him to resolve the general theological distinction between "inner" and "outer" history, thereby leading him to see the unity of historical event and its meaning.¹⁰⁷ Hans von Campenhausen's stress on a unified and all-embracing theological interpretation of history¹⁰⁸ provided Pannenberg with an insight into this category of history as the most comprehensive horizon for all theological reflections.¹⁰⁹ Günter Bornkamm's pursuit of the historical Jesus, who lay elusively behind the Kerygmatic portrayals of him in the Gospels,¹¹⁰ had its impact on Pannenberg's view of Jesus' history as a criterion for the Christian

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁰⁶ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. I, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 105-15.

¹⁰⁷ See W. Pannenberg, "Kerygma and History", *BQiT-I*, 81-95. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 24.

¹⁰⁸ Hans von Campenhausen, "Augustine and the Fall of Rome" delivered as the rectoral address when the University of Heidelberg reopened after the war, *Tradition and Life: Essays and Lectures in church History*, trans. A. V. Littledale (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 42-89, 201-16.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. According to James M. Robinson, Pannenberg's theological reflection was carrying out the vision of von Campenhausen, "Revelation as Word and as History", *Theology as History*, 7-10, 25.

¹¹⁰ Günter Bornkamm, "Myth and Gospel", *Kerygma and History: A Symposium on the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann*, trans. and ed. Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (Abingdon Press, 1962), 192. Bornkamm also deals with this theme throughout his book, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960). Cf. W. Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History", *BQiT-I*, 24.

confession of him. Finally, Edmund Schlink influenced Pannenberg to articulate the doxological structure of language about God.¹¹¹

There were some philosophers as well as the above theologians who provided influential points of contact for Pannenberg's christology. First among these is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. As Timothy Bradshaw observes, the Hegelian concept of *free differentiation and relation* influenced Pannenberg's doctrine of the Trinity. He conceives of God as "the freely self-determining and self-determined triune God."¹¹² The intertrinitarian relations are foundational for his articulation of christology.¹¹³

Pannenberg is also in debt to Hegel for the universal-historical framework of christology.¹¹⁴ He did not only point out the importance of Hegel's idea of universal history for contemporary theology while teaching at Heildelberg, but also refers directly to Hegel when he elaborates his concept of revelation as *Universalgeschichte*.¹¹⁵

Hegel's concept of universal history is not problem-free. First, one cannot see the unity of history until history itself is completed since only from the vantage point of the *eschaton* can the unity be perceived. Another

¹¹¹ Edmund Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, trans. J. H. Neilson et al. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, Ltd., 1967), 16-84. Cf. W. Pannenberg, "Analogy and Doxology", *BQiT-I*, 211-38.

¹¹² Cf. Timothy Bradshaw, *Trinity and Ontology: A Comparative Study of the Theologies of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1988), 1-3, 137-38. Bradshaw argues throughout this book that Pannenberg's trinitarian theology is an application of Hegelian tradition.

¹¹³ Roger E. Olson, "The Human Self-Realisation of God: Hegelian Elements in Pannenberg's Christology," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 13 (1986): 207-223.

¹¹⁴ Cf. W. Pannenberg, "The Significance of Christianity in the Philosophy of Hegel", *IGHF*, 144-77; "What is Truth", *BQiT-II*, 21-26.

¹¹⁵ Merold Westphal argues that Pannenberg is "the most articulate anti-Hegelian since Kierkegaard", "Hegel, Pannenberg, and Hermeneutics", *Man and World* 4 (1971): 276-93, cited in Grenz, "The Appraisal of Pannenberg", 28.

difficulty is that the contingency of the individual event is not taken seriously. The logic of *Begriff* is treated as the ultimate datum of reality.

Pannenberg solves these problems by his concept of *prolepsis* which originates from the standpoint of Israelite apocalyptic tradition. The Christ event is the *proleptic* presence of the future reality. What happened to Jesus' destiny remains outstanding for humans.¹¹⁶ Hegel perceived the Christ event as the closed past, which might at best continue to operate in the present in spirit, but could by no means be a still-open future. But Pannenberg explains by the *proleptic* character of the Christ event "the fact that in primitive Christianity, despite the ultimacy of God's revelation that appeared in Jesus, the future still remained open, so that God's truth was not participated in by means of the concept [*Begriff*] in the last analysis, but rather - beyond all *Begreifen* and being driven by the process of conceptualisation itself - by faith alone, by trust in the coming God."¹¹⁷ Without this character, Jesus' fate could not be the ultimate revelation of God since the openness of the future belongs constitutively to human reality.¹¹⁸ This conception of "openness" naturally leads to the defence of the contingency of the historical events. The open future and the contingency force Pannenberg to move beyond Hegel's metaphysics.¹¹⁹ As Allan Galloway points out, Pannenberg provides hints of the new metaphysics in the course of his analysis of the difference between

¹¹⁶ Pannenberg, "What is Truth", 24f.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹⁹ In Ronald Pasquariello's view, Pannenberg's concept of *prolepsis* is a theological formulation of Hegel's notion of truth as the whole, "Pannenberg's Philosophical Foundations": 338-47. Also See Westphal, *op. cit.*

Greek and Hebraic habits of thought, and his philosophy of time which he owes to J. Heidegger.¹²⁰

Another influence on Pannenberg's future-oriented thinking was Alfred North Whitehead's process metaphysics. Whitehead interpreted reality as a process. Future reality is thus not yet decided, but is developing. This implies that the definite truth is decided only in terms of single occasions contingently following each other. Pannenberg recognises this concept as an enormous achievement.

He moves beyond Whitehead, however, to stress *the priority of the future*. "What turns out to be true in the future will then be evident as having been true all along."¹²¹ This is applied to the idea of God as well as to all finite reality. Whitehead interprets the essence of God as a development. However, for Pannenberg, the God who was present in every past moment is the One who is present in the future.

Ernst Bloch, a Marxist, also influenced Pannenberg's future-oriented reflection. Bloch emphasised eschatology as a central theme of philosophical reflection. The future, which is *temporal* in character and, as such, a mode for God and all of reality, has overwhelming power in the historical process.¹²² Pannenberg has paid tribute to Bloch for this conception of the primacy of the concrete future.

Perhaps Christian theology will one day thank Ernst Bloch's philosophy of hope for giving it the courage to recover in the full

¹²⁰ Galloway, "The New Hegelians", 371.

¹²¹ W. Pannenberg, "Theology and the Kingdom of God", *TKG*, 63.

¹²² W. Pannenberg, "The God of Hope", *BQiT-II*, 237f.

sense its central category of eschatology. He has recovered the biblical tradition's eschatological mode of thought as a theme for philosophical reflection and also Christian theology.¹²³

However, Pannenberg develops Bloch's conception of "*ontologische Primat der Zukunft*".¹²⁴ The primacy of the future and its novelty are established only on its own ontological grounds, rather than on human hopes. He writes,

The primacy of the future and its novelty are guaranteed only when the coming Kingdom is ontologically grounded in itself and does not owe its future merely to the present wishes and strivings of man. When the future Kingdom is designated in biblical terms as the kingdom of God, that is out of concern for the ontological primacy of the future of the Kingdom over all present realities, including, above all, psychological states. This means that from the biblical standpoint the being of God and that of the Kingdom are identical, since the being of God is his Lordship.¹²⁵

1.5. CONCLUSION

As an elucidation of the formation of Pannenberg's christology has shown, the struggle of the German church to defend itself against German National Socialism, the historical context of the overall shape of Pannenberg's

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Cf. Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959). Also see Tupper, *op. cit.*, 26. Here Tupper argues that Pannenberg had not been influenced by Ernst Bloch since he read Bloch's magnum opus *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* only after completing the initial draft of *JGM*. Thus, he continues, Bloch's philosophy of hope represented a provocative "confluence" with Pannenberg's own eschatological vision of universal history, rather than an "influence" on him. However, Bloch's future-oriented philosophy was influential for the shape of Pannenberg's theological reflection as one sees it in his contribution to the Festschrift published in honour of Bloch's eightieth birthday, *Ernst Bloch zu Ehren*, ed. Siegfried Unseld (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1965), 209-25.

¹²⁵ Pannenberg, "The God of Hope", 239-40.

christological programme, motivated him to articulate christology and even his theology as a whole in a social and political, and especially *future-oriented dimension*. His critical response to existential theology and *Heilsgeschichte* theology leads to the emphasis on the historical reality of Jesus as the basis for all inquires into “Jesus in himself” and “Jesus for us” and on the primacy of futurity as decisive for them.

The significance of his christology in the history of Christian thought lies in this turn to both the path “from below” and the future. This is based on his view of theology and the place of history in theology. Theology is a universal science in that it must provide the critical verification of Christian kerygma. This view is based on the universality of God’s reality. Critical history, which is differentiated from human historicity, “special history”, and anthropocentric history, is seen as the most comprehensive horizon. This is because historical events, through which God reveals himself, convey their own revelatory significance.

Barth’s influence was crucial for the formation of Pannenberg’s christology. Its main line, especially the concept of the Christ event as the divine self-revelation, the trinitarian formulation of christology, follows Barth’s tradition. Even some anti-Barthian aspects, for instance, the notion of indirect revelation and appealing to the canons of rationality, are primarily intended to articulate that tradition in the contemporary critical climate, although Barth does not recognise it.

Hegel’s dialectical logic of *free differentiation and relation* and concept of *Universalgeschichte* are also influential points of contact for Pannenberg’s christological reflection. Besides Barth and Hegel,

Campanhausen's stress on the significance of history for Christian theology, von Rad's conception of the Israelite *Traditionsgeschichte*, Bornkamm's emphasis on the importance of the historical Jesus, Whitehead's process metaphysics, and Bloch's concept of the priority of the future have contributed in various ways to the overall shape of Pannenberg's christology.

Seeking the universal validation of the Christian claims in contemporary historical-critical climate is Pannenberg's contribution. But the universal validity of Christian truth must be found in the universal implication of the Word of God. Further, he does not make clear the existential aspect of faith. Moreover, he needs to present a more substantial basis for the exclusive appeal to historical reasoning. His historical method leaves little room for the concept of spiritual blindness, caused by the Fall, and for the illumination of the Spirit. The problem of the totality of history leads to the failure to avoid "Lessing's ditch".

CHAPTER II: THE IDENTITY OF JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD (I)

This chapter establishes Jesus' divine sonship which is intertrinitarian in character. This is interrelated with the interpretation of reconciliation since Jesus as the Son of God reconciles the world to the Lordship of God. Most of the earlier studies of Pannenberg's christology have ascribed Jesus' unity with God to his resurrection as a *prolepsis* of his future essential unity with God.¹ In consequence they have not noticed the decisive significance of Jesus' crucifixion for the establishment of Jesus' divine sonship as it relates to God's Lordship.² But it is argued that within the intertrinitarian framework Jesus, by his ultimate dedication to the Father on the cross, *anticipates the future deity and Lordship of God*, thereby *being* the Son.

The historical approach to Jesus' identity is first set forth in relation to the context of *Traditionsgeschichte* and the Late-Jewish apocalyptic tradition. Then the concept of Jesus' personal unity with God, which is perceived in his relationship to the Father in his human life, is examined. Finally, Jesus' self-differentiation from the Father as the inner basis of his divine sonship is discussed by focusing on the Son's self-differentiation and on its relationship to the future Lordship of the Father and to Jesus' freedom and sinlessness.

¹ See Allan D. Galloway, *Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 99-115, 77-85. David P. Polk, *On the Way to God: An Exploration Into The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 187-96. Timothy Bradshaw, *Trinity and Ontology: A Comparative Study of the Theologies of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1988), 148-162, 274-300.

² E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 300.

2.1. THE HISTORICAL APPROACH TO THE IDENTITY OF JESUS AS THE SON

Pannenberg approaches the intertrinitarian character of Jesus' divine sonship from the historical reality of Jesus in his life. Since this reality is a part of the historical continuity and totality of Israel's apocalyptic transmitted tradition of the Kingdom of God, Jesus' identity as the Son is perceived within this context.

2.1.1. THE PATH "FROM BELOW"

Christian faith professes Jesus as the Son of God. The appeal to Jesus of Nazareth is crucial for this affirmation. Pannenberg correctly perceives the man Jesus to be constitutive for the establishment of his divine sonship.³

Jesus as this man, as man in this particular, unique situation, with this particular historical mission and this particular fate—as this man is not just man, but from the perspective of his resurrection from the dead . . . he is one with God and thus is himself God.⁴

However, Christology, based upon this particular person is vulnerable. This is because the reliability of the historical Jesus is constantly questionable and the historical distance of this man estranges him from the contemporary world. Christian theology has often attempted to escape from this vulnerability, and thus, following classical christology, starts from the confession of the primitive church. Many scholars, especially F. Schleiermacher, follow this tradition.

³ *AC*, 45.

⁴ *JGM*, 323.

But, arguing that the vulnerability proves to be an illusion because Christian faith rests on its relation to this historical person,⁵ in both his monograph and dogmatics Pannenberg takes the path “from below” as the starting point, rather than the Church’s confession.⁶ The main task of christology is rather on one hand to consider the history of the individual Jesus, and on the other hand to evaluate the christological tradition by the critical norm of that history.⁷ This is seen to correspond to the fact that the apostolic proclamation of the Christ event began with his history, namely, his incarnation, life, death, and resurrection. Thus he attempts to reconstruct the basis of dogmatic assertions about Jesus from his history.⁸

Two structural contexts of christology in Pannenberg’s dogmatics hint at this path “from below”. The first context is anthropology, which follows the pattern of classical dogmatics, especially of Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* which deals with christology after the doctrine of humanity.⁹ Pannenberg’s inquiry into Jesus’ identity is developed from a mainly anthropological study. This sequence implies that the christological assertion of Jesus must be universally valid, rather than emerging from a ghetto of authoritative revelation. The second context is the doctrine of God. Pannenberg connects the identity of

⁵ AC, 45-47. See Tupper, *op. cit.*, 165-66.

⁶ See Herbert Burhenn, “Pannenberg’s Doctrine of God”, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975): 535-49.

⁷ JGM, 28.

⁸ Christoph Schwöbel rightly points this out, “Wolfhart Pannenberg”, *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 196.

⁹ The need to delineate christology in the context of a systematic anthropology has already been pointed out by Pannenberg himself in his monograph JGM. Cf. Pannenberg, *Was ist der Mensch? Die Anthropologie der Gegenwart im Lichte der Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 38f., 54 f. Cf. Stanley J. Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York: Oxford, 1990), 113-14.

Jesus with the doctrine of God.¹⁰ For him, “In dealing with Jesus we are dealing with God himself.”¹¹ Christology concerns itself primarily with establishing Jesus’ divinity.¹² What implications can be drawn from this twofold context? Pannenberg’s concern first investigates the historical features of the man Jesus in relation to his universal relevance, and then demonstrates that this Jesus is the Son of God.

Tupper argues that Pannenberg’s christology must be interpreted as a christology “from before”. A conceptual solution to the problem of Jesus’ divinity and universality is not provided by the category “from below” but by the incarnation of the eschaton in Jesus. For Pannenberg “in the destiny of Jesus the End of all history has happened in advance, as prolepsis.”¹³ Thus a christology “from below” undergirds a christology “from before” which issues from the eschatological shape of the history of Jesus.¹⁴ To be sure, unlike other christology “from below”, the significance of Jesus is perceived not from words or events in his life, but from the resurrection. “The eschatological function of Jesus as the anticipation of God’s future forms the key to the central theme of Incarnation.”¹⁵ Nevertheless, the path “from below” should be interpreted as characteristic of Pannenberg’s christology. The Easter event which bestows meaning retrospectively on the pre-Easter history and ministry

¹⁰ Grenz correctly points this out, *op. cit.*, 122.

¹¹ W. Pannenberg, “The Revelation of God in Jesus”, *Theology as History*, vol. III, New Frontiers in Theology, ed. J. B. Cobb, Jr. and J. M. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 101.

¹² *JGM*, 21.

¹³ *RaH*, 134.

¹⁴ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 166.

¹⁵ W. Pannenberg, “Foreword”, *BQiT-I*, xvi.

of Jesus is “as fully historical as any word or deed of Jesus.”¹⁶ Further, the path “from below” comes together within the framework of the trinitarian mutual self-differentiation – a distinctive aspect of his theological development over his earlier stage, chiefly presented in his recent *Systematische Theologie*, – within which all doctrines are formulated and thus crucial for the interpretation of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Within this perspective, the *historical reality* of Jesus’ subordination to the Father is the basis on which his identity as the Son and his reconciling ministry for the world are founded.¹⁷

The emphasis on the history of Jesus forces Pannenberg to reject the soteriological motif as the christological principle, “though soteriology constitutes the motivation in christology itself”.¹⁸ The soteriological motif involves the projection of human desires for salvation into Jesus of Nazareth, and thus detaches the proclaimed Christ from the historical figure of Jesus. *Heilsgeschichte* theology and existential theology isolate the supra-historical and existential significance of Jesus from his distant historical figure.¹⁹ Reacting against this, Pannenberg maintains that the proper christological procedure is not to analyse the work of Christ *pro nobis*, but to develop it from actual past events because the former is inherent in historical reality. If this ground is neglected, faith in salvation loses any real foundation,²⁰ and thus becomes a kind of individual subjectivism. However, Pannenberg’s rejection

¹⁶ Donald G. Dawe correctly indicates this point, “Christology in Contemporary Systematic Theology”, *Interpretation* 26/3 (July, 1972): 270.

¹⁷ See “Introduction” of this treatise. Also, *vide infra* the section on “Jesus’ Self-differentiation from the Father as the Inner Basis of His Divine Sonship”.

¹⁸ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 294, cf. 130.

¹⁹ *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 233.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

of the soteriological motif must be confined to the methodological point of view. Evidenced by his *Systematische Theologie*, Jesus' identity for him is implicitly interrelated to its salvific significance.²¹ This advance is acceptable because these two cannot be separated.²² The Gospels and Paul describe Jesus Christ in his soteriological dimension. The primitive Christian christological transmission of traditions also understands Jesus Christ as the Redeemer. This theme is dealt with in more detail later.²³

Christology "from above" is developed from the preexistent Logos or Son of God being sent into the world.²⁴ In his later writings, Barth, following Calvin,²⁵ interprets the person and work of Jesus Christ as the man-ward divine movement of revelation.²⁶ According to Torrance, Barth brings together the Greek Patristic emphasis on the being of God in his saving acts and the Reformation emphasis on the acts of God in his being revealed to humans through Christ and in the Spirit.²⁷ God is the Word he addresses to humans in the incarnation. God is also in himself the activity he undertakes for human beings and their salvation. In other words, "God's Word is the personal speaking of his being and God's action is the personal activity of his being."²⁸

²¹ *ST-II*, 443. Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 127.

²² *CD*, IV/1, 58.

²³ See the section on "The Doctrine of Reconciliation" in chapter four.

²⁴ Colin Gunton presents a brief summary of christology "from above", *Yesterday & Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 33-55.

²⁵ For Calvin Jesus Christ is the revelation of God's love predestined in eternity for human salvation, Robert A. Peterson, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Atonement* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1975), 3.

²⁶ *CD*, VI/1; Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutter Worth Press, 1956), 265-328.

²⁷ T. F. Torrance, "The Legacy of Karl Barth", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1986): 303. In this sense Barth's christology can be said to begin with the eternal Trinity.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

In God Being, Word, and Action are one and indivisible. In this indivisible inner relationship of the Son and the Spirit to the Father,²⁹ God reveals himself and reconciles the world to himself. This real internal ontological relationship between Jesus Christ and God the Father tends to be replaced in Neo-Protestantism, Roman Catholicism and even Protestant orthodoxy by abstract, external, formal, symbolical, or merely moral relations, which result in a serious loss of direct contact with reality.³⁰ For Barth God himself is the living content of his revelation, which is Jesus Christ, for the *homousios* to *Patri* is of the incarnate Son. In light of this eternal Trinity, the history of Jesus Christ is recognised not merely as a thirty year episode in time and space, but as an event encompassing the entire history of God and man, beginning from eternity and stretching into eternity.³¹ In this way, Barth is able to avoid the total detachment of christology from the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth.

Pannenberg, however, cannot accept this approach “from above” for three reasons. First, it begins from Jesus’ divinity which a contemporary christology has to prove. The primary concern of the enquiry should be: How did Jesus’ appearance in history lead to the recognition of his divinity?³² Second, the path “from above” mostly focuses on the union of God and man in Jesus and consequently neglects “the determinative significance inherent in the distinctive features of the real, historical man, Jesus of the Nazareth.”³³

²⁹ T. F. Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy”, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1986): 462.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 465.

³¹ R. H. Roberts, “Barth’s Doctrine of Time: Its Nature and Implications”, *Karl Barth-Studies of His Theological Methods*, ed. S. W. Sykes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 121-46.

³² *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 28-29; *JGM*, 34.

³³ *JGM*, 34.

Jesus' manifold relationship with the Judaism of his day is essential to an interpretation of his life and message. Third, the approach "from above" is impossible since humans "would stand in the position of God himself in order to follow the way of God's Son into the world."³⁴ They always think from the context of a historically determined human situation, and thus cannot comprehend the incarnation apart from the historical reality of Jesus.

For these reasons, Pannenberg insists that christology must start by looking at the man Jesus. Only in this way can Jesus' divinity be perceived.³⁵ While christology "from above" asks how the eternal logos has assumed human nature,³⁶ christology "from below" begins with the appearance and ministry of the historical Jesus and moves to the recognition of his divinity.³⁷ Jesus' divinity, taken as the starting point for the former, emerges as the conclusion of the latter.

The Barthian, Weber, challenges the legitimacy of this path because humans cannot ascend from a given "below" toward an "above" without holding this "above" to be at least potentially also revealed in the "below".³⁸ But this criticism confuses the "below" with a generality.³⁹ The "below"

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *CD*, VI/1, 158-357.

³⁷ This forces Jon Segundo to criticise that Pannenberg returns to the classical christology by starting from the question of the relationship of the historical Jesus to God, a question for which Jesus himself had no answer, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1985), 30. However, in Pannenberg's view, the history of Jesus is the starting point from which the christological question of the person of Jesus can be answered. While Segundo understands christology as the reflection on praxis, Pannenberg sees that christology is concerned primarily with a divine reality that transcends the world of human praxis and determines such praxis. Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 136.

³⁸ Otto Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, vol. II (Neukirchen Krs. Moers: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1962), 26ff., 34ff.

³⁹ *JGM*, 36.

rather implies “the historic singularity of the man Jesus” which, as a new and contingent event in history, radically qualifies all foreknowledge, even foreknowledge about God.

Precisely for this reason, God has “met” men in Jesus in a way that is not the case otherwise, and one also cannot adequately grasp such differences of historical particularity as merely a matter of degree. A general idea of God and the word “God” related to this idea express only the human quest for God’s reality.⁴⁰

Does Pannenberg’s historical approach rule out completely the path “from above”? Sobrino argues that it does.⁴¹ But this criticism is unsound because to remain only “from below” is not the spirit of Pannenberg. He does not only recognise some problems of “from below”,⁴² but also in *Systematische Theologie* attempts to move beyond the path “from below” set forth in his monograph.⁴³ Both methods are combined insofar as the path “from below” offers a reconstruction of the foundation of the statements that the path “from above” develops systematically.⁴⁴

If christology from below does not manage to develop material alternatives to confession of the deity of Christ but shows that this confession, and consequently the concept of the incarnation, is a relevant expression of the implied significance of the coming and history of Jesus, then this means that the human and historical reality

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ J. Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (London: SCM Press, 1978), 26.

⁴² See W. Pannenberg, “Christologie und Theologie” *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie* Band II (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 129-45. Also, see the “afterword” to *JGM*.

⁴³ Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 135-36.

⁴⁴ *ST-II*, 288f.; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. 2, 327ff. Cf. Schwöbel, *op. cit.*, 182-83, 197.

of Jesus of Nazareth can be appropriately understood only in the light of God that has its basis in God. Hence we cannot regard a christology from below as ruling out completely the classical christology of the incarnation. It is simply reconstructing the revelatory historical basis that classical christology has always in fact presupposed, though never properly explained.⁴⁵

This advance overcomes the Lash's criticism of his repudiation of "from above".⁴⁶

In view of modern intellectual concern with historical inquiry Pannenberg starts from the finite and empirical, rather than a confession or dogma, although "from below" is complemented by "from above". But what conclusions does he seek to draw by this approach? Is it to present the reasons for the confession of Jesus' divinity? If so, then, as Gunton points out, that is inconsistent with his insistence that "christology *establishes* the divinity of Jesus on the basis of inquiry into this-worldly historical events."⁴⁷

How does Pannenberg achieve a move from Jesus' message and destiny to the concept of the incarnation?⁴⁸ He does so by reference to Jesus' resurrection from the dead because it contains *both* a possible subject of historical investigation and some kind of theological significance.⁴⁹ This is because Jesus' resurrection took place in the context of the Jewish apocalyptic eschaton-expectation of a general resurrection. He says,

⁴⁵ *ST-II*, 288.

⁴⁶ Nicholas Lash, "Up and Down in Christology" *New Studies in Theology*, ed. Stephen Sykes and Derek Homes, vol. I (London: Duckworth, 1980), 31-46.

⁴⁷ Gunton, *op. cit.*, 19-20.

⁴⁸ *JGM*, 33.

⁴⁹ Gunton, *op. cit.*, 20.

For Jesus' Jewish contemporaries, insofar as they shared the apocalyptic expectation, the occurrence of the resurrection did not first need to be interpreted, but for them it spoke meaningfully in itself: If such a thing had happened, one could no longer doubt what it meant.⁵⁰

But this historical inquiry which views the resurrection as carrying for Jesus' contemporaries the immediate implication of his special or even divine significance, is suspect because he "is doing precisely what he accused Käsemann of doing: *either* presupposing some dogmatic beliefs ('context of meaning'). This impels one to criticise that Pannenberg does not argue genuinely from below at all; *or* failing to establish what is wanted, namely, the divinity of Jesus."⁵¹

Critics have blamed Pannenberg's historical approach to the identity of Jesus for not paying enough attention to the present experiences of Christ. In Burhenn's view, it does not acknowledge Jesus' present influence on the contemporary believer in establishing Jesus' identity as the Son of God.⁵² Gunton asserts that it is concerned with an inquiry into what Jesus *was*, and thus does not give any place to what he *is*.⁵³ Beeck also alleges that Pannenberg's christology fails to do justice to the actuality of Jesus as present in the Spirit now.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Cone claims that Pannenberg's concept of the

⁵⁰ *JGM*, 67.

⁵¹ Gunton, *op. cit.*, 21.

⁵² Burhenn, *op. cit.*, 548.

⁵³ Gunton, *op. cit.*, 24.

⁵⁴ See Frans Joseph van Beeck, *Christ Proclaimed* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 312-24, cited in Grenz, *op. cit.*, 249.

historical Jesus makes it difficult to explain the relationship of the history of Jesus with the intimacy of an encounter to his presence now.⁵⁵

But this kind of criticism is unwarranted. From the methodological point of view, christology should begin with the historical reality of Jesus, rather than the kerygma of his unity with God.⁵⁶ This does not mean, however, that Pannenberg intends them to be mutually exclusive. He says, "The Jesus proclaimed today is none other than the one who lived at that time in Palestine and was crucified under Pilate, and vice versa."⁵⁷ This is made explicit in his *Systematische Theologie* which presents the history of Jesus as the basis of christological research. It cannot be restricted to a history climaxing in the cross and the presence of the preexistent Son concealed in it, but extends to the post-Easter history. Jesus' earthly history becomes a present event by the exalted Son in the Spirit, an especially meaningful concept when reconciliation is defined as the action of the triune God in his trinitarian reciprocal relationship. It can therefore be said that the apparent weakness of a christology based over-much on the pre-Easter history of Jesus is overcome.

Pannenberg's contribution lies in his emphasis on the objective knowledge of the history and destiny of Jesus of Nazareth for the establishment of Jesus' identity as the Son, which is neglected in the theologies of A. E. Biedermann, Schleiermacher, Bultmann, and Tillich. This presupposes the possibility of going behind the kerygma to the history of Jesus.⁵⁸ While for Althaus the historical Jesus is perceived by contemporary

⁵⁵ See James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 121-22.

⁵⁶ *JGM*, 21-22.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 230.

human experience of the proclaimed Christ,⁵⁹ for Pannenberg this Jesus can be grasped only from the contemporary events of his own pre-Easter life and ministry. Whereas Althaus' position is *fides quaerens intellectum*, Pannenberg's is *intellectus quaerens fidem*. But is it really possible today to undertake such a historical analysis without the help of the kerygma of the apostles? Even if it is possible, is there any reason to deny the compatibility of the historical research with the biblical statements about Jesus' history?

2.1.2. THE CONTEXT OF JESUS' IDENTITY

The path "from below" attempts to identify Jesus' identity as the Son within the historical context of Israel's apocalyptic transmitted traditions. Jesus stood as a part of the history of these traditions.⁶⁰ He is the one who fulfils the expectations of this history.⁶¹ The first context is that of *Traditionsgeschichte*.⁶² It can be asserted with Pannenberg that the main stream of *Traditionsgeschichte* is the idea of the Kingdom of God and thus Jesus' identity is to be understood within the tradition of the Kingdom.⁶³ Within this tradition, he designated himself as the one who was sent to

⁵⁹ Althaus emphasises the importance of knowledge about the historical Jesus. The revelatory character of Jesus' history is not known without historical reflection, for the gospel deals with facts that, it is claimed, happened in human history. See *JGM*, 26.

⁶⁰ *RaH*, 145.

⁶¹ Galloway, *op. cit.*, 60. For him, this is generally accepted except "a very perverse and ideologically motivated scepticism, *ibid.*, 65.

⁶² For Pannenberg *Traditionsgeschichte* provides a hermeneutical basis for the framework of a flow of transmitted events as a whole. The language character of *Traditionsgeschichte* explains this. If a historical event participates in language, the historical event has already transcended the particular moment of its occurrence, concerning itself with the totality of tradition which will only be realised at the *eschaton*. The word describing the meaning of a historical event in the history of traditions, Tupper explains, stretches toward the horizon of universal history wherein the significance of the historical event as God's act is finally realised. Cf. W. Pannenberg, "On Historical and Theological Hermeneutical", *BQIT-I*, 157-58. Also, see Tupper, *op. cit.*, 106-07.

⁶³ *JGM*, 225-35.

proclaim the expected Kingdom.⁶⁴ Since this had already been transmitted to Israel in her history, Jesus shared it with his hearers. This tradition is also directed to the future reign of God. Thus it is not just the context within which Jesus is seen. Jesus provides a new perspective from which the Kingdom can be perceived. There is here a mutual relationship between Jesus and the tradition of the Kingdom in the process of transmission. The Kingdom transmitted in her history was for Israel alone. The future Kingdom, however, is open for all humanity, the destiny of humanity. Within the expectation of this Kingdom, Jesus' identity and its significance can therefore be meaningfully understood.

Pannenberg is correct to perceive the continuity of Jesus' identity with the history of the transmission of traditions. If Jesus in his person is God's revelation, and this revelation is mediated in history, his historical connections are crucial for understanding his identity. But Pannenberg fails to explain that the historical continuity of Jesus actually includes a soteriological motif. The tradition of the Kingdom is concerned primarily with the redemptive Kingdom in which the Redeemer reigns over the world.⁶⁵ As John Bright observes, the Judaic connection of the transmitted traditions implies a messianic anticipation of the Redeemer who will deliver Israel. This is also supported by Moltmann's assertion that the essential nature of this anticipation is messianic. Therefore, Jesus' identity should be seen chiefly in terms of the soteriological fulfilment of the promise of the Old Testament in the course of history.

⁶⁴ Cf. *TKG*, 52f.

⁶⁵ See the sections on "Reconciliation as the Intertrinitarian Activity Bringing about God's Lordship in *Universalgeschichte*" in chapter four, and on "The Son's Action in his pre-Easter History as Prolepsis of God's Lordship" in chapter five. See also throughout chapter seven.

The future Kingdom of God has not been realised in the history of Israel, but was first brought into being by Jesus.⁶⁶ How can the historical continuity between Israel's expectation of the future Kingdom and its arrival in Jesus be explained? Pannenberg answers this question within his own idea of *prolepsis* from Late-Jewish apocalypticism. This leads Pannenberg to emphasise post-exilic Israelite apocalypticism as another decisive context for the identification of Jesus.

The role of the apocalyptic is one of the most fiercely disputed fields in Christian theology.⁶⁷ According to Galloway,⁶⁸ the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, which mainly belonged to the relatively brief inter-Testamental period, was an embarrassment to the early Church and has been estimated as foreign to human reasoning. As a result, the significance of Jesus and his message has been separated from its apocalyptic context. Ernst Käsemann, Koch explains, was the first to understand the radical importance of apocalyptic.⁶⁹ In his essay, "The beginnings of Christian Theology", Käsemann claimed that "Apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology."⁷⁰ Apocalyptic belongs to the main stream of Old and New Testament theology rather than its periphery.⁷¹ Therefore, an adequate

⁶⁶ *RaH*, 142, 139.

⁶⁷ For a survey of the field of apocalyptic see Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of the Apocalyptic* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 82-107. There are other good works in the field: Dietrich Rössler's *Gesetz und Geschichte: Untersuchungen zur Theologie der jüdischen Apokalyptik und der pharisäischen Orthodoxie* (Neukirchen, 1960, 1962); E. Kautsch's *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testament* (1900); P. Volz's *Jüdische Eschatologie von Daniel bis Akiba* (1903); William Bousset's *Religion Judentums im Neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (1902).

⁶⁸ Galloway gives a brief explanation of the apocalyptic context of Jesus and his message, *op. cit.*, 60-69.

⁶⁹ Koch, *op. cit.*, 14.

⁷⁰ Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 82-107.

⁷¹ Koch, *op. cit.*, 14.

discussion of the apocalyptic issues, which, in his view, “sprang from the Easter experience and determined the Easter faith”,⁷² is essential for a theological work.

Pannenberg espouses the apocalyptic issues more thoroughly than Käsemann. Pannenberg maintains, in line with Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, that the eschatological Kingdom, the main aspect of the post-exilic apocalypticism,⁷³ must be recovered as crucial to the whole of Christian theology.⁷⁴ This results from his reaction to liberal theology in the early nineteenth-century which interpreted the Kingdom in terms of moral progression.⁷⁵ He claims, “Theology has yet to digest the radical change from the ethical to the eschatological understanding of the Kingdom of God.”⁷⁶ All Christological inquiries can thus be judged in the light of this Kingdom. Pannenberg emphasises the Israelite apocalyptic tradition more strongly than any other modern New Testament scholar.⁷⁷

As Schwöbel observes,⁷⁸ within the apocalyptic context Pannenberg identifies Jesus as anticipating the ultimate future deity of God which will be realised only at the end of human history.⁷⁹ He was raised from the dead,

⁷² *Ibid.*, 107.

⁷³ *RaH*, 145.

⁷⁴ *TKG*, 52f.

⁷⁵ See Galloway, *op. cit.*, 61.

⁷⁶ *TKG*, 52f.

⁷⁷ Galloway, *op. cit.*, 60.

⁷⁸ Christoph Schwöbel, “Wolfhart Pannenberg”, *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, vol. I (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 265.

⁷⁹ This proleptic character is the hermeneutical key to Pannenberg’s understanding of the total reality. Openness to the future is constitutive of human reality. The reality which occurred in Jesus is still an open future. In the openness to the future Jesus’ history has its own uniqueness. This openness does not contradict the ultimacy of God’s revelation in the Christ

though the general resurrection of the dead has not yet come. In this unique form the early church proclaimed Jesus as the eschatological revealer. Furthermore, the cosmic Kingdom which was expected by the Jewish apocalypticism has taken place proleptically in the Christ event. He proclaimed the future Kingdom as being already present in him and in his work. He saw men's attitude toward his proclamation of the Kingdom as the precursor of their final judgement. John Cobb comments:

[Pannenberg] seems to interpret the entire message [of Jesus] as determined by this expectation of the end in such a way that its validity in every respect hinges on the fulfilment of that expectation.⁸⁰

Hans-Dieter Betz agrees with William Murdock that in Pannenberg's concept of Jesus as the prolepsis of the eschatological Kingdom Jesus is seen as an apocalyptic seer.⁸¹ This criticism, however, is not valid. For Pannenberg the eschatological Kingdom is not only in the future, but has already come in Jesus. Thus, Jesus is different from the apocalyptic visionaries even though he is in continuity with the apocalyptic traditions. Wilckens explains this clearly. In his article, "The understanding of revelation within primitive Christianity",⁸² he argues that in the *proleptic* context of an apocalyptic

event because that event still looks forward to its future realisation. Only in this form is it God's final revelation.

⁸⁰ John B. Cobb, "Wolfhart Pannenberg's Jesus: God and Human", *The Journal of Religion* 49 (1969), 195.

⁸¹ Hans-Dieter Betz, "The Concept of Apocalyptic in the Theology of the Pannenberg Group", *Journal for Theology and the Church* 6 (1969): 192-207.

⁸² Ulrich Wilckens, "The Understanding of Revelation Within Primitive Christianity", *RaH*, 55-122.

scheme of history Jesus already has eschatological validity over and above the Law.⁸³

If Jesus belongs within the Israelite apocalyptic traditions, apocalypticism need not be isolated in perceiving his identity, as views Normann Perrin.⁸⁴ But the rest of the world was not familiar with it. To the Greek it was a laughing stock.⁸⁵ The apocalyptic thinking, that is, the vision of the end of the world, final judgement, general and bodily resurrection of the dead, and the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth is so unfamiliar to many people that it cannot be convincingly shared. This raises the question: what is the ground for taking the apocalyptic context as being determinative of the character of Jesus' identity? Pannenberg's view deserves further substantiation.

Although Jesus lived in the context of the apocalyptic expectation of the *eschaton*, there was still a tension between its coming at the end of history and its presence in the person of Jesus.⁸⁶ This does not trouble Pannenberg because it is the reason why Jesus' proclamation is apocalyptic in character.⁸⁷ But Jesus' claim was focused on the nearness of God, rather than on the future itself. This is supported by Ernst Käsemann.

Jesus to be sure started from the apocalyptically determined message of the Baptist, but his own preaching was not constitutively (!) stamped by apocalyptic; rather, I am convinced, have awaited the coming Son of Man . . . and the beginning of the parousia connected

⁸³ Ibid., 70.

⁸⁴ Norman Perrin, "Putting Back the Clock", *The Christian Century* 85 (1968), 1575-1576.

⁸⁵ Galloway, *op. cit.*, 61.

⁸⁶ See Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), 90ff.

⁸⁷ JGM, 58.

with that in order to experience the nearness of God. To have to unite both would mean for me not to be able to understand anything at all.⁸⁸

Furthermore, one needs to ask whether the Kingdom, which the Jewish apocalyptic writers waited for, is to be understood only in the sense of an *anticipation* of the future Kingdom? The emphasis is on the inbreaking of God's Kingdom into history, rather than the End itself. In this sense it is *prophetic* in character.⁸⁹

2.2. THE PERSONAL UNITY OF JESUS WITH THE FATHER

The intertrinitarian character of Jesus' divine sonship is not perceived in terms of the direct unity of Jesus with the eternal Son of God. Its conception is rather based on the concrete relationship of the man Jesus to God as his Father in his earthly life. This personal relationship is reflected in Jesus' self-consciousness.

2.2.1. THE IMPASSE OF THE TWO NATURE DOCTRINE

The establishment of the identity of Jesus as the Son raises the question of how divinity and humanity can be united in one person.⁹⁰ There have been lines of argument in this debate in the history of Christian thought. The first is the Antiochene concept of the Logos *anthropos* in which the full humanity of Jesus is preserved – even at the expense of his identity with the eternal Son.

⁸⁸ E. Käsemann, "Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie", *ZThK*, LVII (1960), 162-85, cited in *JGM*, 62. Pannenberg's response to this is that "such postulate" that although Jesus took him ministry in apocalyptic atmosphere, he remains unaffected "is historically not very probable".

⁸⁹ Cf. Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 160-85.

The other is the Alexandrian concept of the Logos *sarx* in which Jesus' unity with the eternal Son is preserved – even at the expense of his humanity.⁹¹ The Logos christology led to the Chalcedonian formula of the *hypostatic* union of the two natures in one person.⁹² But this formula, according to Pannenberg, presupposes that the two natures stand ontologically on the same level and have nothing to do with one another apart from their union in the person of the God-man.⁹³ The focus is on the difference between the divine and human, not the unity of the man Jesus. Jesus as a person bears and unites two opposing substances in himself.⁹⁴ Hence, the personal identity of Jesus as the man is still problematic.

How then can the true Godhead and true manhood of Jesus be understood? As Herbert Neie⁹⁵ and Tupper⁹⁶ observe, Pannenberg perceives the unity of Jesus with God as a personal unit.⁹⁷ “There is only one subject of

⁹⁰ This discussion is found in *JGM*, 283-323; *ST-II*, 379-89.

⁹¹ See Newlands, *God in Christian Perspective* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 290. Also, see Galloway, *op. cit.*, 128.

⁹² Tupper expresses this union, “two natures are unmixed, unchanged, indivisible, inseparable in the one Christ”, *op. cit.*, 175.

⁹³ *ST-II*, 385.

⁹⁴ *JGM*, 284.

⁹⁵ Herbert Neie, *The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1979), 73.

⁹⁶ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 174.

⁹⁷ In the history of christology there are different concepts of the mode of God's presence in Jesus: the presence of the Spirit, God's substantial presence, Jesus as the mediator between God and man, God's presence as a mere appearance, and God's revelatory presence. Pannenberg understands God's presence in Jesus as revelational. Unlike a mere appearance, revelational presence includes an essential identity of Jesus with God, which is expressed by the definition of “revelation” as self-revelation, as see Hegel, Marheineke, and Barth (*CD*, I/1, 362f.). This identity, however, is to be understood from the perspective of the functional unity of Jesus with God, which was prominent in the transmission of the christological titles in primitive Christianity. The concept of the revelatory unity of Jesus with God corresponds to the Scriptural traditions which state God's self-disclosure in history (“The Revelation of God in Jesus”, *Theology as History*, 102-109). The following three steps lead materially from the concept of self-revelation to the knowledge of Jesus' divinity: (1) The Christ event is God's revelation as a prolepsis of the End. (2) The concept of self-revelation implies that there can be only a single revelation. (3) The concept of self-revelation requires the “revealer” and the

whatever attributes one may care to bestow upon God's Son."⁹⁸ This subject is *the concrete man Jesus* who is substantially God.⁹⁹ The doctrine of the true divinity and the true humanity of Jesus describes this man Jesus from different points of view.¹⁰⁰ As Galloway observes, this understanding is in keeping with Lutheran tradition. "The finite, historic man is conceived as capable of unbroken identity with the eternal Son of God so that there is no divine remainder which is not included in the identity of Jesus."¹⁰¹ Thus the problem of Jesus' unity with God is concerned with how the eternal divinity of the Son can be related to *the particularity of Jesus' authentic humanity*.

Pannenberg's emphasis on the personal unity of Jesus with God is a remarkable insight. Within the intertrinitarian thought, the persons of the trinitarian God participate in one another in eternity. If the event of Jesus Christ is the historical embodiment of this trinitarian personal communion, the nature of God's engagement with humanity in the event of Jesus Christ is personal.¹⁰² Jesus as a person is united with God, thus being a unique self-revelation of God in the world. Jesus as a person reconciles the world to God.

"content of revelation" to be identical. Thus if Jesus is God's self-revelation, then he belongs to the definition of God himself and thus to God's essence, to his divinity. Other modes of God's presence in Jesus are only aspects of this revelatory unity of Jesus with God. Pannenberg deals with this theme in *JGM*, 116-33. For a brief summary of Pannenberg's concept of Jesus' revelational unity with God, see Tupper, *op. cit.*, 167-69.

Pannenberg further clarifies the character of Jesus' revelatory unity with God in connection to the problems of adoption, the virgin birth, the incarnation, and the Trinity, see *JGM*, 133-68. For the problems of adoption and the virgin birth, see the sub-section on "The Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead" in chapter three. For the problems of the incarnation and the Trinity adoption, *vide infra* the section on "Jesus' Self-differentiation from the Father as the Inner Basis of His Divine Sonship". See also the section on "The Eternal Sonship of Jesus" in chapter three.

⁹⁸ Galloway, *op. cit.*, 128.

⁹⁹ *JGM*, 283.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹⁰¹ Galloway, *op. cit.*, 128.

¹⁰² Newlands, *op. cit.*, 298.

Hence, the humanity of Jesus and his divinity are not to be perceived only in terms of a metaphysical synthesis of disparate substances or natures.

The concept of Jesus' personal unity with God forces Pannenberg to criticise in line with Apollinaris of Laodicea and Schleiermacher the Chalcedonian formulation. A single person cannot participate in two completely different natures, and two independently existing essences cannot form a single whole. Therefore the formulation, which conceives the unification of originally independently existing divine and human natures into a single individual in whom both natures nonetheless remain distinct,¹⁰³ inevitably leads to an impasse from which there is no escape.¹⁰⁴

This dilemma is, in his view, similarly insoluble for Calvin's christology. A clarification of this requires a brief exploration of Calvin's doctrine of the unity of the two natures.

As far as two natures are concerned, Calvin adopts fully the tradition of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. He first emphasises that two natures are required for soteriological reasons. He writes, "What the Mediator was to accomplish was no common thing. His task was so to restore us to God's grace as to make of the children of men, children of God; of the heirs of Gehenna, heirs of the Heavenly Kingdom. Who could have done this had not the self-same Son of God become the Son of man, and had not so taken what was ours as to impart what was his to us, and to make what was his by nature ours by grace?"¹⁰⁵

Calvin affirms the full divinity of Christ. The Mediator sent by the Father is the eternal Son residing in and sharing the essence of God.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Cf. Ps.-Athanasius C. *Apoll.* 1.2. (PG, 26, 1096); Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 332ff., cited in *ST-II*, 385. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1963), § 96.1. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 175.

¹⁰⁴ *JGM*, 287. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 175-76. Pannenberg argues this point by criticising the three stages in the two-nature problem: (1) the heretic Nestorian concept of the dualistic Christ (*prosōpon*) and Monophysite view of Jesus' humanity as entirely absorbed by his divinity; (2) the *communicatio idiomatum*; (3) the self-emptying of the Logos in the incarnation. See *JGM*, 290-323.

¹⁰⁵ *Inst.* II.xii.2.

¹⁰⁶ *Inst.* I.xiii.16; *Calvin's Commentary on Phil.* 2.6.

Against Arius, Sabellius, and Servetus, Calvin maintains that Christ is fully God, not only in nature, but also in appearance. Calvin also believes in the full humanity of Christ. Christ the Son of God “has assumed the true substance of human flesh.”¹⁰⁷

The two natures, for Calvin, are hypostatically united in a single person.¹⁰⁸ In this conception of union, the integrity of Christ’s divinity is not dependent on his humanity even in the smallest degree. Christ preserves his divine properties even in the state of humiliation because they are of his eternal and immutable divinity itself. Christ just concealed his divinity in the state of exinanition. Christ revealed it only in a modified manner, so far as was needful for the office of the Mediator. This forces Calvin to follow the fifth century school of Antioch in restricting the exchange to the relation of the two natures (*communicatio idiomatum*), although he emphatically confirms the unity of the natures. In particular, the distinctive activities of the natures are seen to be referred to the person as the acting subject.¹ Calvin says thus, “Although in unity of person he was God and man together, it does not therefore follow that all that belonged to the divinity was communicated to the human nature, but that so far as was needed for our salvation the Son of God kept his divine power as though hidden.”¹⁰⁹ For Calvin the humanity was not capable of containing the divinity. At the same time, the divinity did not divest itself of its divine glory. If it did, it would then no longer be the divine nature. “God the Son did not deprive himself of any of His divine attributes even in becoming incarnate.”¹¹⁰ Calvin says, “When it is said that the Word was made flesh, we must not understand it as if he were . . . changed into flesh, but that he made choice of the virgin’s womb as a temple in which he might dwell.”¹¹¹ Christ, in Calvin’s view, did not cease to be fully the Son of God in our human condition in Jesus. Although he united his infinite essence with human nature, nevertheless Christ’s deity was never “confined within the narrow prison of an earthly body.”¹¹² This is called the *extra-calvinisticum*.

Calvin does not conceive of the reality of the humanity of Christ, essential for the work of reconciliation, in isolation from the divinity. The nature of his union with God is rather simultaneously emphasised. This is

¹⁰⁷ *Inst*, II.xiii.

¹⁰⁸ For this reason, Calvin rejects Nestorius’ assertion of the incarnation as outward appearance, and criticises the error of Eutyches according to whom the unity is preserved to destroy both natures. Such a fusion of the two natures, in Calvin’s view, results in the madness that both the true humanity and the true divinity of Christ would be threatened, thereby our redemption being jeopardised. At the same time Calvin sharply opposes Servetus who would mix some divine and some human elements leading to rejecting the unity. See *Inst*, II.xiv.

¹⁰⁹ *Calvin’s Commentary on Luke* 2.40.

¹¹⁰ R. S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953), 14f.

¹¹¹ *Calvin’s Sermon on Luke* 1.39-44. Cf. *Inst*, II.xiii.4.

¹¹² *Inst*, II.xiii.4.

because the human nature has value only by its union with the divine nature. Calvin says, "Since neither as God alone could he fell death, nor as man alone could he overcome it, he coupled human nature with divine that to atone for sin he might submit the weakness of the one to death; and that, wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, he might win victory for us."¹¹³

The unity of the two natures in a single person is not meant to hinder the two natures from remaining distinct. Each of them rather retains its distinctive nature.¹¹⁴ Calvin does not admit therefore to any suggestion of an interpenetration of one nature by the other because it could only mean the interchange of each nature into the other. According to Wendel, Barth evaluates this as Calvin's originality.¹¹⁵

Calvin takes as his starting point the eternal unity of the Father and the Son, and then moves from this unity to his manifestation as a man in the incarnation. The crucial problem of this incarnational doctrine, in Pannenberg's view, lies in the "two" natures, not "nature". It portrays the incarnation as the synthesis of human and divine natures in a single person.¹¹⁶ But, Pannenberg insists, the unity of Jesus with God can be perceived by humans only *via* the *human* appearance of the man Jesus.¹¹⁷ As the particular man, Jesus is God, rather than as a unification of two substances.¹¹⁸ This does not mean that the basis of this unity resides in Jesus' humanity. He, following the incarnational doctrine, admits that the event of the incarnation was initiated by God.

Furthermore, for Pannenberg the human reality of Jesus is not limited to his conception and birth, from which it begins, but is related to the whole

¹¹³ *Inst.*, II.xii.3.

¹¹⁴ *Inst.*, II.xiv.2.

¹¹⁵ K. Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, 3rd edition, I/2 (Zollikon, 1945), 27; cited in F. Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (Glasgow: Collins, 1976), 219.

¹¹⁶ *JGM*, 323. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 176.

¹¹⁷ *AC*, 62. *ST-II*, Cf. 325-26.

life of Jesus. Galloway correctly indicates that the unity of Jesus with the eternal Son was not some ghostly, metaphysical transaction, but took place in the birth, earthly activity, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.¹¹⁹ Thus, "The union of the Logos with this humanity continued throughout the whole of the earthly history of Jesus."¹²⁰ However, the incarnational doctrine conceives the incarnation as having been completed with the conception and birth of Jesus, and thus does not provide "the basis of the confession to Jesus' divinity in the historical particularity of his human activity itself."¹²¹ In his relating of the personal unity of Jesus with God to the whole history of Jesus, rather than only to his birth, Pannenberg's view is commendable. "Jesus in himself" is not separated from "Jesus for us". This implies that the incarnation is not just a prerequisite for Jesus' saving work, but is dynamically interrelated to it. If his salvific action is not limited to the cross, but related to his whole life, the personal unity of Jesus with God encompasses his whole life. But this does not exclude the decisive and unique character of the incarnation of the Son in his birth, nor does it mean that the incarnation is in the process of being made perfect.

For Barth the unity of the two natures in the person of Jesus consists only in the "event" of that humble condescension which takes on and determines the humanity of Jesus, thereby humanity in general. Pannenberg agrees with Barth that God, by his action of condescension, respects man's particularity and elects him to commune with himself, and Jesus as the humble

¹¹⁸ *JGM*, 283.

¹¹⁹ Galloway, *op. cit.*, 102. Cf. *AC*, 62.

¹²⁰ *ST-II*, 383; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 427.

¹²¹ *JGM*, 292.

man to a certain extent participates in God's own action of humility. But such functional communion cannot be identified with the personal unity of God and man in Christ.¹²² In Barth's view, God sought communion with sinful man without ceasing to be God and without self-contradiction. He chooses condescension. He chooses humiliation, humbleness, and obedience. This implies that the one true God is identical with the humiliated, humble, obedient man, Jesus of Nazareth.¹²³ However, Pannenberg criticises this view:

On what basis does theology accept responsibility for such assertions? How can the presence of the one true God in Jesus of Nazareth be expressed in such a way that this man at the same time remains understandable in his humanity and one with God in the totality of his existence? The humble course of the life of this man is surely not as such that of God.¹²⁴

Barth expresses the "complete determination of Christ's human nature in terms of *the communicatio gratiarum*."¹²⁵ The *enhypostasia* of the human nature of Jesus Christ in the Logos is "the essence and root of the whole of the divine grace to him". That is event and not state.¹²⁶ Pannenberg, however, denounces this:

If without reference to this event there is still a separate condition of the divine and the human natures taken by themselves, this formula moves along the lines of the disjunction christology. Barth's language of "event", corresponding to the category of the "moment"

¹²² *Ibid.*, 314.

¹²³ *CD*, IV/1, 217.

¹²⁴ *JGM*, 313.

¹²⁵ *CD*, IV/1, 91-115.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

and similar formulations in his commentary on Romans, must in fact be understood so punctualistically in the Prolegomena to the *Church Dogmatics*. If, however, as now seems to be the case, the meaning of “event” is identical with “the life of Jesus Christ” and thus includes a continuous temporal duration (p. 110), then it is not clear where the difference between Barth’s position and the unification christology of the orthodox Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum* according to the *genus maiestaticum* lies. Barth’s emphasis on the “dynamic” character of the divine-human unity in Christ does not overcome the dilemma of the orthodox doctrine of the communication of attributes; it avoids it.¹²⁷

While Calvin and Barth understand the unity of Jesus with the eternal Son in the form of the Logos combined with humanness, Pannenberg contends that the deity of the eternal Son is not an addition to the human reality of Jesus. Conversely, the assuming of human existence by the eternal Son is not the adding of a nature that is alien to his deity, but the self-created medium of fulfilling his eternal sonship.¹²⁸ Only through his personal unity with God Jesus is both truly man and truly God.¹²⁹ This, according to Tupper, is an innovative conception of Jesus’ unity with God as a unity of essence because the deity of Jesus is affirmed but does not affect the authenticity of his humanity.¹³⁰ The mutual indwelling of the Son in the human life of Jesus on the one side, and of his humanity and lowliness in the deity of the Son on the other, takes place in his history.¹³¹ The divinity of Jesus is dialectically identical with his

¹²⁷ *JGM*, 302-03. Page number is Barth’s *CD*, IV/2.

¹²⁸ *ST-II*, 325.

¹²⁹ See *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 357-8; *JGM*, 324. This point is correctly indicated by Neie (*op. cit.*, 73) and Tupper (*op. cit.*, 176).

¹³⁰ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 295.

¹³¹ *ST-II*, 387.

humanity.¹³² This does not repudiate but reaffirms the Scriptural christological tradition.

Although it is convincing, Pannenberg's concept of the personal unity of Jesus with God still does not eliminate the fundamental tension between the difference and unity of the two natures. The distinction between the eternal Sonship and his human existence that began at a particular point in time must inescapably be preserved within the unity in a real and ontological sense.¹³³ But this is inconsistent with his understanding that the *vere deus* and the *vere homo* describes the same person, the man Jesus of Nazareth. Pannenberg's primary concern is certainly about the tension which exists in the perception of the divinity and the humanity of Jesus. The tension for him contains the whole mystery of the Kingdom of God, and thus will be finally resolved only in the resurrection of the dead.

2.2.2. JESUS' SELF-UNDERSTANDING

If Jesus' unity with God is personal in character and thus includes the whole of his concrete life, it must be reflected in Jesus' self-consciousness. A man's knowledge of himself is crucial for the unity of personality. Pannenberg accurately understands that this unity cannot take place entirely outside Jesus' consciousness.¹³⁴ The latter is constitutive for the self. Thus, if the self-understanding of the pre-Easter Jesus were not related to his unity with God, he would not be identical with himself and to *that extent* not one with God.

¹³² Schwöbel, *op. cit.*, vol. I, 261-62.

¹³³ *JGM*, 325.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 326.

Therefore, the question of Jesus' self-awareness of his unity with God is inescapable for the establishment of his identity as the Son.

Pannenberg maintains in line with the more critical New Testament research that the christological titles attributed to Jesus' self-knowledge are entirely the invention of post-Easter christology.¹³⁵ His consciousness of a peculiar unity with God is not directly accessible through the christological titles, but, as H. Conzelmann puts it, "only indirectly",¹³⁶ namely, through the implications of Jesus' activity and destiny.

What is the character of Jesus' self-awareness? This question, as Neie indicates it, is concerned with the type of Jesus' self-knowledge and its extent, that is, whether it was complete from the beginning, or in a process of growth toward completion or some state of incompleteness.¹³⁷ It is to be noted here that man's "authentic selfhood about which he inquires in the openness of his existence is not yet ultimately decided but is always still open to decision."¹³⁸ This forces him to repudiate any definite knowledge of Jesus that he is God, since such knowledge does not leave any room for openness.

For Karl Rahner general human consciousness is differentiated from objective knowledge, and thus self-consciousness does not necessarily mean objective self-knowledge.¹³⁹ Man has an "*a priori*, nonobjective knowledge about oneself as a fundamental given of the spiritual subject in which it is by itself and simultaneously aware of its transcendental reference to the totality of

¹³⁵ Cf. Galloway, *op. cit.*, 99; Neie, *op. cit.*, 74; Tupper, *op. cit.*, 177.

¹³⁶ H. Conzelmann, *RGG*, III (3rd edition), 632, cited in *JGM*, 328.

¹³⁷ Neie, *op. cit.*, 74.

¹³⁸ *JGM*, 330.

¹³⁹ Karl Rahner, "Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-consciousness of Christ", *Theological Investigations*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, vol. V (Helicon Press, 1966), 193-215.

possible objects of knowledge and freedom.”¹⁴⁰ This fundamental given constitutes the “immediacy of consciousness of Jesus to God” which is “unthematic, unreflexive, perhaps never reflected, knowledge about oneself”.¹⁴¹ That this fundamental given is essentially relatedness to God is not unique for Jesus, but universal.¹⁴² The unification of the Logos with the human nature in Jesus is “the most radical actualisation of human spirit generally.”¹⁴³ Jesus’ objective perception of his true self is to be conceived as a personal and intellectual history of self-interpretation.¹⁴⁴

In reaction to Rahner, Pannenberg argues that the fundamental given can never be conscious without the mediation of an “objective” content of consciousness and that the process of self-interpretation is always interwoven with the individual’s social environment. For Jesus this environment was the Jewish religious tradition. Thus its elements which helped Jesus to clarify his fundamental given are crucial for the development of his self-knowledge. “It is certain that Jesus’ self-consciousness was decisively stamped by his message of the nearness of God and his Kingdom.”¹⁴⁵ This is acceptable since the concept of the personal unity of Jesus with God and the doctrine of the incarnation justify the involvement of Jesus’ historical context in Jesus’ self-knowledge.

Pannenberg is also correct to shift the reference of Jesus’ self-awareness from the Logos to the One whom he called Father. This leads

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 200f.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 236-37.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 202f.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

Hanson to accuse Pannenberg of constructing his entire christology on Jesus' filial self-consciousness.¹⁴⁶ This criticism is unwarranted. If Jesus' unity is a personal unity, only Jesus' relationship to the Father constitutes his concrete historical reality. At the same time, this shift makes it possible for christology to be free from being totally dependent upon either the rediscovery of Jesus' self-consciousness or upon establishing the credibility of the christological assertions of the primitive Christianity as reflections of Jesus' self-awareness.¹⁴⁷

Furthermore, the path "from below" conceives Jesus' self-consciousness as temporal, rather than something that Jesus "in the ground of his existence had always known about himself",¹⁴⁸ since man's self-awareness is always open to a yet unknown future fulfilment. Jesus' non-objective immediacy to God as the presupposition for his historical activity was not only historically conditioned but directed toward a still incomplete future.¹⁴⁹ Jesus allowed God and his future to determine the validity of his own activity. Jesus' lack of knowledge includes also knowledge of his own person. It was precisely this lack of complete self-knowledge that required his ultimate dedication to the God of the eschatological future, constituting thereby *the condition of Jesus' unity with God*.¹⁵⁰ In his self-consciousness, Pannenberg reasons,

¹⁴⁵ JGM, 332.

¹⁴⁶ Anthony T. Hanson, "Alan Richardson and His Critics in the Area of Hermeneutics", *Theology and Change*, ed. Ronald H. Preston (London: SCM Press, 1975), 28-30.

¹⁴⁷ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 135.

¹⁴⁸ JGM, 241. Italics added.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 332.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 334.

Jesus knew himself functionally to be one with God's will in pre-actualising the future full reality of the Kingdom of God and thus to be one with God himself, namely, in the function of his message and his entire activity determined by his message, which made up his public existence.¹⁵¹

However, this view is valid only when the noetical and ontological primacy of the future is justified, according to which all beings and truths can be seen only in the sense of being an anticipation of what occurs at the end of history.¹⁵² But it can be contended that, if Jesus' dedication to the Father is the historical manifestation of the eternal trinitarian communion of God, it has already not only established but also revealed his eternal sonship. Is it inconceivable that this once-for-all nature is inconsistent with Jesus' self-awareness? This problem enables one to see that the reference to the future is certainly crucial for Jesus' self-awareness but it is so as the consummation of the all-sufficient self-understanding, which is not temporal. Jesus' dedication to the Father is an outcome of the trinitarian love, not of his lack of knowledge.

2.2.3. JESUS' INDIRECT IDENTITY WITH THE SON

For the classical doctrine of the unity of Jesus with God the eternal Logos or Son is conceived as having taken up the humanity of Jesus. As a result, the credibility of Jesus as a man is vulnerable. Pannenberg, in keeping with St. Augustine, perceives personality as relational in its essential nature. It "is not constituted from within itself but constituted by the relation in which it

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

stands to what is beyond itself.¹⁵³ If this view is accurate, it can be asserted with Pannenberg that the person of Jesus can be understood in his relationship to God the Father. The record of Jesus' communion with God does not imply his identity with a divine Son of God, but his communion with the Father.¹⁵⁴

This personal concept leads Pannenberg to maintain an *indirect* identity of Jesus with the eternal Son of God,¹⁵⁵ as indicated by Tupper¹⁵⁶ and Neie.¹⁵⁷ Jesus did not identify himself with the Logos. Rather, it is precisely in his personal unity with the Father in his human historical existence that Jesus is identified as the eternal Son of the eternal Father. Jesus' relation to the Father is direct and yet his relationship to the eternal Son is indirect, to be arrived at by way of a *detour*, namely, by way of his relation to the Father.

The Neo-Chalcedonian christology which is based on the principle of incarnation and its corollary of descent-ascent, conceives the unity of Jesus with the eternal Son of God in terms of the *enhypostasis* of Jesus in the Logos. The whole existence of Jesus as a man is entirely dependent upon the person of the Son, the Logos.¹⁵⁸ But, in Pannenberg's view, only in his human dependence upon the Father is Jesus identical with the Son.

¹⁵² See the section on "Other Theological and Philosophical Influences" in chapter one. Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 119.

¹⁵³ Galloway, *op. cit.*, 131.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁵⁵ See JGM, 324-49; ST-II, 384-89.

¹⁵⁶ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 178-79, 295.

¹⁵⁷ Neie, *op. cit.*, 77.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. JGM, 339.

The unity of God and man in him is much more intensive than the concept of a synthesis can express. Nor does something new, a third thing, result from a mixture of the two. Nor is the humanity absorbed in divinity so that it disappears. Precisely *in* his particular humanity Jesus is the Son of God. Thereby not only his divine Sonship constitutes the particularity of this man, but above all the converse is true, that the uniqueness of Jesus' humanity in his path of dedication to the Father has established the confession of Jesus as the Son of God.¹⁵⁹

The persuasiveness of Pannenberg's concept of Jesus' unity with the eternal Son in terms of his relationship to the Father is not free from criticism. This concept does not do justice to the true humanity of Jesus as well as his true divinity.¹⁶⁰ It perceives the unity of Jesus with the eternal Son only indirectly in terms of his communion with the Father. Jesus' experience is thus foundational for the unity. But this fails to conceive that Jesus Christ is *truly and ontologically* both the uncreated Son of God and the man born in Nazareth. Jesus as the *true and ontological* Son of God teaches and acts. Thus his teachings and deeds disclose his deity, as expressed by Henry.¹⁶¹ This identity is the basis of the experience of the man Jesus in relation to God as his Father.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 342.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Galloway, *op. cit.*, 130-31.

¹⁶¹ Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. II (Waco, TX: Word, 1976), 302, 308.

¹⁶² The discussion of this indirect unity of Jesus with the eternal Son continues throughout the next section and the sections on "The Eternal Sonship of Jesus" and on "The Universal Sonship of Jesus" in chapter three.

2.3. JESUS' SELF-DIFFERENTIATION FROM THE FATHER AS THE INNER BASIS OF HIS DIVINE SONSHIP

2.3.1. THE SELF-DIFFERENTIATION OF THE SON

For earlier studies of Pannenberg's concept of Jesus' unity with God, for instance, those of Galloway, Polk, Bradshaw, and Tupper, his resurrection from the dead establishes his identity as the Son of God because it is a prolepsis of his future essential unity with God.¹⁶³ But it can be argued that the cross as the expression of Jesus' self-distinction from the Father is the inner basis of his divine sonship.¹⁶⁴ This is confirmed by the Easter event.

Pannenberg's attempt to establish Jesus' identity as the Son on the basis of his dedication on the cross can be applauded. If Jesus' unity with God is a personal unity, this *unio personalis* rests internally and materially upon the unique relation of the man Jesus to the Father. Jesus' dedication to the Father in his whole life, especially his unreserved distinction from the Father on the cross is characteristic of this peculiar relationship and thus can be seen as the criterion by which his divine sonship is established. In this dedication Jesus reveals his personality as the Son.¹⁶⁵ As Pannenberg indicates, when the

¹⁶³ See Polk, *op. cit.*, 187-96; Galloway, *op. cit.*, 77-85, cf. 99-115; Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, 274-300; Tupper, *op. cit.*, 166-67, cf. 167-74.

¹⁶⁴ As Grenz correctly indicates, this is what in the "afterword" to his monograph Pannenberg suggests to do, namely, that the doctrine of Jesus' divinity is not completed with the end of part I but only in part III, with the discussion of the mediation of the deity of Jesus as the Son through his relationship to the Father. Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 243 (n. 41).

¹⁶⁵ *JGM*, 342, 334-49. W. Pannenberg, "The God of Hope", *BQiT*-II, 249. Cf. *ST*-II, 325, 363. Bradshaw explains the relationship between the unity of Jesus with God and Jesus' self-surrender, "God takes suffering and the anguish of the historical process into his essential being by elevating Jesus to be the Son (W. Pannenberg, *Grundfragen Systematischer Theologie*, Band II (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 125-26). God the Father, in his freedom and love conveys into finitude individuality and particularity, and in God the Son this individual, particular finite being, in its estrangement, yields itself totally back to its true origin. In this supreme self-abandonment God overcomes the opposition of negativity and

expressions "Father" and "Son" are strictly applied to the relation to God of the man Jesus, the word "Father" means the God of Jesus and the word "Son" designates Jesus primarily in his relation to God, a relation of obedience, mission, and trust. "Father" and "Son" language, which is figurative, is justified because Jesus' relation to the God of Israel as his "Father" belongs to the essence of this God himself, just as does the person of Jesus of Nazareth, if God is revealed in Jesus. Therefore, the differentiation of the historical Jesus from God is inherent in the revelation of the essence of God himself.¹⁶⁶ This is the point on which Tupper strongly criticises Pannenberg's view.¹⁶⁷

Further, Pannenberg's attempt is justified by the concept of the trinitarian mutual self-distinction as the mode of the triune inner life of God. Within this intertrinitarian perspective Jesus by his extreme dedication to the Father on the cross is established as the Son. It can be asserted with Pannenberg that the entire earthly life and activity of Jesus were his dedication to God and to the will of God. Jesus' obedience to the vocation given by the Father manifested that he differentiated himself as a mere man from the Father.¹⁶⁸ First, he did not claim any dignity for his own person but for the

takes finite being to himself integrally. In this event finitude, in the unique man Jesus, transcends itself in the Spirit in an ultimate way." See Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, 286-87. Cf. Neie, *op. cit.*, 77-78.

¹⁶⁶ *JGM*, 159-60. This essential but distinctive unity of the Son with Father results from the personal unity of Jesus with God. This unity constitutes the foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity, *ibid.*, 160-68. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 174.

¹⁶⁷ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 299-300.

¹⁶⁸ *ST-II*, 372. Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 147, 120. Pannenberg expresses this concept of vocation hardly in his monograph, but in his *Systematic Theology*.

Father's. If he has a sense of sonship in relation to God,¹⁶⁹ this is a reflection of what he says about God as Father.¹⁷⁰ Galloway expresses it as follows,

Jesus prayed to God as his Father. He trusted him, loved him, adored him, obeyed him. Even if Jesus never actually thought of himself as 'Son of God' – even if the application of that title to Jesus is entirely the invention of post-Easter christology –there can be little doubt that Jesus did experience a peculiarly intimate filial relation to God.¹⁷¹

The exegetical ground for this is found in the Johannine saying, "The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing" (John 5:19).

Jesus also subjected himself to the claim of the future Lordship of the Father. Jesus as a creature of God subordinated himself to the imminence of God's Lordship that he proclaimed. Pannenberg says, "As he gave his life in service to the rule of God over his creatures – namely, to prepare the way for its acknowledgement – he is as man the Son of the eternal Father."¹⁷² Jesus' claim in his proclamation of the imminence of God's Lordship admittedly implies authority which belongs to that of God himself. Does this conflict with Jesus' self-differentiation from the Father? Pannenberg is correct to maintain that Jesus claimed that authority, "not for his own person, but for the future of God that he proclaimed."¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ James D. G. Dunn, "Jesus' Sense of Sonship" *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM Press, 1980), 22-33, esp. 26ff.

¹⁷⁰ For Pannenberg the term "Son" denotes the proper relation to the Father, *AC*, 62. *ST-II*, 372.

¹⁷¹ Galloway, *op. cit.*, 99-100.

¹⁷² *ST-II*, 373.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

Jesus' crucifixion, resulting from the ambiguity evoked by his message, is the ultimate point of his self-differentiation from the Father and thus the climax of his obedience to his vocation. Pannenberg considers that Jesus' death exposed his finitude as distinct from his alleged equality with God (Matt. 27:40-43). In the light of Jesus' resurrection, he has reserved nothing for himself "both in his mission and his unheard-of claim, but precisely also in his fate on the cross, which seemed to exclude him from all community with the God of Israel and with men."¹⁷⁴ The dedication to the point of crucifixion was the personal identification of the man Jesus with the God of his message. "Just as the one completely obedient to the Father, he is the revealer of God's divinity and thus himself belongs inseparably to the essence of God."¹⁷⁵ This is convincing when within the concept of the unity of the trinitarian immanent and economic relations the self-distinction of the eternal Son to the Father must be mediated in human history. This implies that Jesus' identity as the Son is to be established on the basis of Jesus' historical obedience to the Father.

Ritschl also emphasises the reality of Jesus' ethical *Berufsgehorsam* to the will of God. But Pannenberg goes beyond Ritschl in the following two points. First, Pannenberg correctly conceives the historical *Berustreue* of Jesus from the intertrinitarian perspective. Jesus by his self-distinction from the Father participates in the essence of God. Such personal unity is at the same time essential unity. One can infer two reasons for this. The first one is that to exist in a state of dedication is the essence of the person itself. Pannenberg

¹⁷⁴ *JGM*, 335.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 336.

approvingly cites Hegel's statement that it is "the character of the person . . . to supersede its isolation, its separatedness" through dedication. "In friendship and love I give up my abstract personality and win thereby concrete personality. The truth of personality is just this, to win it through this submerging, being submerged in the other."¹⁷⁶ The other reason is:

To be submerged in the "Thou" means at the same time, however, participation in his being. Thus the divinity of Jesus as Son is mediated, established through his dedication to the Father. In the execution of this dedication, Jesus is the Son. Thus he shows himself identical with the correlate Son already implied in the understanding of God as the Father, the Son whose characteristic it is not to exist on the basis of his own resources but wholly from the Father. The mutual dedication of Father and Son to one another which constitutes the Trinitarian unity of God also establishes thereby first of all the true divinity of the Son.¹⁷⁷

This essential unity of Jesus with God through personal unity does not exclude personal distinctiveness. This is because "An 'essence' common to both emerges in the course of their interaction."¹⁷⁸ These two reasons allow Pannenberg to see that the identity of Jesus with the divine Son is indirectly established through the particular dedication of the man Jesus to the Father. This forces critics to attack his conception of Jesus' self-dedication to the Father as the basis of his deity as an inadequate explanation of the uniqueness of Jesus. Does a human self-differentiation from the Father constitute deity? If

¹⁷⁶ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. E. B. Speirs, trans. E. B. Speirs and J. Burden Sanderson, vol. III (New York: The Humanities Press, 1962), 24f.

¹⁷⁷ *JGM*, 336.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

a human lives an obedient life to God, can he thereby be divine?¹⁷⁹ These questions lead to the second point of difference from Ritschl's position.

Unlike Ritschl, Pannenberg interrelates Jesus' earthly *Berufsghehorsam* with the Easter event. Through this event God justifies the uniqueness of Jesus' earthly dedication to the Father, namely, obedience to his mission.¹⁸⁰ In this way the cross as Jesus' extreme dedication to the Father is dependent upon the resurrection, and vice versa, as Neie observes.¹⁸¹ This confirmation enables Pannenberg to overcome the problem of the difference between Jesus and the rest of humanity.¹⁸² It also refutes the criticism that his view of human participation in the life of the Son – the perfect obedience to God – places human beings on the ontological level of the divine Son, thereby eradicating all distinctions between humanity and deity.¹⁸³

To be sure, Pannenberg is correct to see Jesus' dedication to the Father as the inner basis of his divine sonship in its interconnectedness with his resurrection. Nonetheless, his concept of the retroactive confirmation by the Easter event is subject to criticisms. It presents a logical inconsistency. For him, the trinitarian reciprocal self-distinction is not only the mode of the triune inner life of God but also the way by which the triune God discloses himself.

¹⁷⁹ For instance, Roger E. Olson, "The Human Self-realisation of God: Hegelian Elements in Pannenberg's Christology", *Perspective in Religious Studies* 13 (1986): 222. Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 137.

¹⁸⁰ See the sub-section on "The Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead" in chapter three.

¹⁸¹ For the mutual dependence of the noetical and ontological foundation of Jesus' divine sonship, see Neie, *op. cit.*, 80-85.

¹⁸² As Grenz rightly indicates, the concepts of sin and grace explain Pannenberg's view of this difference. Humans participate with Jesus in the destiny of humanity, namely, the distinction from the Father. Yet one difference remains. "Their inclusion comes as the gracious gift of God to those who were previously characterised by failure to actualise that destiny. Jesus, in contrast, is the paradigm of the one fully faithful to his divinely given vocation." See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 138.

¹⁸³ Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 137-38.

Within this perspective Jesus by his dedication to the Father is established as the Son and reveals the eternal Fatherhood of God and thus his eternal correlate of the deity of the Father.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, it fails to explain that the divine sonship of Jesus is in tension noetically and ontologically until the resurrection. This is because Jesus' dedication to the Father is retroactively decided only by the Easter event.

Because of these problems one can argue against Pannenberg that the pre-Easter history of Jesus itself, if it is the history of Jesus' self-distinction from the Father, constitutes *noetically and ontologically* his divine sonship. Within the idea of the unity of the immanent and economic trinitarian relations, Jesus' earthly dedication to the Father is the historical embodiment of his eternal Sonship. Thus the historical reality of Jesus' self-distinction from the Father itself reveals and establishes his essential unity with God. Jesus by his dedication to the Father in his entire life is the Son even before the resurrection. Jesus was already conscious of this identity, and claimed it in his proclamation of God's Kingdom. Since he was the Son, he could be perfectly obedient to the Father and to his mission to the point of death. Jesus was the Son in his pre-Easter history, and thus rose from the dead. This is finally affirmed by God in Jesus' resurrection which is one of the Christ events. The interconnectedness between the pre-Easter dedication of Jesus and his resurrection presupposes this.

It can be asserted with Pannenberg that the self-distinction of Jesus from the Father is the self-humbling and *kenosis* of the eternal Son along the lines of Philp. 2:6-11. While the former refers to the earthly obedience of

¹⁸⁴ *Systematische Theologie*, vol. I, 337.

Jesus to the Father, the latter connotes the laying down by the pre-existent of the divine equality in order to become fully human. This is justified by the concept of the trinitarian reciprocal self-distinction as the immanent and economic trinitarian relations. James Dunn has emphasised Jesus' earthly path of obedience without relating it to his pre-existence. Unlike the first Adam, Jesus did not have to grasp at the divine equality with God, but humbled himself to the point of crucifixion in obedience to God.¹⁸⁵ But one can argue that the references to Jesus' earthly path include the idea of pre-existence. The earthly life of Jesus is the historical manifestation of the pre-existent one who is with the Father from all eternity. Pannenberg correctly reasons with Hofius¹⁸⁶ that the self-emptying denotes "the giving up of a life of equality with God to death, so that in part at least it coincides with the result of self-humbling to the obedience of the passion."¹⁸⁷ The Crucified by his obedience to the Father is exalted to be the pre-existent one. This exaltation implies that the earthly obedience of Jesus was already that of the pre-existent Son of God.¹⁸⁸ Hence it can be asserted with O. Cullmann and Pannenberg that the self-humbling and *kenosis* of the eternal Son denote the same thing, namely, the course of Jesus to his passion and suffering on the cross.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ This corresponds to the Pauline view of the second Adam's obedience to God vis-à-vis the disobedience of the first Adam (Rom. 5:12ff.). Whereas Cullmann finds an implication of preexistence in the parallel with Adam, (*Christology*, 174ff.), Dunn understands the text to be in antithesis to the fall of Adam in Gen. 3 (*Christology in the Making*, 114-21). For Dunn the divine form of life of which Jesus emptied himself corresponds to the divine likeness in which Adam was created, *Christology in the Making*, 311.

¹⁸⁶ O. Hofius interprets 2:7c-8c to signify how far the preexistent, renouncing his riches, was willing to become poor and chose an existence in weakness and dishonour, *Der Christushymnus Phil. 2:6-11* (Tübingen, 1976), 63, cited in *ST-II*, 376.

¹⁸⁷ *ST-II*, 375-76.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 376-77.

¹⁸⁹ Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A. M. Hall (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), 177ff. *ST-II*, 375.

One agrees with Pannenberg that the path of Jesus' obedience to God leads to the appearing of the eternal Son as a human being. Within the intertrinitarian thought, the self-differentiation of Jesus from the Father is the relation of the eternal Son to the Father. This self-distinction is the basis of all creaturely existence in its distinction from God and thus that of the human life of Jesus. Just as the self-emptying of the eternal Son in his self-distinction from the Father resulted in the incarnation, the self-humbling of Jesus in obedience to his sending by the Father is the historical form of the eternal Son in his earthly life.¹⁹⁰

The Lutheran tradition interpreted the self-emptying of the divine Logos at the incarnation as a partial or temporary renouncing of the possession or use of certain divine attributes.¹⁹¹ The nineteenth-century kenoticists, especially Gottfried Thomasius (1802-75) maintained that in the incarnation the second person of the Trinity deliberately set aside divine attributes, so that, in the state of humiliation, he lived on earth within the limitations of humanity.¹⁹² Isaak A. Dorner (1809-84) argued that this kenotic christology compromised the immutability of God.¹⁹³ Barth is correct to argue that the *kenōsis* of Jesus Christ is not a temporary renunciation of his divine attributes

¹⁹⁰ ST-II, 377. See the section on "The Eternal Sonship of Jesus" in chapter three.

¹⁹¹ Pannenberg dealt with this theme in detail in *JGM*, 308ff.

¹⁹² Gottfried Thomasius developed this theory first in his *Beiträge zur kirchlichen Christologie* and then in his *Christi Person und Werk*. See D. D. Baillie, *God Was in Christ* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 94-95. See also Alistair E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology 1750-1990* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 79-80.

¹⁹³ Isaak August Dorner, "Über die richtige Fassung des dogmatischen Begriffs der Unversänderlichkeit Gottes" *Gesammelte Schriften aus dem Gebiet der systematischen Theologie* (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1883), 188-377, cited in *JGM*, 311. See McGrath, *op. cit.*, 80.

but the self-deprivation of his being in the form of God alone.¹⁹⁴ Jesus Christ in his self-emptying in no respect ceased as man to be the Son of God. He rather took it upon himself to be the Son of God 'in a way quite other than that which corresponds and belongs to his form as God', namely, to be the Son of God in the form of a servant, thereby concealing his divine glory from the world until it was revealed in his resurrection.¹⁹⁵ This view is shared by Pannenberg, namely that unless God is truly and totally in Christ, it is meaningless to say that the world was reconciled with God in him.¹⁹⁶ The self-emptying of the pre-existent is a relinquishment not of his divine essence, but simply of any equating of himself with the Father.¹⁹⁷ Within the intertrinitarian thought, the Son only by distinguishing the Father from himself expressed his divine sonship. The self-emptying is thus not a renunciation of his deity as the Son, but its activation, as Barth perceives.¹⁹⁸

How, then, can such self-emptying without renunciation of the possession of divine attributes be explained? Within the concept of the trinitarian life of God Barth relates the idea of the *kenōsis* to the obedience of the Son to the Father.¹⁹⁹ The basis for this relationship rests upon the God's eternal decree of election. The Son of God is not only the Elected but also the Rejected,²⁰⁰ who took upon himself sinful humanity.²⁰¹ It belongs to the deity of

¹⁹⁴ CD, IV/1, 183. See Herbert Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth: An Introduction* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1964), 81.

¹⁹⁵ CD, I/2, 36ff. II/1, 516f. IV/1, 180. Cf. Hartwell, *op. cit.*, 81.

¹⁹⁶ ST-II, 378.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 377.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. CD, IV/1, 129f., 177ff., 179ff.

¹⁹⁹ CD, IV/2, 36ff.

²⁰⁰ CD, II/2, 161ff.

²⁰¹ CD, IV/1, 173.

God that in his transcendence “he can be God and act as God in an exalted and also a lowly way.”²⁰² In reaction to this, Pannenberg maintains that “being actively present in his creatures, even in their lowliness, is not the same as so accepting the limitations of creaturely existence that they are really limitations of his own being.”²⁰³ The concept of the trinitarian mutual self-distinction as an aspect of the immanent trinitarian relationship justifies Pannenberg’s understanding that the Son, by his obedience to the Father as an expression of his *free* self-differentiation from the Father, lets the Father be the one God and thus became the origin of all that is distinct from God. Thereby he was disclosed as the Son in the finite form of creaturely existence. Thus Pannenberg has overcome the negative view of the connection between the thought of the *kenōsis* and the eternal uniqueness of the Son in his relation to the Father which was presented in his earlier works.²⁰⁴ It was then asserted that an ontological perception of the concept could not avoid restricting the deity of the Logos, or at least the participation of the assumed man in the deity.²⁰⁵

Within the intertrinitarian framework the self-emptying and self-humbling of the Son is to be understood in terms of the self-giving of the Son to the Father. The Son desires nothing for himself, but glorifies God in service to the Lordship of the Father. This is an expression of the Son’s love for God as his Father and for the world. Precisely in this way the Son reconciles humanity to God and brings it under his Lordship.

²⁰² *CD*, IV/1, 187.

²⁰³ *ST-II*, 378.

²⁰⁴ See *JGM*, 314ff.

²⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 319ff.

2.3.2. THE SON'S SELF-DIFFERENTIATION AS PROLEPSIS OF GOD'S LORDSHIP

If Jesus' dedication to the Father constitutes his divine sonship, this dedication is closely related to the Lordship of God over creation. Since the exercise of his Lordship is integral to the deity of God in Trinity, the triune God by the trinitarian mutual self-distinction achieves his Lordship. In this way the persons of the trinitarian God are united to one another. Within this intertrinitarian thought, if Jesus' subordination to the Father *on the cross* is the historical manifestation of the eternal trinitarian communion, it establishes the Lordship of God. Thus Jesus *is* the Son. From this standpoint, Pannenberg, following Luther, correctly relates the cross to God's Lordship. Jesus by his absolute dedication to the Father actualises the future Lordship of the Father.

It is to be noted here that Pannenberg understands this Lordship as eschatological in character, although it is present in his own activity.²⁰⁶ This is an outcome of his future-oriented thought according to which God's deity and Lordship will be realised only in the future, at the end of human history. While Christian tradition perceives God as an eternal being, Pannenberg conceives him in terms of the power of the future itself. Every event in which the future becomes finitely present must be understood as a contingent act of God who brings that finite reality into being by distinguishing it from his own future.

Earlier studies of Pannenberg's christology connect this future Lordship only to Jesus' resurrection. It is proleptically present in the event.²⁰⁷ This interpretation is based on *Grundzüge der Christologie*. This monograph

²⁰⁶ In his monograph Pannenberg argues that God's Lordship and thus the Lordship of the Son are eschatological in character, *ibid.*, 365-66.

certainly presents the coming Lordship of God as already begun in Jesus' resurrection. Thus, in the sense of participation in the Lordship of God "*Jesus is the eschatological ruler toward whom all things are, so that all things are also through him.*"²⁰⁸ But it can be argued that when one refers to his *Systematische Theologie*, which presents a distinctive aspect of his theological advance over earlier stage, one sees that Jesus by his extreme subordination to the Father anticipates the future Lordship of the Father.²⁰⁹ In this way Jesus is established as the Son, the proleptical person of the future deity of God which can be identified with the realisation of the Lordship of the Father.

One agrees with Pannenberg that the self-distinction of the Son from the Father corresponds to the self-distinction of the Father from the Son. This consists in the fact that the deity and Lordship of the Father are dependent upon the Son.²¹⁰ The Father reveals his eternal Fatherhood through the Son's fulfilment of his mission in service to his Lordship. Pannenberg considers the earthly path of Jesus' dedication to the Father to be constitutive for Godhead. The meaning of Jesus' crucifixion "is not to be developed only in its relevance to the Son, but also in relation to the Father."²¹¹ The cross as the climax of God's absence from the world is Jesus' suffering of God-forsakenness.²¹² In the light of the Easter event, on the one hand, the absence of the Father in the

²⁰⁷ See Polk, *op. cit.*, 187-96. Galloway, *op. cit.*, 99-115, 77-85. Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, 148-162, 274-300.

²⁰⁸ *JGM*, 365.

²⁰⁹ *ST-II*, 379.

²¹⁰ *Grundfragen Systematischer Theologie*, Band II (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 125. *ST-II*, 392. See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 122-23. See also Schwöbel, *op. cit.*, 2nd edition, 191.

²¹¹ "Postscript" to the 5th German Edition of *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 408, cited in Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, 286.

crucifixion is a sign of God's judgement on the world that had turned aside from the Father himself in the Son. On the other hand, it opens up the way of salvation for the world because through fellowship with him in his death humanity can hope for the new resurrection life. Therefore the divine absence in Jesus' suffering on the cross becomes a decisive moment in his becoming present for the world through the Son.

Furthermore, since his deity is not independent of the exercise of his Lordship, the Father has also entrusted his Lordship over all things in the world to the Son²¹³ until the Son will return the power to the Father.²¹⁴ Thus the "failure" of the Son on the cross would bring the power and Lordship of the Father into question. However, Jesus' resurrection demonstrates, Pannenberg contends, the cross to be the event in which the Son glorifies the Father in the world by bringing life to the world. It is thus itself a factor in actualising the Lordship of the Father.²¹⁵

The Son's obedience to the Father expands to the work of the Spirit. The Spirit brings believers, through the apostolic message, into the knowledge

²¹² As Grenz observes, this forms the context within which Pannenberg conceives of the goal of Jesus' mission, – the glorifying of the Father in the world by bringing creation into life, not death, *op. cit.*, 123.

²¹³ Schwöbel, *op. cit.*, 2nd edition, 191. For Pannenberg the Lordship of the Son is the crowning aspect of Jesus' unity with God. This Lordship includes the peculiar position of the Son in human history. Everything is predestined toward Jesus and he is predestined to be the head of humanity through reconciling it into sonship. This predestination involves the Lordship of the Son over creation. The creation of all things is mediated through the Son, which presupposes the Jewish future-oriented view of truth according to which the essence of a thing is decided only what becomes of it. If Jesus Christ is the prolepsis of the End at which God's eternal act of creation will be completed, he is the One through whom all things receive their essential nature. For more detail, see *JGM*, 365-97. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 183-85.

²¹⁴ Cf. 1 Cor. 15:24, 28. Pannenberg rightly understands that the Lordship of the Son and the Lordship of the Father are not competitive because the Son rules in dedication to the Father and his Lordship, and the Father establishes his Lordship, not apart from or beside or after the Son's Lordship. Only in dedication to the will of the Father is Jesus the ruler. *JGM*, 368-70.

²¹⁵ See *ST-II*, 392; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 436.

of the mission of the obedient Son.²¹⁶ Thereby the *Selbstverwirklichung Gottes* in the world is reached.²¹⁷

It is clear that the Son by his self-differentiation from the Father in his historical life discloses the deity of the Father and makes room for his future Lordship.²¹⁸ Thereby he glorifies the Father. Only in this way, has he proved himself to be the Son of the Father.²¹⁹

Pannenberg is correct to conceive Jesus' dedication to the Father on the cross in terms of God's Lordship. Nevertheless, his view is not free from problems. Jesus by his subordination to the Father and his Lordship actualises the Lordship of the Father. But he does so only in the sense of a prolepsis of the eschatological Lordship of the Father which will be realised only at the end of human history.

As the Son is identical with the Father only in the self-dedication of his obedience as the Son through which he lets the Father be wholly and completely God and Father, so God's future is present in Jesus' activity only in that he lets it be wholly and completely future, and

²¹⁶ In the Fourth Gospel Son the Spirit glorifies the Son (17: 1, 5), thereby serving the glory of the Father because the Father will be glorified in the Son. The Spirit bears witness to Jesus (John 15:16). He reminds the disciples of what Jesus said. He leads them into the truth of God that is manifest in the Son (John 16:13 Cf. 1 Cor. 2:10). As Pannenberg rightly perceives, through the proclamation of the gospel the Spirit makes the glory of the Son known to believers. All creation is summoned to glorify the Son because all that the Father has is his (John 16:15). Humans are also led by the Spirit into a new sonship, obedience to the Father (1 Thes. 1:5; cf. 1 Pet. 1:12), *ST-II*, 395. The glorifying of the Father and the Son by the Spirit through the apostolic proclamation brought about the reconciliation of the world with God. The Easter event is indispensable for the glorifying of the Son by the Spirit because in that event the Spirit creates life, cf. W. Pannenberg, "The Working of the Spirit in the Creation and in the People of God", *Spirit, Faith, and Church*, ed. with Avey Dulles, S. J., and Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 13-31; Galloway, *op. cit.*, 106-15. In John's Gospel (6:63) and in Paul (Rom. 8:2) the Spirit as the Creator of new life raised Jesus from the dead (cf. Rom. 8:11; 1:4; 1 Pet. 3:18). The same Spirit, then, can guarantee the hope of new life to believers (Rom. 8:11).

²¹⁷ See *ST-II*, 392-93.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 363, 395.

²¹⁹ *ST-II*, 363.

certainly God's future, beside which all else pales. Only in the mode of such self-dedication to the point of self-sacrifice does Jesus share as Son in the Lordship of the Father.²²⁰

However, Pannenberg's concept is inconsistent with the concept of the trinitarian reciprocal self-distinction not only as the mode of the eternal communion of the Trinity but also as the way by which the triune God achieves his Lordship in the world. Within this concept Jesus' self-distinction from the Father is the historical manifestation of the action of the trinitarian God to achieve his Lordship which had already been realised in eternity. Thus this dedication has already accomplished the Lordship of the Father, and has already revealed his eternal sonship. The future deity and Lordship of God are the culmination of the already accomplished Lordship and thus the deity of God, rather than being proleptically present in it. The validity of Pannenberg's understanding presupposes the justification of Hegel's metaphysics and the apocalyptic scheme of history.

Pannenberg's perception of Jesus' dedication to the Father in terms of the deity and Lordship of the Father is based on the paradoxical view of God's self-actualisation.²²¹ God appears as both the subject and object of the process of the actualising.

²²⁰ *JGM*, 370.

²²¹ As Grenz observes, this is consistent with Pannenberg's theological principle to link all doctrines to the doctrine of God, *op. cit.*, 122.

The self that is to be actualised, and that thus becomes the result of self-actualising, must also be thought of as the subject of the action and therefore already actual at the very beginning.²²²

Both the trinitarian eternal inner life of God and the economy of his reconciling acts in the world constitute the divine self-actualisation, as Pannenberg sees it.²²³ If God's "being-for-himself" is identical with his "being- for-us", "The reality that is achieved in the eternal fellowship of the Trinity and by the economy of its action in the world is one and the same."²²⁴

The idea of self-actualisation corresponds to that of *causa sui*.²²⁵ Hermann Schell uses the latter positively to describe the processions of the Son and Spirit from the person of the Father.²²⁶ Barth also approves its use for the intertrinitarian relations.²²⁷ However, Pannenberg rejects its direct application to the inner trinitarian relations because in the Son the Father generates one who is other than himself. Schell interprets the trinitarian processions in terms of self-development.²²⁸ Pannenberg does not consider the notion of self-development suitable, for each person realises itself in its relationship to the other two. The idea of *causa sui* rather expresses the

²²² *ST-II*, 393.

²²³ See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 125.

²²⁴ *ST-II*, 393.

²²⁵ Plotinus describes God by the term of *causa sui* (*Enn.* 6.8.13ff.). Aquinas rejected it as self-contradictory since no cause can produce itself (*SCG* 1.22). Hegel understands it as a formulation of the ontological proof of God's existence – the generation of existence out of concept – since here the Absolute is seen as Spirit and self-reflective. The term is seen to express the element of differentiating particularity in the Absolute. See *ST-I*, 391.

²²⁶ Hermann Schell, *Katholische Dogmatik*, II (Paderborn, 1890), 21, 61ff., 79, cited *ST-I*, 391.

²²⁷ *CD*, II/1, 305f.

²²⁸ Schell, *op. cit.*, 61ff.

relationship between the immanent and the economic Trinity.²²⁹ Both Karl Barth and Eberhard Jüngel explain what is at issue in the phrase “repetition of God”.²³⁰ Pannenberg prefers the term “*Selbstverwirklichung*”²³¹ since it implicitly denotes the interrelation of the trinitarian eternal communion with the trinitarian economic action in history for the world inasmuch as the latter is integral to its presence in the world. Since the action of the persons of the trinitarian God is not oriented directly to themselves but to the other persons, the trinitarian mutual self-differentiation is the way by which the triune God actualises himself in the world.

Pannenberg’s concept of the *Selbstverwirklichung Gottes* in the world is justified by the intertrinitarian perspective. Within this perspective, as the old Reformed tradition understands,²³² in so far as it is the historical embodiment of the eternal trinitarian immanent and economic relations, Jesus’ entire life of obedience to the Father is not simply a humiliation, but a self-fulfilment of God in the world. However, Pannenberg’s concept is challenged by Olson’s critical argument that it undermines the “graciousness of God’s redemptive activity in the history of Jesus Christ”. In order to realise his own deity in the world God must save it by unifying it with himself.²³³ This cannot escape the Hegelian problem of the necessity of the world’s existence for the self-actualisation of God. But this criticism is not persuasive because

²²⁹ *ST-I*, 391.

²³⁰ *CD*, I/1, 299. E. Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God’s Being Is In Becoming*, trans. Horton Harris (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976), 27ff, 103ff.

²³¹ Grenz interprets this as referring to “the divine activity in this world process directed to the goal of demonstrating the reality of God”, *op. cit.*, 138.

²³² Newlands, *op. cit.*, 298.

²³³ Roger E. Olson, “The Human Self-realisation of God: Hegelian Elements in Pannenberg’s Christology”, *Perspective in Religious Studies* 13 (1986): 222.

Pannenberg's perception is differentiated from that of idealism. God is essentially understood as *causa sui*. God's existence is not realised by the world process as a "me" not yet given to the active "I". The process of the *Selbstverwirklichung Gottes* in the world is rather the revelation in the history of God's eternal self-actualisation found in the trinitarian inner life.²³⁴

Although it was created by God to bear witness to his glory and his Lordship, the world emancipated itself from God and his Lordship, and consequently cannot avoid judgement and death. Yet it is still the object of God's love. In the trinitarian love the persons of the trinitarian God by their reciprocal self-distinction participate in each other and reconcile the world into his trinitarian fellowship. The self-differentiation of the Son from the Father on earth is an expression of this trinitarian love. God's action in the history of the Son's dedication to the Father reveals and substantiates this love. Hence this love is to be understood to constitute God's self-actualisation in the world. This aspect is not explicitly developed in Pannenberg's reasoning.

2.3.3. THE SELF-DIFFERENTIATION AS THE CONTENT OF JESUS' FREEDOM AND SINLESSNESS

If in his complete dedication to the will of the Father Jesus is established as the Son of God,²³⁵ how can this be related to Jesus' freedom and his sinlessness? Within the intertrinitarian framework, Jesus' absolute and unconditional dedication to the Father is the manifestation of the eternal immanent trinitarian relationship, namely, the mutual self-differentiation of

²³⁴ Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 138.

²³⁵ JGM, 349.

Father, Son, and Spirit. Thus, as Pannenberg correctly understands it, Jesus' *liberum arbitrium* – a freedom of choice by the man Jesus over against God – is excluded. Such freedom would destroy the concept of Jesus' sonship as unity of will between Jesus and the Father.²³⁶

Jesus' freedom consisted in doing the will of the Father and pursuing his mission. . . Jesus claimed for himself no independence of any kind from God because his freedom consisted not in independence from God but in unity with him.²³⁷

The assumption of "other possibilities" fails to explain Jesus' concrete historical existence in dedication to his mission. "When a mission has seized a man so unconditionally, he no longer has any choice with respect to that mission. He reserves no inner independence for himself over against his mission. Precisely this constitutes his freedom. Just in this way Jesus is one with God through his dedication to his mission, through his dedication to the Father."²³⁸ This justifies the rejection of any concept of Jesus' meritorious freedom of choice.²³⁹

There is admittedly an element of truth in the indeterminist concept of freedom of choice. A person can choose among a plurality of the available possibilities the one most appropriate to his destiny. Furthermore, his destiny itself is not a fixed norm but open to a decision since he is always open to a future life fulfilment that will surpass his present self-understanding. But it can

²³⁶ Neie, op. cit., 157.

²³⁷ JGM, 349.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 350.

be maintained with Pannenberg that this does not necessarily include decisional *indifferentia ad opposita* to God. If God is the fulfilment of human destiny, indifference to God is not essential to such openness.²⁴⁰ Hence, Jesus as a person who "lives not only in openness to God but also in clear, resolute dedication to him does not thereby make an arbitrary decision but rather follows the call of his human destiny."²⁴¹

The clarity with which Jesus' mission claimed him must have excluded any alternative for him. The clarity of Jesus' mission can be measured by the way in which the single idea of God's eschatological imminence permeated his message and his whole activity.²⁴²

Jesus' sinlessness is a precondition of his divine sonship. The former is only the negative expression of Jesus' dedication to the Father, which constitutes the content of his freedom for God. If sin is defined as disobedience to God or as the self-closing of the ego against God, the subordination of the Son to the Father denotes his separation from all sin.²⁴³ However, the concept of original sin makes Jesus' sinlessness problematic. Although it does not define sin as the essence of humanness, as Pannenberg puts it, this concept ascribes sinfulness to the fundamental human existence in its egocentricity and its ego-obstructedness toward God.²⁴⁴ When it is

²³⁹ For Pannenberg's discussion of this theme in relation to the traditional concept of merit, the assumption of a *visio beatifica* (the divine vision of the blessed) by Roman Catholic christology, and modern anthropological attempts, see *ibid.*, 350-52. Cf. Neie, *op. cit.*, 157-58.

²⁴⁰ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 181.

²⁴¹ *JGM*, 353.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 354-55.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 361. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 182.

presupposed that Jesus shares actual human nature, how can Jesus' sinlessness be explained? The authentic humanity of Jesus is axiomatic for Pannenberg's approach to this problem.²⁴⁵ This leads to the rejection of a "natural" sinlessness of Jesus, undamaged and not spoiled by sin coming from Adam, at the time of Jesus' birth.²⁴⁶

The conception that at the incarnation God did not assume human nature in its corrupt sinful state but only joined himself with a humanity absolutely purified from all sin contradicts not only the anthropological radicality of sin, but also the testimony of the New Testament and of early Christian theology that the Son of God assumed sinful flesh and in sinful flesh itself overcame sin.²⁴⁷

Rather, one can argue with Barth and Pannenberg that Jesus' sinlessness was not a natural incapacity for evil, rooted in a special humanity. But the man Jesus overcame sin under the conditions of human general existence in bondage to sin in his entire process of life. Along his earthly course Jesus of Nazareth let himself be determined by the destiny of humanity, namely, the openness to God. Especially, Jesus' absolute dedication to the Father in the crucifixion overcame the egocentric structure of sin decisively.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ In that Jesus' sinlessness is approached from the man Jesus, is Pannenberg similar with the position of Neo-Protestantism, for instance, Origen, J. Müller, C. Ullmann, A. Ritschl, and W. Herrmann. However, Pannenberg is different from them in his emphasis on the confirmation of the historical reality of Jesus' subordination to the Father by the resurrection. Pannenberg also rejects the understanding of Jesus' sinlessness in terms of his exemplary moral behaviour, *JGM*, 360-61. Cf. Neie, *op. cit.*, 163-68.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Neie, *op. cit.*, 161. Pannenberg criticises that the following concepts cannot explain adequately the Scriptural view of Jesus' sinlessness: (1) the concept of Jesus' miraculous assumption of a sinless human nature by Basil, Ambrose, Augustine, (2) the Scholastic formula *non posse peccare*, (3) the other Scholastic view of *impeccabilitas* by the formula *posse non peccare*, and (4) the Neo-Protestant concept of the actual ethical purity of Jesus. See *JGM*, 357-62. Neie presents an excellent analysis of Pannenberg's criticism of these concepts, *op. cit.*, 161-63.

²⁴⁷ *JGM*, 362.

²⁴⁸ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 182-83.

“Through the cross of Christ sinful flesh was condemned and demolished in him who was nonetheless the Son of God. . . Therefore, he was not himself destroyed in this judgement, but emerged the victor.”²⁴⁹

For Pannenberg this sinlessness is confirmed by Jesus’ resurrection. The total dedication of Jesus became *visible and reality* only through this event. Since this confirmation is retroactive in character, Jesus was sinless from the beginning, “just as he was also the Son of God in the whole of his life and not only after a particular point in him.”²⁵⁰ God’s decision about Jesus’ sinlessness frees one from the impossible task of penetrating into the inner life of the historical Jesus in order to establish there his sinlessness.²⁵¹ But this raises the question: is this consistent with his path “from below”? In establishing Jesus’ righteousness, Pannenberg is relying upon the *extra nos* of the path “from above”. However, this *extra nos* is not permissible for Pannenberg because it is not historically verifiable. Further, the intertrinitarian perspective allows one to argue that the earthly dedication itself of Jesus to the Father is identified with his divine sonship, and thus proves his sinlessness. Thus, if the entire path of Jesus on earth is obedience to God, already in his whole earthly obedient life Jesus is sinless, and as a sinless Son is capable of dedicating himself completely to the Father. The resurrection finally affirms this historical fact.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ *JGM*, 363.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² For further discussion of the confirmation of the pre-Easter history and person by God in the resurrection, see the sub-section on “The resurrection of Jesus from the Dead” in chapter three.

2.4. CONCLUSION

The intertrinitarian character of Jesus' identity as the Son has been discussed as it relates to God's Lordship. As an exploration has shown, Pannenberg approaches this character from the historical reality of Jesus. This does not mean that the path "from below" rules out completely the path "from above", the connection with soteriological motif, and the present experience of Christ. In perceiving Jesus' identity this historical method emphasises the historical contexts of *Traditionsgeschichte* and the Late-Jewish apocalypticism, the main theme of which is the Kingdom of God. The former provides the framework for a flow of transmitted tradition of the Kingdom within a whole which is directed to the eschatological Kingdom. The latter makes available the future Kingdom in advance before the end of history. The intertrinitarian character of Jesus' divine sonship is based on the concept of the *personal* unity of the concrete man Jesus with God, rather than the Chalcedonian or incarnational formulation of a unification of two opposing essences. This unity is reflected in Jesus' self-consciousness which is objective, open toward the future, temporal, and intertrinitarian in character. Since the concept of personality is relational in character, the unity of Jesus with the eternal Son is established indirectly, namely, by way of his relationship to the Father in his whole life. Jesus' self-differentiation from the Father in his historical life, especially his perfect dedication to the Father on the cross is characteristic of this relationship, and thus is the inner basis of his divine sonship. This self-differentiation is the self-humbling and *kenōsis* of the eternal Son. It is also the way by which the Son anticipates the future realisation of the deity and Lordship of the Father. Thereby he is established as

the Son. This is based on the paradoxical view of the *Selbstverwirklichung Gottes* in the world, according to which the persons of the trinitarian God by the trinitarian mutual self-distinction are united to one another and reconcile the world, thereby actualising themselves in the world. Jesus' subordination to the Father and his Lordship is the content of his freedom and thus his *liberum arbitrium* against God is rejected. Jesus' sinlessness is a negative expression of this dedication. Jesus is sinless not in his natural incapacity to be against God but in his overcoming of sin under the conditions of human general existence.

As the discussion has made clear, Pannenberg can be approved in that he establishes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God in terms of the subordination of the man Jesus to the Father and his Lordship in his historical life. If this dedication is the historical embodiment of the relationship of the eternal Son to the Father, it is crucial for the affirmation of Jesus' divine sonship.

But Pannenberg's attempt to establish Jesus' identity as the Son does not evade problems at the following points. First, as far as the methodology is concerned, his presupposition of Jesus' resurrection, which is a kerygma, as the ground of Jesus' divinity is not faithful to the path "from below", and requires a more substantial basis for the universal validity of the apocalyptic context. Second, his concept of the personal unity of Jesus with God still fails to solve the tension between the distinction between divine and human natures and their unity. Third, his intertrinitarian perspective does not make clear the unique noetical and ontological place of the incarnation. Fourth, his perception of Jesus' ultimate dedication to the Father on the cross only as a prolepsis of

the future realisation of the deity and Lordship of God leads to difficulty in explaining that it has already revealed the Fatherhood of God and thus Jesus' eternal sonship, and realised the Lordship of the Father. Fifth, the contention that Jesus' divine sonship is established only when it is retroactively confirmed by his resurrection is not only unacceptable historically but also inconsistent with the intertrinitarian thought. The historical reality of Jesus' dedication to the Father and his Lordship itself proves his sinlessness, and thus establishes his divine sonship.

CHAPTER III: THE IDENTITY OF JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD (II)

This chapter continues to establish Jesus' identity as the Son in terms of the trinitarian mutual self-distinction as it relates to God's Lordship. The eternal sonship of Jesus is first examined. The universal sonship of Jesus, which is articulated from the anthropological perspective, is subsequently considered. The historical basis of Jesus' divine sonship is then analysed by focusing on the historical confirmation of this identity by his earthly message and his resurrection.

3.1. THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF JESUS

If Jesus only by his subordination to the Father and his Lordship *in his earthly life* is established as the Son, is this sonship limited to his earthly existence? If the trinitarian mutual self-giving is the mode of the trinitarian eternal communion of the Godhead, Jesus' obedience to the Father on earth is the historical form of the fellowship of the Son with the eternal God the Father. Thus it originates in the eternity of God. The exegetical ground is found in Paul.¹ This is supported by Kuschel. For him, the belief in the New Testament is that Jesus is inseparable from the deity of the eternal God. This implies not only his existence before his earthly birth but also the participation

¹ Cf. Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4.

of this man in the eternity of God.² From this standpoint, Pannenberg is correct to maintain that the self-differentiation of Jesus precedes the time of his earthly life. Jesus as the "Son of God" is preexistent.³

However, the concept of a preexistent divine being descending from heaven constitutes a major problem in the history of primitive Christian traditions.⁴ Pannenberg intends to prove the eternal sonship of Jesus "from below". Only by his dedication to the Father in his historical life, is Jesus united to the eternal God. God is also related to Jesus his Son.⁵ This historical relationship with a man is constitutive for the eternal identity of God as Father. Thus the correlate in the relationship must also be eternal. As Grenz observes, this overcomes a problematic division of the preexistent Logos from the historical person of Jesus which arises from the traditional doctrine of the incarnation.⁶

If we seriously mean that Jesus, as the person through whom God is revealed, belongs to the very essence of God himself, then he must in this respect – in respect of his unity with God – have already been the

² K. Kuschel, *Geboren vor aller Zeit? Der Streit um den Ursprung Christi* (Munich, 1990), 528, cited in *ST-II*, 367.

³ *JGM*, 150-51; *ST-II*, 440. For Pannenberg, in the light of the Easter event, the "inner logic" of this sonship means that God was always one with Jesus, even prior to his earthly death. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 171.

⁴ *JGM*, 151. Pannenberg recognises the thought of the incarnation from the perspective of revelatory history. If Jesus is the revelation of God, no other event or man is united with the essence of God in the same way as the person of Jesus. Jesus as the revelation of God is united with the divinity of God only in his historical appearance. In Jesus God himself has come into human form and in such a way the Father-Son relationship, which always belonged to God's essence, now acquired corporeal form. However, Pannenberg questions the relationship of the incarnational christology to the exaltation christology in the resurrection. The incarnational christology emancipates itself from the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic view of history which clarifies the concept of incarnation in the early church and validates the final affirmation of God becoming man in Jesus. Thereby there arises a gap between this christology and the historical Jesus. See *JGM*, 156-57. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 173-74.

⁵ *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 150; Cf. *AC*, 68; *ST-II*, 367, 370.

⁶ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 140.

Son before he became man, before his human birth. The assertion of Jesus' preexistence as Son of God is therefore nothing more than a conclusion drawn from Jesus' unity with God himself in his revelation. It includes Jesus' oneness of nature with God. For otherwise God would not be revealed as himself in his revelation in Jesus. But Jesus' oneness of nature with God also means that this man participated in God's eternity, although he was, as man, not eternal but born in time, like the rest of us.⁷

The concept of preexistence raises the question of a conceptual distinction between the eternal Son of God and the earthly appearance of Jesus.⁸ Pannenberg himself recognises the necessity of this distinction. There is a difficulty in the idea of the combination of the eternal Son and the individual Jesus of Nazareth. However, the eternal sonship of Jesus is inseparable from his historical relationship to the Father, since the confirmation of the Son's preexistence is based on this alone.⁹ The eternity of the Son and the historical mode of Jesus' existence are "differing aspects of a single, concrete life of Jesus on earth."¹⁰

Barth also articulates the connection of the eternal Son to the man Jesus by means of predestination.¹¹ God predestined the Son of God to be the Son of Man, the preexistent God-man Jesus Christ, who as such is the eternal basis of the divine election.¹² The concept of preexistence refers both to the

⁷ *AC*, 68.

⁸ *JGM*, 154.

⁹ *ST-II*, 368.

¹⁰ *Tupper, op. cit.*, 173.

¹¹ *CD*, I/1, 414ff.

¹² *CD*, II/2. Cf. III/1, 50f.

eternal Son¹³ and to the human reality of Jesus.¹⁴ However, in Pannenberg's view, Barth, in his relating of the two aspects, fails to make the connection because the act of election is part of the freedom experienced by God in his relation to the world, so that its content is not constitutive for the eternal identity of his divine essence. For this reason, the connection with the historical filial relationship of Jesus to the Father must be derived from the eternal relationship of the Son to the Father.¹⁵

According to Pannenberg, the interconnection between the Father and the historical existence and work of Jesus is *part* of the eternal identity of the Father. This enables him to conceive of a state of preexistence of the Son of God who was manifested in the history of Jesus. This is similar to the perception of an abiding relationship of the Crucified and risen Lord to the Father in consequence of his exaltation to fellowship with the Father and to participation in his Lordship.¹⁶

Viewed in this way, the incarnation is not an accidental event independent of the Son's eternal essence.¹⁷ It is rather "the self-created medium of his extreme self-actualisation in consequence of his free self-distinction from the father, e.g. a way of fulfilling his eternal sonship",¹⁸ by which he is able to fulfil the destiny of humans as creatures. The idea of a divine-human unity existing from the beginning of Jesus' life is reconciled

¹³ *CD*, I/1, 414.

¹⁴ *CD*, II/2, 110.

¹⁵ *ST-II*, 368 (n. 127).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 319, cf. 302f.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 325.

with the genuine humanity of his activity. Pannenberg paraphrases the concept of the incarnation:

Out of his eternity, God has through the resurrection of Jesus, which was always present to his eternity, entered into a unity with this one man which was at first hidden. This unity illuminated Jesus' life in advance, but its basis and reality were revealed only by his resurrection.¹⁹

This view is persuasive because the immanent and economic relations cannot be separated. The filial relationship of Jesus to the Father on earth is the earthly expression of the relation of the Son to the eternal God.

For Pannenberg this preexistence is not real but ideal in character.²⁰ Following Barth, he reasons that "like all creaturely reality, this preexistence in the purpose of God would be on the condition of the divine freedom and would not be constitutive for the identity of the divine essence."²¹ As Bradshaw rightly points out it, this view is characteristic of German idealism.²²

One can agree with Pannenberg that the origin of the divine sonship of Jesus rests entirely upon the eternity of God himself. The earthly obedience of Jesus to the Father, upon which his divine sonship is established, is the historical mediation of the triune life of God in Trinity in eternity. This view of his origin does not conflict with the ascription of the divine sonship of Jesus to the virgin birth, the baptism, the cross, and the resurrection. His sonship can

¹⁹ *JGM*, 322.

²⁰ R. G. Hamerton-Kelly argues for the difference between ideal and real preexistence, *Wisdom, and the Son of Man* (Cambridge, 1973), cited in *ST-II*, 370 (n. 135).

²¹ *ST-II*, 370. Cf. *CD*, III/1. 50f.

²² Bradshaw argues this throughout his study, *op. cit.*, 1-4.

be seen in relation to the special contexts of these Christ events unless the events themselves are regarded as definite evidences of the ultimate origin of this sonship.

However, Pannenberg bases the link between the historical dedication of Jesus and the unity of the Son with the eternal God on God's retroactive confirmation by the Easter event. This implies that the eternal sonship of Jesus is made possible only by his resurrection.²³ But the concept of the trinitarian mutual self-differentiation in the immanent and economic trinitarian relations compels one to argue that Jesus' earthly existence is that of the eternal Son. This eternal sonship has already been revealed in the historical reality of Jesus, his virgin birth, baptism, the crucifixion, and finally the resurrection.

3.2. THE UNIVERSAL SONSHIP OF JESUS

One agrees with Pannenberg that from anthropological perspective the subordination of Jesus to the Father and his Lordship, which constitutes his personal identity as the Son, can be expressed as a radical expression of his openness to God.²⁴ This openness is not alien to the humanity of man but is characteristic of the *Bestimmung* of humanity.²⁵ Jesus' personal unity with God is then the fulfilment of human destiny. Thus Jesus' authentic humanity need not be denied in establishing his divine sonship. The completeness of Jesus' personality is achieved by a process of integration through personal communion with the Father. Pannenberg rightly reasons,

²³ This theme is dealt with in detail later. *Vide infra* the sub-section on "The Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead".

²⁴ Cf. Neie, *op. cit.*, 85-86.

²⁵ See Tupper, *op. cit.*, 180.

All human existence is designed to be personalised by its dependence upon God, to be integrated into a person through its relation to God the Father in such a way that men are constituted as persons by the Fatherly God in confrontation with him.²⁶

The man Jesus by dedicating himself to the Father achieves the universal destiny of humanity, and is thus the representative of humankind before God.²⁷ In this sense Jesus is the universal Son.

Bradshaw confines the universal sonship of Jesus to his future unity with God which will be realised only at the end of human history.²⁸ It is true that in Pannenberg's view the sonship of Jesus is bound up in the future of God. The intertrinitarian thought forces Pannenberg to see the divine sonship of Jesus primarily in relation to the Father. However, Bradshaw overlooks the fact that this sonship has an anthropological implication. If the trinitarian mutual self-differentiation is the trinitarian immanent and economic relations, Jesus as the Son reconciles humankind into his sonship. For this reason, Jesus' divine sonship as the prolepsis of the future of God for Pannenberg cannot be conceived in separation from its anthropological universal relevance.

One needs to draw attention to the Pauline description of Jesus as the eschatological new Man. According to Pannenberg, this description denotes Jesus' universal sonship in that it relates his person and history to all humanity.²⁹ For Paul, just as the sin of the first Adam has brought judgement on the whole of humanity, Jesus as the second Adam, by his obedient

²⁶ *JGM*, 345.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, 291

²⁹ *ST-II*, 297.

suffering on the cross, reconciles it to God. The man Jesus as the new Adam lives a life of the new relationship to God, namely, dedication to God as the Father and acknowledgement of his Lordship, and thus brings the destiny of humanity to a fulfilment which is superior to the first creation. As such Jesus is the Son.³⁰ For this mission he was sent into the world by the Father. The sending of the Son is not limited to his birth, but extends to his whole earthly course. This forces Pannenberg to criticise that primitive Christianity did not relate the new Adam to the human and historical distinctiveness of his public appearance, but from the very first linked his whole earthly path to the incarnation of the Logos at his birth.³¹

It can be maintained with Pannenberg that sonship becomes a historical reality only in Jesus' eschatological history and yet others may share the personal sonship of Jesus.³² This sharing means to share his relationship of dedication to the Father.³³ The participation of others in this sonship, however, is different in structure. As an individual man, Jesus alone participates in God's essence.³⁴ However, believers become sons of God only to the extent that they participate in Jesus' sonship. They share in Jesus' sonship only in proportion to the degree of their communion with this one man who as a man is the Son of God.³⁵ It is true that participation in God's essence is mediated

³⁰ *JGM*, 345-46.

³¹ *ST-II*, 303.

³² This point is rightly indicated by Tupper (*op. cit.*, 181) and Neie (*op. cit.*, 86-87).

³³ *JGM*, 346. Cf. Neie, *op. cit.*, 86.

³⁴ For Pannenberg the eschatological character of Jesus' earthly message and its retroactive confirmation by the resurrection make the mode of his unity with the Son of God unrepeatable and unique.

³⁵ *JGM*, 347.

through personal communion with the Father.³⁶ The Christian's participation in God's essence, however, is differentiated from the uniqueness of Jesus' unity with God. As an individual man, Jesus alone partakes of the deity of God. In their own individual existence Christians remain essentially different from the Father. Therefore, they share in the divine glory not in their particular individuality but only through Jesus. As Pannenberg expresses it,

The openness to God that belongs to the structure of human existence as such and that finds its fulfilment only when human existence is personally integrated in dependence upon God . . . is fulfilled in all other men only through their historically mediated relation to and community with Jesus of Nazareth.³⁷

The human uniqueness of Jesus the Son is closely connected to his Messiahship. The early church related the pre-Easter ministry of the Messiah primarily to the Jewish people. By his proclamation of the imminence of the rule of God and its dawning in his own work, Jesus came to move the covenant people to conversion to its God. In this way Jesus renewed and deepened the relationship of Israel to its God, but not in a political way. However, after the Easter event Jesus becomes the Messiah of all nations. The experience of Jesus' resurrection made his disciples link the messianic hope of Israel to the suffering and crucified Son of God.³⁸ For Paul, through his vicarious sufferings for the sins of humanity the universal significance of the person and history of Jesus as the Messiah is justified. Pannenberg correctly

³⁶ *Ibid.* Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 181.

³⁷ *JGM*, 348.

³⁸ See Werner Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 50 (London: SCM Press, 1966), 19-64.

states, "Precisely by the event of the passion Jesus became a figure that transcends the national and religious differences between Jews and non-Jews."³⁹

It is persuasive when Pannenberg relates the Jewish hope of Messiah to God's justice and righteousness. This messianic hope served to actualise divine law as its embodiment.⁴⁰ Israel's election was based on its commitment to the proclamation of God's Lordship bringing justice and righteousness to all nations, rather than being an end in itself. Jesus expounded this justice and righteousness in the light of the coming Lordship of God, who is the Creator of *all humankind*. Thus, as Pannenberg understands, the individual destiny of fellowship with God is linked to fellowship with others. Jesus the Son by his subordination to the Father and his Lordship brings all people, including the Jewish nation, into his sonship. Pannenberg writes,

We cannot work out our destiny of fellowship with God in the isolation of a purely individual relation to God, nor can we work out our destiny for life in fellowship and peace without God in the relation of all of us to the one God.⁴¹

The future-orientated perspective leads Pannenberg to restrict the universal sonship of Jesus to the future destiny of humanity. As the *eschatos Adam*, Jesus Christ is the prototype of a new humanity which will be realised at the end of human history through the reconciliation of the world. But this raises the question: is the sonship of Jesus to be understood only in a sense of anticipation of a future new humanity? The universal significance of Jesus'

³⁹ *ST-II*, 312. Cf. Eph. 2:14.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 322.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

sonship is rather to be understood in the sense that his earthly reality is the final revelation of the filial relationship of all humanity to God. The entire earthly life of Jesus is characterised as obedience to the Father and his Lordship. If this life is essentially the historical embodiment of his eternal sonship, it is the mode of his universal sonship. In his earthly life Jesus has already actualised a new humanity into which the rest of humanity is reconciled through him. Humans by participation in his obedience have already been made anew in his sonship. Further, for Pannenberg this universal sonship is possible only when God's retroactive confirmation by Jesus' resurrection is presupposed.⁴² But this is not faithful to the historical perspective from which Jesus' pre-Easter life of obedience to the Father noetically and ontologically establishes his universal sonship.

3.3. THE CONFIRMATION OF JESUS' DIVINE SONSHIP

For the path "from below" Jesus' identity as the Son must be *historically* confirmed,⁴³ rather than being presupposed in the doctrine of the incarnation, as in classical christology. Only when the uniqueness of Jesus' self-differentiation from the Father is historically justified, is his divine sonship established. The historical confirmation is found in Jesus' earthly message and in his resurrection from the dead.

⁴² See the section on "Jesus' Self-differentiation from the Father as the Inner Basis of His Divine Sonship" in chapter two.

⁴³ Pannenberg deals with this theme in *ST-II*, 326-362 and in *JGM*, 53-114. Cf. Pannenberg's article "Analogy and Doxology", *BQiT-I*, 212-38.

3.3.1. JESUS' CLAIM TO AUTHORITY IN HIS PROCLAMATION OF THE COMING KINGDOM OF GOD ⁴⁴

In the opinion of most of modern exegetical scholars the christological titles were conferred on Jesus by the faith of the early church. Pannenberg, however, insists that the pre-Easter claim of Jesus to authority preceded his disciples' faith.⁴⁵ While Bultmann denies that the kerygma needs to be legitimated by Jesus' earthly activity,⁴⁶ Käsemann states, "Only if Jesus' proclamation decisively coincides with the proclamation about Jesus is it understandable, reasonable, and necessary that the Christian kerygma in the New Testament conceals the message of Jesus."⁴⁷ Fuchs sees Jesus' conduct as 'the real context of his claim'.⁴⁸ In Jesus' outworking of love for sinners the Kingdom of God was already present. This is illustrated by his celebration of the eschatological meal, which, according to tradition, would take place in the future and was reserved for the righteous, but was celebrated by Jesus with tax collectors and sinners already in the present. According to Campenhausen, Jesus by his forgiveness of sins set himself over against the law that was given by God, and thus equated himself with God.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Jesus' pre-Easter claim to authority is at the centre of Pannenberg's recently revived discussion about the historical Jesus, *JGM*, 55.

⁴⁵ Cf. Herbert Nieie, *The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1979), 24.

⁴⁶ R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 43.

⁴⁷ *JGM*, 56.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴⁹ Nieie, *op. cit.*, 25.

Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God admittedly implies an authority which belongs to God himself. One can agree with Pannenberg that this does not conflict with Jesus' self-differentiation from the Father. Jesus claimed authority not for himself but for the Father.⁵⁰ Jesus always spoke of his ultimate authority as linked to that of the God of Israel. Jesus also subjected himself to the claim of God's Lordship.⁵¹ Jesus knows himself as the one who is *sent* to proclaim *God's* Kingdom. This claim throws light on why Jesus was led to the crucifixion.⁵² Without Jesus' *proclamation* his suffering on the cross would not be capable of being perceived as a perfect dedication to God by which he serves God's Lordship over his creatures and thus established as the Son of the eternal Father.⁵³

Pannenberg correctly perceives that God's Lordship will be accomplished at the *eschaton* in the fullest sense.⁵⁴ Jeremias asserts that since the time of Hellenism the hope of the establishment of God's Lordship over the nations⁵⁵ had taken on an eschatological character.⁵⁶ The Kingdom was already transmitted in the history of Israel, and thus was familiar to his

⁵⁰ *ST-II*, p. 373.

⁵¹ Cf. *TKG*, 52f.

⁵² Grenz rightly indicates this point, *op. cit.*, 208.

⁵³ *ST-II*, 373.

⁵⁴ For Pannenberg every event in which the future becomes finitely present must be understood as a contingent act of God who brings that finite reality into being by distinguishing it from his own powerful future. God is thus considered not only as the origin of his creation, but also the ultimate destiny of humanity. The Kingdom is the reality of the unconditional and creative activity of this God. See W. Pannenberg, "Future and Unity", *Hope and the future of Man*, ed. Ewert H. Cousins (London: The Garnstone Press, 1973), 63.

⁵⁵ Ps. 96:10ff.; cf. Isa. 52:7.

⁵⁶ J. Jeremias, *Das Königtum Gottes in den Psalmen* (Göttingen, 1987), 136ff.; cf. 121ff. See also H. Merklein, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottesherrschaft. Eine Skizze* (Stuttgart, 1983), 24f., 39ff.; cited in *ST-II*, 326.

contemporaries.⁵⁷ Pannenberg argues, "Jesus' activity is understandable only from this history, for Jesus called Israel back into the nearness of the God who was Israel's God from Egypt on and for whose coming the pious Jew prayed daily."⁵⁸ Within this context John the Baptist proclaimed the Kingdom. However, the proclamation of the Baptist differs from Jesus' proclamation as far as the future Kingdom was concerned. While for the Baptist this Kingdom brought imminent judgement, for Jesus it was the coming of his Lordship.⁵⁹

Pannenberg agrees with Bornkamm⁶⁰ that the Kingdom, for which Israel was looking, is not simply a future state, but was at hand in Jesus,⁶¹ in so far as the end of history is anticipated in the life and destiny of Jesus of Nazareth.⁶² Further, Jesus' message mediates the presence of God's Lordship. Wherever the message of the coming Kingdom is accepted, God has already come in power, and has also revealed his creative love⁶³ which through forgiveness opens the way to new life. Humans now have communion with God, which means salvation. It is to be noted here that the presence of God's

⁵⁷ Jesus does not exist as an isolated event, but stands within the continuity and totality of this tradition. He is the one who fulfils what is expected in the tradition. According to Allan D. Galloway, this is generally accepted except by "a very perverse and ideologically motivated scepticism", *Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 60, 65. Furthermore, Jesus not only shared the tradition of this Kingdom with his hearers, but also throws a new light on it in that he himself provides the perspective from which it can be seen. There is here a mutual relationship between Jesus and the tradition of the Kingdom in the process of transmission.

⁵⁸ *JGM*, 193.

⁵⁹ Matt. 3:2 rejects the difference between Jesus and the Baptist by insisting that the Baptist grounded his summons to repentance on the imminence of the Kingdom. Cf. Becker, *Johannes der Täufer und Jesus von Nazareth*, 74f.; cited in *ST-II*, 327.

⁶⁰ Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960), 62f.

⁶¹ *RaH*, 142

⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, 139.

⁶³ For Pannenberg in Jesus God's love is revealed in a Trinitarian form. God is more than an existing entity. He is the future of his coming Kingdom. As this future, he was and is present through the man Jesus who testified to the coming Kingdom. Through this man God is present to the world as the spirit who gives freedom and life by creating faith. Future and present are comprehended in the unity of God. See *TKG*, 71-72.

Lordship is not an alternative to its future establishment. The future itself is rather a “power determining the present without losing its futurity”.⁶⁴ The movement of power is directed from the future, rather than from the past.

Hans Conzelmann admits that Jesus stands “in the tradition of Jewish eschatology”, and thus the future element in his message cannot be denied. However, for Jesus this is not relevant because of the interval of time before the end. For Jesus God’s presence is all in the present. In response Pannenberg argues,

As much as it is to be granted to Conzelmann that what is expected in the future in Jewish tradition has been “anticipated” in Jesus’ activity, the reduction of Jesus’ temporal statements to an existential meaning of immediate encounter with the Kingdom of God must be judged as a deactivation of the tension between the “already” and the “not yet” in Jesus’ message.⁶⁵

One can agree with Pannenberg that the Kingdom is already present in Jesus’ proclamation, at the same time as it is referred to as the future reality. This can be evidenced by the fact that “the reference to future table fellowship in the Kingdom (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:29f.) at festival meals also played implicitly a determinative role to the degree that the meals represented the (future) fellowship of the Kingdom and offered advance assurance of participation in its salvation.”⁶⁶ A one-sided emphasis on only the *presence* of the *basileia* is to be rejected. However, according to Tupper, Pannenberg

⁶⁴ W. Pannenberg, “On Historical and Theological Hermeneutic”, *BQIT-I*, 178. Cf. H. Merklein, “Die Einzigkeit Gottes als die sachliche Grundlage der Botschaft Jesu”, *Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie* 2 (1987), 13-32, esp. 24.; cited in *ST-II*, 330.

⁶⁵ *JGM*, 58.

⁶⁶ *ST-II*, 328.

brings together the present and future through Jesus' eschatological proclamation which reveals *the priority of the future*.⁶⁷ Therefore, Jesus' message of the *basileia* implies a personal claim to authority only in the sense that the coming Kingdom is imminent in it.⁶⁸ This claim still awaits its future confirmation.⁶⁹ Pannenberg finds an exegetical evidence for this in the saying of Luke 12:8, "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God." In opposition to Ph. Vielhauer, E. Schweizer, Käsemann, and W. Marxsen, Pannenberg contends in line with Bultmann, Bornkamm, H. Braun, H. E. Todt, and F. Hahn that this saying is authentic.

All versions of the saying, with the exception of Matt. 10:32f., have in common that Jesus distinguishes the Son of Man from himself as a different figure. This constitutes the most important argument for the age of the saying: After Easter such a distinction between Jesus and the judge at the end of the age no longer have been formulated.⁷⁰

Moreover, the nature of Jesus' claim to authority as "anticipation of the future verdict" corresponds to the relationship between the visions of an apocalyptic or God's prophetic word in the Old Testament, and history.

The prophets received words that must be confirmed by their future fulfilment, and thereby must be shown to be Yahweh's words. The apocalyptic view of history, which also grasped future events before

⁶⁷ E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 294.

⁶⁸ Stanley J. Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York: Oxford, 1990), 117-18.

⁶⁹ *JGM*, 58.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

they occurred, required confirmation by the actual course of the events themselves.⁷¹

Does this proleptic structure of Jesus' claim identify Jesus as an apocalyptic? Pannenberg emphasises that Jesus is different from the apocalyptic visionaries for the following reasons.⁷² First, Jesus recognises that he brings something new. Second, like John the Baptist, he expected the end to be imminent, thus did not describe the path to it but called people to repentance. Third, in Jesus' activity eschatological salvation had already appeared. Fourth, "with him the end is not only seen, but it has happened in advance."⁷³ However, this difference does not weaken the identity of Jesus' claim with the apocalyptic visions in the sense that both are in need of future confirmation.

The earthly deeds of Jesus could authenticate his claim to a certain extent. They could point to the beginning of the time of salvation. But, in Pannenberg's view, they could not give certain confirmation of the fact that Jesus personally was the one in whom salvation or judgement are ultimately decided.⁷⁴ A complete verification of Jesus' pre-Easter claim is available only at the eschaton. In that Jesus did not claim any dignity for his own person but for the Father's and subjected himself to the claim of the coming Lordship of the Father, Jesus' claim implies a personal authority, but only in the sense of anticipation of the future confirmation that is found in Jesus' resurrection and finally in the eschaton.⁷⁵

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁷² See Tupper, *op. cit.*, 134.

⁷³ *JGM*, 61.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 65-66, 137.

Moltmann charges Pannenberg with depreciating the central significance of Jesus' death for christology because Jesus' claim to authority is confirmed by the Easter event.⁷⁶ Klappert also criticises Pannenberg that the cross is subsumed under the principal correlation of Jesus' claim and resurrection.⁷⁷ This criticism is based on Pannenberg's assertion that, seen by the resurrection as the prolepsis of the imminent end of the world, "it must have been of secondary significance for Jesus whether he himself would have to endure death before the end came. The truth of his proclamation did not need to depend on this."⁷⁸ But this criticism is not convincing because the claim to his personal authority did not directly lead to the confirmation of Jesus' divine sonship but to his rejection as a blasphemer and finally to his condemnation.⁷⁹

The open question of verification of the unheard of claim to personal authority . . . is an important one for christology because the related ambivalence shows that his rejection and therefore his path of suffering even to the cross are essentially and not just accidentally bound up with his destiny. The theology of the cross is thus linked to the earthly sending of Jesus to proclaim the imminent rule of God.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 173. Pannenberg deals with this criticism fully in the epilogue to the 5th edition of *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 419f.

⁷⁷ Berthold Klappert, *Die Auferweckung des Gekreuzigten, Der Ansatz der Christologie Karl Barths in Zusammenhang der Christologie der Gegenwart* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1971), 54-63, cited in Neie, *op. cit.*, 207. For Neie rightly argues against with Klappert the interrelation of Jesus' claim, his self-sacrifice on the cross, and his confirmation, *ibid.*, 176-79, 207-09.

⁷⁸ *JGM*, 66.

⁷⁹ Cf. *JGM*, 251ff.; *ST-II*, 338.

⁸⁰ *ST-II*, 338.

Ritschl understands the passion of Jesus as an expression of faithfulness to his calling which is linked to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God.⁸¹ However, according to Pannenberg, Ritschl did not articulate the inner connection between the offence taken at the appearance of Jesus and the ambivalence of the claim to personal authority. Only in virtue of this interrelation, in Pannenberg's view, the course of his suffering is not accidental but essential for his divine mission.⁸²

Pannenberg is right in his assertion that Jesus' claim to authority in his proclamation of the Kingdom is seen in terms of his self-differentiation from the Father. He can also be applauded for his perception of Jesus' claim to authority in his reference to the eschatological Kingdom as it had been depicted in Israel tradition. Nonetheless, his concept of this claim only as an anticipation of the ultimate verification is acceptable only when the validity of the apocalyptic view of the Kingdom is justified.⁸³ Further, this concept is inconsistent with the intertrinitarian concept. The trinitarian mutual self-distinction is the eternal trinitarian fellowship of God and the way by which the triune God achieves his Lordship. If Jesus' subordination to the Father and his Lordship is the historical manifestation of this intertrinitarian relationship, his eternal sonship and the Lordship of the Father have already been revealed. Hence, Jesus' earthly claim itself, which belongs to the Christ event, has already confirmed the uniqueness of his self-distinction from the Father, and thus has

⁸¹ Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay, 2nd edition (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 442-52. See F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart, 2nd edition (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), § 101.

⁸² W. Pannenberg, "Theology of the Cross", *Word and World: Theology for Christian Ministry* 8 (1988): 162-72.

⁸³ See the section on "The Historical Approach to the Identity of Jesus" in chapter two.

revealed his personal authority in terms of God's Lordship. Jesus as the Son subjected himself to the claim of God's authority and his Kingdom. This character of Jesus' claim is finally justified by his resurrection.⁸⁴

For Pannenberg, does the ultimate confirmation of Jesus' claim occur only at the *eschaton*? This confirmation has already taken place in the resurrection of Jesus, to which attention turns now.

3.3.2. *THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS FROM THE DEAD*

The divine sonship of Jesus is established only when the peculiarity of his self-differentiation from the Father is historically confirmed by his resurrection from the dead as well as by his earthly claim to authority. For Bultmann this event is an expression of the significance of the cross.⁸⁵ Barth understands it as "the revelation of the mystery of the preceding time of the life and death of the human Jesus".⁸⁶ Pannenberg, however, perceives it as God's confirmation of the pre-Easter person and activity of Jesus. This confirmation does not simply disclose a meaning that had previously been hidden, but was still present, apart from the resurrection. It rather determines what the meaning was of the earthly person and activity of Jesus, namely, that in his entire historical life Jesus dedicated himself to the Father and his Lordship,⁸⁷ thus being the "Son".⁸⁸ Hence, without the Easter event, the apostles would have had no christology.

⁸⁴ See the section on "Jesus' Self-differentiation from the Father as the Inner Basis of His Divine Sonship" in chapter two.

⁸⁵ R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology", *Kerygma and Myth*, vol. I (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), 38f.

⁸⁶ *CD*, III/2, 118ff., esp. 131ff.

⁸⁷ *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 348.

Moltmann charges Pannenberg with making this constitutive significance of the resurrection as an alternative to a christology based on the pre-Easter history of Jesus.⁸⁹ This criticism, however, has overlooked Pannenberg's strong point, namely, the close connection of the resurrection to the pre-Easter history.⁹⁰ Pannenberg finds the distinctive significance of the resurrection only in its reference back to the earthly person and ministry of Jesus. This reference is not an addition to the resurrection but is inseparable from it, since it was the Crucified Jesus who was raised.⁹¹

For Pannenberg the divine confirmation means a repudiation of the accusation that was brought against Jesus. Jesus did not make himself equal to God. He rather differentiated himself from the Father by his subordination to the Father so that he might serve the Lordship of the Father. Precisely in this way, he is righteous before God as the "Son".

Further, by the Easter event God vindicated Jesus against the condemnation by the Romans that he was a messianic pretender in revolt against Roman domination and his subsequent execution on that charge. The title "Messiah" is related to that of "Son"⁹² because in the Jewish tradition the latter does not connote Jesus' nature, but his function, namely, to exercise God's Lordship.⁹³ However, it was "reinterpreted in terms of the suffering

⁸⁸ Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 294; Neie, *op. cit.*, 77.

⁸⁹ Moltmann, *op. cit.*, 173. Cf., *ST-II*, 344; the epilogue to the 5th edition of *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 417f.

⁹⁰ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 294; Neie, *op. cit.*, 80-85.

⁹¹ *ST-II*, 344.

⁹² *AC*, 62. For Pannenberg the sonship in the Second Psalm means an act of adoption. As Yahweh's son, the king assumes Yahweh's Lordship on his behalf. Cf. 2:7-8; 110:1.

⁹³ *AC*, 63-64.

obedience of the Crucified.”⁹⁴ Jesus was confirmed as the one to whom God has delegated his Lordship and the exercise of his will.⁹⁵ This is the point of his exaltation to messianic dignity by institution into full exercise of divine sonship. But, since the exaltation corroborates the divine vindication of Jesus by his resurrection, the messiahship is not a new phase that follows, cancels, and leaves behind that of his passion, but is paradoxically related to the cross. This enables the Fourth Gospel to express the crucifixion itself as exaltation.⁹⁶ This expression, for Pannenberg, is possible only in the light of the resurrection.⁹⁷

Moreover, God’s confirmation of Jesus by his resurrection extends to the pre-Easter claim of Jesus to authority.⁹⁸ Koch considers this confirmation as dubious: “Is not the fulfilment of Jesus’ prophecies (and hence the confirmation of his person and destiny) expected primarily through the coming of the Kingdom?”⁹⁹ In response to this question, Pannenberg contends with Wilkens that Jesus’ claim is retroactively confirmed in Jesus’ resurrection because the future of God and his Lordship are proleptically present in the event.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Koch does not find either the priority of prolepsis to

⁹⁴ *ST-II*, 365.

⁹⁵ *AC*, 63.

⁹⁶ Cf. John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32f.

⁹⁷ *ST-II*, 365.

⁹⁸ *AC*, 63. This is rightly pointed out by Tupper (*op. cit.*, 294), and Grenz (*op. cit.*, 119).

⁹⁹ Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of the Apocalyptic* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 151 (n. 19).

¹⁰⁰ *AC*, 63. Cf. U. Wilkens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, vol. 1. (Zurich/ Neukirchen, 1978-82), 59, cited in *ST-II*, 365. For Pannenberg this is in keeping with the starting point for the christological assertions of the New Testament, *JGM*, 133-58.

exaltation or the convergence of prolepsis with an eschatological incarnation in Pannenberg.¹⁰¹ But Pannenberg maintains,

The special character of the proleptic event of the resurrection of Jesus should then be sought in its full participation in the reality of eschatological life. The provisional aspect, by which even this event is still only prolepsis, consists simply in this – but what does ‘simply’ mean here! – that here the eschatological reality of life appeared only in an individual, and not yet in all mankind and the world as a whole.¹⁰²

Hence, the filial relationship to the Father rather extends back to the actual beginning of his earthly existence.¹⁰³ Jesus’ earthly proclamation of the imminence of God’s Kingdom does not accord with his accusers’ condemnation of Jesus as a blasphemer. But the strands of Jesus’ history are linked in the resurrection.¹⁰⁴ The concepts of his birth and his baptism as the basis of his divine sonship do not conflict with one another or with the fact that Jesus was invested with the dignity of sonship by his resurrection.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Koch emphasises the importance of interrelating prolepsis with exaltation more than Pannenberg and the necessity of referring the future complete confirmation of Jesus’ expectation to the *eschaton*. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 275-76.

¹⁰² W. Pannenberg, “Response to the Discussion”, *Theology as History*, New Frontiers in Theology, ed. J. B. Cobb, Jr. and J. M. Robinson, vol. III (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 263.

¹⁰³ *ST-II*, 365-66. Cf. *JGM*, 137.

¹⁰⁴ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 294.

¹⁰⁵ *ST-II*, 366. Pannenberg explicated the relationship of the retroactive confirmation by the resurrection to the problems of adoption, baptism, and the virgin birth in detail in his *JGM*, 133-58. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 170-71. First, the problem of adoption is inherent in the divergent New Testament usage of the title Son of God. Pannenberg focuses on the unity of the primitive Christian history of traditions in which the title developed. The early church understood the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as the decisive point in the history of his relation to God. Jesus himself was now designated the Son of Man, the future Messiah, and the exalted Lord. The incisive significance of the resurrection for christology is expressed in the “two-stage christology” of Rom. 1:3f. While the earthly Jesus is designated as “Son of David”, the resurrected Jesus is designated as “Son of God”. The divine sonship of Jesus already set him apart from the multitude of other men by the fact that he was Son of David. “Thus a continuity of the pre-Easter Jesus with the exalted Lord is perceived.” But the

Pannenberg's view of this retroactive confirmation is not restricted to epistemology, but extends to ontological confirmation.¹⁰⁶ "Apart from the resurrection from the dead Jesus would not be God, even though from the perspective of the resurrection, he is retrospectively one with God in his whole pre-Easter life."¹⁰⁷ "Until his resurrection, Jesus' unity with God was hidden . . . because the ultimate decision about it had not been given."¹⁰⁸ Through his resurrection it is decided, not only so far as our knowledge is concerned, but with respect to reality, that Jesus is one with God and retroactively that he was also already one with God previously.¹⁰⁹

concept of adoption, according to which Jesus received divinity in the resurrection, obscures the confirmatory character of the Easter event with reference to the earthly life of Jesus. "He was not only unrecognisable before Easter, but he would not have been who he was without the Easter event." See *JGM*, 137-41, 321.

Second, the tradition of the resurrection sees it in continuity with Jesus' pre-Easter activity. However, the baptismal tradition did not originate from a projection back into the earthly life of Jesus, but sees his unity with God already established in the reception of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism. But, Pannenberg reasons, although Jesus had experienced the endowment of the Spirit in baptism and thus his claim to authority might have originated in it, it would not constitute the origin of his unity with God. The retroactive confirmation of the resurrection implies that Jesus' person cannot be separated from God in any way or at any time. See *ibid.*, 137-141.

Third, the concept of the virgin birth attempts to find the peculiarity of Jesus precisely in the mode of his birth. However, Pannenberg claims in line with many Protestant theologians that this contradicts the christology of the incarnation of the preexistent Son of God who bound himself to the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth. Consequently, it refuses the antiadoptionistic and antidocetic thought to express that Jesus was the Son of God from the very beginning. Pannenberg places the ground of Christian faith on the resurrection, not the virgin birth. Cf. *ibid.*, 141-50; *AC*, 71-77. Pannenberg's view of the virgin birth is criticised. For instance, Kenneth Heintz charges Pannenberg with taking the virgin birth out of its theological context, "Pannenberg: Theology 'from Below' and the Virgin Birth", *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976): 181. Raymond Brown also argues against Pannenberg that the virgin birth alone could bring about the incarnation of a preexistent one, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: Paulist, 1973), 43. Delwin Brown maintains that even if the virgin birth story in Matthew and Luke is intended to express Jesus' birth as the beginning of the preexistent Son, it does not follow that one who accept the doctrine has to intend so, *The Divine Trinity* (LaSalle, Israel: Open Court, 1985), 122-23. Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 139.

¹⁰⁶ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 119. Cf. Neie, *op. cit.*, 80.

¹⁰⁷ *JGM*, 224. Tupper correctly indicates this point, *op. cit.*, 167.

¹⁰⁸ *JGM*, 321.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 135-36.

Galloway argues that in the light of the resurrection there is no alternative but to admit the identity of Jesus with God. He analyses the reasons for this.¹¹⁰ First, the attribute of being the divine son is *par excellence* an attribute which applies to his person in the whole of his extended identity in time. "The light that falls back on the pre-Easter Jesus from the resurrection involves his person as a whole."¹¹¹ Second, in his eternal relation to God, who occupies a real time but is not limited to time as humans are, he was already one with God. Third, the resurrection anticipates the end of history which will finally reveal one true God. If there is identity of essence between Jesus and God, the experience of the distinction between himself and God in his earthly life belongs to the inner life of God.¹¹² The ontological retroactive confirmation is based on his view of the ontological primacy of the future.¹¹³ All beings and events are eventuated from the ultimate future.¹¹⁴ According to Grenz, for Pannenberg not "only the meaning of the events but also their actual essence changes in the context of history, so that the final essence is now present only in the form of an anticipation based on the appearance in history of what occurs at the end of history."¹¹⁵

Olson criticises that Pannenberg's retroactive confirmation "has more in common with adoptionism than with classical incarnational christology."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ See Galloway, *op. cit.*, 82-83.

¹¹¹ *JGM*, 141.

¹¹² Galloway, *op. cit.*, 100-01.

¹¹³ See the section on "Other Theological and Philosophical Influences" in chapter one.

¹¹⁴ For Pannenberg this eschatological approach to creation culminates in the divine love of the Kingdom of God. *TKG*, 70.

¹¹⁵ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 119.

¹¹⁶ Roger E. Olson, "The Human Self-realisation of God: Hegelian Elements in Pannenberg's Christology" *Perspective in Religious Studies* 13 (1986): 221.

However, this overlooks the special significance given by Pannenberg to the fact that Jesus' dedication to the Father originates from the eternity of the intertrinitarian life of God.¹¹⁷

Pannenberg's correlation of Jesus' resurrection to the cross is conceivable. Jesus' earthly claim to authority in his proclamation of the imminence of God's Lordship, Jesus' passion and suffering on the cross, and his resurrection as the Christ events constitute the revelation of God. Nonetheless, Pannenberg's view of God's retroactive confirmation does not avoid problems. Above all, it is inconsistent with his intertrinitarian thought according to which the cross is the inner basis on which Jesus' identity as the Son is established and disclosed. The concept of the trinitarian reciprocal self-distinction is not only the mode of the trinitarian existence but also that of the way by which the triune God discloses himself.¹¹⁸ This problem forces one to argue against Pannenberg that the pre-Easter history of Jesus itself, insofar as it is the history of his self-distinction from the Father, constitutes noetically and ontologically his divine sonship. Jesus as the Son existed already throughout his earthly course. This is finally affirmed by God in Jesus' resurrection as one of the Christ events. The correlation between Jesus' resurrection and his pre-Easter person is meaningfully understood only when this intertrinitarian character is presupposed.

Second, Pannenberg's concept of the retroactive confirmation has difficulty in explaining a noetical and ontological tension between the human Jesus and the eternal Son before the resurrection. This is because Jesus'

¹¹⁷ Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 139-40.

¹¹⁸ *Systematische Theologie*, vol. I, 337.

dedication to the Father is retroactively demonstrated only by the Easter event. However, the notion of the unity of the immanent and economic trinitarian relations enables one to argue that Jesus' identity as the Son must be established only by the *historical* reality of Jesus' dedication to the Father since it is the historical embodiment of the eternal Sonship. Thus the earthly dedication of Jesus itself reveals his essential unity with God even before the resurrection. Therefore the retroactive enforcement of the meaning of Jesus' pre-Easter life by the resurrection is probably thinkable in a theological sense, but not in a historical sense.

Third, in Pannenberg's view of the retroactive confirmation there is a danger of regarding the identity of Jesus as ontologically getting closer to God before the events of the crucifixion and the resurrection. Since Jesus' identity as the Son is retroactively decided by the Easter event, it must be seen to be open before those events. But within the intertrinitarian outlook the earthly life of Jesus as an expression of his self-distinction from the Father is the mode of his existence as the Son in the world. Thus Jesus was truly and ontologically the Son in his pre-Easter life. Since Jesus was the Son, he rose from the dead, not vice versa.

The confirmation of the meaning of the pre-Easter person and history of Jesus by Jesus' resurrection requires that it have its own content. What is the nature of Jesus' resurrection? ¹¹⁹ Pannenberg understands the reality of Jesus' resurrection appearances as a completely unknown destiny. Since it

¹¹⁹ Cf. Pannenberg deals with this theme in his monograph *JGM*, 66-73 and in *ST-II*, 343-63. See Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Resurrection and Reality in the Thought of Wolfhart Pannenberg", *Heythrop Journal* 24 (1983): 1-18; James T. Bridges, "Pannenberg's Theology of Resurrection", *Human Destiny and Resurrection in Pannenberg and Rahner* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 158-205.

refers metaphorically to an event whose essence remains hidden, like a waking from sleep, it cannot be perceived empirically "on this side of death".¹²⁰ It is thus differentiated from the revivification of the corpse. This shift to metaphor, Michalson criticises, basically follows Bultmann's position,¹²¹ because it places the event into "a special history" so that it becomes the clue to the meaning of all history.¹²² This criticism, however, is unconvincing. Pannenberg does not intend by this "resurrection" to denote only a metaphor but a tangible, analogous relationship between the phenomenon of life and the hope of resurrection, that is, the fulfilment of the deeper meaning of life itself.¹²³ Further, in his *Systematische Theologie*, Pannenberg correctly focuses on another New testament concept, that is, new life, a non-metaphorical expression of the metaphorical term "resurrection".¹²⁴ Since life in the full sense has its source in the Spirit of God and entails fellowship with God, Pannenberg, following Paul, understands the risen Lord as a *spiritual* body.¹²⁵ Although the transformation of the physical body into a

¹²⁰ Pannenberg says, "The intended reality and the mode in which it is expressed in language are essentially different.", *JGM*, 75.

¹²¹ Gordon E. Michalson indicates that Pannenberg's attack on "the principle of analogy" is expected to lead to the concept of the resuscitation of a corpse, "Pannenberg on the Resurrection and Historical Method", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 33 (1980): 355-59.

¹²² See Robert North, "Pannenberg's Historicising Exegesis", *Heythrop Journal* 12 (1971): 396.

¹²³ W. Pannenberg, "Nachwort" in Ignace Berten, *Geschichte, Offenbarung, Glaube*, trans. Sigrid Martin (Munich: Claudius Verlag, 1970), 138, cited in Tupper, *op. cit.*, 279. Cf. Peter C. Hodgson, "Pannenberg on Jesus" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 36 (1968), 376; Tupper, *op. cit.*, 278-79.

¹²⁴ As Grenz points indicates (*op. cit.*, 242), his monograph focuses on the background to the metaphor in the apocalyptic literature and to the question of resuscitation versus transformation, *JGM*, 74-88.

¹²⁵ W. Royce Clark charges Pannenberg with failing to clarify the event of resurrection because this concept is not a symbol with an obvious meaning., "Christian Images of Fulfilment: Healing within Anticipation", *Religion in Life* 46 (1977): 188, 192. However, Pannenberg means by this term the participation of the whole human in the fullness of the divine life of the creator Spirit. Cf. Grenz correctly points this out, *op. cit.*, 141.

spiritual body is so radical that there is no substantial or structural continuity from the old existence to the new, it occurs to the physical body.¹²⁶ Following Kümmel, Pannenberg argues in opposition to Bultmann¹²⁷ for a historical continuity. The “historical continuity” here means only a connection between the beginning and the end point, regardless of how radically this process may be conceived. Since this new life takes place in the future, Jesus’ resurrection is linked to his exaltation to participate in God’s Lordship, which primitive Christianity expressed by linking Jesus to the figures of eschatological expectation. Jewish tradition did not connect this exaltation to the resurrection from the dead. Nor did its expectation of an eschatological resurrection rely on the resurrection of one individual before the end of this aeon. But primitive Christianity understood Jesus’ resurrection as the beginning of end-time events in that the future of God is present in the exaltation.¹²⁸ This event is the ultimate demonstration of the divinity of Israel’s God as the one God of all men.¹²⁹ Therefore, it thrusts into the end of history, rather than being a type of

¹²⁶ This forces John B. Cobb to raise the question: “where is the resurrected body of Jesus?” Although Pannenberg locates this body in the future, “the future must be posited as already extant or as an eternity alongside of time or abrogating the reality of time in a way that Pannenberg usually wished to avoid.”, “Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Jesus – God and Man”, *Journal of Religion* 49 (1969): 197. Pannenberg articulates the present location of the risen body in terms of the church as a prolepsis of the future Kingdom of God. The exalted Lord is present in a concealed sense in the communion of the faithful. Cf. Tupper suggests an alternative to this, that Jesus is resurrected into the future of God, *op. cit.*, 282. For more detail about this issue, see Tupper, *ibid.*, 280-83.

¹²⁷ Cf. W. G. Kümmel, in Lietmann, *An die Korinther I/II*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949), 195. Also, see Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 198.

¹²⁸ According to Grenz, Pannenberg understands Jesus’ resurrection as the beginning point for a connection between Jesus as the bearer of the future of God and the coming of the future itself, and for a shift by the early church in the focal point of the relationship of the believers to God – from the expectation of the eschatological future to the presence of the resurrected Lord in his church, *op. cit.*, 118.

¹²⁹ *JGM*, 73. Italics added.

“metahistory”.¹³⁰ This “corresponds to the *proleptic* aspect of the whole history of Jesus.”¹³¹

Clark criticises Pannenberg’s concept of the uniqueness of Jesus’ resurrection because it ignores the fact that the Fourth Gospel does not differentiate Jesus’ resurrection from the resuscitation of others.¹³² To be sure, John correlates these two. Nevertheless, John intends to teach that the new life, which was brought about by the Easter event is higher than that of others. Hence the concept of resuscitation simplifies too much the reality of the resurrection. This enables one to interpret Pannenberg’s strict refusal to relate Jesus’ resurrection to the concept of a return to earthly existence.¹³³

What is the meaning of the event of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead?¹³⁴ In his dogmatics Pannenberg is less dependent on a specific view of apocalypticism than in his earlier writings, because the reality of Jesus’ resurrection appearances¹³⁵ was fundamentally different from the Jewish idea of eschatological resurrection to life.¹³⁶ Yet he still admits that the Jewish expectation of a resurrection from the dead provided a conceptual framework

¹³⁰ See R. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 22-23.

¹³¹ *ST-II*, 351.

¹³² W. Royce Clark, “Jesus, Lazarus, and Others: Resuscitation or Resurrection?”, *Religion in Life* 49 (1980): 230-41. Cf. Hodgson, *op. cit.*, 378.

¹³³ Grenz rightly indicates this point, *op. cit.*, 141.

¹³⁴ See Donald G. Dawe, “Christology in Contemporary Systematic Theology”, *Interpretation* 26 (1972): 269-72.

¹³⁵ Cf. Pannenberg deals with this theme in his monograph *JGM*, 66-73 and in *ST-II*, 343-63. See Elizabeth A. Johnson, “Resurrection and Reality in the Thought of Wolfhart Pannenberg”, *Heythrop Journal* 24 (1983): 1-18; James T. Bridges, “Pannenberg’s Theology of Resurrection”, *Human Destiny and Resurrection in Pannenberg and Rahner* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 158-205.

¹³⁶ Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 143.

for the Christian Easter message.¹³⁷ This event carries its own meaning within its sphere in the history of traditions. Only thus can Jesus' resurrection be the basis of faith without being supplemented by an external interpretation added to it.¹³⁸

For Jesus' Jewish contemporaries, insofar as they shared the apocalyptic expectation, the occurrence of the resurrection did not first need to be interpreted, but for them it spoke meaningfully in itself: If such a thing had happened, one could no longer doubt what it meant.¹³⁹

Within the apocalyptic context, the Easter event means: the beginning of the end, the confirmation and exaltation of Jesus by God himself, the ultimate demonstration of the divinity of Israel's God as the one God of all men.¹⁴⁰ The link¹⁴¹ of Jesus' resurrection to the more general expectation of an end-time resurrection of the dead forces Pannenberg to see that for its final verification the Easter message needs an eschatological resurrection of the dead.¹⁴² This

¹³⁷ See *JGM*, 66-73. For a critical debate of this theme up to 1972, see Tupper, *op. cit.*, 268-72. Cf. David Polk, *On the way to God: An Exploration into the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 196-206.

¹³⁸ *JGM*, 73.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁴⁰ For Pannenberg, in the historical nexus of event and experience, event and meaning belong together. The latter is by no means external to the event or arbitrary. See *ibid.*, 73-74 and *ST-II*, 344.

¹⁴¹ Vögel doubts that expectation of a general resurrection would be a sufficient horizon of interpretation for the Easter appearances. Instead, he emphasises expectation of the resurrection of the righteous to life, *Wie kam es zum Osterglauben?*, 107ff, 110, 112ff., cited in *ST-II*, 349. Cf. *ibid.*, 350.

¹⁴² For Pannenberg's discussion of the relationship between Jesus' resurrection and the general resurrection, see "Constructive and Critical Functions of Christian Eschatology", *Harvard Theological Review* 77 (1984): 125-26; *JGM*, 106-108. Cf. Paul Van Buren, *Discerning the Way: Theology of the Jewish Christian Reality* (New York: Seabury, 1980), 43; W. R. Clark, "Christian Images of Fulfilment: Healing within Anticipation", *Religion in Life* 46 (1977): 194; William J. Abraham, *Divine Revelation and the Limits of Historical Criticism* (New York: Oxford, 1982), 212.

future-oriented view of the resurrection is similar to the proposition of Moltmann. For him Jesus' resurrection is not a fixed and finished event of the past, but an event which in its ambivalent historical form looked forward to a universal and world-changing hope in the future.¹⁴³ But Pannenberg's view requires a more exegetical substantiation. What is the exegetical basis for grounding Paul's concept of the glorified body on the Jewish apocalypticism?¹⁴⁴ The non-apocalyptic view of Jesus' resurrection is more characteristic of the teaching of the New Testament.¹⁴⁵

The Easter message presupposes the universal validity of Jewish expectation of the eschatological resurrection of the dead at least in its basic features. Pannenberg finds evidence for this validity in the account of the reaction of the philosophers of Athens to Paul's proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus.¹⁴⁶ Pannenberg admits that the apocalyptic concept of the end may be untenable in many details. But this does not nullify the anthropological argument for a hope of an after-death-life and the appropriateness of including human corporeality in this hope even in the modern world.¹⁴⁷ This is because its fundamental elements, for instance, the expectation of the end, the resurrection of the dead, and the last judgement are comprehensible to modern humans. However, can this really be relevant for the modern non-Christian world? As Burhen correctly indicates, the

¹⁴³ Moltmann, "Gott und Auferstehung", in *Perspektiven der Theologie, Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Munich, 1968), 44, cited in *ST-II*, 351.

¹⁴⁴ See George E. Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 127, 138; Hodgson, op. cit.; 376-78; Cobb, op. cit.: 199-200.

¹⁴⁵ See Peter Selby, *Look for the Living* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 144, 149-50.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Acts 17:32.

¹⁴⁷ Pannenberg deals with this theme in detail in his article, "Constructive and Critical Functions of Christian Eschatology": 119-39.

apocalyptic perspective “is shared by few contemporary philosophers and is clearly not that of the majority of historians.”¹⁴⁸ What are the grounds for him to regard the apocalyptic context as the only framework in which to perceive Jesus’ resurrection? Further, Pannenberg’s concept of the totality of history, as George Newlands correctly puts it, is “puzzling rather than illuminating.”¹⁴⁹

For Pannenberg the confirmation of Jesus’ divine sonship by his resurrection is not theological, but *historical*. Thus, unless the event *actually* occurred, then all discussions of its significance are meaningless. This is a remarkable insight. Within the concept of the Christ event as the historical mediation of the eternal immanent and economic trinitarian relations, all the Christ events including Jesus’ resurrection as historical events constitute the revelation of God and establish his divine sonship. Modern theology tends to deny the historicity of the Easter event.¹⁵⁰ Bultmann believes the Easter event to have no historical ground because it takes place within the experiential world of the disciples. Barth understands it as a historical event which is conceived by a “leap of faith”. But Pannenberg correctly emphasises it as an objective historical event in both his monograph and dogmatics.¹⁵¹

An argument in favour of the historicity of this event first requires a clarification of the nature of historicity.¹⁵² One agrees with Pannenberg that

¹⁴⁸ Burhen, *op. cit.*: 368-79.

¹⁴⁹ George M. Newlands, *The Theology of the Love of God* (London: Collins, 1980), 182.

¹⁵⁰ Pannenberg, in line with contemporary theology, has taken the Easter event as foundational for christological inquiries. He himself indicates this in his response to Peter Hodgson’s methodological criticism.

¹⁵¹ See *JGM*, 88-106; *ST-II*, 352-63. Cf. Galloway, *op. cit.*, 100, 75-77.

¹⁵² Tupper gives an excellent summary on the problem of Pannenberg’s concept of Jesus’ resurrection, *op. cit.*, 274-85. See also Grenz, *op. cit.*, 118-19. See Polk, *op. cit.*, 206-44; Dawe, *op. cit.*, 269-72; Herbert Burhenn, “Pannenberg’s Argument for the Historicity of the Resurrection”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40 (1972): 368-79; Frederick

every statement about Jesus' resurrection implies a claim to historicity because the Christian understanding of it assumes its occurrence in the tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem, not in a supra-historical realm.¹⁵³ This is supported by the fact that any assertion of a historical event also includes a historical claim and exposes itself to testing.¹⁵⁴ Further, a claim concerning historicity does not necessarily mean that it is analogous to everyday occurrences.¹⁵⁵ Diderot, Hume, and Lessing doubt the historicity of Jesus' resurrection because there are no contemporary analogues for it. Ernst Troeltsch similarly interprets this historicity as dubious, for the resurrection appeared radically to disrupt the *Gleichartigkeit* of history.¹⁵⁶ Pannenberg, however, argues that "the principle of analogy" introduces an unwarranted "constriction of historical inquiry". This is because it is based on a "biased" and "anthropocentric" world view which takes a human standpoint as the only normative one within history.¹⁵⁷ This viewpoint is radically restricted in its scope, and thus cannot be allowed to define a fixed view of reality. Hence a claim to historicity is not affected by its reference to the otherness of the eschatological reality of resurrection life. The assertion of its historicity is concerned theologically with the fact that the

Herzog, *Understanding God: The Key Issues in Present-Day Protestant Thought* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 62-63.

¹⁵³ Pannenberg is indebted to E. G. Collingwood for this understanding, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946).

¹⁵⁴ *ST-II*, 360.

¹⁵⁵ *JGM*, 137. For more detail, see *ibid.*, 88-106. Cf. "Redemptive Event and History", in *BQiT-I*, 50-80; Also see J. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 243ff.; D. F. Fuller, "The Resurrection of Jesus and the Historical Method", *Journal of Bible and Religion* 34 (1966): 18-24; Ted Peters, "The Use of Analogy in Historical Method", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 35 (1973): 474-82; Burhenn, *op. cit.*: 368-79; Gordon E. Michalson, *op. cit.*: 345-59.

¹⁵⁶ This "principle of analogy" inevitably undermines any claims to the uniqueness of the reality of Jesus' resurrection because this principle is taken as the only way to understand the past. Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believers* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 32. See also Michalson, *op. cit.*

overcoming of death by the new eschatological life has actually taken place in this world and human history. Moreover, a claim to historicity does not repudiate its disputability. This is because all historical statements about Jesus' resurrection are provisional in character since the eschatological reality has not yet been universally accepted.¹⁵⁸ This does not mean that the uniqueness of the reality of Jesus' resurrection cannot be historically maintained. There are valid reasons which substantiate the historicity of Jesus' resurrection.¹⁵⁹ Finally, the historicity of Jesus' resurrection depends on the understanding of reality. Pannenberg is in keeping with the Pauline view that unless it is possible for the dead to rise, then the resurrection of Jesus is not to be understood as a fact.¹⁶⁰ All these understandings force Pannenberg to "opt for the ability of historical investigation for the probability of Jesus' resurrection", rather than "for the neutrality of historical research".¹⁶¹ It is to be noted here that Pannenberg's reasons for asserting the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus are not conclusive. Pannenberg states, "I attach absolutely no conclusive power for historical judgement to the arguments for the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus."¹⁶² The contention that Jesus' resurrection is a historical event is to affirm that Jesus has been raised from the dead.

¹⁵⁷ W. Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History", *BQiT*-I, 45.

¹⁵⁸ J. Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 223-40ff. See R. J. Bauckham, "Moltmann's Messianic Christology", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991): 519-31.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 284.

¹⁶⁰ See Pannenberg, "Constructive and Critical Functions of Christian Eschatology": 119-39.

¹⁶¹ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 295.

¹⁶² "Nachwort", 135, cited in Tupper, *op. cit.*, 284.

It can be argued with Pannenberg that the historicity of Jesus' resurrection can be evidenced by two Easter traditions.¹⁶³ The first is the tradition of the appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples found in Paul.¹⁶⁴ Paul's account of Jesus' appearances in 1 Cor. 15:1-11, according to Pannenberg, is the original behind the Gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection.¹⁶⁵ This is because in the oldest New Testament witness Jesus' resurrection and his ascension form a single event. Also, the fact that the Jerusalem disciples recognised Paul's apostleship as having been commissioned by the Lord confirms the appearance of the risen Lord to him. Paul seeks to prove the historicity of Jesus' resurrection by naming witnesses.¹⁶⁶ However, Grass insists that Paul does not offer what can be estimated as a historical proof in the modern sense.¹⁶⁷ Pannenberg raises the question here: "Does not the vital interest of the historian already lie at the basis of all historical investigation even though such an interest certainly cannot be permitted to prejudice the results of the inquiry?"¹⁶⁸ For him, there is the proximity of Paul's accounts to the events which he described. Paul's earlier personal experiences, probably referring to his visit to Jerusalem, were

¹⁶³ See *JGM*, 88-106; *ST-II*, 352-63.

¹⁶⁴ See Burhenn, op. cit.: 368-79; Hodgson, op. cit., 376-78; Cobb, op. cit.: 199-200; Laurence W. Wood, "History and Hermeneutics: A Pannenbergian Perspective", *Wesley Theological Journal* 16 (1981): 12.

¹⁶⁵ In Pannenberg's view, the resurrection in the Gospel accounts is characterised as visionary experiences. This does not mean, however, that the experiences have no reality because all visionary experiences cannot be regarded as psychological projection with no basis in reality. Cf. *ST-II*, 354. Cf. *JGM*, 92.

¹⁶⁶ See W. G. Kümmel in H. Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I/2*, 192, in reference to Lietzmann, 77; K. H. Rengstorf, *Die Auferstehung Jesu*, 47, cited in *JGM*, 89. See also Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 295.

¹⁶⁷ Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 3rd edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 96, cited in *JGM*, 89.

¹⁶⁸ *JGM*, 89.

close enough for him to document them accurately because they were only six to eight years after the events. Furthermore, Paul uses “formulations coined even previously”, which most likely arose prior to his visit to Jerusalem.

In view of the age of the formulated tradition used by Paul and the proximity of Paul to the events, the assumption that appearances of the resurrected Lord were really experienced by a number of members of the primitive Christian community and not perhaps freely invented in the course of later legendary development has good historical foundation.¹⁶⁹

It is not acceptable, accordingly, to argue that parallels in the history of religions are responsible for the emergence of the primitive Christian message about Jesus' resurrection. Pannenberg approvingly cites the findings of J. Leipoldt, “One cannot doubt that the disciples were convinced that they had seen the resurrected Lord. Otherwise the origin of the community in Jerusalem and with it of the church becomes an enigma.”¹⁷⁰

The fact that the apostles experienced the appearances of the resurrected Jesus does not explain what kind of experiences these may have been. This raises the question of the content of the appearances. Pannenberg suggests five elements from analysing the accounts of the Pauline Epistles and Acts: the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, a *soma pneumatikon*, an appearance from heaven, “light phenomenon”, and Christophany connected with the spoken word.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁷⁰ Johannes Leipoldt, “Zu den Auferstehungsgeschichten”, *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 73 (1948), 737, cited in *ST-II*, 91.

With regard to the character of the Easter appearances, Pannenberg agrees with Grass that it is characteristic of a *vision*¹⁷¹ since it is not visible to everyone. The term “vision” can only express something about the subjective mode of experience, not something about the reality of an event experienced in this form. This does not mean, however, that it is just an illusion or hallucination, nor is it the result of the imaginative projections of the disciples, as the so-called “subjective vision hypothesis” claims. He reasons,

If by “vision” one understands a psychological event that is without a corresponding extrasubjective reality, then one can certainly not presuppose such a “subjective” concept of vision for the resurrection appearances as self-evident. Only if the corresponding psychiatric point of contact can be inferred from the texts could this understanding of vision be used.¹⁷²

“Subjective vision hypothesis” argues that the faith of the disciples could have survived the crisis of Jesus’ death. But this is not psychologically sound even in consideration of the firm expectation of the imminent end of the world with which Jesus presumably died and in which his disciples lived. This is because the disciples’ faith in Jesus was undoubtedly destroyed by the death of Jesus. Moreover, this argument cannot explain the origin of the Easter message of an eschatological resurrection within history, the number of the appearances of Jesus, and their temporal distribution.

¹⁷¹ Grass, *op. cit.*, 229.

¹⁷² JGM, 95.

Schillebeeckx understands the appearances as the conversion visions of the disciples.¹⁷³ However, it can be asserted that the tradition of the appearances, not a *parousia* kerygma, is the starting point and basis of the conversion of the disciples. Pannenberg and Moltmann are correct to contend that the Easter appearances are not to be explained by the faith of the disciples, but, conversely, the faith of the disciples by the appearances¹⁷⁴ because the appearances formed the kerygma of the resurrection of the Crucified.¹⁷⁵ Hence the vision of the disciples is not subjective, but objective. "The historian still remains obligated to reconstruct the historical correlation of the event that led to the emergence of primitive Christianity."¹⁷⁶ Since there is an "element of truth" in the apocalyptic expectation of resurrection, Pannenberg reasons, the reality of Jesus' resurrection is to be considered as the best explanation for the events. This is why he is able to speak of the resurrection of Jesus as a historical event.¹⁷⁷

The second tradition is the empty tomb found in the Gospels. Pesch interprets the empty tomb as a reconstructed story providing a scenario for a pre-existing truth¹⁷⁸ because "the story of faith in the resurrection of Jesus presupposes his resurrection on the third day, which in turn excludes the idea

¹⁷³ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (London: Collins, 1979), 369-70.

¹⁷⁴ Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 217. Cf. *JGM*, 96.

¹⁷⁵ *ST-II*, 356.

¹⁷⁶ *JGM*, 97.

¹⁷⁷ Pannenberg says, "If the emergence of primitive Christianity, which, apart from other traditions, is also traced back by Paul to appearances of the resurrected Jesus, can be understood in spite of all critical examination of the tradition only if one examines it in light of the eschatological hope for a resurrection from the dead, then that which is so designated is a historical event, even if we do not know anything more particular about it. Then an event that is expressible only in the language of the eschatological expectation is to be asserted as a historical occurrence.", *ibid.*, 98.

¹⁷⁸ R. Pesch, *Markus*, vol. II, 521, cited in *ST-II*, 356.

of finding his body in the tomb.”¹⁷⁹ Hubert Richards and Fergus Kerr also reject its historicity because the Easter message of the apostles did not contain the report of an empty tomb.¹⁸⁰ Placher contends in line with this view that first century Judaism need not have implied an empty tomb since the apocalyptic literature and Paul never report the empty tomb of Jesus.¹⁸¹ Dummett, however, argues that it was commonly accepted by Christians and Jews. The point at issue was not the fact but the explanation: either Jesus had risen as the apostles maintained, or his body had been stolen to provide the basis of a deception.¹⁸² Bultmann and Grass regard its finding in its earlier form in Mark 16:1-8 as a late Hellenistic legend.¹⁸³ Pannenberg maintains with Campenhausen, Brown, and Fuller¹⁸⁴ that the story became accepted as old, being regarded as a local Jerusalem tradition and an original part of the passion story.¹⁸⁵ In view of the situation of the primitive Christian preaching of the site of the execution and burial, it cannot be seen that “the Christian message of the resurrection could have been spread abroad unless the presupposition of the empty tomb were tenable.”¹⁸⁶ Pannenberg agrees with Moltmann and Althaus that the Easter message that the disciples brought back to Jerusalem could not have been maintained for a single hour if the emptiness

¹⁷⁹ Pesch, “Das ‘leere Grab’”, 17, cited in *ST-II*, 356.

¹⁸⁰ *ST-II*, 357.

¹⁸¹ William C. Placher, “The Present Absence of Christ: Some Thoughts on Pannenberg and Moltmann”, *Encounter* 40 (1979): 172-73.

¹⁸² M. Dummett, “Biblische Exegese und Auferstehung”, *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 13 (1984), 281, cited in *ST-II*, 357.

¹⁸³ Grass, *op. cit.*, 20ff., 173-86. See R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 287ff.

¹⁸⁴ Fuller, *Formation*, 69f.; H. von Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab* (1952, 2nd edition. 1958), cited in *ST-II*, 356.

¹⁸⁵ *ST-II*, 356.

of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned.¹⁸⁷ Paul does not expressly mention the empty tomb. This is, Pannenberg explains, not because he was ignorant of it but because it is of no importance to him, though it is important as a self-evident fact. His primary concern is with Jesus' resurrection and the future destiny of the believers.

Primitive Christian conviction regarding Jesus' resurrection is based on the appearances, not the empty tomb. This does not mean that the empty tradition is not significant for the comprehensive witness to the Easter event. It rather "provides insight into the kind of reality that appeared."¹⁸⁸ One is persuaded by Pannenberg that without accepting the tradition, the appearances of the risen Lord might have been mere hallucination. Thus the two traditions should be seen as substantiating the historical reality of Jesus' resurrection. The historicity of Jesus' resurrection is thus established. This does not mean, however, that the historical question of Jesus' resurrection is thereby closed. Rather it provides a sound historical response to that question that will be discussed until the eschatological general resurrection.¹⁸⁹

The historicity of Jesus' resurrection is crucial for the divine sonship of Jesus. This is why Pannenberg emphasises the necessity for both a historical-critical research and an apocalyptic framework of meaning. But he faces the problem here: how can both these criteria be met? This problem impels one to focus on the fact that the emphasis on the historicity of Jesus' resurrection by primitive Christianity concerned itself primarily with a call for a faith in the

¹⁸⁶ *JGM*, 100.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 143.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

Incarnate Son in his history, rather than providing simply a historical report, as is the view of Barth. This does not mean, however, that, like Barth, faith is incompatible with a historical inquiry. Rather, it implies that history and faith come together.

3.4. CONCLUSION

The intertrinitarian character of Jesus' identity as the Son has continuously been established. As an analysis has shown, the subordination of the man Jesus to the Father and his Lordship in his earthly life originates in the eternity of God. Thus Jesus is the eternal Son. He by this dedication fulfils the destiny of all humanity, namely, the openness to God, and thus represents all humankind. In this sense he is also the universal Son. Believers participate in his sonship through him when they share his relation of dedication to the Father and his Lordship. The uniqueness of Jesus' subordination to the Father and his royal reign is historically confirmed by his earthly message and the Easter event. The pre-Easter claim of Jesus to authority clarifies Jesus' dedication to the Father in that he claimed that authority only for the Father. He subjected himself to the claim of the future of God and his coming Lordship. However, Jesus' claim to authority is proleptic in the sense that it needs a final future verification. This does not exclude but presupposes its close connection to Jesus' dedication on the cross. The historical event of Jesus' resurrection which is the exaltation to a new life with God retrospectively proves his pre-Easter history as his dedication to the Father and his Lordship. This confirmation also extends to Jesus' earthly claim to authority. Thus his divine sonship is noetically and ontologically confirmed.

It is persuasive when Pannenberg relates Jesus' dedication to the Father and his Lordship to the eternal Son because his obedience to the Father is the historical mediation of the eternal communion of the trinitarian God. Also, this dedication can be seen in terms of its anthropological implication. In addition, Jesus' resurrection must be seen in its correlation to the cross.

But his concept of the retrospective confirmation by the resurrection is not faithful to the intertrinitarian framework. For the path "from below to above" there is a noetical and ontological tension between the human Jesus and the divine Son before the resurrection. However, within the intertrinitarian thought, Jesus' obedience to the Father and his Lordship in his whole life as the historical embodiment of the eternal Son is the basis of his divine sonship. Thus, already in his whole earthly course up to the point of crucifixion Jesus is the eternal Son, and has brought humanity into a new humanity which is made new in his own image. This already-established sonship is first revealed by Jesus' earthly message and finally by Jesus' resurrection.

CHAPTER IV: THE CONCEPT OF RECONCILIATION

Up to now, one has traced the formation of Pannenberg's christology, and established Jesus' identity as the Son of God. Attention now turns to God's action in the history of Jesus for the reconciliation of the world which is dealt with in this and the following three chapters. This chapter defines the concept of reconciliation as it relates to God's Lordship over creation. It is demonstrated that reconciliation is the action of God in the reciprocity of his trinitarian relations to bring humanity under his Lordship in human history. This definition serves as the basis upon which the cross can be argued as the action of the Son to reconcile the world to the Lordship of the Father.

For a substantive background to the subsequent discussion, the nature of the doctrine of reconciliation is first clarified in relation to soteriology and the doctrine of the person of Jesus. The intertrinitarian concept of reconciliation is subsequently considered by drawing attention to reconciliation as the sovereign action of God, to reconciliation directed to the world, and to the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation. Following this is an exploration of the intertrinitarian reconciling action of God in terms of God's intertrinitarian activity bringing about his Lordship in *Universalgeschichte*.

4.1. THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

4.1.1. A FORMULATION OF SOTERIOLOGY

God's salvation is connected to human history. It is mediated in it. Thus it is historical in character. This concept of divine salvation conflicts with the theology of *Heilsgeschichte* as represented by Martin Kähler and Karl Barth, which explains salvation as supra-historical. It also conflicts with existential theology as represented by Rudolf Bultmann, Friedrich Gogarten, and Herbert Braun, which delineates salvation in the subjectivity of personal human existence. Viewed in this way, Pannenberg is correct to conceive the historical nature of God's salvation. God does not break into history in a decisive action of salvation, but works out salvation in the course of human history. History itself is the very mode of God's salvation.¹

God's redemptive acts took place within the universal correlative connection of human history and not in a ghetto of *Heilsgeschichte*, or in a primal history belonging to a dimension which is "oblique" to ordinary history.²

Nevertheless, the historical character of divine salvation does not mean that

¹ Pannenberg argues throughout his book *RaH* that history is not only the mode of God's revelation, but also that of his salvation.

² Timothy Bradshaw, *The Theology of W. Pannenberg: A Trinitarian Synthesis* (Leicester: Theological Students Fellowship, 1988), 41-42.

it can be perceived as history, as Pannenberg asserts it. God's salvation is undoubtedly mediated in the course of human history. *Heilsgeschichte* is thus related with *Universalgeschichte*. But it cannot be identified with the entire course of human history. Its reality goes beyond human history and thus is in tension with human history. Although it overcomes the dualistic view of salvation, Pannenberg's concept still fails to explain this.

Given that divine salvation is historical, it is directed towards a future culmination since history leads to its appointed end. This sets it apart from human achievement which having only a temporal aim keeps humans away from the future reality. How can the relationship between future salvation and present participation in it be clarified?

Jesus teaches that eschatological salvation is realised in his person and his ministry. Future salvation is also already at work in those who set their hope wholly on its presence in the Christ event. But Paul does not describe salvation as being present but relates it to pardon at the future judgement, and thus it remains an object of hope. He rather speaks about justification which rests on the reconciliation in Jesus' death on the cross. It is to be noted here, however, that, according to Pannenberg, even for Paul there is a shift to the present in the idea of participation in future salvation.³ Future salvation has been presently imparted to believers through the apostolic proclamation of the reconciliation brought about by the crucifixion. Hence the concept of participation in the glory of the new life is no

³ ST-II, 401.

longer tied to deliverance from future judgement, but to “the historical event of rescue from the life of sin for a new life by the spirit.”⁴

For sinful humanity, overcoming the opposition to God through the death of Jesus on the cross, which reveals God’s love for the world, is crucial for participation in salvation. In this sense, it can be asserted with Pannenberg that the entire process of imparting salvation can be delineated in terms of reconciliation. Therefore the doctrine of reconciliation is to be regarded as a formulation of soteriology.⁵

4.1.2. A FUNCTION OF CHRISTOLOGY

How can the reconciling significance of the Christ event for the world be known? Is it from the search for the historical person of Jesus Christ or from human experience arising out of faith?

“Jesus for us” is never properly separable from “Jesus in himself”. As a classical axiom expresses, Jesus’ action follows his being (*agere sequitur esse*). Thus his reconciling work does not have any meaning apart from the fact that it is the work of the incarnated Son of God, nor does he exist apart from his saving work. While the New Testament is concerned primarily with Jesus’ saving activity for the world, according to Gerald O’ Collins, the early centuries of Christianity concerned itself chiefly with his being. Yet this does not mean that the New

⁴ Cf. Titus 3:4ff. *ST-II*, 402.

⁵ Stanley J. Grenz correctly points out that Pannenberg’s doctrine of salvation is articulated under the rubric of the doctrine of reconciliation, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York: Oxford, 1990), 126.

Testament excludes the implicit (and sometimes explicit) ontological affirmations, and the Fathers of the Church and the early councils were not interested in the soteriological concerns.⁶

Pannenberg, on this view, correctly correlates what Jesus does with what he is. McGrath vigorously accuses Pannenberg of separating these two.⁷ But this criticism is not persuasive. The reconciling significance of Jesus is closely connected to the person of Jesus since christological titles such as the Messiah, the second Adam, and the Son of the Father already imply his universal soteriological meaning. Soteriology thus articulates Jesus in terms of the human salvation brought through the history of Jesus.⁸ This is evidenced by the structure of his doctrine of reconciliation which is interrelated with the doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ.⁹ This follows the pattern that most modern theologians, particularly Barth, take.

For Barth the person of Jesus Christ is identical with his work as the Reconciler. At the same time, the work of Jesus Christ is determined by the fact that he is very God, very man, and the God-man. The two are mutually and dynamically interpreted. Thus the way of dealing first with his person and then with his work is seen as abstract. Further, Barth does not separate the two even in

⁶ Cf. Gerald O' Collins S. J., *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 17-20, esp. 19.

⁷ Alister E. McGrath, "Christology and Soteriology: A Response to Wolfhart Pannenberg's Critique of the Soteriological Approach to Christology", *Theologische Zeitschrift* 42 (1986): 222-36.

⁸ See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 127.

⁹ *ST-II*, 443. Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 127. Pannenberg deals with this in detail in *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 32-44; *JGM*, 47-49; *ST-II*, 277-97; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 316-36.

the external structure. Calvin begins with the event of incarnation, and then deals with the Virgin birth, the passion, the cross, the resurrection, and the doctrine of two natures and two states. However, Barth begins with the pre-existence of Christ, and deals reversibly with the two natures and the two states mutually. Calvin deals first with the two natures and then with the two states. In dealing with the two states, Calvin considers first the human state of exinanition of the Incarnate and then the divine state of exaltation. But Barth intimately relates the two natures and the two states. Two natures are interpreted through his work of reconciliation in both his humiliated and exalted states. The state of exinanition of the Son of God is not followed by the state of exaltation of the Son of Man. Instead, these two are represented as two sides of the one individual reconciling divine-human work of Jesus Christ. Two aspects of the person of Jesus Christ and the two directions of the work of Jesus Christ are interpreted in mutual correlation.¹⁰ A dialectic method can be seen here.

Following Barth, Pannenberg interprets the person of Jesus Christ “only from the consideration of his earthly work and of the claim contained in his whole activity on the one hand and of his fate in the cross and the resurrection on the other”.¹¹ Christological titles confirm this because they themselves contain reconciling significance. This is why Pannenberg, with Barth, criticises Calvin for

¹⁰ *CD*, IV/ 1, 134f.

¹¹ *JGM*, 209.

his separation of the person and the work of Jesus Christ.¹²

Pannenberg's integration of the two also becomes clear when the trinitarian mutual self-differentiation is viewed as not only the mode of the triune eternal life, but also that of the reconciling action of the trinitarian God. Within this framework, Jesus, by his self-differentiation from the Father, is established as the Son of God, but also reconciles the world to God the Father. Hence the person of Jesus and his reconciling significance always belong together.

If the person and the work of Jesus Christ are interrelated, how can the mutual relationship of the two be explained? For Pannenberg, according to Christoph Schwöbel, "Jesus for us" must be grounded in "Jesus in himself" being established by starting from the past reality of the historical Jesus¹³ because such significance is intrinsic to him and his history.¹⁴ This is based on his theory of meaning. While positivistic historiography reduces historical facts to *bruta facta* void of meaning,¹⁵ his theory perceives fact and meaning as inseparable because events *interpret themselves*.¹⁶ As Colin Gunton observes,¹⁷ the history of Jesus did not contain simply facts, but facts redolent with significance.

¹² This objection is based on exclusive emphasis on the external structure of Calvin's christology. In light of the soteriological approach to the person of Jesus Christ, characteristic of Calvin's christology, the two are interrelated with one another, not separated.

¹³ JGM, 38-49. See Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg", *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, vol. I (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 261.

¹⁴ *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 42.

¹⁵ Herbert Nieie, *The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 16.

¹⁶ Colin Gunton, *Yesterday & Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 24.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

The past reality of Jesus did not consist of brute facts in the positivistic sense, to which arbitrary interpretations, one as good as another, could be added. Rather, meaning already belongs to the activity and fate of Jesus in the original context in the history of traditions within which it occurred, from the perspective of which all subsequent and explicit interpretations can be judged.¹⁸

The historical Jesus, accordingly, is the criterion for the critical examination of all enquiries about what Jesus means for the world.¹⁹ This implies that the significance of Jesus automatically follows from the exposition of what Jesus was. For this reason Pannenberg maintains in both *Grundzüge der Christologie* and *Systematische Theologie* that the doctrine of reconciliation is a function of the doctrine of the person of Jesus, not vice versa.²⁰ The former is an articulation of Jesus in terms of God's reconciling action through Jesus' history.

This is a departure from the view that reduces "Jesus in himself" to "Jesus for us".²¹ F. Schleiermacher approaches the former on the basis of human experience of reconciliation.²² R. Bultmann restricts it to the enquiry into the existential significance of Jesus.²³ P. Tillich conceives it as a function of the latter.²⁴

¹⁸ *JGM*, 49.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30, 49.

²⁰ *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 32-34; *Systematische Theologie*, 441-42.

²¹ See G. G. O'Collins, S. J., "The Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg", *Religious Studies* (1986), 370. Cf. Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg", ed. David F. Ford, *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 182.

²² *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 19.

²³ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

However, in Pannenberg's view, the soteriological motif in the approach to christology must always be based on the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth.²⁵ He says thus,

A presentation of christology beginning with the past reality of Jesus does not necessarily need to break with the christological tradition at every point. It must, however, examine the soteriological approach of the traditional christologies in light of the historical reality of Jesus.²⁶

In this way he attempts to overcome the risk of being dominated by soteriological interests which easily turn into the christological projection of human longings for salvation. According to Stanley Grenz,²⁷ this is also the way to answer Feuerbach's challenge to theology that it is simply the projection of human desires.

McGrath makes the criticism that Pannenberg prioritises knowledge of the identity of the source of experiences of Christ, thereby neglecting the priority of the experience of salvation.²⁸ This criticism, however, ignores the fact that "Jesus in himself" logically precedes and establishes "Jesus for us".²⁹ This is supported by the interpretation of Grenz that "Pannenberg opts for the logical, not the epistemological order".³⁰ Although the latter methodologically precedes the former, the connection between the two is always implicit. Their integration is

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 233.

²⁶ *JGM*, 49.

²⁷ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 136.

²⁸ McGrath, *op. cit.*, 232.

²⁹ See E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 294.

³⁰ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 136.

implied in the structure of Pannenberg's dogmatics: christology is dealt with in the context of anthropology. This structure hints that human longings and hopes are of importance to his articulation of christology, indicating that, despite his own claims, he is still under the shadow of Feuerbach.

Pannenberg's emphasis on the historical knowledge of Jesus as the basis of his reconciling significance is persuasive. Reconciliation takes place and is mediated in human history. It is only through the *historical person* of Jesus Christ that God reconciles the world to himself. Thus the historical knowledge of Jesus is essential for the interpretation of God's reconciling action in him. Yet this question remains: is it really possible today to undertake such a historical analysis without the help of the kerygma of the apostles? Even though it is possible, is there any basis to reject the compatibility of the historical research with the scriptural statements about Jesus' history and his reconciling significance? This problem compels one to argue that a historical inquiry into the reconciling significance of Jesus is not incompatible with the soteriological approach to his person. This is because the kerygma of the early Church, if it is accepted as the source of historical knowledge of Jesus, testifies to a historical reality that implies the soteriological motif. In this sense, the quest into the significance of Jesus should be soteriological as well as historical.

In this light, Calvin's emphasis on the soteriological motif in approaching the historical person of Jesus is a considerable insight. He marshals an impressive array of scriptural testimonies to demonstrate that salvation was the reason for the

coming of the Son into the world in creaturely form.³¹ Since human beings had sinned and thus were alienated from God who created them to be with him, they needed to be brought back sufficiently close to God to hope that God might dwell with them.³² The Son of God was clothed with *flesh* to “swallow up death and replace it with life, conquer sin and replace it with righteousness.”³³

This soteriological motif in tracing the historical Jesus is also supported by Barth. For him, who Jesus Christ *is* becomes known through his saving *action* in history. The actualisation of divine revelation took place in the saving and atoning life of Jesus Christ on earth. Jesus Christ must be seen not in a static self-unit, but in the whole Christ event as it is focused on the cross and the resurrection. The event of the cross is the fulfilled reconciliation accomplished by the condescension of the Son of God. The concept of Jesus Christ in isolation from this event fails to see him in his completeness and is in danger of abstracting him, as it were, from his proper context.³⁴

³¹ Robert A. Peterson, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Atonement* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1975), 24. The very title of *The Institutes* Book Two summarises Calvin's position: “Christ Had to Become Man in Order to Fulfil the Office of Mediator.”

³² Ronald S. Wallace, *The Atoning Death of Christ* (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1981), 81.

³³ *Inst.* II.xii.1-2.

³⁴ John Thompson, *Christ in Perspective: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1978), 8.

4.2. RECONCILIATION AS THE ACTION OF THE TRIUNE GOD IN HIS INTERTRINITARIAN RELATIONSHIP

4.2.1. RECONCILIATION AS GOD'S SOVEREIGN ACTION

Reconciliation is essentially the action of God. The restoration of the relationship with God, disrupted by sin, with which reconciliation is primarily concerned, is not a human achievement, but is brought about only by God through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Pannenberg's perception of reconciliation as a divine sovereign action is thus acceptable.

This theo-centric concept of reconciliation is based on the sovereignty of God in establishing his Lordship over creation in terms of which reconciliation can be delineated, as is dealt with later.³⁵ This is supported by Calvin's view that the Kingdom of God, the substantial reality of his Lordship, is neither promoted, nor upheld by human effort,³⁶ but is achieved by God alone. During the period between Kant and Ritschl the Kingdom was seen as the goal of human labour. In reaction to this, Pannenberg, following the older Reformation tradition, contends that it is not simply the development of human history, but comes in a marvellous way from God.³⁷ Thus it must always remain the Kingdom *of God*. This supremacy of God is

³⁵ *Vide infra* the section on "Reconciliation as the Intertrinitarian Activity Bringing about God's Lordship in *Universalgeschichte*".

³⁶ *Calvin's Commentary on Psalm*. 118.25.

³⁷ *TKG*, 52.

in keeping with the Johannine expression that the Kingdom is not of this world.

This Kingdom, accordingly, is differentiated from the kingdom which the Zealots were working to restore at the time of Jesus. Neither is it a construction undertaken by extending Christian virtue.³⁸ Nor is it an event opening new possibilities for human existence, as argued by J. Moltmann. As Pannenberg sees it, God's Kingdom involves cosmic revolutions and changes far beyond anything conceivable as a consequence of progressive human effort.

4.2.2. RECONCILIATION DIRECTED TO THE WORLD

Given that reconciliation is the sovereign action of God, its object is the world itself, rather than God himself.³⁹ The sinful world must be reconciled to God, not vice versa. If reconciliation is understood in terms of God's Lordship over creation, the activity of the triune God bringing about his Lordship in human history is conducted towards the world, rather than towards God himself. This understanding is in keeping with the Pauline view of reconciliation which originates in God, and has as its goal the reconciliation of the world to himself.⁴⁰ Hence it can be asserted with Dippel, Döderlein, Menken, Schwarz, Schleiermacher, and Pannenberg⁴¹ that God is the active subject in the event of

³⁸ Richard John Neuhaus, "Wolfhart Pannenberg: Profile of a Theologian", *TKG*, 33.

³⁹

⁴⁰ Cf. Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:21f. See also 2 Cor. 5:14.

⁴¹ *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 447. So also J. C. Dippel, *Vera Demonstratio Evangelica*, vol. II (1729), 676, quoted in Wenz, *Geschichte*, I, 168; J. C. Döderlein, *Institutio theologi christiani* (1780, 2nd edition, 1783), II, 331f. (§ 262); G. Menken, *Versuch einer Anleitung zu eigenem Unterricht in den Wahrheiten der heiligen Schrift* (1850); the Heidelberg supernaturalist H. Schwarz, *Grundriss der Kirchlichen protestantischen Dogmatik* (1816); F. Schleiermacher, *The*

reconciliation.⁴² This is also upheld by Barth who expresses Jesus' death as an "action of sovereignty on God's part".⁴³

However, in the history of Christian thought the event of reconciliation in Jesus' crucifixion has been interpreted in a different direction. *God* is seen as the object of the reconciling ministry of Jesus on the cross.⁴⁴ For instance, Anselm, following Irenaeus (150-200),⁴⁵ conceives of Christ's death as appeasing God's wrath for the sin of humanity.⁴⁶ This "satisfaction" theory places God as the object of reconciliation. Early Scholasticism links the humanity of Christ to his mediatorial office. Jesus represents humanity before God in his human suffering and obedience.

Calvin replaces this satisfaction theory with vicarious penal suffering.⁴⁷ Christ as the one, who is divine as well as human, offers himself to God for the expiation of the sins of the world.⁴⁸ The Father's love is emphasised as the initiative in reconciliation. Calvin, however, in Pannenberg's view, does not completely differ from Anselm because he puts the Father at the centre as the recipient of

Christian Faith (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), §§100, cited all in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 452.

⁴² Grenz correctly indicates this, *op. cit.*, 126.

⁴³ *CD*, IV/I, 76, 80.

⁴⁴ Wallace gives a brief summary of this interpretation in his book, *op. cit.*, 78-93.

⁴⁵ Cf. F. W. Dillistone, *The Christian Understanding of Atonement* (Herts: James Nisbet and Company, Ltd, 1968), 50-54; 93-95. See also Wallace, *op. cit.*, 67-68,

⁴⁶ Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo, A Scholastic Miscellany: From Anselm to Ockham*, *Library of Christian Classics*, vol. x, trans. Eugene R. Fairweather (London: SCM Press, 1956), 100-183. Cf. Glenn W. Olsen, "Hans Urs Von Balthasar and the Rehabilitation of St. Anselm's Doctrine of the Atonement", *Scottish Journal of Theology* (34, 1981), 51-61.

⁴⁷ *Inst*, II.xvi.3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

Christ's sacrificial offering.⁴⁹ Pannenberg criticises this view because it focuses on the justice of God being offended by human law-breaking,⁵⁰ and thus fails to explain that reconciliation is directed to the world itself, not God himself.

4.2.3. RECONCILIATION INTERTRINITARIAN IN CHARACTER

Reconciliation as God's reconciling action is intertrinitarian in character. It is the action of the triune God in the reciprocity of his trinitarian relations to bring the world into a new relationship with God. Within the concept of the unity of the immanent and economic trinitarian relations, just as God exists in his eternal trinitarian communion, he works out reconciliation in his intertrinitarian relationship. Pannenberg's *Systematische Theologie*, presenting a considerable advance of his theological reflection over earlier writings, correctly makes this intertrinitarian character clear. The mutual self-differentiation of Father, Son, and Spirit is not only the mode of their inner life, but also the manner by which they reconcile the world to God.⁵¹

What implications can be inferred from this intertrinitarian concept of reconciliation? It first implies the mutual dependence of the persons of the trinitarian God in working out reconciliation. In the intertrinitarian relationship, all three persons are involved in the process of reconciliation. The Son, by renouncing

⁴⁹ ST-II, 406.

⁵⁰ H. A. Hodges, *The Pattern of Atonement* (London: SCM Press, 1955), 42-43.

⁵¹ ST-I, 308f.; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. 1, 335f. In Pannenberg's view, the immanent trinitarian interrelationship is disclosed in the economic trinitarian interrelationship. This is

himself completely on the cross, makes way for the action of the Father and his Lordship, thereby reconciling the world to God. The Father, by making his deity and Lordship dependent upon the Son, brings humanity to a new loving relationship with himself.⁵² Moreover, the reconciling action of God is not limited to the reconciliation brought about by Jesus' death. The cross can be understood only in the sense of anticipation of the subsequent working out of that event by the Spirit.⁵³ The Spirit differentiates himself from the Father and the Son as he brings, through the apostolic proclamation, humanity into the knowledge of the glory of the Father and the Son. Thereby the Spirit completes the reconciliation that took place in Jesus' suffering on the cross, leading to the Lordship of the Father.

This trinitarian mutual dependence leads to another implication of the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation: the unity of three persons' work. The reconciling action of the Son is associated with the action of the Father in the Son.⁵⁴ The Son's self-offering and his being offered up by the Father are one and the same divine action for the reconciliation of the world,⁵⁵ as is noted later in detail.⁵⁶ Also, the joint action of the Son with the Father is united with the

partly based on the Israelite tradition which holds that God's being is revealed in his historical action for the world, thereby overcoming the Hellenistic speculative concept of God.

⁵² Cf. Rom. 8:32; cf. 4:25.

⁵³ For Pannenberg the basis for this relationship is found in the theology of primitive Christianity, which developed not only a christology but also a doctrine of Jesus' salvific work. See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 127.

⁵⁴ Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18f.; Rom. 5:10.

⁵⁵ Pannenberg shares this with U. Wilkens (*Römer*, I, 326f.), cited in *ST-II*, 439.

⁵⁶ See the section on "Jesus' Death as the Co-operative Action of the Son with the Father" in chapter five.

completing work of the Spirit. The Spirit's work is the activity by the exalted Son in the Spirit through the gospel.⁵⁷

Although Pannenberg's intertrinitarian concept of reconciliation is convincing, it is not free from problems. He ascribes the basis of the trinitarian mutual dependence and unity in God's reconciling the world to the proleptical nature of the reconciliation in Jesus' death which is necessarily provisional. But this fails to make clear that the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation presupposes the once-for-all nature of the reconciling action of the Son on the cross. If it is true that reconciliation can be expressed in terms of God's Lordship, that this Lordship has already been realised in the Christ event, though its culmination is still in the future. It is consistent with the intertrinitarian understanding of reconciliation that the reconciling action of each of the three persons is not provisional but essential in character. Thus the Spirit's work is to be understood to apply the all-sufficient essential event of reconciliation in the crucifixion.

It is sufficient here to consider the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation, for this theme is dealt with in more detail throughout the whole dissertation, especially in the following three chapters.

⁵⁷ See the sections on "The Son's Action in his pre-Easter History as Prolepsis of God's Lordship" in chapter five, and on "The Son's Reconciling Activity Completed in the Spirit" in chapter seven.

4.3. RECONCILIATION AS THE INTERTRINITARIAN ACTIVITY BRINGING ABOUT GOD'S LORDSHIP IN UNIVERSALGESCHICHTE

4.3.1. GOD'S RECONCILING ACTION BRINGING ABOUT HIS LORDSHIP: INTERTRINITARIAN

The intertrinitarian reconciling action of God is directed to the establishment of his Lordship over the world. The Kingdom of God as the full realisation of his Lordship is the goal of this action. Reconciliation is nothing less than the process of God's bringing about his Lordship in human history. Thus, it is justified that Pannenberg defines reconciliation in terms of God's Lordship.

One agrees with Pannenberg that the activity of the trinitarian God to achieve his Lordship over creation is intertrinitarian in character. The reciprocal trinitarian self-distinction is not only the immanent trinitarian relations. Since his deity is not independent of the exercise of his Lordship,⁵⁸ in this way he establishes his Lordship, thereby leading to his self-actualisation in the world.⁵⁹ The Son, by his ultimate dedication to the Father on the cross, makes room for the Lordship of the Father, thereby reconciling humanity to the Father's Lordship. The Father, by making his own deity and Lordship completely dependent on the Son's fulfilment

⁵⁸ Christoph Schwöbel, *op. cit.*, 2nd edition, 191.

⁵⁹ Grenz correctly points out that the doctrine of reconciliation is related to the process of the self-actualisation of God in the world, *op. cit.*, 125.

of his mission on the cross, brings the world to his Lordship.⁶⁰ Furthermore, all this is extended by the work of the Spirit. The Spirit glorifies the Son and the Father by making the Son's obedience to his mission on the cross known to humankind through the apostolic proclamation, thereby manifesting the Lordship of the Father in the Son.⁶¹ Therefore, the intertrinitarian reconciling action of God is identical with his intertrinitarian activity to bring about his Lordship. They are two sides of one and the same action, and thus dependent on each other. This theme is discussed in more detail later.⁶²

4.3.2. GOD'S RECONCILING ACTION BRINGING ABOUT HIS LORDSHIP: UNIVERSALGESCHICHTLICH

The intertrinitarian reconciling action of God bringing about his Lordship is closely connected to human history because it is mediated in it. Pannenberg perceives this action in the perspective of *Universalgeschichte*.⁶³ It is thus *universalgeschichtlich*. The concept of universal history is first clarified, which serves as the basis of the interpretation of this character.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ ST-II, 392. See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 122-23. Also, see Schwöbel, *op. cit.*

⁶¹ ST-II, 395.

⁶² This is dealt with throughout the study. *Vide infra*. Also see the sections on "The Son's Action in his pre-Easter History as Prolepsis of God's Lordship" in chapter five, and on "The Son's Reconciling Activity Through the Gospel" and on "The Son's Reconciling Activity Through the Gospel Aimed at Founding the Church" in chapter seven.

⁶³ W. Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History", *BQiT-I*, 67.

⁶⁴ The resources for interpreting Pannenberg's concept of *Universalgeschichte* are limited. He has not yet published his detailed theology of history, his articulation of universal history being mainly presented in his programmatic book *Revelation as History*, which in 1961 he edited with his circle members, R. Rendtorff, T. Rendtorff and U. Wilkens, *Basic Questions in Theology* of which the English edition in three volumes, published in 1970, 1971, and 1973, and other articles, particularly "Response to the Discussion", *Theology as History*, *New Frontiers in Theology*, vol. III, ed. John B Cobb, Jr. and James M. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

Pannenberg understands history as its totality, which is open to critical verification. This totality is not merely the sum of particular events in history. Each finite historical event is rather subordinated to the final unity of all events. This unity is based on the idea of God who, as the Lord of history, gives history its unity and meaning by his acts and intervention in the course of history.⁶⁵

God, who is the origin of the contingent in the world through the transcendence of his freedom, establishes also the unity of the contingent as history, but in such a way that the contingency of events, which is integral to history, is not excluded.⁶⁶

In his essay "Redemptive Event and History", Pannenberg posits the concept of the totality of history in the form of a promise-fulfilment tension. Israel is differentiated from the people of the ancient Near East in that it experienced the reality of God not in the shadows of a mythical primitive history, but decisively in historical change itself.⁶⁷ While Eliade finds the root of the Israelite consciousness of history in prophetic proclamation,⁶⁸ Pannenberg based it on the concept of a "living God" who can break into his creation and initiate new events in an unpredictable way. The certainty that God repeatedly performs new acts forms the basis for the Israelite conception of reality as a linear history moving toward a

⁶⁵ Pannenberg argues that God is not only the world-ground but also the one who acts in contingent events in his essay, "The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of early Christian Theology", *BQiT*-II, 119-83. Also, see *RaH*, 125.

⁶⁶ W. Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History", *BQiT*-I, 74-75.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶⁸ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Bollingen Series 46, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), 102f.

goal.⁶⁹ God makes promises and fulfils these promises. History arises within this reality of God. The length of time spanned by promise and fulfilment is not fixed, but becomes ever wider and more extensive.⁷⁰ Israelite historical consciousness is “always eschatologically oriented insofar as, on the basis of promise and fulfilment, Israel expected beyond historically experienced fulfilment further fulfilment”,⁷¹ leading to the ultimate fulfilment. “Israel not only discovered history as a particular sphere of reality; it finally drew the whole of creation into history. History is reality in its totality.”⁷² Pannenberg considers this totality of history as necessary for historical reflection on God’s reality.⁷³ Every reality is in the continuum of the whole of history, and thus, as a part of the whole, finds its meaning. Thus, the totality is the framework within which the real meaning of any particular event can be rightly understood. This concept of the entire history meets with opposition. Gerhard Sauter argues that it destroys the open future, and thus constitutes a closed system.⁷⁴ But this overlooks Pannenberg’s concern with the openness of the future, which is explored as follows.

The second concept of *Universalgeschichte* is the futurity of history. History is essentially open to the future because it will be realised only at its end. Pannenberg reasons,

⁶⁹ Pannenberg, “Redemptive Event and History”, 18.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁷¹ Ibid., 23.

⁷² Ibid., 21.

⁷³ Cf. W. Pannenberg, “Response to the Discussion”, *Theology as History*, 241-44.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 260.

History is the simultaneous growth of a plurality of processes which transcend themselves in their movement towards an open future and struggle with each other in an effect at unity, all in the context of that future and the contingencies it involves, rather than a "closed" unity, as it were present as a whole.⁷⁵

In Pannenberg's scheme of history, according to Tim Bradshaw, "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."⁷⁶ Within this dialectical dynamic of history, even the Christ event is merely *provisional* toward the eschatological future. This concept of the futurity of history is based on the idea of the freedom of God. In his absolute freedom, God produces new events and realities in history which cannot simply be anticipated from the past. Thus the continuity of history cannot flow essentially from the past into the future, but originates in the future and then flows from there into the present. This futurity of history "acquires constitutive significance for the question of the knowledge" as well as for that of God's reality.⁷⁷ As far as it constitutes the totality of history, the future forms the necessary framework of meaning within which each historical event is interpreted.

But Pannenberg's view of the futurity of history is subject to Ford's criticism that his perception of an absolute end to the historical process is

⁷⁵ *TPS*, 291.

⁷⁶ Bradshaw, *op. cit.*, 21.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

inconsistent with his insistence on “the radically open-ended nature of history”.⁷⁸ An equally serious fault in relation to his emphasis on the retroactive power of the future on the past is a danger of seeing human history as if it were divine. Pannenberg perceives history in close relation to God. The end of history is the future of God, the realisation of his self-actualisation in the world. The reality of God is retrospectively identified with the course of human history. As a result, history comes to be viewed as being of divine essence. But, as Tupper rightly points out,⁷⁹ history has not only positive but also negative features. Sin, evil, suffering, destruction, and brokenness, for instance, are all realities of history.

The totality of history is the reality of the eschatological future. This raises, as Søren Kierkegaard points out,⁸⁰ the problem that one must live in the present and cannot wait for its realisation in the eschatological future. Pannenberg seeks to solve this problem by his unique concept of the *proleptic* presence of the total history, which is the final concept of *Universalgeschichte*. The entire history, which has yet to come, has become present in the Christ event. But, as Burhenn points out, this concept of prolepsis is subject to criticism that it fails to attribute any direct value to the ministry and destiny of Jesus for the writing of history today.⁸¹ Although Pannenberg’s argument that historical thinking requires

⁷⁸ Lewis S. Ford, “Whiteheadian Basis for Pannenberg’s Theology”, *Encounter* 38 (1977): 313.

⁷⁹ For Pannenberg the positive nature of things is presupposed in order to describe their perversion. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 304.

⁸⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *On Authority and Revelation*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 176.

⁸¹ See Herbert Burhenn, “Pannenberg’s Doctrine of God”, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975): 535-49, esp. 546.

reference to *Universalgeschichte* is valid, it is still not possible to write universal history because of the Christ event.

Pannenberg connects God's revelation with universal history. God reveals himself indirectly in the entire course of human history. Divine revelation will be realised only at the end of history since history is completed only at its end. This future revelation has taken place in the life and destiny of Jesus, in advance, before the end of history. The stress on an open future in the perception of divine revelation forces Pannenberg to reduce the Christ event to a mere anticipation of the future revelation. This leads to difficulty in explaining the all-sufficiency of the revelation in the Christ event. As Barth correctly observes, divine revelation has been completely realised in it. In this sense it is the final revelation, rather than a prolepsis of the future realisation of revelation. The end of history is the full demonstration of this revelation.

It becomes clear that the totality, the futurity, and the proleptical presence of the total history in the Christ event are the overarching aspects of Pannenberg's concept of universal history. He draws this concept of *Universalgeschichte* from *Traditionsgeschichte*.

The scheme of "promise-fulfilment", in his view, provides a provisional basis for *Universalgeschichte* because "as a rule the promises do not enter so literally into fulfilment."⁸² Eventually, in 1961, in *Revelation as History*, he suggests the more comprehensive concept of *Traditionsgeschichte* which holds

⁸² W. Pannenberg, "Response to the Discussion", 259.

that each transmitted promise can be interpreted freshly in light of a new historical experience.⁸³ *Traditionsgeschichte* denotes the transmission of traditions or the transmission of history.⁸⁴ History is not constituted by *bare facts*, but is a process of the transmission of traditions.

The historical process - and this means the one course of events with which historiographical inquiry has also to do - is essentially a process of transmission of traditions. All political events - in fact even natural events that play into it - gain their meaning and significance only by virtue of their relation to the traditions in which the human society, that is effected by them, lives.⁸⁵

The transmission of traditions, accordingly, is not the unaltered handing down of traditions, but their transformation. It is concerned with "the processes of criticism, modification, and dissolution of transmitted traditions as well as the process of their formation".⁸⁶ According to the Israelite experience of history, the prophetic word of promise becomes an event in history. The historical event participates in language, thereby constituting an essential part of Israel's traditions. The tradition expressed as words not only provides the linguistic context, in which and through which new events are meaningfully experienced and expressed, but also is

⁸³ An illuminating discussion about this is found in the preface to *Theology as History*, 9f. For the concept of history of the transmission of tradition Pannenberg has gleaned a considerable insight from Gerhard von Rad's historical interpretation of the Old Testament, *Old Testament Theology Vol. I: The Theology of Israel's Traditions*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963).

⁸⁴ The Latin term *traditio* refers to both tradition and transmission.

⁸⁵ W. Pannenberg, "Kerygma and History", *BQiT*-I, 90.

⁸⁶ W. Pannenberg, "Response to the Discussion", 256.

ceaselessly revised in the light of new experiences and new expectations of the future.⁸⁷ This process makes it comprehensible that history takes place as the history of the transmission of traditions.⁸⁸

It is a consequence of the language-character of historical experience that human history always accomplishes itself as history of the transmission of traditions, in dialogue with the heritage of a past which is either adopted as one's own or else rejected, and in anticipation of a future which is more than the future of the particular individual concerned.⁸⁹

Within this process of the transmission of traditions, fact and meaning are interwoven. Dialectical theology, as it is most commonly perceived, tends to separate the two. Pannenberg, however, regards such an attempt as an outmoded and inadequate historical method. They belong to each other with no one element having priority over the other. This setting aside of the distinction between "factuality" and "significance" helps to overcome the problem of history which kerygmatic theology faces.⁹⁰

Moltmann, who interprets history in the promise-fulfilment tension,⁹¹ asks to Pannenberg: how can the Kantian distinction between reality and the perception of it be overcome?⁹² Pannenberg's primary concern, however, is not with the

⁸⁷ W. Pannenberg, "On Historical and Theological Hermeneutical", *BQiT*-I, 140.

⁸⁸ Pannenberg, "Response to the Discussion", 256.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ See Tupper, *op. cit.*, 125f.

⁹¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London: SCM Press, 1967), 95-138.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 81.

necessity of such a distinction, but with the historical context. The meaning of a historical event belongs only to the event itself, insofar as it is understood within its own historical context.⁹³ *Traditionsgeschichte* constitutes the context from which the historical event derives its intrinsic meaning.

For Moltmann there are two alternatives for interpreting "real events" in their original contexts, that is, either to set out hermeneutically from the "word event", or to set out in terms of universal history from the particular event in the totality of historical reality.⁹⁴ Pannenberg, however, merges them together. Since revelation is God's indirect self-demonstration in the course of human history, it is interrelated with historical events.

But Pannenberg's view of *Traditionsgeschichte* fails to make it clear that the central motif of the Israelite concept of transmission of traditions is *Heilsgeschichte*, rather than *Universalgeschichte*. As Gerhard von Rad correctly points out,⁹⁵ the Israelite conception of history concerns itself primarily with *Heilsgeschichte*. Therefore, the totality of transmitted traditions provides the hermeneutical framework of God's redemptive history, rather than universal history.

Pannenberg's concept of *Universalgeschichte* is based on the *apokalyptische Geschichtsverständnis* as well as on *Traditionsgeschichte*. While the latter is the interpretative basis for the framework of *Universalgeschichte* in

⁹³ W. Pannenberg, "The Revelation of God in Jesus", 125f.

⁹⁴ Moltmann, *op. cit.*, 81.

⁹⁵ Von Rad, *op. cit.*, 121-28. See also vol. II (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 99-125.

the form of a flow of transmitted events within a whole, the former makes available the whole of history before it reaches its climax. The post-exilic Jewish apocalypticism, in his view, offers a scheme of history which can be identified with the concept of *Universalgeschichte*.⁹⁶ Above all, it presents an insight into the whole of history. Dietrich Rössler contends that the apocalyptic schematisation of history can be characterised as a universal process from the beginning to the end. Pannenberg, following Rössler, argues that Jewish apocalyptic writers extended history universally so that "it covered the whole course of the world from creation to the end."⁹⁷

Second, the apocalyptic view of history provides an insight into the eschatological future. For Pannenberg history is always orientated to the eschatological future, since its totality is constituted only by its end.⁹⁸ But this is challenged by the criticism that the Jewish apocalyptic scheme of history is dualistic-eschatological in character. The *eschaton* is the breaking-off of history, not its completion. Bultmann expresses it as a "dehistorisation" of history.⁹⁹ Wood

⁹⁶ For this reason Pannenberg uses the term "apocalyptic" in reference to the conception of *Universalgeschichte*.

⁹⁷ Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History", 20. Cf. Dietrich Rössler, "Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament", *Gesetz und Geschichte: Untersuchungen zur Theologie der jüdischen Apokalyptik und der pharisäischen Orthodoxie* (Neukirchen, 1960, 1962). Martin Noth suggests a different point of view, "The Understanding of History in Old Testament Apocalyptic", *The Laws of the Pentateuch and Other Essays*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 194-214.

⁹⁸ William R. Murdock claims that the Jewish apocalyptic view of history is different from that of the Old Testament. While the latter interpreted history as the place in which Yaweh's election of Israel could be known, the former saw *Heilsgeschichte* as eschatological-futuristic and thus remarkably disinterested in divine self-demonstrations in Israel's history, "History and Revelation in Jewish Apocalypticism", *Interpretation* 21 (1967): 180.

⁹⁹ R. Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 30, 35.

also argues that the apocalypticists promulgated the imminent expectation of the *eschaton*, when the present evil world would be done away, rather than *Universalgeschichte*.¹⁰⁰ Further, Murdock claims that for the apocalyptic literature, since history is reality in opposition to God,¹⁰¹ and thus is a threat to the sovereignty of God, eschatology becomes necessary.¹⁰² In response, Pannenberg asserts that this view over-emphasises the Babylonian-Persian influence, and thus underestimates the context of the Israelite tradition of faith in God who is the Creator of the world and acts in the course of human history. The Jewish apocalypticists expected the future as the reality of this God. The *eschaton* was therefore seen as the completion of that process, rather than a mere opposition to the historical process as a whole.

¹⁰⁰ Laurence W. Wood, "History and Hermeneutics: A Pannenbergian perspective", *Wesley Theological Journal* 16 (1981): 10.

¹⁰¹ Murdock, op. cit., 167.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 175. For Murdock, dualism and eschatology belong together, thereby constituting the two *foci* of a single theological system. Murdock explains this antithetical character between history and the *eschaton* within the concept of the two æons, drawn from Babylonian-Iranian syncretism. The present æon, according to him, is a space-time continuum that would eventually end and be succeeded by an eternal æon. The *eschaton* marks the shift from the present æon to the future one. The future æon does not have any essential connection with the *eschaton* which belongs essentially to the present æon. It is the termination of history defiled by the evil æon, rather than its goal. Thus, he accuses Pannenberg of obscuring the distinction between these æons, thereby regarding the *eschaton* as the beginning of the future æon. See *ibid.*, 174-76. Murdock indicates that more often than not the apocalyptic schemata cover only the more recent course of history leading up to the *eschaton*. He gives evidence: II Bar. 27, the twelvefold schema represents the twelve woes of the eschatological period; T. L. 17-18, the period covered is from either Moses or Levi to the Messiah; II Bar. 36-40, the period covered is from the Babylonian empire to Rome. He also explains that even some schemata which originally represented the whole of history have been reinterpreted by the apocalyptic writers to represent instead only a specified course of history. He presents some important cases: The author of Dan. 2 has taken the æon-image, which originally represent the whole of history, but later reinterpreted the period from the Babylonian Empire to the time of Antiochus IV; the eagle with the twelve wings in IV Ezr. (10:60-12:35) should represent the whole of history, but instead it represents the fourth beast of Dan. 7 (IV Ezr. 11:38f.) and the Roman Empire; the seven metal mountains of I En. 52 represent neither the whole of history, but only the history of Israel from Moses or Levi to the Messiah. See *ibid.*, 170-71.

Certainly God will put an end to the present world (the evil *æon*), but his activity precedes this evil period, because he creates as well as puts an end to it in the eschatological future. Thus the evil *æon* is to be understood in the context of a history of divine activity preceding it in the beginning and transcending it in the end.¹⁰³

But Pannenberg overlooks the fact that to the Jewish apocalypticists the eschaton is the consummation of the history of “the chosen”, not the completion of the process of *Universalgeschichte*. This is evidenced by the Enochic writing. The Book of Similitudes (1 Enoch 37-71)¹⁰⁴ particularly did not speak of an earthly kingdom to replace the eschatological Kingdom of God.¹⁰⁵

The apocalypticists could not perceive God’s revelation in the events of their own time because the continuity between the present and the future was not visible to the apocalypticists. Pannenberg’s answer to this problem is that the true meaning of the individual historical event is totally hidden until the end of history because God reveals himself indirectly in the entire course of human history and thus divine revelation will only be realised at the eschaton.¹⁰⁶ However, Wood and Murdock find the apocalypticists’ inability to perceive revelation in the discontinuity between history and the eschaton. History is not the sphere of God’s

¹⁰³ Pannenberg’s letter to Murdock on November 11th, 1977.

¹⁰⁴ The date of this document has been disputed. It is suggested by John J. Collins to be around the time of Christ, “The Kingdom of God in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha”, *The Kingdom of God in 20th-Century Interpretation*, ed. Wendell Willis (Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 88. Cf. D. W. Suter, *Tradition and Composition in the Parables of Enoch*, Society of Biblical Literature 47 (Missoula, MT: Scholar Press, 1979), 11-38.

¹⁰⁵ John Collins, op. cit., 89.

¹⁰⁶ Pannenberg, “Dogmatische Thesen”, 96.

revelatory activity,¹⁰⁷ but “particularly ill-suited as the locus of divine revelation”.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, only the literary revelation mediated by the apocalypses, not historical revelation, was constitutive of the continuity.¹⁰⁹

Third, Pannenberg’s identification of the Jewish apocalyptic scheme of history with *Universalgeschichte* rests upon the fact that the scheme provides an insight into the eschatological perspective which sees the end of history *ahead of time*. The whole history which will be realised only at the end of history has already taken place in the life and destiny of Jesus.¹¹⁰ Pannenberg asserts that the tradition of the Jewish faith in God as performing salvific acts in the course of human history brought the apocalypticists to broaden *Heilsgeschichte* toward *Universalgeschichte*. It is precisely here that the theological continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament is established.

But it can be argued against Pannenberg that *Heilsgeschichte*, not *Universalgeschichte*, is constitutive of the Jewish apocalypticism. As Hans Dieter Betz observes, the main concern of the Jewish apocalypticism is the eternal destiny of God’s elect.¹¹¹ Interestingly, Wilckens, a member of the so-called “Pannenberg’s circle”, with Rössler, emphasises this. All of Israel’s history, for Wilckens, takes on the character of election history. The goal of election history is

¹⁰⁷ Wood, op. cit.

¹⁰⁸ Murdock, op. cit., 180.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 186.

¹¹⁰ W. Pannenberg, “What is a Dogmatic Statement?”, *BQiT-I*, 204.

¹¹¹ Hans Dieter Betz, “The Concept of Apocalyptic in the Theology of the Pannenberg Group”, ed. Robert W. Funk, trans. J. W. Leitch, *Journal for Theology and Church* 6 (1969): 201.

identified with the end of all history to the extent that “God directs all destiny to the goal of historically confirming the election according to his saving purpose which he began to work out in the original election.”¹¹² Therefore, the Christ event should be understood primarily in the perspective of *Heilsgeschichte*, directed to the redemption of human history. From this perspective, the Christ event is the *kairos* for this redemptive history because divine revelation and redemption, promised in the Old Testament, have already been accomplished in it. In this sense it is the “middle” of history,¹¹³ rather than a prolepsis of human history.

The concept of *Universalgeschichte*, as clarified before, is determinative of Pannenberg’s conception of the intertrinitarian reconciling action of God bringing about his Lordship in human history. First of all, it is historical since universal history means “critical history”, open to critical scrutiny. It takes place in “a reliably historical event”, namely, in Jesus’ death.¹¹⁴ This is understandable because the trinitarian God reconciles the world to his Lordship in the historical life and ministry of Jesus Christ, rather than in heavenly realms. One can agree with Paul, Martin Kähler, and Pannenberg that this action rests upon a process of the past, so that it might be mediated in history.¹¹⁵ This historical mediation is made possible only by the past event as “a real overcoming of the misery that consists of humans

¹¹² Ulrich Wilckens, “The Understanding of Revelation Within the History of Primitive Christianity”, *RaH*, 63. He explains that the Jewish apocalyptic texts usually used the term “revelation” to mean the eschatological participation in the gifts of salvation that the elect have from God when they enter the new æon. See *ibid.*, 59-66.

¹¹³ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 257.

¹¹⁴ *AC*, 78. *ST-II*, 410; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 455. See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 126.

having fallen into sin, death, and the related estrangement from God".¹¹⁶ Peter Abelard interprets the divine reconciling action as taking place only in inward emotion.¹¹⁷ Existential theology understands it in terms of human existentiality. *Heilsgeschichte* theology perceives it as "a special history". But these views fail to explain its historical character.

Second, the intertrinitarian reconciling action of God to achieve his Lordship encompasses the entire process of the renewal of God's relationship to humanity in *Universalgeschichte* because history is perceived as its totality.¹¹⁸ However, a question arises here. As Pannenberg perceives, can this action be perceived as history? It can be argued that its historical mediation does not justify its identification with universal history. The divine Lordship, into which the triune God in Jesus' history reconciles humanity, is redemptive in character. It is primarily concerned with the redemption of history. Moreover, God is not only immanent but also transcendent. For Pannenberg God is integrated with the finite historical process. The future reality of God which will be realised only at the end of history is retrospectively identified with the course of human history. This integration leads to the view that his being is subject to universal history. As Barth

¹¹⁵ Martin Kähler, *Zur Lehre von der Versöhnung* (1937), 268; *Die Wissenschaft der christlichen Lehre von dem evangelischen Grundartikel aus im Abrisse dargestellt* (1883, 2nd edition 1893), 305, 311, cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 455.

¹¹⁶ *ST-II*, 410; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 456.

¹¹⁷ F. W. Dillistone questions this categorisation as "confusing and unhelpful", for "in reality Abelard marks the transition from an outlook which saw God dealing with humanity as a whole, either through a legal transaction or through a mystical transfusion, to one in which the ethical and psychological qualities of the individual within the community began to receive fuller recognition", *op. cit.*, 325. Dillistone provides a brief exposition of Abenard's doctrine of atonement, *ibid.*, 324-27.

correctly argues,¹¹⁹ God's being and work belong together, but not in such a way. God has immutable existence, superior to temporality, and external to the one continuum of past, present, and future. As such he breaks into the realm of history to reveal himself in Jesus Christ and to reconcile the world to himself under his Lordship. Therefore, his reconciling action to establish his Lordship is not to be identified with universal history, as delineated by Hegelian metaphysics, though it is mediated in history.

The concept of reconciliation as its entire process in universal history leads Pannenberg to delineate the intertrinitarian reconciling action of God in the whole history of Jesus including his post-Easter history. Thus the "one-sided" interpretation of reconciliation which focuses on either the event of reconciliation in Jesus' crucifixion or the subsequent process of reconciliation is rejected.¹²⁰ The two are dependent upon each other. The former is effective only in the latter.

As Pannenberg sees it, within the intertrinitarian framework, there is no reason why God's reconciling action is ascribed merely to Jesus' death. It rather includes the subsequent work of the Spirit. Thus Barth's argument that the subsequent process is only a report about Jesus' death fails to explain the close connection of the cross with the subsequent working out of it.¹²¹ Nonetheless, Pannenberg's concept does not adequately take into consideration the all-

¹¹⁸ Grenz rightly points this out, *op. cit.*, 126.

¹¹⁹ Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 216.

¹²⁰ See *ibid.*, 126-27.

¹²¹ *CD*, IV/1, 76.

sufficiency of God's reconciling action in Jesus' death. By implication the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation does not weaken, but presupposes it. The subsequent process is completely dependent upon the cross. Therefore this process does not constitute in itself the event of reconciliation, but applies the once-for-all event of reconciliation brought about by Jesus' death to believers.

Third, the intertrinitarian reconciling action of God in Jesus' death is directed to the future reconciliation of the world bringing about his Lordship since universal history is completed only at its end. It has a distinctive meaning solely in its *inner telos*.¹²² What was enacted in the crucifixion opens the way for human entry into God's Lordship which he will fully realise at the end of human history.¹²³ Only in this openness can the cross have its own uniqueness for the reconciliation of the world.

The future reference is certainly crucial for conceiving the intertrinitarian reconciling action of God. Although reconciliation is accomplished in Jesus' death, all human beings in the world, in reality, have not experienced a loving relationship with God. The divine reconciling action is not limited to Jesus' crucifixion, but is directed, as its goal, to the future reconciliation of the world that is the completion of God's Lordship. But this does not mean that the future reconciliation is the only reference to God's reconciling action. The event of reconciliation in the crucifixion and the present working out of that event are in the perfect tense. The triune God

¹²² *ST-II*, 412.

¹²³ Pannenberg closely connects this to the twofold context of the doctrine of God and anthropology.

in Jesus' earthly history has already reconciled the world to himself. Believers have presently participated in the reconciliation won by Jesus' death. God's Lordship has already been brought about by his reconciling action in Jesus' death. The cross is the historical manifestation of the trinitarian mutual self-distinction of God by which he achieves his Lordship that had already been established in eternity. In that it participates in this Lordship, the present progress of God's Lordship is also in itself an already-realised reality of his royal reign, leading to a future culmination. In this light, Calvin correctly states that the *Regnum Christi* has already been inaugurated in the coming of Christ,¹²⁴ and is being advanced by Christ after his ascension into heaven¹²⁵ in the Spirit through the apostolic proclamation,¹²⁶ and will be consummated in the future. The future reality is grounded in both the past inauguration and its present progress because without these two the future Lordship cannot be hoped for.

The future-orientated framework removes the individual dimension, particularly forgiveness of sins, from a central position in understanding God's reconciling action.¹²⁷ Pannenberg identifies the coming Lordship of God with the universal political destiny of humanity. Thus the divine reconciling activity through the Christ event is chiefly concerned with this destiny. Individual forgiveness of

¹²⁴ T. F. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church: A Study in the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1956), 115.

¹²⁵ *Inst.*, II.xvi.14.

¹²⁶ Calvin, Lecture 33 given on Dan. 7.8; Lecture 88 given on Mic. 4.3.

¹²⁷ Paul Jensen provides us with a good explanation of the relationship of Jesus' death on the cross with forgiveness of sins, "Forgiveness of sins", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46 (1993): 141-59.

sins is only as a negative aspect of this Lordship.

To be sure, God's reconciling action should be understood in a broad perspective extending beyond the individual dimension because his Lordship includes all areas of human life in the world. Paul does not understand forgiveness of sins as the only aspect of reconciliation. But this does not deny that the individual dimension, especially forgiveness of sin, is crucial for God's reconciling action in Jesus' death even in terms of his Lordship.¹²⁸ The essential nature of this Lordship is redemptive, aiming at the redemption of all realms of human life. This redemptive Lordship begins with, and is based on, the renewal of human existence before God. Since forgiveness of sin is integral to this renewal, it is the door that opens to God's Lordship. As von Rad rightly admitted,¹²⁹ reconciliation is not only limited to social relations, but is to be primarily related to the individual well-being. Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians, "in [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins..." (1:7). Other dimensions of reconciliation are based on the individual forgiveness of sins.

Fourth, since the future of history is present in advance before its end, the reconciling action of the triune God in Jesus' crucifixion to establish his Lordship can be understood merely in the sense of an anticipation of the eschatological

¹²⁸ Calvin emphasises forgiveness of sins as an essential character of Christ's death. This can be hinted by his christological structure. Before dealing with the doctrine of the person and the work of Jesus Christ, Calvin deals first with the doctrine of sin. The Christ event as the concrete and historical action is interpreted to reconcile humanity who is concretely and totally corrupted because of sins. For Calvin, the substitutionary work of Christ involves a covenantal relation of Adam to his posterity and of Christ to the elect, and the exchange which includes the imputation of Adam's sin to Christ and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the elect.

¹²⁹ Von Rad, *op. cit.*, vol. II, 402ff.

reconciliation of the world through which God's Lordship will be realised.¹³⁰ It is thus provisional in character towards its final realisation. But this view undermines the once-for-all nature of God's reconciling action in Jesus' death for establishing his Lordship, as noted before.

4.4. CONCLUSION

The intertrinitarian concept of reconciliation has so far been defined as it relates to God's Lordship. As an analysis has shown, Pannenberg is correct to understand the doctrine of reconciliation as a formulation of soteriology. Reconciliation is crucial for participation in salvation and thus the total process of God's imparting salvation can be expressed as the process of reconciliation. He regards the doctrine of reconciliation as a function of christology, since the reconciling significance of Jesus is inherent in his person and in his history. The correlating of the reconciling significance of Jesus to his person and the emphasis on the objective knowledge of his history as its basis are acceptable. But he overlooks the actual difficulty of access to such knowledge without the kerygma of the apostles and the fact that historical inquiries are not incompatible with the soteriological approach to his person.

Pannenberg's definition of reconciliation as the intertrinitarian *action* of God in terms of his Lordship over the world is compelling. Reconciliation is the sovereign action of God through Jesus Christ. Since the world itself must be

¹³⁰ *ST-II*, 412-13. See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 126.

reconciled to God, not vice versa, the object of God's action is the world, rather than God himself. The reconciling action of God is intertrinitarian in character in that in the intertrinitarian relationship all three persons are involved in working out reconciliation in unity. This intertrinitarian action brings about his Lordship in human history.

But his *universalgeschichtlich* view of the intertrinitarian reconciling action of God is unconvincing. Pannenberg perceives universal history as the totality of history which is directed to the future and is proleptically present in the Christ event. This leads to the understanding that reconciliation is the entire process of God's action to establish his Lordship and thus is eschatological. It is achieved in Jesus' death which looks forward to the eschatological reconciliation of the world. The reconciliation brought about by the crucifixion can thus be seen only anticipatory in the sense that is to be worked out by the Spirit, leading to the future realisation of the reconciliation of the world from which God's Lordship is derived. However, the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation presupposes the once-for-all event of reconciliation in Jesus' suffering on the cross, rather than its anticipatory nature which is necessarily provisional. God's Lordship has already been accomplished in Jesus' suffering on the cross, although its consummation is still in the future. Further, Pannenberg fails to explain that God's Lordship as the goal of his reconciling action is redemptive in character which is mediated in human history and yet is still in tension with it.

CHAPTER V: THE RECONCILING OFFICE OF THE SON

This chapter discusses, based on the intertrinitarian concept of reconciliation, the reconciling office of the Son. From the trinitarian perspective, the reconciling action of the triune God can be described in terms of the reconciling office of the Son. It is argued that Jesus' suffering on the cross is the Son's active carrying out of his reconciling office, rather than the passive acceptance by Jesus of his destiny to suffer.

The pre-Easter history of Jesus is first identified as the reconciling action of the Son, which is foundational for the subsequent discussion. Subsequently, this action is construed in terms of God's Lordship. Next, the cross as the revelatory activity of the Son is explored. Following this is a consideration of the reconciling action of the Son in relation to the action of the Father. Within the trinitarian thought, the Son performs his reconciling office in association with the Father. Finally, the reconciling action of the Son is analysed in terms of the traditional doctrine of the *Officium Triplex Christi*.

5.1. JESUS' EARTHLY HISTORY AS THE RECONCILING ACTION OF THE SON

Critics argue that Pannenberg's view of Jesus' death leaves very little room for the action of the Son. For instance, Allan Galloway asserts that Pannenberg is too much preoccupied with the thought that Jesus' death is

decided by his fate rather than by his own action.¹ Neie indicates two standpoints in Pannenberg's conception of Jesus' death: its historical circumstances and the resurrection. From the first standpoint, the cross was Jesus' destiny because of his perfect dedication to God and to the commission he had from God. From the second standpoint, Jesus' crucifixion was vicarious, penal, and *pro nobis* in the sense that God gave him up for humans, not in the sense that Jesus sought his death as a work of expiation in which he presented his life to God.² Clark Pinnock accuses Pannenberg of not admitting that Jesus' foreknowledge had any significance for his impending death.³ Although Jesus may have expected that his conflict with the Jewish authorities might result in his death, he did not regard that destiny as anything other than the cost of faithfulness to his message.⁴ Tupper interpreted Jesus' execution as "happened" to him.⁵

It is to be noted here that this criticism is based on Pannenberg's *Grundzüge der Christologie* published in 1964. The monograph undoubtedly regards the cross as the destiny of Jesus that he passively accepted, rather than as an active accomplishment like his earthly ministry. Pannenberg writes,

Neither the crucifixion nor the resurrection was actively accomplished by Jesus...his passion and death remain something that

¹ See Allan D. Galloway, *Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 124, 127.

² See Herbert Neie, *The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1979), 152, cf. 168-72. However, later in the book, he suggests that Pannenberg's concept of Jesus' death needs to be supplemented as the suffering of the Son because it is exactly as suffering man that Jesus is the Son, *ibid.*, 216-22.

³ Clark H. Pinnock, "No-Nonsense Theology: Pinnock Reviews Pannenberg", pt. 2, *Christian Today* 21 (19 November, 1976): 14.

⁴ Galloway, *op. cit.*, 124.

⁵ E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 133.

happened to him and are not to be understood as his own action in the same sense as his activity with its message of the nearness of the Kingdom of God.⁶

But it can be argued that Pannenberg's concept of Jesus' death should be interpreted as the action of the Son, not simply his fate. His recent dogmatics, *Systematische Theologie*, makes this point explicit. He comments,

Jesus himself is not simply passive in this action, for the Son is also acting subject in the event. As such, he is the Saviour of the world.⁷

What is the basis for this argument? Does Pannenberg believe that the Gospel descriptions of the passion were foreknown by Jesus and even planned by him? But the path "from below" does not allow them to be understood in this way. This is because if one considers the historical realities of Jesus, he can hardly have sought the suffering on the cross as the goal of his message and ministry, although he probably reckoned with its possibility.⁸ Following Wrede, Pannenberg interprets the passion predictions as *vaticinia ex eventu*.⁹

Can, then, the rationale for the argument be drawn from the traditional concept of the divine-human person? If it can, it would compromise Pannenberg's historical method within which the historical Jesus in his authentic humanity brings about his own passion and death. Without the

⁶ JGM, 245.

⁷ ST-II, 441; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 488.

⁸ Stanley Grenz indicates that Pannenberg's dogmatics reflects "his new appreciation for the foresight of the earthly Jesus in finding meaning in his impending death", *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York: Oxford, 1990), 146.

⁹ Pannenberg accepts the reasons for this judgement as summarised by Willi N. Marxsen, *Anfangsprobleme der Christologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1960), 22, 31 f.; cited in JGM, 245.

humanity of Jesus, his genuine God-forsakenness or his self-sacrifice become unreal. Therefore, either the cross is the destiny that God laid on Jesus or the Son's action is dependent upon the historicity of the person of Jesus which Pannenberg links to his divine sonship.¹⁰ This is consistent with his christological principle that what Jesus does must be grounded in what he *is*, which is established by examining the historical reality of his person.¹¹

The distinctiveness of the historicity of Jesus, in Pannenberg's view, rests upon the relationship of the historical man Jesus of Nazareth to the God whom he called Father, that is, Jesus' self-distinction from the Father.¹² If Jesus as a person is God's self-revelation, and thus Jesus' history and his person belong to the divinity of God, then the self-differentiation of Jesus from the Father also belongs to the essence of God himself.¹³ "God's essence as it is revealed in the Christ event thus contains within itself the twofoldness, the tension, and the relation of Father and Son. The deity of Jesus cannot therefore have the sense of undifferentiated identity with the divine nature, as if in Jesus, God the Father himself had appeared in human form and had suffered on the cross",¹⁴ as modalism conceives it. Rather in his absolute subordination to the Father and openness before God in his historical life, especially in his extreme self-distinction from the Father on the cross, Jesus *is*

¹⁰ ST-II, 439; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 486.

¹¹ Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg", *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, vol. I (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 261.

¹² See the section on "Jesus' Self-differentiation from the Father as the Inner Basis of His Divine Sonship" in chapter two.

¹³ *JGM*, 158-59. For Pannenberg, the term "Son" designates primarily his relationship to the Father, a relationship of obedience and "mission" (Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4; John 3:17, *passim*; I John 4:9) as well as of trust, not his place of honour in contrast to humanity and cosmos, *ibid.*, 159.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 159-60.

the Son.¹⁵ This is supported by Pannenberg's conception of the mutual differentiation of Father, Son, and Spirit as the mode of their inner life, which has already been presented in his monograph,¹⁶ and more substantially in his dogmatics.¹⁷ This can be accepted, however, only when the peculiarity of Jesus' self-distinction from the Father is justified. Whereas classical christology links this justification from the incarnation, the path "from below" links it to Jesus' resurrection.¹⁸

What implications can be drawn from this establishment of the divine sonship of Jesus? If sonship is a proper description of the relationship of Jesus to the Father, the whole pre-Easter history of Jesus must be seen as the earthly path of him who in a concealed fashion was already the eternal Son of God.¹⁹ This does not mean that the Son can be identified with the acting agent in the event of reconciliation. This is because Pannenberg's earlier works, particularly *Grundzüge der Christologie* emphasises the break between the pre-Easter work of Jesus and the events of the crucifixion and the resurrection.²⁰

But it is to be noted here that *Systematische Theologie* presents the action of the Son incarnate in Jesus as embracing, through his human activity,

¹⁵ Cf. Pannenberg, "Die Subjektivität Gottes und die Trinitätslehre: Ein Beitrag zur Beziehung zwischen Karl Barth und der Philosophie Hegels" and "Der Gott der Geschichte: Der Trinitarische Gott und die Wahrheit der Geschichte", *Grundfragen Systematischer Theologie*, II, 96-111, 112-28, cited in Schwöbel, op. cit., 288.

¹⁶ *JGM*, 158-60. Cf. 179-83.

¹⁷ *Systematische Theologie*, vol. I, 335-47. *ST-I*, 308-319.

¹⁸ Cf. Rom. 1:3f. See the sub-section on "The Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead" in chapter three. *ST-II*, 439-40; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 486-87.

¹⁹ *ST-II*, 440; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 486.

²⁰ *JGM*, 223, cf. 210.

the distinction between the human activity and the fate of Jesus.²¹ Pannenberg expresses,

The only new thing in statements about the self-offering of the Son in this event is that "Christ" and "Son of God" not merely function as titles but name the pre-existent Son of God who was sent into the world as the acting subject of the history of Jesus, *a subject not merely identical with the human reality of Jesus* as it may be brought to light by historical research into the Jesus tradition, but still *the true subject at work in his human history*.²²

This is the point which Neie and Tupper overlook. Neie restricted the activity of the Son only to his earthly life. The cross and the resurrection are his destiny. They are the action of God in him.²³ Tupper recognises that the office of Jesus represents his actively pursued mission in dedication to God. However, the events of Jesus' death and resurrection are passive.²⁴

The formulation of this development is based on the conception of the reciprocal self-differentiation of Father, Son, and Spirit in the trinitarian economic action as the concrete form of the immanent trinitarian relations.²⁵ Within this intertrinitarian thought, Jesus, by his perfect self-differentiation

²¹ ST-II, 446; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 493.

²² ST-II, 442. Italics by the writer. *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 488.

²³ See Neie, *op. cit.*, 216-22, 77-85.

²⁴ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 133.

²⁵ ST-I, 314; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. I, 341. This is characteristic of a new development in Pannenberg's theological reflection over the earlier works, which is presented in *Systematische Theologie*. See Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg", *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 190-95, 203. A particular aspect of Pannenberg's advance in theological thinking is that the whole dogmatic conception, particularly his theological conception of reconciliation, is formulated in the framework of the Trinity. See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 111-48, esp. 112. This development was suggested by Pannenberg himself early in the "afterword" to his monograph *Grundzüge der Christologie* and by Elizabeth Johnson, in "The Ongoing Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg", *Horizons* 9 (1982): 237-50.

from the Father in his historical life and especially on the cross, makes room for the action of the Father and the coming of his Lordship in the Kingdom. Thereby Jesus *is* the Son of God, and reconciles the world into a new relationship with God the Father. The cross is therefore not the destiny, but the self-offering of the Son to the Father for the reconciliation of the world.²⁶

In understanding the history of Jesus, Pannenberg's advance *from his destiny to the action of the Son* is commendable. As Pannenberg correctly perceives, the immanent intertrinitarian relationship is not separated from the economic intertrinitarian relationship. God's being is revealed in his action for the world. In the trinitarian love the persons of the trinitarian God by their mutual self-giving participate in one another. In this way the triune God reconciles the world to his trinitarian fellowship, since this love extends to the love for the world. The earthly path of Jesus up to the point of crucifixion as his perfect self-distinction from the Father is the historical embodiment and mediation of the eternal intertrinitarian relationship. Thus it is not only the mode of his divine sonship but also the way by which he as the Son acts to bring the world to a loving relationship with the Father. Therefore, Jesus' suffering on the cross is to be understood as the reconciling action of the incarnate Son. This is evidenced by Paul's teaching that the cross is the Son's loving self-surrender²⁷ and self-sacrifice.²⁸ The earthly life and ministry of Jesus is interwoven with the action of the Son.

²⁶ ST-II, 442; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 488f. Cf. *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 348.

²⁷ Cf. Gal. 2:20.

²⁸ Eph. 5:2.

But Pannenberg's problem lies in the assertion that the action of the Son in his pre-Easter history is retrospectively constituted by the confirmation of his resurrection. While this event is an expression of the significance of the cross for Bultmann,²⁹ and the revelation of the preceding history for Barth,³⁰ it is in Pannenberg's view confirmation.³¹ This confirmation is beyond disclosure of a meaning that the person and history of Jesus already had on his way to cross, but rather determines it.³² This is because the "other history", on which the significance of Jesus' earthly history is based, is instituted by the Easter event. Without the resurrection, the uniqueness of Jesus' self-distinction from the Father is not confirmed and thus Jesus' pre-Easter history must be regarded as simply his human activity.³³

However, this constitutive meaning of the resurrection is inconsistent with the intertrinitarian framework. Within this framework, only the self-distinction of Jesus from the Father constitutes noetically and ontologically the action of the Son as well as his divine sonship. This is based on the understanding that Jesus' dedication to the Father in his whole life is the historical manifestation of the eternal trinitarian reciprocal self-distinction not only as the immanent and economic trinitarian relations but also as the mode of the self-disclosure of the trinitarian God. Thus, already in his earthly path of

²⁹ R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology", *Kerygma and Myth*, vol. I (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), 38f.

³⁰ *CD*, III/2, 118ff., esp. 131ff.

³¹ *Vide* the sub-section on "The Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead" in chapter three.

³² *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 348; *ST-II*, 345.

³³ Pannenberg, "Dogmatische Erwägungen zur Auferstehung Jesu", *Kerygma und Dogma*, 14 (1968), 105. *ST-II*, 346-51.

dedication to the Father Jesus as the Son acts to reconcile the world to the Father.

Further, Pannenberg is not faithful to his own historical terms. For him, there is a tension between the action of the Son and the destiny of Jesus before the confirmation of the resurrection. This is based on the tension between the human level of Jesus' history and the history of the Son until the Easter event. But, if Jesus' pre-Easter dedication to the Father is the *historical* embodiment of the eternal immanent and economic trinitarian relations, it itself establishes his divine sonship and thus constitutes his reconciling action. In his pre-Easter history Jesus as the Son dedicated himself to the Father, thereby reconciling the world to the Father. This is true of Jesus' understanding of his reconciling ministry on the cross. In the Gospels, the passion of Jesus is already predicted and even planned by the Son.³⁴ As Galloway correctly points out, it was Jesus who said "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."³⁵ This historical revelation is finally affirmed by the resurrection which belongs to one of the Christ events. Therefore the retrospective constitution of the Son's action in his pre-Easter life by the resurrection is probably thinkable in a theological sense, but not in a historical sense.

Pannenberg is correct to see that the constitutive meaning of the resurrection is not an alternative to a christology which is based on the earthly history of Jesus. It is rather closely connected to the cross. The resurrection is the resurrection of the Crucified. This follows Barth's assertion that "that which took place on the third day . . . lifted up the whole of what took place

³⁴ For instance, cf. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34.

³⁵ Cf. Galloway, *op. cit.*, 127.

before in all its particularity . . . into something that took place once and for all.”³⁶ But within the intertrinitarian perspective this correlation presupposes that the pre-Easter dedication of Jesus to the Father itself has already revealed his divine sonship and constituted the action of the Son.

Therefore, it can be asserted that Pannenberg’s path “from below to above”, which is perceived from the perspective of *Universalgeschichte*, leads to the mistake of substituting the noetic and ontological constitutive significance of Jesus’ self-distinction from the Father in his historical life for the resurrection.

5.2. THE SON’S ACTION IN HIS PRE-EASTER HISTORY AS PROLEPSIS OF GOD’S LORDSHIP

Frank Tupper charges Pannenberg with not making it clear that the cross is materially related to the coming Kingdom of God, the full realisation of his Lordship over the world.³⁷ This accusation is based on the understanding that the Kingdom has already become present in Jesus and by him in his proclamation of it, and has taken place in his resurrection in the form of a *prolepsis*.³⁸

But this criticism is unfounded. Pannenberg correctly perceives the trinitarian mutual self-differentiation not only as the triune life of God but also as the manner by which the triune God actualises his Lordship over creation through the reconciliation of the world. In this intertrinitarian outlook, the Son, by his extreme subordination to the Father *on the cross*, makes room for the

³⁶ CD, IV/1, 313.

³⁷ See Tupper, *op. cit.*, 299f.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 300.

action of the Father and his coming Lordship.

However, the *universalgeschichtlich* framework forces Pannenberg to relate the reconciling action of the Son only to the coming Lordship of the Father as the destiny of humanity.³⁹ This is based on his concept of reconciliation as the entire process of God's activity to achieve his Lordship in human history.⁴⁰ Since the total process is completed only at the end of human history, the reconciling action of the Son is essentially directed, as its goal, to the future Lordship of the Father. This Lordship is not only the future of God but also that of the world. For dialectical theology, as it is most commonly perceived, eschatology is deprived of its temporal meaning.⁴¹ The final future, however, in Pannenberg's view, is in line with all other events, not merely accidental to the substance of things.⁴² This is based on the conception that the eternal essence of things is temporal, which conflicts with the traditional view of it as non-temporal, and thus eternity is constituted only by the historical process and especially by its final outcome. The divine Lordship is the concrete future of the world in which God will manifest himself as the unifying power.⁴³ It derives from the eschatological reconciliation of the world at the end of human history.

For Pannenberg, only in its relationship with God's future Lordship as the destiny of humanity reconciled to God, has the Son's reconciling action

³⁹ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 300.

⁴⁰ See the section on "Reconciliation as the Intertrinitarian Activity Bringing about God's Lordship in *Universalgeschichte*" in chapter four.

⁴¹ *TKG*, 52.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 61, 78.

universal relevance.⁴⁴ This is conceivable when it is accepted that christological titles such as "Messiah," "Kyrios," or "Son of God" relate the specific figure of Jesus to all humanity and thus to its future.⁴⁵ Jesus' death proleptically opens for humanity the coming Lordship of the Father. It is only in this sense that it can be seen as the reconciling action of the Son to bring the world under the Lordship of the Father. The exegetical grounds for this anticipatory character of the Son's earthly action lie in Hebrews 9:28. The Son's offering up of himself as the high priest implies a prolepsis of the actual process of the setting aside of humanity's sin in the totality of human history.

But Pannenberg faces the question: What are the grounds for taking the apocalyptic scheme of history as the only framework for understanding the reconciling action of the Son in his death? He has not fully explained this. His view also leads to difficulty in making clear that the action of the Son in the event of reconciliation is the once-for-all action of the Son to bring humanity under the Lordship of the Father, not simply a prolepsis of its future realisation in the Kingdom of God. This Lordship, with which the Son's action is primarily concerned, has already been accomplished.⁴⁶ The future Lordship of the Father in the Kingdom is the culmination of this already-realised Lordship, and, as such, is the ultimate goal of the earthly reconciling action of the Son. This is consistent with the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation within which the reconciling action of the trinitarian God presupposes the all-sufficiency of the earthly Son's action for achieving the Father's Lordship.

⁴⁴ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 300.

⁴⁵ ST-II, 443; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 489.

⁴⁶ See the section on "Reconciliation as the Intertrinitarian Activity Bringing about God's Lordship in *Universalgeschichte*" in chapter four.

The future-orientated view of God's Lordship impels Pannenberg to assert that the Son's reconciling action does not conclude with the definitive sacrificial death of Jesus,⁴⁷ but expands to the ongoing intercession of the risen Son before God in the post-Easter history of Jesus.⁴⁸ The earthly action of the Son can be seen as an anticipation of the subsequent process of the exalted Son's activity in the Spirit, bringing humanity, through the gospel, under the Lordship of the Father. Pannenberg says, "The christological statements themselves arose in this way as an expression of the initial work of the Spirit in the believing community of primitive Christianity."⁴⁹ In this way Pannenberg overcomes the obvious weakness of failing to see that the Son's earthly action is effected in believers' present experience, a weakness expressed in his monograph which is the object of George Newlands' criticism.⁵⁰

Pannenberg's emphasis on the continuity of the Son's reconciling action on earth with the risen Son's activity in the Spirit after the resurrection is acceptable. Since reconciliation is essentially the action of the triune God in his trinitarian communion, the reconciling actions of all three persons are interrelated to each other. Reconciliation is therefore not to be restricted to the action of the Son with the Father on earth, but continues to be worked out by the Spirit, leading to the culmination of the Lordship of the Father in the Son. In the light of the concept of reconciliation as the action of the triune God as the mutuality of the trinitarian relations, the working out of reconciliation by

⁴⁷ Cf. Heb. 9:26.

⁴⁸ Cf. Heb. 9:24.

⁴⁹ ST-II, 443; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 489.

⁵⁰ George M. Newlands, *The Theology of the Love of God* (London: Collins, 1980), 182.

the Spirit can be seen as the reconciling activity of the exalted Son in him. This corresponds to the understanding that the self-offering of the Son and his being offered up by the Father are one and the same divine action for the reconciliation of the world.⁵¹

5.3. THE CROSS AS THE SON'S REVELATORY ACTIVITY

How can the reconciling action of the Son on the cross be related to God's revelation? McGrath criticises that Pannenberg's concept of Jesus' death disregards its revelatory function.⁵² This criticism focuses on the reconciling significance of the cross. Although in the crucifixion God reconciles humanity into a loving relationship with him, God himself is still not disclosed. This is, McGrath reasons, because divine revelation will take place only at the end of history and is proleptically present in Jesus' resurrection. Further, Sobrino criticises that Pannenberg's christology leaves no room for the revelatory meaning of the cross since it takes the apocalyptic traditions only the context and thus excludes the Servant-of-Yahweh christology.⁵³

But it can be argued in opposition to this criticism that Pannenberg's concept of Jesus' death is to be interpreted as the revelatory action of the Son with the Father.⁵⁴ As Frank Tupper correctly observes, the passion first *reveals*

⁵¹ See the section on "The Son's Reconciling Activity Completed in the Spirit" in chapter seven.

⁵² Alister E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology 1750-1990* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 198.

⁵³ J. Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (Maryknoll, NY.: Orbis, 1978), 26-28.

⁵⁴ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 294 -95.

God's love as the solution to human experience of God's forsakenness. Jesus' suffering on the cross is nothing less than the revelation of God's love for the world.⁵⁵

The cross is also the event in which the Son *discloses* the eternal Fatherhood of God and his eternal sonship. Tupper relates the cross to God's revelation only in the soteriological dimension, and thus overlooks this point. Pannenberg is correct to ground his concept of the cross as the revelatory activity of the Son in the intertrinitarian framework. Within this framework, the mutual self-differentiation of Father, Son, and Spirit in the divine reconciling action is the way by which God discloses himself.⁵⁶ Jesus, by his ultimate self-abnegation to the Father on the cross, reveals his eternal correlate with the deity of the Father. Also, only in and through the cross as the expression of Jesus' extreme dedication to the Father, does the eternal God the Father disclose himself in his relationship to Jesus.⁵⁷ This is historically confirmed by Jesus' earthly proclamation of the imminent Kingdom of God and his resurrection.

Pannenberg's concept of the cross as the revelatory activity of the Son is supported by the understanding that the reconciling action of God in Christ cannot be seen apart from his revelatory activity because divine revelation towards sinners is a reconciling operation, and vice versa, as indicated by Alan

⁵⁵ Cf. J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 267-78. For more details, see the section on "*Sühne* as *stellvertretendes Strafleiden*" in chapter six.

⁵⁶ ST-I, 308ff.; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. I, 335ff.

⁵⁷ ST-II, 310; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. I, 307.

Torrance.⁵⁸ In this light, Barth's concept of the Christ event as *Geschichte* is a considerable insight.

Barth uses the term *Geschichte* to describe the living reality that exists in Jesus Christ, rather than something that can be embodied in a any principle, idea or concept.⁵⁹ He is the *Geschichte* of God with man and the *Geschichte* of man with God. This reality includes the totality of Christ's being and his action. Barth writes,

Jesus Christ exists in the totality of his work as the Mediator. He alone is the one who fulfils it, but he does completely fulfil it, so that in and with what we have to say about him in particular we necessarily speak about that comprehensive whole that constitutes its particularity.⁶⁰

The real content and meaning of any particular aspect of the person and work of Jesus Christ can therefore be seen rightly only by looking at the whole.

For Barth, the incarnation and the reconciling work of Jesus Christ are two aspects of the one action of God in him. The incarnation, which is, in a sense, more related to the coming of the Word in the flesh, includes all that he was and did when he came. Christ's reconciling work, on the other hand, is the completed event in which Jesus Christ as true God and true man fulfilled the will of the Father and the purpose of his coming. In other words, reconciliation

⁵⁸ Alan Torrance, *Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 4.

⁵⁹ Barth, according to Alan Torrance, repudiates any kind of theological "principles." As regards this, Barth criticises not only Jürgen Moltmann for his attempting to build an eschatological scheme but also Wolfhart Pannenberg for his striving to set up a christological system. Cf. *Karl Barth's Letters 1961-68*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley, (Edinburgh, 1981), 174-6; 177-9. See also Alan Torrance, *op. cit.*, 9.

⁶⁰ A. MacGrath, "Dialectical and Dialogical Christology," *Theologische Zeitschrift*, 42 (Jahrgang, 1986), 124.

is the purpose of his incarnation; yet in another sense, it is the whole of his being and action in the incarnation. It is right here that who Jesus Christ is and what the incarnation means are perceived. The incarnation and reconciliation are inextricably interwoven all through the incarnate life of Jesus Christ so that he himself in his hypostatic union constitutes revelation and redemption.⁶¹

This interrelatedness of the two can be inferred from the oneness in being and agency between Jesus Christ and the Father. In the incarnation of the Son the Father has graciously condescended to be with humans to reconcile humans to himself. This is the great soteriological emphasis on the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father.⁶² As the electing God, the elected Man, and the reconciled Man, Jesus Christ brings about reconciliation between God and all men.⁶³

The strength of Pannenberg's intertrinitarian concept of the cross as the revelatory action of the Son leaves him with a problem that the cross is divine revelation only in concealed fashion before the confirmation of the resurrection. This faces a logical inconsistency. For him, the self-differentiation of Father, Son, and Spirit is only the way that the triune God discloses himself. It is also his thesis that the historical event and its significance belong together, not in separation. Therefore, Pannenberg should perceive that the historical reality of Jesus' self-differentiation from the Father itself is the mode of divine revelation even before the confirmation by the Easter event. If the resurrection is one of the Christ events, it should be

⁶¹ John Thompson, *Christ in Perspective: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1978), 13-14.

⁶² Thomas F. Torrance, "The legacy of Karl Barth," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1986): 304-05.

understood to be in line with the other events of revelation, rather than in the sense that it retrospectively establishes the pre-Easter revelatory activity.

Within the intertrinitarian thought, the reconciling action of the Son in his pre-Easter history is also the action of the Father in him to bring the world to his Lordship. The discussion of the reconciling office of the Son requires a consideration of the cross as the joint action of the Son with the Father.

5.4. JESUS' DEATH AS THE CO-OPERATIVE ACTION OF THE SON WITH THE FATHER

It can be asserted with John Macquarrie and Herbert Neie that Jesus' death as the Son's self-offering is compatible with his being offered up to death by God the Father. Paul testifies that Jesus' death is the action of the Father in the Son to reconcile the world to himself.⁶⁴ The Father sent the Son to the world in *sarx hamartias* in order to condemn sin in his flesh. The "giving up" of the Son on the cross, according to W. Kramer, was the climax of the Father's providential directing of the earthly course of Jesus.⁶⁵

However, could Pannenberg perceive the passion and death of Jesus as the Father's action? This question arises because first, the path "from below" focuses on the inherent meaning of the historical events rather than on a divine intention attributed to them; second, the stress on the historical reality of Jesus' renouncing of himself prohibits Pannenberg from seeing the passion as the Father's act.⁶⁶ But it can be argued that even within Pannenberg's scheme

⁶³ *CD*, IV/1, 126.

⁶⁴ Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18f.; Rom. 5:10.

⁶⁵ Werner Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, Studies in Biblical Theology 50 (London: SCM Press, 1966), 115-19f. Cf. Rom. 8:32; 4:25.

⁶⁶ Neie, *op. cit.*, 222.

the cross is the action of the Father. It is to be noted here that in the historical and anthropological method this argument should be historically verifiable and intelligible to the contemporary *Wirklichkeitsverständnis*. How can the argument pass such tests?

If Jesus' death is understood as the action of the Father, there arises a tension between the self-offering of the Son and his being offered to death by the Father. Christian tradition has sought to resolve such a problem by means of the idea of the unity of both actions. As Grenz rightly observes,⁶⁷ Pannenberg is in keeping with this tradition.⁶⁸ However, can the notion that Jesus is in essence united with God be given as the reason for understanding Jesus' passion as the Father's action? Within Pannenberg's intertrinitarian outlook, Jesus *is* united with God precisely in and through his self-differentiation from God the Father in his historical life and on the cross. If the person and history of Jesus is God's self-revelation, the self-subordination of the man Jesus to the Father belongs to the essence of God.⁶⁹ But the one who suffers is the man Jesus, rather than the Father. This historical reality hinders Pannenberg from seeing the cross as the Father's suffering.

For this reason, Pannenberg conceives of the unity of their actions on other grounds, the mutual self-differentiation of Father, Son, and Spirit in the trinitarian economic action as the concrete form of the triune inner life.⁷⁰ This is conceivable on the basis that God's being and God's reconciling action belong together because his existence is revealed in his action for the world.

⁶⁷ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 129.

⁶⁸ ST-II, 439; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 485-86.

⁶⁹ JGM, 158ff.

⁷⁰ ST-I, 308ff.; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. I, 335ff.

Thus the eternal communion of the triune God can be identified with the mode of the trinitarian economic action. This intertrinitarian framework implies the trinitarian interdependence and unity in reconciling the world as well as in the existence of the Trinity.

The doctrine of procession, relational theory, and Hegel's theory of the self-sublimation of the three Persons can be pointed to as the most important theological approaches to the problem of the unity of God. Pannenberg's intertrinitarian understanding is based on Hegel's view,⁷¹ and is further substantiated by his clarification of that view.

In his treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity in his *Philosophy of Religion* Hegel was the first to so elaborate the concept of "person" in such a way that God's unity becomes understandable precisely from the reciprocity of the divine Persons.⁷²

The God who reveals himself is essentially person. . . . as Hegel says, it is "the character of the person, of the subject, to relinquish its isolation. Morality, love, is just this: to relinquish its particularity, its particular personality (*Persönlichkeit*) to extend it to universality - friendship is the same . . . The truth of personality is just this: to win it through immersion, through being immersed in the other." Through this profound thought that the essence of the person is to exist in self-dedication to another person, Hegel understood the unity in the Trinity as the unity of reciprocal self-dedication, thus, as a unity that only comes into existence through the process of reciprocal dedication. Thereby he conceived God's unity in an intensity and vitality never before achieved, not by striking off the threeness of persons, but precisely by means of the sharpest accentuation of the concept of the personality of Father, Son, and Spirit . . . With the

⁷¹ *JGM*, 180.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 181.

exception of the problematic derivation of the Trinity from the concept of Spirit which Hegel shared with tradition, his idea is especially suited to the relation of Jesus to the Father and of the Father to him, as well as to that of the Spirit, who glorifies both, to the Father and the Son, as it is expressed in the New Testament.⁷³

An intimation of this perception of the unity of the three person grounded in complete reciprocal dedication is already to be seen in the patristic doctrine of the perichoresis, the reciprocal indwelling of the three Persons in one another.⁷⁴

Within the intertrinitarian scheme, the cross in consequence of Jesus' extreme self-differentiation from the Father is the way by which the Son reconciles the world. The Father is not unaffected by the passion if it is true that God is love. Rather, just as the Son dedicates himself to the Father, the Father dedicates himself to the Son. The Father's self-differentiation is seen not just in the fact that the Father begets the Son but that he hands over all things to him, so that his Kingdom and his own deity are now dependent upon the Son.⁷⁵ The cross throws doubt not merely on the divine power of Jesus but also on the deity and Lordship of the Father. To this extent, the Father shares the suffering of the Son, his sym-pathy with the passion.⁷⁶ This is in accord with Moltmann's view.⁷⁷ Precisely by sharing the passion, the Father is the Father of the Son, and brings humanity into a new relationship with him. It can

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 182f.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁷⁵ *ST-I*, 313; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. I, 340.

⁷⁶ *ST-II*, 314; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. I, 342. Grenz correctly points this out, *op. cit.*, 147. Neie also interprets that the Father's self-differentiation from the Son necessarily includes participation in, identification with, and assumption of the suffering of the Son, and vice versa, *op. cit.*, 222-23.

⁷⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *op. cit.*, 190, 227ff.

be said therefore that the Father as well as the Son is the true subject of the history that led him to the cross. Pannenberg's *Systematische Theologie* states this very clearly.⁷⁸

Furthermore, the dedication extends to *Allgemeinheit*, which is characteristic of Hegel's view. The three Persons exist and act not only in their own mutual self-distinction, but also in their dedication to those who have been created. The common dedication of the Trinity to the objects of creations, a dedication whose expression is love, implies God's immersion into and participation in their passion, suffering, and forsakenness. Hence the cross can be seen as the suffering of God in his love for humanity and all created beings – “without compromising his principle, historically established, of the distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit in the essence of God itself.”⁷⁹

It becomes clear now that the intertrinitarian framework allows one with Pannenberg to see that Jesus' passion on the cross is the action of the Father in the Son as well as that of the Son with the Father for the reconciliation of the world. Thus the weakness of perceiving the crucifixion only as the passion of the man Jesus is overcome. If the intertrinitarian

⁷⁸ See *ST-II*, 438-41; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 484-87. Also, he presented this point in his article “Christologie und Theologie”, *Kerygma und Dogma*, 21/3 (1975), 159-75, esp. 170ff.. Even before the publication of his dogmatics, Pannenberg indicated this point in a postscript to Tupper's book, “When a revised version of my christology . . . is undertaken, I will supplement the interpretation given in the chapter of the crucifixion by a discussion of the action of God in the cross of Jesus. That seems to be precisely what Dr. Tupper is asking for. Because of my approach from the anthropological-historical perspective (“from below”), I concentrated my attention on the inherent meaning of the events rather than on a divine intention attributed to them, although I did relate the historical events to the activity of God. Only after the christology was published was I able to clarify certain aspects in the doctrine of God to my own satisfaction so that I could dare now speak of a divine intention in historical events. As a consequence, in relation to the crucifixion, as in other respects, the self-explication of God in the history of Jesus will get closer attention when I am able someday to revise the text of that book.”, Tupper, *op. cit.*, 305.

⁷⁹ Nieie, *op. cit.*, 223.

premise is acceptable, the cross as the expression of Jesus' obedience⁸⁰ to the Father is the co-operative action of the Son with the Father in love for humanity to reconcile the world to God's Lordship. The Son's action does not exclude but presupposes the initiative of the Father in the crucifixion.⁸¹ Just as the Son's action in the event of reconciliation does not exclude the action of the Father, the Father's giving up of the Son to death does not make the Son a mere object but implies his active working. This unity is evidenced by Paul.⁸²

The reconciling office of the Son that is the being offered to death by the Father, is more substantiated by a clarification of it in terms of the traditional doctrine of the *officium triplex Christi*, to which attention turns now.

5.5. THE OFFICIUM TRIPLEX CHRISTI

The Reformation tradition explains the reconciling office of the Son in terms of the *officium triplex Christi*, Prophet, King, and Priest.⁸³ Barth interrelates the doctrine of the three offices of Christ with the doctrine of the two natures, as does most of modern theology. Following Barth, Pannenberg correctly correlates the threefold office of Christ with the person of the Reconciler.⁸⁴ As Pannenberg sees it, the *officium triplex Christi* cannot be separated from the person of the Son. Christological titles themselves such as

⁸⁰ Cf. Rom. 5:19.

⁸¹ *ST-II*, 439; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 485.

⁸² Cf. Rom. 5:19.

⁸³ See *JGM*, 208ff.

⁸⁴ Pannenberg's christological principle, that is, 'soteriology is a function of christology' indicates this implicitly. Cf. *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 32-34. *JGM*, 38ff.; *ST-II*, 398-99; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 441-42.

“Christ”, “Kyrios”, “Son of Man”, and “New Adam” imply the reconciling significance of Jesus. The doctrine is an articulation of the person of Jesus in terms of the offices. Thus Pannenberg’s criticism that the theologians of the Middle Ages, particularly Peter Lombard, separated Christ’s mediatorial work⁸⁵ from his person is justified.⁸⁶ Augustine, Latin Scholasticism, and Calvin, according to Pannenberg, differentiated Christ’s office as Mediator from his identity.⁸⁷

What is the basis for perceiving the person of Jesus and his reconciling significance? The path “from below” finds it in the history of Jesus.⁸⁸ This is in a sense understandable. The reconciling action of the trinitarian God takes place and is mediated in the *historical person* of Jesus Christ. Thus the historical knowledge of Jesus Christ and his ministry is essential for the interpretation of the reconciling significance of the Christ event.⁸⁹

Pannenberg claims that statements about the person of Christ and statements about his reconciling office are remarkably different in their relation to Jesus’ history. Christological assertions about the person of Jesus might be deduced from the history of Jesus, and especially his passion on the

⁸⁵ Calvin describes Christ’s office as Mediator (Inst. 2.xii.).

⁸⁶ See Peter Lombard, *Sent.* 3.16.6f.; Leo I (DS § 293), cited in *ST-II*, 444.

⁸⁷ *Inst.*, II.xii. Calvin used occasionally the term *munus* rather than *officium*, cf. *Inst.*, II.xxii. Pannenberg’s criticism of Calvin’s treatment of Christ’s three offices is not convincing. The separation of the office from his person remains external but is not Calvin’s spirit. Calvin’s presentation of the *munus triplex Christi* brings together what Scripture holds together, the person of Jesus Christ and his work. Christ’s saving works are interpreted in terms of his identity. The affirmation of the hypostatic union of the person of the Redeemer is also not meant to show that it is a mere prerequisite of reconciliation, but is to be seen in terms of the meaning and redemptive functions of the works which he as Mediator performs, rather than in terms of the essence which his humanity seems to conceal. Cf. E. David Willis, *Calvin’s Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin’s Theology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 61-63.

⁸⁸ See the sections on “The Historical Approach to the Identity of Jesus” in chapter two and on “The Doctrine of Reconciliation” in chapter four.

⁸⁹ See the sub-section on “A function of Christology”, in chapter four.

cross and his resurrection from the dead.⁹⁰ The reconciling office of the incarnate Son of God, however, cannot be automatically perceived from Jesus' history. Pannenberg attempts to solve this problem by suggesting another history hidden behind the human historical work and destiny of Jesus - the history as the medium of the eternal Son of God and the active presence of the exalted Lord through the apostolic proclamation. Only this other history makes it possible to perceive the human history of Jesus as the reconciling action of the Son which is aimed no longer at the people of God of the old covenant but at the reconciliation of humanity.⁹¹

Otherwise, if statements about the mediatorial office of the incarnate Son are interpreted only in the light of Jesus' human history, as presented in *Grundzüge der Christologie*,⁹² a problem rises because the earthly history of Jesus cannot be seen as the Son's executing of his reconciling office. The cross remains only Jesus' fate, not the self-offering of the Son.⁹³ Further, as Herbert Nieie observes,⁹⁴ in his earthly existence Jesus was neither a king nor a priest nor, in the strict sense, a prophet.⁹⁵ First, Jesus' coming and his activity were not prophetic in character,⁹⁶ though he was in the prophetic tradition. His concern was exclusively with God and his future, not this or that event in the historical future.⁹⁷ The future had broken in through him and through his

⁹⁰ ST-II, 444-45; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 491.

⁹¹ ST-II, 444-45.

⁹² See JGM, 208-25.

⁹³ ST-II, 445; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 492.

⁹⁴ See Nieie, *op. cit.*, 168-172.

⁹⁵ See JGM, 208-25; ST-II, 445-47; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 492-94.

⁹⁶ JGM, 215-17.

⁹⁷ ST-II, 445; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 492.

ministry. He was therefore distinct from the prophets.

Second, during his earthly ministry Jesus neither sought nor practised the *munus regnum*.⁹⁸ His royal office began only after the resurrection, not with the pre-Easter history. Pannenberg writes,

The title of King (Christ) . . . designates the position that is due to Jesus because of his resurrection, first of all with regard to the eschatological future, but then also as a present reality in heaven.⁹⁹

Third, Jesus did not exercise his priestly office on earth. The Reformation doctrine of the priestly office consists of *satisfactio* and *intercessio*. Whereas the former is a result of Jesus' active fulfilment of the law and his suffering on the cross, the latter is his intercession for believers before the Father on the basis of the satisfaction accomplished on the cross. However, since *intercessio* is a priestly function of the exalted Christ, only the act of *satisfactio* belongs to his pre-Easter history. The doctrine of Jesus' priestly office, according to Pannenberg, has two New Testament roots, that is, the explicit designation of Jesus as High Priest and the concept of his death on the cross as the atonement for our sins.¹⁰⁰ Since the sacrificial idea easily carries with it the idea of priesthood, Hebrews developed the unique idea that Jesus in his person was both priest and sacrifice.¹⁰¹ This relationship of the idea of atonement to the concept of sacrifice, however, he points out, is not found in the earliest Christian understanding of the cross, but can be traced to

⁹⁸ *JGM*, 217.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 220.

Hellenistic-Jewish Christianity which is attested by Paul.¹⁰² It is to be noted here that in Pannenberg's view, God the Father himself was the priest in this sacrificial event on the cross. This implies that the cross was not a part of Jesus' *work*,¹⁰³ but the fate that he had to endure. He, accordingly, pays tribute to E. Lohse who articulates the origins of the Palestinian concept of Jesus' death.

Christ's atoning death did not first have to create the gracious God, as was true with the pious of late Judaism who went to death in order to pay off the debts of the people and turn away the wrath of God. Rather, Christ's atoning death presupposes the gracious God who had offered up the Christ in order that he would carry the punishment of sin for us.¹⁰⁴

The Pauline writings, with Christ as the subject of the offering unto death,¹⁰⁵ are therefore to be understood in the light of his exaltation and even from the standpoint of the sending of the Son in the flesh,¹⁰⁶ rather than the pre-Easter Jesus himself.¹⁰⁷

The historical figure of Jesus on earth is supported by Pannenberg's view of the resurrection as constitutively *ontological*, as well as *noetical*. The Easter event is not only constitutive for the perception of Jesus' divinity, but is

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 219-20. Cf. Rom. 3:25. This is highly questionable. For instance, Mark 10: 45 strongly connects Jesus' death with the Servant tradition of Isaiah 53 where vicarious-substitutionary atonement is the central theme. Thus, Pannenberg's argument is exegetically weak at this point.

¹⁰³ *JGM*, 220.

¹⁰⁴ Eduard Lohse, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht: Untersuchungen zur urchristlichen Verkündigung vom Sühnetod Jesu Christi* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 146, cited in *JGM*, 220, Cf. *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 226.

¹⁰⁵ R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. II, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 12. Cf. Gal. 1:3f., 2:20; Eph. 5:2, 25. 2:6.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Gal. 4:4.

also ontologically constitutive for that divinity. "Apart from the resurrection from the dead, Jesus would not be God."¹⁰⁸ What does this imply? It is that the pre-Easter history of Jesus is the history of the man Jesus.

Ritschl, following F. Schleiermacher, connects closely the Reformation doctrine of the *officium Christi* to the historical reality of Jesus. Ritschl stresses Jesus' "calling" as an ongoing process for setting up the ethical community of the Kingdom of God among humans.¹⁰⁹ However, in *Grundzüge der Christologie*, Pannenberg restricted it to the pre-Easter work, and thus did not relate it to the cross and the resurrection. This implies that the reconciling in the crucifixion must be ascribed to the work of God, not the Son. This is why Pannenberg charged the Reformers in their doctrine of the *munus triplex Christi* with seeing the divine-human person of Christ as the bearer of the threefold office, thereby bypassing the historical reality of Jesus.¹¹⁰

But his *Systematische Theologie* presents an advance in articulating this. The action of the Son extends to the cross and the Easter event because "the thought of the divine sonship of Jesus means not only incarnation but also an activity of the Son in the history of Jesus".¹¹¹ Following von Frank, Pannenberg maintains that the New Testament speaks mostly of an action of

¹⁰⁷ JGM, 220; *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 226.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 224. It can be asserted against Pannenberg, however, that the opposite is also true. Because he was God he rose from the dead. The pre-Easter resurrection predictions must have equal weight with the passion predictions.

¹⁰⁹ Ritschl, *op. cit.*, 433ff. He emphasises Jesus' mission for establishing the moral community of the Kingdom of God by his words and works and suffering and thus replaces the "*munus*" and "*officium*" with the "calling".

¹¹⁰ JGM, 223. *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 229. Pannenberg criticises such a view of the person of Christ as a mythological concept and therefore inconceivable in our time. See JGM, 222, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 228.

¹¹¹ ST-II, 446. *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 493.

the Son of God in the history of Jesus.¹¹² Further, the reconciling action of the incarnate Son is not limited to the earthly history of Jesus, but extends to events after the resurrection because Jesus is perceived as the exalted Son even in the post-Easter history. The limitation of his monograph, articulating the three offices of Christ only in terms of the work of the earthly Jesus, is thus overcome.

This forces Pannenberg to revise the chiefly negative criticism of the older Protestant doctrine of Christ's mediatorial office, particularly Calvin's doctrine.¹¹³ This is clarified by an elucidation of the main points of Calvin's doctrine of the three offices of Christ.

Calvin systematises the saving work of the Mediator and the soteriological significance of his person in terms of the *munus triplex Christi*. He possibly derives this doctrine from Bucer,¹¹⁴ which can be traced back to Eusebius of Caesarea.¹¹⁵ Aquinas, St. Augustine, and Chrysostom spoke of the triple function of Christ. As J. Bosc observes, however, the three offices are not explored with consistency or fullness before Calvin.¹¹⁶ This schema can thus be said to be really characteristic of his doctrine of the saving work of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁷ The Old Testament presents that the Prophet, Priest and King in Israel are mediators of the Covenant. Calvin, by using this threefold schema, describes Christ as the anointed ultimate Mediator of the Covenant who

¹¹² F. H. R. von Frank, *System der christlichen Wahrheit*, II (1880), § 35, cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 494.

¹¹³ ST-II, 448; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 494-95.

¹¹⁴ Bucer, *Enarrationes in Evangelia*, 1536, 606: 'Rex regum Christus est, summus sacerdos, et prophetarum caput.', cited in W. Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (Glasgow: Collins, 1976), 225.

¹¹⁵ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, 1, 3, 9; cited in Wendel, *op. cit.*, 225.

¹¹⁶ J. Bosc, *The Kingly Office of the Lord the Son* (Edinburgh, 1959), 5-6; cited in R. S. Wallace, *Calvin Geneva and Reformation: A Study of Calvin as Social Worker, Churchman, Pastor, and Theologian* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1990), 242.

¹¹⁷ J. F. Jansen does not interpret the schema of three offices as crucial in Calvin's doctrine of the work of Christ in *Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London: J. Clark, 1956), 26-38. He argues that the prophetic office was not intended by Calvin to use, for the movement from the *munus duplex* in 1536 edition of the *Institutes* to that of the *munus triplex* was merely "peripheral" and "artificial change" and "the triple formula never appears in his commentaries" (*ibid.*, 51, 74f., 105f.).

restores and makes new the broken Covenant with God.¹¹⁸ In light of this hypostatic union of Christ, he interprets the meaning and functions of the three offices of Christ as follows.

First, Christ is Prophet. As a prophet, he is a “herald and witness of the Father’s grace”.¹¹⁹ His prophetic office began with his earthly ministry. He came to be the great messianic teacher bringing “the fullness and culmination of all revelation”.¹²⁰ Calvin comments, “inasmuch as He is the eternal Wisdom of God, He is the only fount of all doctrines.”¹²¹ He emphasises Christ’s holy life and example as the confirmation of his teaching while M. Luther grounds the efficacy of his teaching on his divinity.

Christ’s prophetic ministry, according to Calvin, continues by the Holy Spirit even after the Easter event. The Spirit who is the Spirit of Christ completes his prophetic office. This office is not for Christ himself, but “for his whole body that the power of the Spirit might be present in the continuing preaching of the gospel.”¹²² Ministers are instruments of his performing this prophetic ministry by the Spirit for his people. As T. Parker sees it,¹²³ his prophetic work is redemptive in character.¹²⁴ When he performs his prophetic ministry to people by the Spirit through the gospel, reconciliation with God takes place.¹²⁵

Second, Christ is King. The title Messiah was given to him especially with respect to, and by virtue of, his kingship.¹²⁶ Since his Kingdom is neither earthly nor carnal – and hence subject to corruption, – but spiritual, it lifts the individual believers up even to eternal life. He as King assures them of immortality, comforts and “fortifies” them even in their afflictions, affirms the perpetual preservation of the church against the assaults of the devil and the whole world, and endows his people with their spiritual need.¹²⁷

For Calvin this *Regnum Christi* began with his coming to the earth. This coming also extends to the apostolic era of the preaching of the gospel. The ascended Christ rules the church by his Word. His rule has, however, not yet been completed.¹²⁸ The full effect of his reign will appear at the Last

¹¹⁸ Cf. Wallace, *Calvin Geneva and Reformation*, 242.

¹¹⁹ *Inst*, II.xv.2.

¹²⁰ *Inst*, II.xv.1

¹²¹ *Calvin’s Commentary on John* 14.24.

¹²² *Inst*, II.xv.2.

¹²³ T. H. L. Parker points out that “His preaching was a part of His redemptive activity – as necessary a part as His ‘office of priest and king’ in *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, revised edition (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969), 111.

¹²⁴ *Inst*, IV.xv.4.

¹²⁵ *Calvin’s Commentary on Luke* 4.17.

¹²⁶ *Inst*, II.xv.2.

¹²⁷ *Inst*, II.xv.4.

¹²⁸ *Calvin’s Commentary on Isa.* 60.18.

Day.¹²⁹

Last, Christ is Priest. According to Calvin, there are two parts of his priestly office: reconciliation and intercession. First, his priesthood functions as reconciling the world to God. Christ as a spotless Mediator became sinner in human place to suffer the punishment that humanity deserved, so that he might procure the favour of God for humans and render them acceptable to God.¹³⁰ Calvin says thus: "Jesus Christ intervened, and by taking on himself the punishment prepared for every sinner by the just judgement of God, Christ effaced and abolished by his blood the iniquities which had caused enmity between God and men, and by that payment God was satisfied."¹³¹

For this office Christ is required to be not only God, but also man. In becoming flesh, God comes close to humans in such a way that "his divinity and our human nature might by mutual connection grow together."¹³² For Calvin, the humanity of Christ is not seen as merely the instrument of God's reconciliation in him, but the "material cause" of it.¹³³

He emphasises the whole life of obedience as sacrifice. The voluntary humiliation of the Incarnate itself means sacrifice. It is by his whole life of obedience to the Father that he obtained for us the divine reconciliation.¹³⁴ He says, "even in death itself his willing obedience is the important thing because a sacrifice not offered voluntarily would not have furthered righteousness."¹³⁵

Calvin finds a close union of Christ with the world in his sacrifice. He took humanity's place and became a sinner and subject to the curse, not in himself, indeed, but in humanity.¹³⁶ He submitted himself to the Father in his whole life of obedience that he might transfer to us his human life of fellowship with the Father.¹³⁷ "Having taken up himself the burden of impurity with which we were oppressed", the Son of God "has clothed us with his righteousness".¹³⁸ This union is caused by his compassion for humankind. "He was not compelled by violence or necessity, but was induced purely by his love for us and by his mercy to submit to it." Calvin grounds the infinite and efficient value of his obedience and suffering for the reconciliation of the world in God's eternal love. God's love for humanity before the foundation of the world is the cause of Christ's expiation of human

¹²⁹ *Inst*, II.xv.5.

¹³⁰ *Inst*, II.xv.6.

¹³¹ *Inst*, II.xvi.2.

¹³² *Inst*, II.xii.1-2.

¹³³ *Inst*, III.xi.7; III.xiv.17, 21.

¹³⁴ *Calvin's Commentary on Mic.* 5.4.

¹³⁵ *Inst*, II.xvi.5; II.xvii.3.

¹³⁶ *Inst*, II.xvi.6.

¹³⁷ *Inst*, II.xvi.5-6.

¹³⁸ *Inst*, IV.xvii.2.

sins. Calvin says, "By his love, God the Father goes before, and anticipates our reconciliation in Christ . . . This is because he first loves us that he afterwards reconciles unto himself."¹³⁹

For Calvin Christ's priestly office continues in his heavenly intercession for us. The benefit and efficacy of his sacrifice are once-for-all. Yet he is continuously pleading the efficacy of his sacrifice before his Father's throne.¹⁴⁰ This heavenly intercession is inaugurated by Christ's sacrifice. Through his ministry of intercession it is possible for humans to obtain favour in prayer and praise even today as well as to enjoy the "peace of a godly conscience". Calvin teaches: "Christ plays the priestly role, not only to render the Father favourable and propitious toward us by an eternal law of reconciliation, but also to receive us as his companions in this great office [Rev. 1:6]. For we who are defiled in ourselves, yet are priests in him, offer ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary that the sacrifices of prayers and praise that we bring may be acceptable and sweet-smelling before God."¹⁴¹

There are similarities between Pannenberg and Calvin. First, Christ's reconciling office is articulated in terms of the sending of the Son by the Father. The office is demonstrated by the Son fulfilling the mission on which the Father sent him, namely, the death on the cross. Second, the reconciling office is perceived as the fulfilment of the old covenant in the unity of Old covenant and New. Third, the reconciling office is understood as encompassing his earthly witness to the imminence of God's Lordship and the work of the exalted Christ, particularly his intercession for believers following his sacrificial death on the cross, a concept derived from Hebrews 7:25.

But, in Pannenberg's view, the older dogmatics conceive of the activity of the exalted Lord as Priest, King, and Prophet simply from the viewpoint of a phase of Christ's mediatorial office that objectively follows his earthly history, thereby being subject to "the one-sidedly christological

¹³⁹ *Inst.* II.xvi.3.

¹⁴⁰ *Calvin's Commentary on Heb.* 7.25.

objectivism".¹⁴² This is not in keeping with the content of the earthly history of Jesus because the doctrine does not link together the three different levels of meaning in the early church's statements about Christ's reconciling action. He rather articulates the *munus triplex Christi* in the interconnectedness of Jesus' earthly activity and that of the risen Son which is based on the interrelation of the three levels of the divine sonship of Jesus.¹⁴³ The priestly office lies in the self-offering of the Son on the cross and the heavenly intercession of the risen Son for believers. The kingly office is present in a veiled form in the earthly appearance of Jesus, and, after the exaltation, rests upon his ruling over the world by the word of the gospel and the power of the Spirit, preparing for the coming Lordship of the Father in the world.¹⁴⁴ The prophetic office is exercised in Jesus' proclamation of the imminence of the future realisation of the deity and Lordship of the Father. The office did not end with his earthly history, but is still exercised by the exalted Son himself through the proclamation of the gospel by the church.¹⁴⁵ The three offices of Christ are therefore correlated to each other, not three equal parts of a whole. As Stanley Grenz observes,¹⁴⁶ they are aspects of the reconciling activity of the one person, the earthly and exalted Son in the whole history of Jesus, hence, one threefold reconciling office. This is a consequence of the intertrinitarian

¹⁴¹ *Inst*, II.xv.6.

¹⁴² *ST-II*, 448; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 495.

¹⁴³ See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 244.

¹⁴⁴ *ST-II*, 448; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 495.

¹⁴⁵ *ST-II*, 449; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 496. This point has led Pannenberg to correct the previous understanding that was presented in his monograph *JGM*, 219. For Pannenberg the church's proclamation of the gospel should not be interpreted as "a part of the prophetic office" of Christ in the sense that its work may be "identified with his without distinction".

¹⁴⁶ See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 244-45.

character of reconciliation which implies the unity of the earthly reconciling action of the Son with that of the risen Son in the Spirit.

But Pannenberg's criticism that the Reformation doctrine perceives the three offices as divisible elements is not convincing. In the older doctrine, especially in Calvin, the three offices are interrelated, not separated. They are closely connected to Christ's saving work, rather than being treated as an abstract doctrine or a principle in themselves. As professor Newlands points out,¹⁴⁷ Calvin's doctrine of Christ's saving works brings together the three important strands of the biblical tradition, though it pays little attention to the extent to which the categories of the Old Testament are transformed through Christ (e.g. shepherd, Saviour, and servant). They are three aspects of one redemptive work of the Redeemer. It can be said therefore that Pannenberg's conception of the threefold reconciling office of the Son is a modified form of the traditional doctrine of the *munus triplex Christi*.¹⁴⁸

The articulation of the Son's reconciling office in terms of the interrelation of the three offices of Christ is Pannenberg's contribution. As Frank correctly points out,¹⁴⁹ these offices are logically divisive but organically interrelated elements that are directed to the reconciliation of the world. Hence they must be seen as the three aspects of the one reconciling office of the Son. The Son's prophetic office functions to proclaim, through the apostolic ministry of the Church, his self-offering to the Father on the cross, thereby leading humanity into the realm of his Lordship, as he had already made it

¹⁴⁷ See George M. Newlands, *God in Christian Perspective* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 220.

¹⁴⁸ Grenz correctly indicates this, *op. cit.*, 127.

present to believers in his earthly ministry.

The threefold reconciling office of the Son, in Pannenberg's view, is established only when it is confirmed by Jesus' resurrection. This is because the other history of Jesus, which is seen as the basis of his reconciling significance, is instituted by the event. Thus until the confirmation there is a tension between the human history of Jesus and the threefold reconciling office of the Son. But this tension is not true of the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation and the historical revelation. This is the limitation of the path "from below to above". This problem forces one to argue that the threefold reconciling office of the Son is perceived even in Jesus' historical life and his passion on the cross. He manifested himself as the one who has authority over all things in the world. He forgave sins. The passion was already predicted and even planned by the Son.¹⁵⁰ Jesus knew the significance of his reconciling ministry on the cross.¹⁵¹ Paul teaches the exaltation of Christ on the basis of his voluntary humiliation and death.¹⁵² Further, the earthly history of Jesus as the expression of his subordination to the Father reveals the eternal Father and his own eternal sonship.

¹⁴⁹ Frank, *System der christlichen Wahrheit*, 194, cited in *ST-II*, 447; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 494.

¹⁵⁰ *Vide supra* the section on "The Son's Action in His pre-Easter History as Prolepsis of God's Lordship". Cf. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33. Pannenberg insists that from the historical realities of Jesus which led to the crucifixion it is difficult to see that Jesus sought his death as the goal of his message and ministry. Cf. *ST-II*, 416f., 438-39.

¹⁵¹ Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

¹⁵² Cf. Phil. 2: 9.

5.6. CONCLUSION

The discussion of the Son's reconciling office has concentrated on the argument that Jesus' death is the executing by the Son of his reconciling office. This has been overlooked by earlier studies of Pannenberg's view of Jesus' crucifixion. These studies have focused on the human historical level of Jesus' work, and thus interpreted the cross as a fate that befell Jesus.

As a consideration has shown, Pannenberg can be applauded in that within the intertrinitarian framework he perceives the cross as the reconciling action of the Son to bring the world under the Lordship of the Father. The pre-Easter history of Jesus as his perfect self-distinction from the Father is the reconciling action of the Son. The cross is also the way by which the Son makes room for the action of the Father and the coming of his Lordship, thereby reconciling the world to God. Jesus' self-differentiation from the Father on the cross discloses the eternal Fatherhood of God and his own eternal sonship. In this way the Father dedicates himself to the Son, and thus participates in the suffering of the Son. Within the intertrinitarian framework, the earthly action of the Son extends to the activity of the risen Son in the Spirit. These two are the one and the same action of the Son. Hence the traditional three offices of Christ can be seen as the three aspects of the one reconciling action of the Son in the whole history of Jesus including his post-Easter history.

But Pannenberg's intertrinitarian concept of the Son's reconciling action is still inconsistent with the intertrinitarian framework at the following

points. First, his view of the retrospective confirmation of this action by his resurrection leaves a noetical and ontological tension between the human level of Jesus' history and the history of the Son before the Easter event. Within the intertrinitarian perspective, the earthly subordination of Jesus to the Father and his Lordship is the historical mediation of the Son's action. Thus, it is the way by which the Son openly performs his reconciling office to bring the world under the Lordship of the Father even before Jesus' resurrection, rather than only in a concealed fashion. From this standpoint, the threefold office of Christ can be perceived as the action of the Son even in the pre-Easter history of Jesus.

Second, his concept of the Son's reconciling action on the cross only as a prolepsis of the coming Lordship of the Father undermines its all-sufficiency for the establishment of the Father's Lordship. Within the intertrinitarian perspective, the cross is the once-for-all reconciling action of the Son to lead humanity to the Lordship of the Father. Jesus' dedication to the Father and his Lordship is the historical mediation of the eternal intertrinitarian action of the trinitarian God to achieve his Lordship, which had already been realised in eternity, in the world. Thus the cross has already brought about this Lordship. The future Lordship of the Father is its culmination.

CHAPTER VI: JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS AS *STELLVERTRETUNG*

This chapter focuses on Jesus' death as *Stellvertretung*. This further substantiates the reconciling office of the Son. The Son performs his reconciling office in the form of *Stellvertretung* so that humanity can participate in the process of reconciliation. It is argued that within the intertrinitarian framework, the Son, by his ultimate dedication to the Father on the cross, represents humanity so that it might be reconciled to God under his Lordship.

The oldest interpretations of Jesus' death are first clarified, which serves as a substantive groundwork for the subsequent discussion. Then Jesus' historical activity, especially his conflict with the law, which led to his execution, is explored. On this basis the *Sühnebedeutung* of the cross for Israel and the Gentiles is established, which is the next theme. Attention moves to an elucidation of the concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden*, characteristic of Pannenberg's view of the cross. Following this is an investigation of *Stellvertretung* as a universal phenomenon in a socio-political life by which the concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* is justified. Finally, the character of *Stellvertretung* as liberation is exposed by concentrating on the inclusive concept of representation and on the Son's representation as the paradigm of sonship for humanity.

6.1. THE EARLY CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDINGS OF JESUS' DEATH

Pannenberg indicates that the significance of Jesus' death was not as clear as that of the Easter event. Whereas in the early Christian church the resurrection was conceivable in the perspective of Israel's apocalyptic tradition and within the context of Jesus' claims to authority, the crucifixion did not fulfil the expected eschaton nor could it be directly connected with his pre-Easter life and activity. Above all, the resurrection forced primitive Christianity to grapple with the divine "must" of the crucifixion.¹

Why had Jesus to go the way of suffering to the cross if God was subsequently to acknowledge in the resurrection the unheard-of claim with which Jesus appeared? Why did God permit Jesus' rejection by the Jews? Why did he not acknowledge Jesus earlier so unambiguously that Jesus would have been incontrovertibly shown to be God's authorised representative? Why must his path have led to the cross? ²

There were various answers to this question in primitive Christianity. Pannenberg maintains with F. Hahn³ that the earliest was probably based on the Old Testament tradition of the rejection and murder of the prophets of God by the stiff-necked people.⁴ The core of this prophetic destiny⁵ may go back to

¹ Pannenberg deals with this in *JGM*, 246-251, and in *ST-II*, 416-421. See E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 160; Herbert Neie, *The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1979), 6-10.

² *JGM*, 246.

³ F. Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum, Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, 83 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 49, cited in *JGM*, 246.

⁴ Luk. 13:34 par.; cf. 11:49ff.. Cf. *ST-II*, 416; *JGM*, 246-47; *AC*, 78. See Allan D. Galloway, *Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 124; Neie, *op. cit.*, 7.

Jesus himself, “even though Jesus never understood himself as prophet in the strict sense.”⁶ The main idea connected with this was that the “must” of Jesus’ rejection was foreordained by God’s decree⁷ and that the passion story was formulated under the influence of the *Weissagungsbeweis* (proof from prophecy) by the Palestine community.⁸

One agrees with Pannenberg that the early Christian church undoubtedly emphasised Jesus’ death as expiatory, though not primarily as an expiatory sacrifice in the cultic sense.⁹ This expiatory character is expressed in the ransom-saying in Mark 10:45 and the blood of Jesus shed “for us” in Luke 22: 20 or “for many” in Mark 14:24 in the Lord’s Supper tradition. The expression “for many” in both cases possibly indicates a connection with Isaiah 53:12. But for Paul the plural γράφαι in I Cor. 5:3 excludes a specific reference to Isa. 53:12. However, according to Pannenberg, Paul’s formula has bound two independent motifs together: (1) the concept of the expiatory power of the suffering and death of prophets and martyrs current in Judaism,¹⁰ and (2) the fundamental idea of the old account of the death of the Son of Man that God

⁵ Cf. Mark 12:2 ff.

⁶ *JGM*, 247.

⁷ Acts 2:23; 4:28.

⁸ See R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd, 1963), 280ff. See Neie, *op. cit.*, 7.

⁹ *JGM*, 247; *ST-II*, 416; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 462. On this Pannenberg agrees with E. Lohse, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht: Untersuchung zur urchristlichen Verkündigung vom Sühnetod Jesu Christi* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 119, 126, cited in *JGM*, 247; G. Friedrich, *Die Verkündigung des Todes Jesu im NT* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1982), 57-67; Vgl. H. Kessler, *Die theologische Bedeutung des Todes Jesu: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Düsseldorf, 1970), 241-52, esp. 243ff., cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 462.

¹⁰ Pannenberg shares with Eduard Lohse the expiatory power of the suffering of prophets and martyrs, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht: Untersuchungen zur urchristlichen Verkündigung vom Sühnetod Jesu Christi* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 31f., 64ff, cited in *JGM*, 248 (n 9).

foreordained and Scripture predicted.¹¹ It was only this connection that made room for the motif of the expiatory suffering of the Servant of God. This motif provided the conception of the universal significance of the expiation accomplished by Jesus' death. This transcended contemporary Jewish concepts of expiation since it is the ultimate expiation.¹²

This expiatory character for primitive Christianity are understood in other motifs.¹³ It was expressed as an expiatory sacrifice, which Pannenberg considers to be more metaphorical than the other motifs,¹⁴ or as the eschatological Passover Lamb.¹⁵ It was also elucidated as a covenant sacrifice in the sense that Jesus' blood, shed "for many" in the eucharistic tradition, has sealed the "new covenant" promised in Jeremiah 31:3, which no other means of expiation could establish.¹⁶ Since the covenant sacrifice of Jesus' death possesses expiatory power,¹⁷ it includes an especially broad interpretation of the expiatory character of Jesus' death.¹⁸ For Paul the execution of Jesus was the end of the law. Jesus has taken upon himself on the cross the curse of the law

¹¹ Pannenberg borrows this from Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, 83; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 55ff., 201-03., cited in *JGM*, 248 (n 10).

¹² *JGM*, 247-48.

¹³ Cf. *AC*, 78-79.

¹⁴ Rom. 3:25; Hebrews.

¹⁵ *JGM*, 249. Pannenberg shares this with Lohse, *Martyrer und Gottesknecht*, 138ff., 149-54.

¹⁶ 1 Cor. 11:25; Luk. 22:20.

¹⁷ Pannenberg borrows this idea from F. Lang, "Abendmahl und Bundesgedanke im NT", *EvT* 35 (1975), 524ff.; F. Hahn, "Zum Stand der Erforschung des urchristlichen Herrenmahls", *ibid.*, 553ff. According to Pannenberg, for Lang the covenant idea was a very early part of the tradition but may also have been linked to the motif of purging sin, and for Hahn the difference between covenant and expiation is stressed but there might be a linkage in Mark 14.24 because of the added "shed for you" (as distinct from 1 Cor. 11.25), cited in *ST-II*, 417.

¹⁸ *JGM*, 249.

as an innocent person, thereby nullifying it completely.¹⁹ Colossians also understood the significance of Jesus' death as setting aside the law.²⁰ This abolition of the law made room for the mission to the Gentiles.²¹ According to Pannenberg, this universal significance of the crucifixion is confirmed by the Adam-Jesus speculation.²²

These different interpretations in primitive Christianity presuppose the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. But it can no longer be accepted as a relevant presupposition in Pannenberg's methodological premise that all theological articulations must be historico-critically verifiable in the intellectual atmosphere of the post-Enlightenment era. The interpretation of Jesus' death must rather be justified on other grounds, namely, the "reliably historical" realities of his activity which led to his execution²³ and the contemporary

¹⁹ Gal. 3:13.

²⁰ Col. 2:13f.

²¹ Cf. Eph. 2:14-16; Gal. 3:14; Rom. 11:11ff.

²² Pannenberg identifies this with the view of E. Brandenburger, *Adam und Christus: Exegetisch-religionsgeschichte Untersuchung zu Röm. 5:12-21* (Neukirchen Krs. Moers, Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1962), 237-45; cited in *JGM*, 200-01. As Brandenburger understands, for Pannenberg, Paul's *anthropos* category is changed "from the sphere of the suprahistorical-speculative into that of history" (Brandenburger, *op. cit.*, 238). This is so "in the sense of an eschatological universalism of salvation (*ibid.*, 244) in which the universality of the forgiveness of sins accomplished by the death of Christ (*ibid.*, 237), presupposes a corresponding universality of the sin that humanity incurred through the first Adam, which therefore is not to be understood only as violation of the Mosaic law." (*ibid.*, 203ff.). Within the context of the Jewish apocalyptic traditions Paul conceived of the original and symbolic meaning of the idea of the Son of Man as the eschatological realisation of the human in its heavenly destiny. This eschatological destiny of humanity had already appeared in the Christ event. Thus arises the question of participation in it. "This question could be answered by the archetypal aspect of the *anthropos* category. Thus Paul, in the light of the experience of the Christ event, transformed not only the Adam speculation about the first, prototypal man, which we find in Philo, but also the eschatological turn that had already been given to this speculation in apocalyptic." (*JGM*, 200f., n. 13). As Neie observes (*The Doctrine of Atonement*, 10), for Pannenberg, "Paul thus shifted the locus of true humanity from the distant past to the future. For mythical orientation to a prototypal distant past, he substituted an eschatological oriented concept of human history." (*JGM*, 200).

²³ *AC*, 78-79. *JGM*, 250.

Wirklichkeitsverständnis.²⁴ To be sure, the expiatory significance of Jesus' death must be interpreted on the basis of objective facts because the expiatory action of the Son in it takes place and mediated in human history. But such a historical approach is dependent upon the kerygma of the early church, since these facts are not easily accessible without the help of the latter. Even though these facts are approachable, it does not mean that this kerygma excludes the historical realities of Jesus' action. Further, the expiatory death of Jesus is a unique event beyond a universal phenomenon.²⁵

The relationship of Jesus' earthly activity to his condemnation is now looked at in terms of his conflict with the law. The *Sühnebedeutung* of Jesus' death is dependent upon this.

6.2. THE RELATIONSHIP OF JESUS' DEATH WITH THE LAW

In his whole historical activity Jesus implicitly equated his own authority with that of God. This is evidenced by the fact that he placed his own authority above the Law and forgave sins. Jesus' claim to authority in his explication of the law and his unconditional promise of forgiveness was based on *the imminence of God's Lordship*. This inevitably conflicted with the post-exilic Jewish legal tradition which was regarded as being identical with God's will and with the ultimate criterion for salvation. Jesus appeared as a transgressor against this law and thus against God himself who had made known his will in it. The Johannine understanding of Jesus' identification of

²⁴ See Neie, *op. cit.*, 129-31; Tupper, *op. cit.*, 60.

²⁵ *Vide infra* the section on "*Stellvertretung* as a Universal Phenomenon".

himself as the Son of God, which is the central point of the Jewish accusation against him, illustrates this fact.²⁶ Hence Pannenberg is correct to maintain that the rejection of Jesus as a blasphemer did not arise from a few slanderous individuals, but was the inevitable and understandable reaction by the Jew who was faithful to the law.

Pannenberg asserts that only in the light of Jesus' resurrection was he revealed as acting lawfully, and those who rejected him were the real blasphemers. This means that the traditional law itself was an inadequate expression of God's will.²⁷ The message of the Easter event, which cleared away the ambiguity of his pre-Easter ministry caused the foundations of Jewish religion to collapse.²⁸ To that extent, for Paul Jesus came under the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13).

However, Paul's understanding of the cross as setting aside the law does not mean its complete abrogation. In his letter to the Galatians this was what he taught. But the function of the law as the *paidagogos* in the *Heilsgeschichte* allows him to say in Romans, "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law"(3:31).

²⁶ John 5:18; 19:7. See *AC*, 79-81.

²⁷ *JGM*, 254.

²⁸ This does not mean the complete rejection of Jewish religion. Pannenberg says, "I would strongly emphasise the element of continuity concerning Jesus religion as such. This seems more adequate to Jesus' own proclamation, because Jesus claimed that the God of Israel and not the law was the core of Jesus religion. If we accept this point of view, then this would not mean to question Jewish religion as such, but a particular interpretation of it, namely, the centrality of the law as being indistinct from that of God. . . . there are many ways of understanding the Jewish faith. I think that even within the Jewish religion, not only on the basis of Christian faith and the resurrection of Jesus, it could be said: the emphasis on the law is not only possible emphasis in the self-understanding of the Jewish faith. I am going to revise my christology at that particular point." "A Theological Conversation with Wolfhart Pannenberg", *Dialog*, 11 (autumn, 1972), 291ff. Pannenberg adds, it is the non-biblical view that God had finally repudiated Israel because of the crucifixion of Jesus and had withdrawn

According to Pannenberg, Paul interprets this “upholding” of the law in terms of salvation history.²⁹ Within this function the law reached its goal through Jesus’ death. If the law came into human history for the purpose of increasing sin (Rom. 5:20), its work is accomplished through death. Pannenberg says,

The believers are free from the law by virtue of their being united with the death of Christ, since death emancipates from bondage to the law (Rom. 7:4). Whoever has hope in a new life beyond death is free from the law in the realm of this hope. And because believers already live out of that hope in the coming glory, their behaviour is no longer subject to the law.³⁰

Therefore, the Pauline concept of Christ as the end of the law³¹ means first of all freedom from the law for those who are united with Christ in one body and in consequence share in the fulfilment of the law through Christ in love.³²

A question arises here: did Paul understand that with Jesus’ death the period of the law as a historical epoch came to an end? It can be asserted with Pannenberg that this is the case in Galatians because here the law is not given by God himself but by angels and thus is only temporarily valid (ch. 3:19). In Romans, in contrast, he teaches the universal validity of the law for the sake of the universality of salvation. Now the law is the “law of God” himself (Rom. 7:21, 25) which is “holy and just and good” (v. 12). Thus its authority is not

Abraham’s election from the Jews in order to transfer that election to the church, as the new Israel, *AC*, 82.

²⁹ Pannenberg is indebted to Ulrich Wilckens for this, “Die Rechtfertigung Abrahams nach Röm. 4,” *Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen*, eds. K. Koch and R. Rendtorff (Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1961), 111-27, esp. 117ff., cited in *JGM*, 255.

³⁰ *JGM*, 256.

³¹ Cf. Rom. 10:4.

restricted to a limited period of history. Within this view, as the earliest Palestinian community understood, Jesus was the New Moses whom Israel had expected as the eschatological prophet in accordance with Deut. 18:15.³³ Jesus himself never denounced the law in general, but interpreted it with free authority. As Pannenberg sees it, although the freedom of this interpretation implied refutation of and a breach with the law, later endorsed by his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus' concentration of the law on the commandment of love constitutes a continuity between Jesus' message and the Israelite law.³⁴ The eternal will of God, expressed in the Jewish legal tradition, has been revealed in the new and final form of Jesus' commandment to love. The power of love which Jesus' activity and path to the cross reveal will bring forth new systems and traditions of justice.

Can the concrete Israelite law in its totality be perceived as the eternal will of God? Pannenberg rightly questions this,

If the connection of Jesus with the law in the history of salvation – along the line of Galatians – is to be understood primarily as the concrete Israelite law, must we not say that it has come to an end in Jesus in a different sense than as God's will for justice as such, which Paul has in mind when he speaks of the law in Rom., ch. 7?³⁵

³² Cf. Gal. 5:14; 6:2; Rom. 13:10.

³³ On this point Pannenberg follows Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel*, 380-404, cited in *JGM*, 255.

³⁴ *JGM*, 257. Cf. Nieie, *op. cit.*, 125.

³⁵ *JGM*, 256.

Paul's lack of clarity with respect to the relationship between the concrete Israelite law and God's will inevitably requires a theological doctrine of the law that goes beyond Paul.

One can maintain that the post-exilic legal tradition has been abolished through Jesus' crucifixion and thus cannot be claimed as the expression of God's eternal will. On the other hand, in line with Romans, the law does not end with Christ but is fulfilled in him. It is in this sense valid. The position of Romans is closer to the understanding of Palestinian Jewish Christianity than Galatians which questions the Old Testament law's claim to immediate divine origin and authority. For Paul the Jewish law has analogies in the life of other nations in that it follows norms which are binding on the conscience.³⁶ In this sense it represents the general situation of humankind. Also, this universal meaning of the Jewish law makes it possible to relate the salvation accomplished in Jesus' defeat of the law on the cross to all humanity.

Therefore, one can agree with Pannenberg that Jesus' conflict was with the legal tradition of the Israelite law, calcified after the exile, rather than with the law "usurped" by sinful men, as Weber sees it.³⁷ Unless this is accepted, the cross cannot be interpreted as the representative suffering for the blasphemy of his accusers *in keeping with the historical evidence*. The Jews had committed no blasphemy apart from the abrogation of this law. However, until the work carried out by Jesus the law was the historical form of God's good purposes for Israel. Otherwise, Jesus' death would have been simply a conflict with

³⁶ Cf. Rom 2:14 f.

³⁷ Otto Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik* (Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1962), vol. II, 224f.

Jewish authorities and thus incapable of being related to all humanity *in keeping with the historical evidence*.³⁸ The validity of this law was dethroned only by Jesus' new legitimation of the commandment of love. The God of Israel emancipated people from this law and made a new covenant on the basis of his sovereign Lordship over the world. In this sense, the love which was revealed in Jesus was the fulfilment of the law.

But can the so-called *inversion of standards* be justifiable in Pannenberg's own historical terms? For him the retroactive force of Jesus' resurrection in both its ontological and noetical aspects is valid only if it is backed up by the historical data.³⁹ If at the centre of Jesus' conflict lies God's replacing of the historical Israelite law with a new covenant through him, how, then, can Pannenberg justify historically this interpretation by the resurrection? The *inversion of standards* is theological or kerygmatic, rather than historical.⁴⁰ Further, according to the principles of civil law, a valid law can be abrogated later, but not retroactively. Hence, one is impelled to contend that it is true of the historical realities that Jesus' earthly activity, his proclamation of God's love and his coming Lordship, and even his incarnation as God's new revelation, constitute the removal of the authority of the Israelite law.

³⁸ Nieie correctly points this out, *op. cit.*, 136.

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 139.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, 141.

6.3. JESUS' DEATH AS SÜHNESTELLVERTRETUNG

6.3.1. SÜHNESTELLVERTRETUNG FOR ISRAEL

If Jesus died lawfully, one now asks if his death can be seen as expiation for others. Pannenberg ascribes the variety of the oldest interpretations of the cross to differing human presuppositions. These presuppositions, however, have altered substantially over two thousand years, and no longer include cultic notions of *Opfer*, *Sühne*, and *Stellvertretung*.⁴¹ Thus a criterion is needed for assessing the justifiability of the different interpretations.⁴² For Pannenberg, the fact that these presuppositions are ancient with a place in primitive Christianity does not prove the validity of their truth. Even the Old Testament derivation of certain ideas does not justify the legitimacy of applying them to Jesus' death.⁴³ The path "from below" finds such criterion in the uniqueness of Jesus' crucifixion.⁴⁴ The significance of Jesus' death as vicarious expiation can be meaningfully perceived "only if Jesus' own path to the cross contains a vicarious element and if the common human situation of selfish entanglement in personal concerns designated with the term 'sin' is thereby transformed and can

⁴¹ *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 467.

⁴² G. Friedrich, *Die Verkündigung des Todes Jesu im NT* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1982), 143ff., esp. 145f., cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 467.

⁴³ Cf. I Cor. 15:3.

⁴⁴ Pannenberg identifies Friedrich with the view that the dominant role of ideas of expiation and representation in primitive Christian interpretations of Jesus' death is based on the uniqueness of the event serving as a selective principle in the history of its interpretation. Cf. Friedrich, 144f., cited in *ST-II*, 467 (n. 79).

be convincingly presented as having been transformed."⁴⁵ The image of the just man suffering vicariously for his people, in Pannenberg's view, is most easily conceivable in the modern world and overcomes the problem of the specially cultic *Stellvertretung*. Jesus may have known this because he stood in the tradition of a prophetic-apocalyptic theology of suffering. Yet the vicarious-expiatory meaning of Jesus' suffering on the cross needs to be verifiable on grounds drawn from the unique character of his own life and death. This is consistent with his christological principle that meaning is inherent in event.⁴⁶ It is to be noted here that this criterion does not reject the traditional understanding but might present it in a new interpretative model. The probable difficulty of perceiving the classical ideas of expiation and *Stellvertretung* in a modern age does not justify their replacement, but shows the necessity for opening up these ideas to later generations by interpreting them in a new way.⁴⁷ Thus the real problem in presenting such idea to the contemporary world does not rest upon their lack of forcefulness, but upon the failure to interpret them clearly.⁴⁸ Pannenberg's view is persuasive in that the historical reality of Jesus' passion is emphasised as decisive for the interpretation of the expiatory significance of Jesus' death. Through working out reconciliation in the history of Jesus the triune God reveals himself, thereby actualising himself in the world.

⁴⁵ JGM, 250.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 38-49. Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg", *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, vol. I (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1989), 261. See the section on "The Doctrine of Reconciliation" in chapter four.

⁴⁷ ST-II, 422; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 468.

⁴⁸ Pannenberg finds an illustration for this in the work of Rene Girard arguing the relevance of the concept of vicarious expiation even in the modern social world, *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 468, ST-II, 422. Cf. R. Girard, "Generative Scapegoating", *Violent*

Thus, the *Sühnebedeutung* of Jesus' crucifixion is based on the special nature of the event itself, rather than on any sort of abstract or speculative idea of presupposition.

The event of Jesus' execution makes it clear that it is not a punishment for his own faults. It can be asserted with Hengel and Pannenberg that God himself, by raising Jesus from the dead, vindicated him the charges that led to his execution.⁴⁹ His conflict with the law does not amount to a transgression against the law. He was not a blasphemer, nor a political agitator.

Why then was his execution necessary? The biblical premise is that if he did not die for his own sins, he died for others. This is so insofar as it is divinely ordained, not accidental. The early Christian church understood it as an expiatory death.⁵⁰ Pannenberg, following this tradition, contends that Jesus' suffering on the cross is a "service" to humankind,⁵¹ a service which, apart from Christ, each human would have to fulfil for himself, as interpreted by Tupper⁵² and Neie.⁵³ Was his death merely the consequence of his service carried out in his earthly life, or was it in itself a service? Only when the latter is accepted, can his execution be *on our behalf*. Primitive Christianity presupposed this in the idea of the ransom or the expiatory sacrifice or the Suffering Servant of

Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formulation, ed. R. G. Hamerton-Kelly (Stanford, CA, 1987), 43-145. See also Girard's *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore, 1977).

⁴⁹ ST-II, 423; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 469. Martin Hengel maintains that Jesus by his resurrection was proved to be sinless, *The Atonement: A Study of the Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 65f.

⁵⁰ Cf. E. Lohse, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht, Untersuchung zur urchristlichen Verkündigung vom Sühnetod Jesu Christi* (Göttingen, 1955; 2nd ed. 1963), 29ff., 29ff., 66f., 78ff., cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 470.

⁵¹ JGM, 247, 258-59.

⁵² Tupper, *op. cit.*, 160-61.

⁵³ Neie, *op. cit.*, 137.

God. But this presupposition, in Pannenberg's view, must be historically verifiable.⁵⁴

If Jesus' death is a service for humanity merely in the sense that it is a special instance of his identification with others that characterises his earthly coming as a whole, it lessens the specific significance of his death for humankind. One agrees with Pannenberg that this is because within the trinitarian framework,⁵⁵ Jesus in his whole life on earth was not just as "the human for others" but first and foremost *the man for God*. Jesus was the human for others only insofar as he was given his mission to reveal God as the eternal Father and break in his coming Lordship through his own ministry. Jesus' crucifixion is the consequence of his ultimate obedience to the Father in the service of the coming of the Father's Lordship.⁵⁶ This obedience implies the giving of his life for the world. Only from the standpoint of this intertrinitarian significance of the cross, can the whole of Jesus' earthly course be perceived as a way to his death. Jesus can be known to be for others, and his death a service for humanity.⁵⁷ Although earlier studies of Pannenberg's doctrine of atonement, for instance, those of Tupper⁵⁸ and Neie,⁵⁹ interpret Jesus' death as a service for humanity, overlook this intertrinitarian aspect of Jesus' death for others.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Cf. Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (London: Burns & Oates, 1981), 209f. *ST-II*, 424.

⁵⁶ Cf. George M. Newlands, *God in Christian Perspective* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 307.

⁵⁷ Cf. Phil. 2:6-8; 2 Cor. 8:9. *ST-II*, 424; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 470.

⁵⁸ See Tupper, *op. cit.*, 160-61.

⁵⁹ Neie, *op. cit.*, 203-04, 198, 140.

Neie interpreted the cross as the *price* of Jesus' revealing of the new "covenant".⁶⁰ But this covenant is to be understood in terms of the cross. The Son by his ultimate obedience to the Father revealed him as the eternal Father and actualised his Lordship, thereby constituting the new "covenant". Therefore the cross is decisive for Jesus' service for God and his Lordship, rather than the result of the service in his historical life. The latter is an expression of the cross. Neie's interpretation does not make clear this point.

For Pannenberg the concept of the *pro nobis* of Jesus' death does not justify automatically the notion of the universal scope of its efficacy. This is because the Jewish ideas of the expiatory function of the sufferings of the righteous and especially of the martyrs hint that Jesus' execution should be interpreted as an expiation for the Jewish people.⁶¹ The exegetical basis for this is found in John's Gospel.⁶² However, Pannenberg claims, the perception of expiation for the Jewish people cannot be a parallel to Jewish thoughts of the expiatory sufferings of the righteous and the Maccabean martyrs because Jesus died as one who was rejected and condemned by his people.⁶³

The early Christian church prominently interprets the term "for many" as denoting all humanity.⁶⁴ If the historical reality of Jesus' activity on earth is the basis of the interpretation of Jesus' death, its universal significance must be

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁶¹ Cf. Lohse, *Martyrer und Gottesknecht*, 94ff., esp. 101, cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 470-71.

⁶² John 11:50f.

⁶³ Cf. Isa. 53:3. The Jewish authorities had laid violent hands on Jesus on the pretext of his blasphemous claim. But this was their wrong arrogation of divine authority against God in the person who was sent by God. For Pannenberg the Easter event confirms this, *ST-II*, 425.

⁶⁴ Mark 14:24 par., 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:14f.; Rom. 5:14.

in accordance with his *faktischen Stellvertretung* in the place of his Jewish judges and the whole of mankind. This *Stellvertretung* can be established by proving that Jesus' judges and all humanity are historically blasphemers.

Pannenberg first notes that, viewed *post resurrectionem Christi*, Jesus' judges committed the crime of blasphemy through their verdict.⁶⁵ "Those who rejected him as a blasphemer and had complicity in his death were the real blasphemers."⁶⁶ Pannenberg here faces the possible criticism that his argument presupposes the validity of the law because only according to the law do his judges deserve the punishment for blasphemy. Pannenberg answers this criticism by pointing out two things: (1) Jesus' judges are not blasphemers because of the law but because they condemned him who God has legitimated, and (2) the blasphemer deserves death because God as Creator is the source of all life and thus whoever turns against God severs himself from life.

The vicarious significance of Jesus' suffering on the cross is justifiable on the basis that the Jewish authorities of the time were not particularly malicious, but, as official representatives of the Jewish people, acted in accordance with the law.⁶⁷ "Every Jew who was faithful to the law would have had to act in the same way or similarly had he been in the position of the Jewish authorities."⁶⁸ Jesus' resurrection shows not only the Jewish judges but also every Jew to be a blasphemer. Therefore, Jesus' death is "the punishment

⁶⁵ *JGM*, 259-60; *ST-II*, 423-26. See Tupper, *op. cit.*, 161; Neie, *op. cit.*, 136-40.

⁶⁶ *JGM*, 259.

⁶⁷ *AC*, 83. *JGM*, 259.

⁶⁸ *JGM*, 260,

deserved by the whole people to the extent that it is bound to the authority of the law".⁶⁹

Pannenberg's argument that Jesus' judges and the whole Jewish people are the real blasphemers is based on the *inversion of standards*. But this is not cogent. From the standpoint of his own terms, namely, historical verifiability, if they acted in accordance with the law, not from individual malice, they do not appear guilty by that law even after Jesus' resurrection. A retroactive punishment does not make sense legally. No one can be prosecuted on account of any act which is lawful at the time of the act. Thus Jesus' resurrection can change the evaluation of the judges' act but does not make their act of blasphemy.⁷⁰ Further, God abrogated the law itself.

Jesus' conflict with the law pivots on God's giving of the new "covenant" through the Son. This covenant reveals that obedience to God and his Lordship is the core of the law. The Son by his supreme obedience to the Father and his Lordship accomplished this new covenant. Within this perspective, the guilt of Jesus' judges *historically* consisted of their rejection of God's new revelation and thereby that of God himself and his Lordship. Their sin is shared potentially by the whole Jewish people.⁷¹

6.3.2. SÜHNESTELLVERTRETUNG FOR HUMANITY

If the Israelite law God abolishes through the Christ event is universally valid, the *Sühnebedeutung* of Jesus' death extends to all humanity. If God by

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ See Neie, *op. cit.*, 138-39.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

Jesus' resurrection vindicated him as innocent, not only Israel but also all humankind were blasphemers when they potentially crucified him. How can it be historically established that all humankind shared in this blasphemy?

From the historical standpoint, one can with Pannenberg infer the solidarity of the Gentiles with the Jewish people from the involvement in the passion and death of Jesus by Pilate as the representative of Rome and of political rule in general.⁷² Jesus' message and activity did not motivate the participation of the Romans in the events. His proclamation of the coming Lordship of God and its exclusive authority for humankind, however, led to the conflict with the Roman *imperium* because the ultimacy of this Lordship robs every political order of its absolute claim on the people living under it.⁷³ In the sphere of the influence of Jesus' message, the right of every existing state to bind its subjects to it absolutely is contested. The ruler is no longer able to assume the place of God.⁷⁴ Hence Jesus' death was the political violation of the royal reign of God by the statesman Pilate. It is right here in the human pride that claims equality with God that the blasphemy of the Gentiles rests. This was made clear when God reversed Pilate's action through the raising of the Crucified.⁷⁵

But this political conflict is an insufficient basis for the vicarious significance of Jesus' death for the Gentiles. Pannenberg is aware of this.

⁷² AC, 83, 85, 86; JGM, 267f.; ST-II, 426; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 426. See also Tupper, *op. cit.*, 161; Neie, *op. cit.*, 140-44.

⁷³ AC, 85.

⁷⁴ JGM, 261.

⁷⁵ AC, 86.

And yet in political power one may see only one form of the delusion of human identity with God, even though it is an especially instructive example. Therefore the conflict with political power is not yet an adequate legitimation of the universally human significance of Jesus' vicarious death.⁷⁶

Only if Jesus in his death suffered the abandonment of God resulting from "the pride of equality with God which separates man universally from God", and if he has taken such abandonment away once and for all, can one find non-Jewish humanity represented by the activity of the Roman procurator in Jesus' condemnation.⁷⁷ Neie objects to Pannenberg's identification of the universal human usurpation of God's rank with blasphemy.⁷⁸ Jesus' resurrection confirms the mortal sin of Jesus' rejecters as blasphemy. It also retroactively discloses the blasphemy of Jesus' judges. The universal motive for the rejection of Jesus is identified as pride of equality with God. These two notions are unrelated. Thus Pannenberg is required to "either extend the concept of blasphemy and subsuming all godless under this delict as common denominator, *or* of naming alternative forms of sin as the ultimate human adversity to God and Jesus."⁷⁹ However, this criticism is not sound. Jesus' new interpretation of the law – the core of the law is God himself – led to his conflict with the law. The inversion of standards retroactively designated the judges, who were faithful to the law but failed to grasp its core, as blasphemy. This means that a person is a blasphemer not because he violates the law given by God, but because the

⁷⁶ *JGM*, 261.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* See Tupper, *op. cit.*, 161-62.

⁷⁸ See Neie, *op. cit.*, 141-42.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

honour of God himself is violated. Since the pride of equality with God is an acute expression of blasphemy, it can be identified with blasphemy.

How does the apostle Paul legitimate the *Sühnebedeutung* of Jesus' death for non-Jewish humanity? For him, Jesus' death abolishes the law that prohibited the Gentiles from participating in Abraham's blessings,⁸⁰ and thus opened the gates for all nations into Israel's history of election. This abolition does not mean a blotting out of sin, but its abrogation as the criterion for salvation. It is merely the negative condition for the Gentiles' community with the God of Israel. Thus Pannenberg indicates here, the universal significance of Jesus' crucifixion "is dependent upon the fact that community with Israel's God is positively made possible by Jesus and all the more so since the judgement of the law over human sin, the Gentiles' like the Jew's, is in no way impugned."⁸¹ Paul by using "Adam" speculation suggests here that the cross has made access to God possible for the Gentiles⁸² because his death is the death of man in general (2 Cor. 5:14; Rom. 5). All men are subject to death as a result of their sin. "The death of one just man takes the place of humanity which as a whole has incurred death."⁸³ For Paul the Jewish law includes an element which is universally valid. The Gentiles know this law in their conscience. The universal human significance of the Jewish law is the explicit formulation of the universally valid relationship between a deed and its consequences, and is one form of the universal legal structure of social life. If it is so, then, Pannenberg

⁸⁰ Cf. 2 Cor. 5:14f.; Gal. 3:13f.; Rom. 11:11ff.; Acts 13:46ff.

⁸¹ *JGM*, 261.

⁸² See Tupper, *op. cit.*, 162. See also Neie, *op. cit.*, 143.

⁸³ *JGM*, 262.

rightly understands, the Jewish nation, as God's chosen people, stands before God for all humanity.⁸⁴ Thus Gentiles together with Jews live their lives in opposition to God which is shown in Jesus' condemnation by his judges.⁸⁵ Now all humanity appears blasphemous in the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus by the Jewish leaders. "Christ bore the tragic consequences of death deserved by the blasphemous existence of humanity in general."⁸⁶ The universal *Sühnebedeutung* of Jesus' death is thus established.

Pannenberg's problem is that this significance is decided by Jesus' resurrection from the dead. This event retroactively establishes Gentiles' sin of pride with equality with God. But this is not faithful to his own historical terms because it presupposes a doctrinal belief. Rather, it remains to be proved *historically* that they violated the honour of God and rejected his Lordship in the name of the law of their consciences, although they knew God as the Creator by the law.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 262f. Pannenberg writes, "In the light of Jesus' resurrection, not only is the justice of the verdict passed on him condemned; so also is the legitimation of his Jewish judges to pass judgement on him in the name of the chosen people. And by the same token the legitimation of Jesus' judges to pass final judgement on him in the name of the authentic heritage of Israel (and with it the tradition which was constitutive for the Jewish people) is also annulled, although this does not affect the representative significance of the death of Jesus for the Jewish people, and thus for mankind, as chosen people. On the contrary, the election of the Jewish people is verified by the resurrection of Jesus, as the one united to the God who raised him from the dead (contrary to the verdict of his judges) and whom Jesus had earlier proclaimed as the God of the coming kingdom. Consequently, in the light of the Easter event, it becomes possible for the Jews particularly to revise the verdict once passed on Jesus, as being unjust and as not having been passed once and for all in legitimate representation of God's chosen people. Moreover, this possibility is open whether the revision takes place expressly on the grounds of the Christian Easter faith or whether it is drawn from a better understanding of the Jewish tradition. Here the possibility of a revision of the Jewish verdict on Jesus affects the understanding of the people of God themselves; it does not merely permit a special exception to be made for particular individuals.", *AC*, 83-84.

⁸⁵ *AC*, 88.

⁸⁶ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 162.

⁸⁷ *Vide supra* the subsection on "*Sühnstellvertretung* for Israel".

6.4. SÜHNE AS STELLVERTRETENDES STRAFLEIDEN

Jesus' death "for us" or "on our behalf" can very easily become his death "in our place" because the expiation which a person makes for others is the expiation which the others themselves ought to have made. For sinful humanity, God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). Leon Morris says,

Christ took our place, as the sacrificial victim took the place of the worshipper. I realise that the significance of sacrifice is widely disputed, and that there are some who reject any substitutionary aspect. . . in my judgement sacrifice cannot be satisfactorily understood without including an aspect of substitution. And Christ died as our sacrifice. He died accordingly, as our Substitute.⁸⁸

In the offering of himself to the Father the Son took the place of sinners. This does not mean the Son's entering into the existential conditions of those others on behalf of whom it is done. Pannenberg correctly perceives that it is usually possible to do something for others only when one is not under the limitations that put needy people in a position in which they can no longer help themselves.⁸⁹ Jesus represents humanity in a "co-human solidarity". The entering of the pre-existent Son into an earthly existence implies that he took the place of sinners in suffering their fate (cf. Rom. 8:3).⁹⁰ Not in his council alone does God let the innocent Jesus suffer death in the place of sinners.

⁸⁸ Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 175.

⁸⁹ ST-II, 419; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 465.

⁹⁰ ST-II, 421.

Rather, God himself in his Son took the place of sinners and took to himself the judgement on their sin.⁹¹ Therefore, the incarnation is the Son's act of *Stellvertretung*.

This act can be expressed in terms of God's Lordship. It is the activity of the Son to bring humanity under the Lordship of the Father. The Son suffered on the cross the death of sinners as the consequence of their conduct of turning aside from God and his Lordship. The creaturely world is created to bear witness to the divine Lordship that had been actualised already in the eternal fellowship of the Trinity. Its independence from God, however, impedes acknowledgement of that Lordship. In consequence it is inescapably subject to judgement and death. But God's will for it is the opposite: existence and life. This forms the context within which Pannenberg perceives Jesus' crucifixion.⁹² He is right to see the Son's dereliction on the cross as the price of the rebellion of humanity against God.⁹³ The Son, by taking upon himself God's judgement on the world, brings life to it and thus glorifies the Father and actualises his Lordship.⁹⁴

However, for Pannenberg's path "from below to above" this *Stellvertretung* of the Son is established only by Jesus' resurrection. It demonstrates that the Son suffered the full punishment which humanity deserved for their blasphemous existence of rebellion.⁹⁵

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Grenz correctly indicates this, *op. cit.*, 123.

⁹³ See *ST-II*, 392.

⁹⁴ See *ibid*; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 436.

⁹⁵ *JGM*, 245.

The one who was handed over as a blasphemer and executed as an agitator suffered death in the place of, and on behalf of, all those who as sinners live in arrogated equality with God and actual rebellion against him and who thus bring death upon themselves. As the Son of God suffered vicariously in his flesh the condemnation of sinners (Rom. 8:3), he did it for all (2 Cor. 5:14) and triumphed for all.⁹⁶

Thereby, Jesus' *Stellvertretung* was effected by a reversal of the places of the innocent and the guilty.⁹⁷ Jesus' *stellvertretendes Strafleiden*⁹⁸ rests upon the fellowship that Jesus as the Son accepted with all humanity as sinners and with their fate as such.⁹⁹ This link is foundational for the universal *Sühnebedeutung* of his death. But from the historical standpoint, the son's ministry of *Stellvertretung* is not established by the confirmation of his innocence by the Easter event. In Pannenberg's view, the Jewish judges, who represent all humanity, deserved to die but did not die at the time of their delict. Thus the innocently dying of Jesus bore their punishment. However, as Neie correctly puts it, this is only *a possibility*.¹⁰⁰

How can Jesus' death as *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* actually come into force for individual sinners? Pannenberg relates the *Sühnewirkung* of his death to the coming judgement of *God* on the living and the dead, with which the eschatological message of Jesus is concerned. This future-oriented view

⁹⁶ ST-II, 426-27; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 472-73.

⁹⁷ Pannenberg insists that only when this *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* is accepted, can the expiatory function of Jesus' execution be perceived. ST-II, 427 (n. 94); *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 473.

⁹⁸ Tupper rightly interprets Pannenberg's understanding of Jesus' death as his *stellvertretendes Strafleiden*, *op. cit.*, 161-64.

⁹⁹ ST-II, 427; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 473.

¹⁰⁰ Neie, *op. cit.*, 140.

forces him to link the expiatory efficacy of the crucifixion to the (at least subsequent) conversion of the people to the *God* of his eschatological message, and thus to confession of Jesus himself. The expiation brought about by the cross demonstrates that access to eschatological salvation is still open on the condition of acceptance of the eschatological message of Jesus and confession of Jesus.¹⁰¹ So, with the hope of the future life, sinners became 'the righteousness of God'.¹⁰² But this takes place only if, for their part, the sinners are linked to the death of Jesus.¹⁰³ This occurs in baptism.¹⁰⁴ In the act of baptism they can participate in a new reality in which the situation of human sin has been transformed. Both objective and subjective elements belong together in Pannenberg's concept of Jesus' *Sühnstellvertretung*, as Tupper observes it.¹⁰⁵ Pannenberg explains this character of *stellvertretender Sühne* in its relation to *Versöhnung*.¹⁰⁶ Reconciliation, which is grounded in the judgement on sin in the Son's death,¹⁰⁷ is effected only when the offer of reconciliation made by the one side is accepted by the other. Likewise, the expiatory effect of the Son's death needs appropriation by faith, confession, and baptism on the part of each individual.

¹⁰¹ ST-II, 426; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 472.

¹⁰² Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21.

¹⁰³ Phil. 3:10f.

¹⁰⁴ Rom. 6:3f.; Col. 2:12.

¹⁰⁵ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 294.

¹⁰⁶ For Pannenberg *Versöhnung* can be a parallel to the expiatory efficacy of Jesus' death, though it is different from the other in its linguistic background and implication in that it has no cultic reference but concerns itself with diplomatic process for bringing peace between enemies. Pannenberg refers to C. Breytenbach, *Versöhnung: Eine Studie zur paulinischen Soteriologie* (1989), 45-83, cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 474.

¹⁰⁷ Breytenbach stressed that the idea of the expiatory offering should not be related to this, *op. cit.*, 165, 215, 204ff., cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 474.

One can agree with Pannenberg that the efficacy of vicarious expiation in Jesus' suffering on the cross is effective only when his death is linked to that of believers in the act of confession of the Son as the Lord. Yet the over-emphasis on this appropriation through the proclamation of the gospel impels Pannenberg to contend that without it it is inconceivable that vicarious expiation was effected in his death. This fails to make clear that the appropriation presupposes the all-sufficient efficacy of Jesus' suffering on the cross.

Pannenberg's concept of Jesus' death as *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* overcomes the limitations of three soteriological theories of Jesus' death: the ransom-theory, the Anselmian objective theory of the atonement, and the doctrine of Christ's penal suffering.¹⁰⁸ A critical evaluation of these theories clarifies his concept.¹⁰⁹

First, the ransom theory, which has its biblical verse *probantia* in Mat. 20:28, Mark 10:45, and 1 Cor. 6:20, interprets Jesus' death as God's victory in Christ, destroying the devil and all the powers of evil.¹¹⁰ This mythological interpretation of the image of ransom was developed by the early Fathers. Irenaeus first argued for the legality of the redemption from the "dominion of

¹⁰⁸ For Pannenberg Jesus died not merely on our behalf but in our place. Thus he categorises as soteriological theories those only which attribute a particular salvific function to it. Both the so-called "classical" type of soteriology (G. Aulén) in which Christ's victory over death and Satan is the main motif and the Abelardian subjective theory of reconciliation do not focus on Jesus' death soteriologically. These two soteriological conceptions see in Jesus' death only a particular example of that which constitutes the saving significance of his entire activity. In the "classical" theory of the atonement this is the deification that is grounded in the incarnation and consummated in Jesus' victory over death. In the subjective theory of reconciliation the death of Jesus is the ultimate consequence of God's love for man which characterizes the entirety of Jesus' activity and message, *JGM*, 274 (n. 53).

¹⁰⁹ *JGM*, 274-80. See Neie, *op. cit.*, 151-56.

¹¹⁰ Newlands, *God in Christian Perspective* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 312.

apostasy” through the ransom of the blood of Christ, though that dominion was not legal.¹¹¹ Tertullian understood that the Lord redeemed humans from the angels who had dominion over creation.¹¹² For Origen it was Satan, not God, who demanded Christ’s blood. Referring to Paul’s statement that believers are bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20), he commented,

Now it was the devil that held us, to whose side we had been drawn away by our sins. He asked, therefore, as our price the blood of Christ. But until the blood of Jesus, which was so precious that alone it sufficed for the redemption of all, was given, it was necessary that those who were established in the Law should give each for himself his blood (i.e., in circumcision) as it were in imitation of the redemption that was to be.¹¹³

Origen made much of Jesus’ saying that he had come to offer his life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). But to whom was this ransom paid? He certainly would not pay a ransom to God nor even to himself. It must have been paid to the evil one who held the human captive until the ransom, that is, the soul of Jesus, was paid.¹¹⁴ Augustine believed that Jesus’ death has ransomed the human from the power of the devil by his blood.¹¹⁵ With the rise of the theories of Anselm and Abelard, this ransom theory has been less prominent. Anselm especially rejected it because this idea yielded to the devil a

¹¹¹ *Adv. Haer.* V, 1, 1, cited in *JGM*, 276.

¹¹² Tertullian, *De fuga*: “*Dominus quidem illum [hominem] redemit ab angelis mundi tenentibus potestatem* (MPL 2, 114), cited in *JGM*, 276.

¹¹³ Origen, *Commentary on Romans* 2:13.

¹¹⁴ Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 13:28.

¹¹⁵ Augustine, *de trinitate* XIII, 13 (MPL 42, 1026ff.), cited in *JGM*, 276.

right to power over humanity. Recently, Gustaf Aulén upheld the theory again. For him, the essential point is God's triumph.¹¹⁶

But the mythological expansion of the ransom idea by the patristic theologians should not be overestimated. As Pannenberg sees it,¹¹⁷ like that of the expiatory sacrifice, covenant sacrifice, Passover Lamb, etc., the image of ransom for the New Testament writers themselves had only a symbolic meaning as a designation of the vicarious character of Jesus' death. This is attested by the fact that the question of to whom the ransom was paid did not rise. If taken literally, the image of a ransom and the concept of an expiatory sacrifice would be mutually exclusive. Bultmann rightly points out, "The mythological idea of a bargain with the devil is far from Paul's thought."¹¹⁸ Hence the ransom theory, as F. Lakner rightly expresses it, is "essentially not a theory of the inner essence of redemption, but a popular illustrative statement of its reality, the content of which is further testified by Scripture."¹¹⁹ Most patristic doctrines of redemption really concern themselves with the *victory* over death, the consequence of God's union with Jesus' humanity in the act of the incarnation. In addition, there is the problem of the perception that the devil has "a power of possession" over humanity. But all human beings, including the devil, belong only to God, not to the devil. The execution of any power is subject to God.

¹¹⁶ Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), 26-27.

¹¹⁷ JGM, 275.

¹¹⁸ R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 297.

¹¹⁹ F. Lakner, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. III, 2nd edition (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1957-1967), 1021f., cited in Neie, *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, 153 (n. 2).

Thus, as Anselm correctly insists,¹²⁰ God did not have to purchase humans from Satan, nor pay a ransom to him. Furthermore, this metaphysical bargain between God and Satan seems very alien to human life.¹²¹ This leads one to agree with Pannenberg that the ransom theory does not adequately interpret Jesus' death.

Secondly, unlike the symbolic image of ransom, the satisfaction theory literally explicates the significance of Jesus' death, and perceives it as satisfying God's violated honour because of human sin.¹²² Some of the later Latin theologians, for instance, Augustine and Gregory the Great, had opened the way for this theory in their recognition of a God-ward dimension in the atonement.¹²³ Anselm (1033-1109), archbishop of Canterbury, however, was the first to formulate it.¹²⁴ He conceives the concept of ransom not symbolically but literally in the light of the doctrine of penance. The Gospels for him depict Jesus' passion as a result not only of God's plan but also of an objective toward which Jesus systematically directed himself. Likewise compared with the concept of meritorious power of the suffering of the just in Rabbinical Judaism,¹²⁵ Jesus' death is to be seen as the accomplishment which Christ as representative of man before God made, rather than God's giving him up as an

¹²⁰ Anselm, *Cur Deus homo*, 1.7.

¹²¹ Newlands, *God in Christian Perspective*, 312.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 311.

¹²³ L. W. Grensted, *A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement* (Manchester: University Press, 1920), 120-21.

¹²⁴ Anselm articulates this theory in his major work, *Cur Deus homo?*

¹²⁵ Pannenberg shares this understanding with E. Lohse, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht*, 104, 105ff., 110, cited in *JGM*, 277.

“expiatory sacrifice”. However, in Pannenberg’s view,¹²⁶ this transposition of the divine plan back into Jesus’ own consciousness is possible only in the light of his resurrection, and contrary to the historical facts. Moreover, Anselm neglected the relation of Jesus’ death to his proclamation of the imminent Kingdom of God. H. Nieie points out here, “The latter did not immediately imply suffering and death, neither in the context of its *Traditionsgeschichte*, nor historically in Jesus’ actual human path.”¹²⁷ This criticism permits Pannenberg to assert that Jesus’ death is a *Sühnestrafleiden*, rather than a satisfaction of God wrought by the God-man.

Thirdly, the theory of the penal suffering emphasises Jesus’ bearing and overcoming God’s wrath against humanity on behalf of humans.¹²⁸ This theory was anticipated by patristic theology which understood Jesus’ crucifixion as the action of God in and through Jesus, rather than an achievement of the man Jesus in relation to God. Its dominant soteriological interest in the incarnation, however, led to the interpretation of Jesus’ persecution only from the perspective of the incarnation. Consequently, it did not adequately perceive the crucial place of the vicarious-penal-suffering-motif in the crucifixion. Luther reinstated this motif emphatically. He first stressed the prototypal aspect of Jesus’ suffering on the cross. Jesus represents humanity not by offering

¹²⁶ See *JGM*, 42-43, 277.

¹²⁷ Nieie, *op. cit.*, 153.

¹²⁸ R. S. Wallace, *The Atoning Death of Christ* (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1981), 77. Millard J. Erickson provides an excellent argument for the penal-substitution theory, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 815-23.

satisfaction but by humbling himself under God's wrath against sin and thereby demonstrating his righteousness before God.¹²⁹ Pannenberg writes,

The judgement of God stands in contrast to the judgements of men. God gives his grace to the one who is unrighteous in his own eyes and thereby shows himself to be humble before God. In this sense Christ is righteousness and so also faith in him is righteousness in a way that is derived from him (*fides Christi*). In the cross of Christ this *judicium Dei* . . . is apparent to us. In the lecture on Romans of 1515 and 1516 Luther characterised Christ in the same sense as the pattern, the prototype, of all God's actions. Because God wanted to glorify Christ and install him as king, he permitted him on the contrary to die . . . God deals in this way with all the saints. Three sentences earlier Luther described the general rule of this divine action: The work of God must be hidden and is not recognised when it happens. The grace of God is hidden under us opposite. This is the root of Luther's *theologia crucis*.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Calvin, according to Wallace, understands Jesus' death as offering a satisfaction to God's righteous judgement and appeasing the Father's righteous wrath very much in the same language as Luther. However, Calvin is much more concerned with the estrangement of humankind from God the Father who created it to live at his side, rather than with any legal problem. Thus the need for atoning humans is to recreate a nearness near enough and an affinity sufficiently firm for them to hope that God might dwell with them. In becoming flesh, God comes to humanity in a such a way that his divinity and his humanity might by mutual connection grow together. But reconciling union with God cannot take place unless the Mediator is a man entering a 'holy brotherhood' with humans under the one Father. But only God in coming close to humans could replace death with life, conquer sin and replace it with righteousness (*Inst.*, 2:12:1-2). At this point Calvin follows Irenaeus and Athanasius. See Wallace, *The Atoning Death of Christ*, 81. Furthermore, Dillistone explains, for Calvin the incarnate Son of God lived a life of perfect obedience and then 'on this righteous person was inflicted the punishment which belonged to us'. In all his actions, Christ acted as our substitute suffering on our behalf the penalty, condemnation, even the curse which, apart from him, would have been our lot. This view of at-one-ment seemed entirely conformable to the great system of Roman law which had gained enormous respect in European society. It was logical and, at the same time, it appealed to human feelings when the victim was seen suffering and dying as a substitute for guilty mankind. See F. W. Dillistone, *The Christian Understanding of Atonement* (Herts: James Nisbet and Company, Ltd, 1968), 194-203.

¹³⁰ JGM, 43-44.

In later writings, according to Pannenberg, Luther emphasised the aspect of Jesus' vicarious penal suffering.¹³¹ Jesus took the guilt of humanity upon himself as his own guilt and thus suffered for humanity the punishment of the cross as though he deserved it. Luther came very close to an understanding of Jesus' crucifixion in the context of his historical path when he described the cross as an affliction of conscience. Nevertheless, from a methodological point of view, Pannenberg argues that Luther's concept of *Strafleiden* is not based on the historic life and resurrection of Jesus but presupposes the incarnation. Thereby it makes the human life of Jesus problematic from the very beginning, and thus gives a mythological tone to Jesus' penal suffering.¹³²

Pannenberg disagrees with both Melancthon and Calvin because they perceived the God-human person, not the man Jesus, as the one who accomplishes the satisfaction, and thus returned to Anselm's theory of satisfaction. Pannenberg applauds the supernaturalist Gottlob Christian Storr for his replacement of the satisfaction theory by the doctrine of penal suffering after the Enlightenment. Pannenberg's criticism is directed to Schleiermacher, Von Hoffmann, and Ritschl who, following Abelard, reject in various degrees the idea of Jesus' *Strafleiden*.¹³³ The early Barth stressed Jesus' suffering on the cross as God's judgement over the world: "By the death of Christ, the line of

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 278-79.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 279. See Neie, *op. cit.*, 155.

¹³³ For Albrecht Ritschl, "It is unbiblical to assume that the sacrificial offering includes in itself a penal act, executed not upon the guilty person, but upon the victim who takes his place." See Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay, 2nd edition (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 474, cf. 546f.

death has passed vertically through our lives."¹³⁴ The later Barth interpreted Jesus as the one man who was rejected,¹³⁵ and thus the one judged by God for the sake of humanity.¹³⁶ Barth's problem, in Pannenberg's view, is that he goes back again to the tradition of the early church and develops the doctrine of atonement as an interpretation of the incarnation, not of Jesus' historical life. Yet Barth can be applauded for his perception of the comprehensive character of Jesus' vicarious suffering which takes up and overcomes the death of humanity.¹³⁷

But it can be argued against Pannenberg that the concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* is not true of the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation. Given that Jesus' crucifixion is the intertrinitarian action of God and thus the Son's *Stellvertretung* for all humanity, its character is dependent upon the concept of God. This is Pannenberg's principle of dogmatics which articulates all doctrines in relation to the doctrine of God. His view of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* presupposes the understanding that God punishes. But God is the Father who loves *contra legem*.¹³⁸ Love constitutes not only the eternal trinitarian communion of God but also his trinitarian economic action for the world. This love is revealed through the life and ministry of the Son. Therefore, Jesus' crucifixion is to be understood as the Son's participation, in love, in the passion of humanity, the consequence of its sin of disobedience to

¹³⁴ K. Barth, *The Epistle to the Roman*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 163.

¹³⁵ *CD*, II/2, 161ff., 315ff.

¹³⁶ *CD*, IV/1, 235ff., 252ff., 258ff.

¹³⁷ *JGM*, 280.

¹³⁸ Ritschl correctly understands God as the Father, *op. cit.*, 38-99.

God and his Lordship in order to lead it to the love of the Father and his Lordship.

This argument receives further substantiation through the discussion of *Stellvertretung* as a universal phenomenon in a socio-political life upon which Pannenberg justifies his concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden*.¹³⁹

6.5. STELLVERTRETUNG AS A UNIVERSAL PHENOMENON

Pannenberg acknowledges that the concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* needs to be fundamentally justified because it is not universally accepted that *Stellvertretung* can actually take place in the sphere of personal life. Above all, the validity of this concept presupposes the possibility of guilt and expiation of guilt in human moral life. The Enlightenment rejects this transferability because only the doer is responsible, and he alone can be afflicted.¹⁴⁰ For the Socinians,

Ethically religious guilt and punishment are not, however, something objective like debts of money . . . but something personal, bound to the individual. A debt of money is held to be satisfied when paid, whether by the debtor himself or by another. A moral debt, however, is not paid at all unless it is atoned for by the one who has incurred it.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 264.

¹⁴⁰ For Pannenberg this criticism is grounded in an extreme ethical individualism that was characteristic of modern human self-understanding up to the 1950s but has been brought into doubt by the crisis of the social transformation of the present day, *ibid.*, 265. Cf. Neie, *op. cit.*, 145.

¹⁴¹ D. F. Strauss, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre*, vol. II (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1841), 294f., cited in *JGM*, 264. See *AC*, 87. Neie analyses excellently the Socinian criticism on the question of the transferability of guilt and punishment, *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, 187-90.

In reaction to this, it can be asserted with Pannenberg,¹⁴² Koch,¹⁴³ and von Rad¹⁴⁴ that the collective liability of guilt was at the heart of the ancient Israelite conceptualisation and practice.¹⁴⁵ First, as far as the relationship between sin and consequence is concerned, sin brings about *Schicksal*. Misfortune in terms of evil, suffering, ban, and death is inherent in a sinful deed. This belongs to a kind of natural-law relationship between a deed and its consequences. This elucidates Paul's expression of death as the "wages" of sin. This implies that "death is built into the essence of sin as the most extreme consequence of sin's desire for separation from God, the origin of life."¹⁴⁶ What follows an evil action is therefore not *Vergeltung* in a moral sense which is arbitrarily imposed upon it and administered after an ideal norm. The Old Testament is not familiar with a word for "punishment". According to Gerard von Rad, "the words '*awon* or *hattat* can denote the evil act; but they can also denote its evil result and therefore punishment, because the two things are basically the same.'¹⁴⁷ In this view, Neie rightly points out that the word for "righteousness" in the sense of *justitia distributiva* or vindictive justice is not known to the Old Testament.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, one can interpret with Pannenberg

¹⁴² See *JGM*, 265-66.

¹⁴³ Klaus Koch, "Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?", *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 52 (1955): 1-42.

¹⁴⁴ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1: *The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 262ff., 385ff.

¹⁴⁵ Pannenberg deals with this theme in *ibid.*, 265-67. This is correctly pointed out by Tupper (*op. cit.*, 163-64) and Neie (*op. cit.*, 145-48, 180-96).

¹⁴⁶ *JGM*, 265.

¹⁴⁷ Von Rad, *op. cit.*, 385.

¹⁴⁸ Neie, *op. cit.*, 181.

the Pauline description of Christ as being made "sin" as follows: the misfortune following from human sin has fallen upon Jesus.¹⁴⁹

Second, for the Old Hebrew view of guilt and expiation the individual is fully involved in society.¹⁵⁰ A sinful deed brings misfortune not only upon the individual doer, but also threatens his society. Von Rad explains,

Through ties of blood and common lot the individual was regarded as being deeply involved in the community that an offence on his part was not just a private matter affecting only himself and his own relationship to God. On the contrary, wherever there had been a grave offence against the divine law, what loomed largest was the incrimination which the community experienced in consequence at the hands of God, for because of the sin nothings less than the whole possibility of its cultic activity had become imperilled.¹⁵¹

This explains why the community was heavily involved in an individual's sin. It was not merely a matter of an imaginary moral taint which affected his society as well, and so was "just" an internal disturbance of its relationship with God. Rather, it inevitably had effects which destroyed individual and community alike, unless the latter solemnly and demonstratively annulled its solidarity with the offender. The evil doer was in an utterly realistic and direct sense dangerous to his society.¹⁵² This presupposes that the effect of an evil deed is separable from the individual doer. The evil deed, according to

¹⁴⁹ 2 Cor. 5:21.

¹⁵⁰ See *JGM*, 265-66.

¹⁵¹ Von Rad, *op. cit.*, 264. Cf. J. Hempel, *Das Ethos des Alten Testaments* (Berlin, 1938), 32ff.; W. Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1933-9), 1ff., cited in Von Rad, *op. cit.*, 264.

¹⁵² Von Rad, *op. cit.*, 266.

Pannenberg, tends to find a place where it may unload its evil power primarily on the head of the doer. But if its destructive effect has not found its target, it can involve the wider circles of his society.

Israel developed the practice of directing the catastrophe inherent in an evil deed toward some other entity, that is, a sacrificial animal so that its effect on the community might be annulled.¹⁵³ This presupposed the legitimacy of transferring the guilt inherent in an offence onto an innocent victim.¹⁵⁴ God had authorised this in the cultic system.

It becomes clear that the transferability of guilt and expiation of guilt is a common phenomenon in the ancient Israelite world. Does this justify Pannenberg's concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden*? This can be answered when the role of God within the context of such conceptualisation and practice is further considered.

According to Dillistone, Socinus strongly emphasises the transcendence of God. He is able to forgive freely and to exercise mercy which cannot possibly be in opposition to his justice. He in his love can waive the guilt.¹⁵⁵ But this criticism is not in accordance with the Old Hebrew concept of God. He cannot and does not set aside the deed-consequence-process.¹⁵⁶ Rather, Pannenberg correctly perceives that since the consequence of an evil deed does not turn back to the offender automatically, God's action is required to watch

¹⁵³ JGM, 266. Cf. Deut. 21: 1-9; Lev. 16:21f..

¹⁵⁴ Tupper, *op. cit.*, 163.

¹⁵⁵ F. W. Dillistone, *The Christian Understanding of Atonement* (Herts: James Nisbet and Company, Ltd, 1968), 203-04.

¹⁵⁶ See Neie, *op. cit.*, 188.

over the process.¹⁵⁷ God “brings the evil man’s conduct upon his own head” (1 Kings 8:32).¹⁵⁸ The enforcement of this correspondence of deed and *Schicksal* is part of God’s covenant with Israel.¹⁵⁹ For Pannenberg it is “a demonstration of Yahweh’s grace”.¹⁶⁰ Klaus Koch expresses this correspondence as “*Wirkung göttlicher Treue*”.¹⁶¹ Von Rad writes,

On this view, the “recompense” which catches up with evil is certainly no subsequent forensic event which the sin evokes in a completely different sphere – that is, with God. It is the radiation of the evil which now continues on: only so does the evil which the sin called out reach equilibrium. This conception has been called a “synthetic view of life,” since here the action of man on the one hand and what happens to him on the other are not yet understood as two separate and independent things, or at least as things standing only in very loose relationship to one another. Instead, the presupposition of this idea is the closest possible correspondence between action and fate: what is in question is a process which, in virtue of a power alike to all that is good and all that is evil, comes to a good or an evil end. Israel regarded this as a basic order of her whole existence, to which Jahweh had given effect and over whose functioning he himself kept watch.¹⁶²

It is to be noted here that what Pannenberg overlooks is that even in this process God partly forgives.¹⁶³ He can annul the calamitous curse. To this extent the Socinian concept of God is right. Further, even if a sin could not be

¹⁵⁷ JGM, 268.

¹⁵⁸ Von Rad, *op. cit.*, 265.

¹⁵⁹ See Neie, *op. cit.*, 182-85.

¹⁶⁰ JGM, 266.

¹⁶¹ Klaus Koch, “Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?”, 21; cited in Neie, *op. cit.*, 183.

¹⁶² Von Rad, *op. cit.*, 265.

forgiven, and thus numerous atoning rites had to be performed,¹⁶⁴ God himself, who is appealed to, acts to avert the disastrous curse which burdens the community. This is supported by von Rad. He explains,

What was effected in expiation was that in both cases, with persons and objects alike, Jahweh removed the baneful influence of an act. He broke the nexus of sin and calamity; and this was as a rule effected by way of channelling the baneful influence of the evil into the animal which died vicariously for the man (or for the cultic object).¹⁶⁵

Moreover, for the Old Hebrew suffering and death are not punishment but consequence.¹⁶⁶ Oehler approvingly explains this,

The law nowhere indicates that in sacrifice . . . an act of punitive punishment is executed; it in no way asks us to look on the altar as a place of punishment.¹⁶⁷

This impels one to argue against Pannenberg that within the framework of the ancient Hebrew conceptualisation and practice the Son's *Sühnstellvertretung* for the human race lies in the fact that Jesus' death is *not God's punishment but his saving event*.

Can the Old Hebrew concept of vicarious *Stellvertretung* be valid in the modern sphere of moral life? This concept developed in Israel's own history.

¹⁶³ See Neie, *op. cit.*, 184.

¹⁶⁴ Von Rad, *op. cit.*, 268f.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 271.

¹⁶⁶ Neie correctly points this out, *op. cit.*, 190.

¹⁶⁷ Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh, 1874), 431, cited in von Rad, *op. cit.*, 271. See *ibid.*, 390f.

When the unity of the nation dissolved in 587 B.C., the corporate nature of expiation was no longer regarded as sufficient. Pannenberg explains,

The generation living at the time, having experienced Josiah's cultic reform, did not understand why they had to atone for the sins of earlier generations. This protest refused to accept solidarity with Israel's past.¹⁶⁸

Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke of the accountability of every individual for his own deeds.¹⁶⁹ The relationship between deed and consequence came to be restricted to the individual life. But this relationship did not work out. When the solidarity of individual with society was accepted, this did not cause a particular problem because it was accepted that the people who were the descendants would inherit the effect, namely, reward or punishment. Only when this sense of solidarity receded did the disparity between deed and consequence become intolerable.¹⁷⁰ Pannenberg, following von Rad,¹⁷¹ perceives this as "one of the motives for the development of the apocalyptic expectation of a future judgement of the dead and of a resurrection of the righteous."¹⁷² The fact that the relation of deed and its consequences no longer worked out required the notion of an adjustment beyond death.

¹⁶⁸ *JGM*, 267.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Von Rad, *op. cit.*, 391ff. Cf. K. Koch, 32f., cited in *JGM*, 267 (n. 40).

¹⁷¹ Von Rad, *op. cit.*, 402ff.

¹⁷² *JGM*, 267.

The extreme development of this ethical individualism is found in Faustus Socinus,¹⁷³ Enlightenment, D. F. Strauss, and Albrecht Ritschl.¹⁷⁴ God is viewed to be the One who loves and forgives human sin, rather than punishes. "It would be unjust of God to punish the innocent for the guilty, especially because the guilty are, after all, in his power."¹⁷⁵ The collective liability in human moral life is also unacceptable.

Pannenberg considers this extreme ethical individualism as essentially different from the post-exilic Israelite moral individualism.¹⁷⁶ The corporate nature of the relationship between deed and consequence influenced the latter even in the exile despite a move towards individualisation.¹⁷⁷ However, the former does not merely regard the disparity between guilt and punishment in the individual life as unbearable, but also perceives such punishment to be externally imposed by the force of the state.¹⁷⁸ This fact calls into question the

¹⁷³ Neie presents a brief analysis of Socinus' critique of the concept of vicarious expiation, *op. cit.*, 185-91, 193.

¹⁷⁴ The stress on the individual responsibility for an evil act leads Ritschl to repudiate, in line the Socinians, any transference of guilt to the innocent, Ritschl, *op. cit.*, 268f.

¹⁷⁵ *AC*, 87.

¹⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, 87f. Cf. *JGM*, 268.

¹⁷⁷ For Pannenberg the corporate nature was kept in tension with individualistic thinking about salvation and judgement, especially in the cultic tradition. As regards the relation of the concept of expiation in the Priestly document to the cultic tradition, Pannenberg identifies with Klaus Koch [*Die Priesterschrift von Ex. 24 bis Lev. 16* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 100ff., cited in *ibid.*, 268.]. Also, concerning the development of the concept of vicarious expiation beyond the cultic sphere, Pannenberg follows E. Loshe [*Märtyrer und Gottesknecht*, 98ff., 71), cited in *ibid.*, 268-69.]. Pannenberg explains, "The concept of expiation in the Priestly document may well be in the history of traditions a reaction of the old cultic tradition against the religious-ethical individualism. Only in the Priestly document so we encounter the extension of the concept of expiation to the entire cultic tradition. The reaction of the cultic way of thinking was again institutionalised in the restoration of the Israelite cultic community in Jerusalem under the Persians. Later, the idea of the possibilities of vicarious expiation was extended even beyond the cultic sphere. Thus, the primitive Christian traditions could express Jesus' vicarious significance both in cultic and in noncultic concepts. In the figurative usage of sacrificial terminology, Hellenistic Judaism already led the way, since the sacrificial cult itself could not be practised in the Diaspora.", *ibid.*, 268-69.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 267-68.

very necessity of punishment.¹⁷⁹ In human socio-political life, Pannenberg argues, "substitution is a universal phenomenon, both in conduct and its outcome."¹⁸⁰ Everyone is inescapably involved in his society by incurring responsibilities which more or less extend to others and by sharing in the deeds of others.¹⁸¹ This principle is taken over into the world of work. According to Durkheim's theory of the division of labour in society,¹⁸² and Ritschl's conception of vocation,¹⁸³ each member of a working society has a vocation on behalf the total society and does particular jobs on behalf of all members of the society.¹⁸⁴ If one member suffers, all suffer together (1 Cor. 12:26). "The benefits that the acts of some confer and the harm that the failings of others cause all effect the society as a whole."¹⁸⁵

The universal validity of *Stellvertretung*, in Pannenberg's view, is thus established. Therefore the vicarious significance of Jesus' death is defensible, but not on the basis of a miraculously supernatural uniqueness of Jesus' death.¹⁸⁶

If substitution is not a universal phenomenon in human social relationships, if the individualistic interpretation of responsibility and recompense need not be rejected as one-sided because it overlooks the

¹⁷⁹ Neie, *op. cit.*, 148.

¹⁸⁰ JGM, 268.

¹⁸¹ AC, 87; JGM, 268.

¹⁸² Pannenberg deals with the theory of the division of labour is articulated in his monograph *Grundzüge der Christologie and Anthropology in Theological Perspective*. Cf. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1947).

¹⁸³ Ritschl, *op. cit.*, 433f., 442-52. Pannenberg delineates the concept of vocation in his *Systematische Theologie*.

¹⁸⁴ JGM, 268.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 264ff.; ST-II, 419; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 465.

¹⁸⁶ JGM, 268.

social relationships of individual behaviour, then it is not possible to speak meaningfully of a vicarious character of the fate of Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁷

The validity of *Stellvertretung* as a universal phenomenon leads to the assertion that Jesus' death is a vicarious event "in view of the unique reversal that the one rejected as a blasphemer is, in the light of the resurrection, the truly just man, and his judges, in contrast, are now the real blasphemers."¹⁸⁸ This event is a matter of divine disposition because God's own law authorised the judgement over Jesus. Through the actions of his legitimate officeholders God himself let Jesus go to his death in place of the people whose resistance to Jesus is revealed in the light of his resurrection to be rebellion against its God and his Lordship. In his death, Pannenberg concludes, Jesus bore the punishment inherent in blasphemy, which rightly belonged to his judges and all humankind.¹⁸⁹

Pannenberg's justification of the concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* on the basis of a modern socio-political reality is in a sense a contribution in that it seeks a universal validation of the Christian concept of Jesus' death in terms of the modern *Wirklichkeitsverständnis*. But this requires further substantiation. In a modern social life, there is undoubtedly *Stellvertretung* in the realm of deed and consequence. The consequence of every individual deed is not confined to the doer, but works itself upon society. However, in the ethical life there is no such thing. Personal guilt and

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

responsibility are not transferable, though society may share the consequences of an individual failure.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, for the modern view God is love and thus *forgives* all those who are obedient to him and his Lordship through repentance in union with Jesus Christ. Thus Neie is correct to perceive that no evil is God's punishment, but the consequences of deeds.¹⁹¹ Every evil is a discipline or an opportunity to prove love and service.¹⁹² Therefore the phenomenon of *Stellvertretung* in a human social life does not justify Pannenberg's concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden*. Jesus' death as *Sühnstellvertretung* is a unique event beyond the verification in terms of the contemporary *Wirklichkeitsverständnis*. This forces one to justify the vicarious expiatory significance of Jesus' death on other ground, that is, *God's special grace*.¹⁹³

Pannenberg argues that the "inversion of standards" establishes the *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* of Jesus' death. His resurrection retroactively establishes the blasphemy of all humanity. In the light of the Easter event, Jesus' judges condemned him whom God had legitimated and thus committed blasphemy. Thereby they inescapably faced judgement and death because blasphemy means to sever from the creator himself. But this is *historically* unacceptable. As noted earlier,¹⁹⁴ the execution of Jesus by his judges was lawful. The retroactive abrogation of the law cannot establish their guilt. Further, this abrogation invalidates the death penalty by that law on blasphemy.

¹⁹⁰ Neie gives an excellent analysis of the ancient Israelite view and the modern understanding, *op. cit.*, 193-96.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁹³ Neie correctly points this out, *ibid.*, 194.

¹⁹⁴ *Vide supra* the section on "*Sühnstellvertretung*".

The judges and the Gentiles no longer appear to incur death in the penal sense.¹⁹⁵

For this reason, one can argue, like the ancient Hebrew view, that the Son suffered the *consequences* of human rebellion against God and his Lordship, so that they may be brought to obedience to God and his Lordship, rather than bearing the punishment of God. In this way God *forgives* the sin of humanity. This is what the Socinians overlooked. For them, God's free forgiveness is emphasised in so extreme a fashion as to leave no room for the reconciling work of the Son. New Testament certainly refers to "the free and untrammelled grace of God, issuing in forgiveness and release." But it also massively attests that through the death and resurrection of Christ God was reconciling the world to himself.¹⁹⁶ This suffering is an outcome of the trinitarian reciprocal love of the persons of the trinitarian God. The Son by his ultimate *obedience* to the Father perfectly serves the Lordship of the Father. Thereby he reveals God as the eternal Father and thus his own eternal sonship, and reconciles the sinful humanity to a new loving relationship with God and brings it under his Lordship. This obedience is the demonstration of the full extent of the love of the trinitarian God for the world. In this sense, the *pro nobis* of Jesus' death is *on our behalf*, or *in our favour*.

¹⁹⁵ See Neie, *op. cit.*, 198-99.

¹⁹⁶ Dillistone, *op. cit.*, 203-04.

6.6. STELLVERTRETUNG AS LIBERATION

6.6.1. THE CONCEPT OF INCLUSIVE STELLVERTRETUNG¹⁹⁷

Given that Jesus' death was *stellvertretend*, to what extent does it have vicarious significance? Life is usually sacrificed to save the life of others. Is this true of Jesus' *Stellvertretung* on the cross? Anselm understood Jesus' death as satisfaction voluntarily paid to God by the God-man which humanity owes to God but cannot pay because of sin. Thus others are free from the necessity of dying.¹⁹⁸ But the crucifixion is not such a payment, but *represents* before God the death of all. Grenz correctly puts it: "what occurs in the lives of all persons happens in Jesus in a paradigmatic sense".¹⁹⁹ Pannenberg maintains along the line of Marheineke²⁰⁰ that "Christ is not the representative of humanity insofar as he is outside it but insofar as he *is* it, representing in himself what is the same in all individuals."²⁰¹ Thus Jesus' death does not exclude the individual deaths of those whose behalf he died.²⁰²

Is the Son *the man before God* in the sense that he has taken the place of sinners and suffered for them so that they now have nothing to add to what

¹⁹⁷ See *JGM*, 263-64. *ST-II*, 429-36.

¹⁹⁸ *JGM*, 263.

¹⁹⁹ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 128.

²⁰⁰ Philipp Konrad Marheineke, *Die Grundlehren der christlichen Dogmatik als Wissenschaft*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Duncker und Humboldt, 1827), § 398, cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 475. The concept of inclusive *Stellvertretung*, for Pannenberg, is traced back to Hegel. See Ritschl, *op. cit.*, 546f.

²⁰¹ *ST-II*, 429; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 475.

²⁰² *AC*, 89. *ST-II*, 429-30. Cf. Tupper, *op. cit.*, 162.

he has done? If it is so, one faces a problem,²⁰³ as is the case of the doctrine of exclusive *Stellvertretung*, a problem of neglecting the independence of those who are represented.²⁰⁴ This problem does not trouble Barth because in Jesus Christ God removed not merely sins but also “their very root, the man who commits them”.²⁰⁵ In other words, the crucifixion of Jesus is an end of humans as sinners and therefore of sin itself.²⁰⁶ For Barth, Paul teaches that sin dies only with the death of sinners and this has already happened for believers in the linking of their death to Christ’s (cf. Rom. 7:4). In this view, the work of baptism is ascribed to Jesus’ death, and thus those who are represented are totally replaced.²⁰⁷ This results from the assertion that reconciliation is restricted to Jesus’ crucifixion which is a closed event of the past, not being open to a process of reception.²⁰⁸

This totalitarian concept of *Stellvertretung* is challenged by Sölle. She argues that Jesus takes the place of others only temporarily and thus leaves open it.²⁰⁹ “With permanent occupation the representative becomes a

²⁰³ ST-II, 431; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 477.

²⁰⁴ See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 128.

²⁰⁵ CD, IV/1, 77.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 253.

²⁰⁷ Dorothee Sölle blames Barth’s concept of *Stellvertretung* for “objectivist”. For Barth Christ’s *Stellvertretung* leaves humans nothing to do with or after him and thus this definitiveness of Jesus Christ leads to “inevitably totalitarian. See D. Sölle, *Christ the Representative: An Essay in Theology after the ‘Death of God’* (London: SCM Press, 1967), 88ff., 109. G. Wagner also calls Barth’s christology “theological liquidation”, “Theologische Gleichschaltung Zur Christologie bei Karl Barth”, *Die Realisierung der Freiheit: Beiträge zur Kritik der Theologie Karl Barths*, ed T. Rendtorff (1975), 10-43; G. Wenz, *Geschichte der Versöhnungslehre in der evangelischen Theologie der Neuzeit*, vol. 2 (1986), 247, cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 477-78.

²⁰⁸ CD, IV/1, 253.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Sölle, *op. cit.*, 48ff.

replacement.²²¹⁰ According to Pannenberg, this concept still belongs to the idea of exclusive representation because it presupposes the ongoing existence of those who are represented.²¹¹

Rather, one agree with Pannenberg that the fellowship between the death of Jesus and that of others is crucial for the representative significance of Jesus' death.²¹² Paul teaches that believers can share the *Sühnestellvertretung* of Jesus' death only through their own death. The emphasis on this link forces Pannenberg to understand Jesus' death merely as an anticipation of the future individual deaths. To the extent that Jesus' death anticipates the death of others, it has the character of inclusive *Stellvertretung*.²¹³ This leads to the difficulty in explaining that this link presupposes the once-for-all nature of the Son's *Stellvertretung* on the cross. Humans have been objectively represented in the past event of Jesus' death. Believers' communion with Jesus' death is to actualise this all-sufficient *Stellvertretung*.

Pannenberg perceives the death of others in terms of their future physical death. Their union with Jesus means simply *the change of the character of their death from the eternal damnation*, in which he died, excluded from the nearness of the God²¹⁴ and his Lordship *to hope* for

²¹⁰ ST-II, 432; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 478.

²¹¹ ST-II, 432.

²¹² AC, 89. Cf. JGM, 263-64.

²¹³ ST-II, 432. Sölle maintains that Jesus did not merely take the place of sinners in his passion or his incarnation, but also represented the absent God to them with his message and in his ministry, *op. cit.*, 146. But Pannenberg argues that according to the Gospels Jesus is not the *Vertreter* of God but the mediator of his presence. Jesus' message and ministry have presently brought the coming Lordship of the Father, ST-II, 433; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 479.

²¹⁴ JGM, 263. AC, 89.

participation in the new life that had already appeared in his resurrection.²¹⁵ He writes,

Because Jesus gathers up our dying into his own, the character of our dying changes. In communion with Jesus it loses its hopelessness and has already been overcome through the life which has appeared in Jesus' resurrection. The death of the blasphemer, the one who is shot out from all communion with God, has been taken away by Jesus once and for all.²¹⁶

Only in this change does Jesus' death constitute inclusive *Stellvertretung*. This can be conceivable when his anthropological future-orientated perspective of Jesus' *Stellvertretung* is presupposed. But this is not true of the inclusive nature of Jesus' *Stellvertretung*. This is because if death is the consequence of sin, and Jesus represents in his death what is the same in all individuals, his death must be the same death as that of others even in character. This problem forces one to maintain that others' death is to be understood in terms of a spiritual death. Human death means a separation from God and his royal reign. Human physical death is an aspect of this "spiritual" death. Believers, by the linking of their death to that of Jesus through faith, die the same death, the eternal judgement in which Jesus died. Further, viewed in terms of this spiritual death, believers by their communion with Jesus' death in the act of faith, have *already* participated in a new life. They have become new creatures, and as such identity, live an obedient life to God and his Lordship. Hope for an eschatological future life is dependent upon this new life.

²¹⁵ ST-II, 420.

6.6.2. *STELLVERTRETUNG AS PARADIGM OF SONSHIP*

Within the intertrinitarian framework, Jesus, by his perfect obedience to the Father on the cross, is the Son. Precisely as the Son, Jesus definitively actualises the destiny of humanity, the new life of fellowship with God. In this sense, Jesus is the paradigm of its relationship to God. Paul expresses this by using the term, the new Adam. For him, the entering of the Son into human conditions as descendants of Adam aims at the overcoming of humans' sin in the flesh of him. The old Adam dies in Jesus' death in order to become the new Adam.²¹⁷ Believers, by linking their death to Jesus' death through faith, participate in the new Adam, namely, his filial relationship with the Father.

For Pannenberg the representative character of Jesus' death is not presupposed by means of the idea of the incarnation. It is rather perceived in the light of the resurrection.²¹⁸ Burhenn criticises that such a representative scheme clearly puts the primary emphasis on the relationship between Jesus and God, rather than on the relationship between Jesus and the present believer.²¹⁹ As Burhenn correctly points out, within the intertrinitarian framework, Pannenberg understands the Son's *Stellvertretung* in his relationship with God. But does this relationship exclude the relationship between Jesus and the contemporary believer? In the intertrinitarian concept of reconciliation, the Son's *Stellvertretung* can be meaningfully understood only in a sense of

²¹⁶ AC, 89. Cf. JGM, 263-64.

²¹⁷ Cf. Rom. 8:3; 1 Cor. 15:49.

²¹⁸ JGM, 278-79.

²¹⁹ Herbert Burhenn, "Pannenberg's Doctrine of God", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975): 548.

anticipation of the subsequent process that is worked out through the apostolic proclamation. Thus the Son's *Stellvertretung* does not exclude the relationship between Jesus and humans. Jesus' definitiveness does not suppress or eliminate others, but leaves room for their individuality. This is because Jesus' human definitiveness rests upon his offering of himself for the sake of God and his coming Lordship,²²⁰ rather than upon his individuality. By the linking of the death of others to his own, the Son brings humans, as independent beings, to share in his sonship.

According to the theory of the division of labour or vocation, Pannenberg explains, each different vocation in society has a representative function, for it is carried out on behalf of all members of society. Likewise, Jesus fulfilled his vocation. This vocation is the historical basis for the function of Jesus' *Stellvertretung* on the cross. As Grenz observes,²²¹ Jesus, by accepting his individual existence as man, is the paradigmatic Son.²²² Jesus' acceptance of his death, which is the seal of his self-differentiation from the Father, opens the door to the uniqueness of individuals in their finitude. Thus others can also participate in the filial relation to God and the inheritance of his Kingdom only through death, namely, the acceptance of their own death. The death of Jesus, then, means that others no longer have to see themselves as excluded from fellowship with God and therefore as enemies of God. He opens up access for

²²⁰ *ST-II*, 433.

²²¹ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 128.

²²² *Ibid.*, 121.

them so that in accepting their own finitude like him they come to share in life from God.²²³

One can agree with Pannenberg that believers, by participation in the obedient suffering and death of the Son through baptism and faith, become the righteousness of God.²²⁴ Just as the Son by his self-distinction from the Father is united with the Father as the Son, humans by following his paradigm acknowledge their own finitude before God, thereby being reconciled to God. The Son's *Sühnstellvertretung* on the cross is directed to leading humans to share his obedient life to the Father and his Lordship through overcoming human pride of equality with God, a cause of Jesus' conflict with the law.

Nevertheless, for Pannenberg Christians share in Jesus' sonship as the ones who die in hope of the future resurrection life. This fails to make clear that they participate in his filial relationship with the Father as the ones who have already experienced the new life. Further, Jesus' paradigmatic sonship is established only by Jesus' resurrection. This is inconsistent with his intertrinitarian and historical thought. Within this outlook, if it is his obedience to the Father and his Lordship, the whole life of Jesus on earth establishes his paradigmatic *Stellvertretung*.

It is a remarkable insight that the independence of others, for which the Son's inclusive *Stellvertretung* made room, is expressed as liberation from the bondage of sin and the law in human life.²²⁵ The independence also sets free

²²³ ST-II, 434; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 480-81.

²²⁴ 2 Cor. 5:21. ST-II, 420; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 466.

²²⁵ This character is not primarily concerned with liberation in the political sense. For Pannenberg this liberation remains not simply as a private, individual matter, but also implies political government. Cf. On this topic see Th. Pröpper: *Erlösungsglaube und*

those who have fellowship with God and his eternal life from the yoke of the world and its powers in all the relation of dependence in which they live their finite lives.²²⁶ Further, it liberates them from themselves in order to fulfil their individual callings in service to God and to the world, leading to a new immediacy to God that believers have as his children.²²⁷

Although this freedom is mediated by the sending of the Son and his ministry of *Stellvertretung* on the cross, Pannenberg emphasises, it is to be actualised by the Spirit of sonship in believers themselves. For John and Paul the Spirit brings humans freedom.²²⁸ When humans have this freedom of the Spirit through the apostolic message, their reconciliation to God has arrived at its goal.

6.7. CONCLUSION

The discussion of Jesus' death on the cross as *Stellvertretung* concentrates on the argument that Jesus' death as the final act of his self-differentiation from the Father is the Son's action of *Stellvertretung* in order to bring humanity under the Lordship of the Father. As the consideration has made clear, Pannenberg's concept of the Son's *Stellvertretung* is conceivable. It is based on the biblical understanding of Jesus' death as *Sühne* for humanity which is expressed in terms of prophetic rejection, expiation for sin, an

Freiheitsgeschichte. Eine Skizze zur Soteriologie, 2nd ed. (1988), 38ff.; M. Seckler, "Theosoterik und Autosoterik", *Theol. Quartalschrift* 162 (1982), 289-98; cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 483.

²²⁶ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. I, ed. E. B. Speirs, trans. E. B. Speirs and J. Burden Sanderson (New York: The Humanities Press, 1962), 308.

²²⁷ Gal. 4:4-6. *ST-II*, 436; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 483.

²²⁸ Cf. John 8: 32, 36; II Cor. 3:17.

expiatory sacrifice, a covenant sacrifice, and “the end of the law”. The *Sühnebedeutung* of the cross is to be interpreted on the ground of the historical reality of Jesus’ activity which caused his execution. From the historical viewpoint, Jesus, by revealing that the core of the law is obedience to God himself and his Lordship, abolished the post-exilic Jewish legal tradition. Thus Jesus’ death resulted from his conflict with the law itself, rather than with particular malicious individuals. The expiatory meaning of Jesus’ death extends to all humankind including the Jewish people. This is because in his condemnation both the whole Jewish people and the other nations were revealed as blasphemers. Jesus’ judges as the representatives of Israel acted in accordance with the Jewish law. The action of Pilate as the representative of the Gentiles was blasphemous in that it revealed the pride which assumed equality with God. The Son, by his perfect dedication to God, serves the Lordship of the Father, thereby expiating humanity from its sin of rebellion against God and his Lordship. Jesus, by accepting his own death, the seal of his finitude, is the paradigmatic Son. Thus others, by acknowledging their own death, participate in his sonship. This *Stellvertretung* of the Son is liberating in character. It sets one free from the bondage of sin in order to serve the Lordship of the Father.

But Pannenberg’s concept of Jesus’ *Stellvertretung* is not free from problems. Above all, his concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* is not true of the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation. The Son, in his view, suffered in the place of humanity on the cross the full punishment which it deserved for the sin of turning aside from God and his Lordship. This is justified by the ancient Israelite corporate conceptualisation and practice of guilt and expiation of guilt

and modern social or ethical life. But, given that Jesus' death is the intertrinitarian action of God and thus the action of the Son, the character of the Son's *Stellvertretung* is to be consistent with the concept of God. But God loves *contra legem*. The Old Hebrew understands God as the One who does not punish but saves through expiation and also forgives. Further, the loving Father who forgives through repentance is more common in modern spiritual life, rather than a punishing God. Therefore, Jesus' crucifixion is to be understood as the Son's participation, in love, in the passion of humanity, the consequence of its sin of disobedience to God and his Lordship to bring it to the love of the Father and his Lordship.

Second, his view of "*the inversion of standards*" is not faithful to his own historical terms. His assertion of the retroactive abrogation of the law itself by the resurrection is theological, not historical. The principle of civil law does not allow such retroactive abrogation. The blasphemy of both Jews and Gentiles is *historically* established by the historical reality of their rebellion against God and his Lordship, rather than by the resurrection. Jesus' earthly life of obedience, not his resurrection, establishes his paradigmatic *Stellvertretung*.

Third, his justification of the Son's *Sühnstellvertretung* on the basis of contemporary *Wirklichkeitsverständnis* fails to explain that his *Stellvertretung* on the cross is the unique event beyond the verification of the validity of *Stellvertretung* as a universal phenomenon.

Finally, his assertion that in union with Jesus' death in the act of baptism humans die in *hope* of the new resurrection life makes the character of individual death different from that of Jesus' death. This is not true of the inclusive nature of Jesus' *Stellvertretung*.

CHAPTER VII: THE RECONCILING ACTION OF THE SON IN HIS POST-EASTER HISTORY

This chapter focuses on the reconciling activity of the Son in the Spirit after his resurrection. From the perspective of *Universalgeschichte*, the history of Jesus expands to his post-Easter history. It is demonstrated that the Son continues his reconciling action in the Spirit through the gospel for the complete realisation of the Lordship of the Father.

The completion of the reconciling action of the Son in the Spirit is first considered. The subsequent theme is the proclamation of the gospel by which the risen Son in the Spirit continues his ministry of *Stellvertretung* to lead humanity under the Father's Lordship. There follows an examination of the church as a sign of God's Kingdom at which the reconciling activity of the exalted Son through the gospel aims.

7.1. THE SON'S RECONCILING ACTIVITY COMPLETED IN THE SPIRIT

The Son, by his ultimate obedience to the Father on the cross, reconciles humanity to the Father and brings it under his Lordship. All humans in the world, however, have not actually participated in the reconciliation won by the Son in his death. It is right here that the reconciliation brought about by Jesus' crucifixion needs to be actualised. In the light of the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation, the Son's offering of himself to the Father on the cross, which is his being offered by the Father, essentially requires the actualising work of the Spirit. From this standpoint, Pannenberg is correct to

perceive the involvement of the Spirit in the process of reconciliation. As Christoph Schwöbel points out,¹ the Son continues his *Stellvertretung* of humanity in the Spirit, leading to its complete realisation in the coming Lordship of the Father.

What makes the Spirit's involvement in the process of reconciliation necessary? Within the trinitarian outlook, as Pannenberg sees it,² such necessity rests upon the absence of the exalted Son. The exegetical ground for this absence is found in the Johannine differentiation between the Spirit and the risen Lord. After the departure of the exalted Son,³ the Spirit exists as an independent person. As he is absent, the risen Son is dependent on the Spirit for the actualisation of the reconciliation brought about by his death.

What implications can be drawn from the absence of the risen Son? One agrees with Pannenberg that Jesus' inclusive *Stellvertretung* does not exclude human involvement in the process of reconciliation.⁴ Within the intertrinitarian thought, Jesus by his self-differentiation from the Father is united to the Father as the Son. In this way, the Son by his perfect dedication to the Father, reconciles in his own person the *independence* of humans. The absence of the risen Son gives them this independence,⁵ so that as *independent*

¹ Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg", *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 198.

² *JGM*, 179.

³ For John, only after Jesus has departed from his disciples (John 7:39; 16:4) will the Spirit come to stay with them always (John 14:16).

⁴ Cf. *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 270-71. *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 467-75. This theme has already been dealt with throughout chapter five.

⁵ *ST-II*, 450; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 497. For Pannenberg this conception of the divine sonship, according to Grenz, is an answer to Anselm's question, *Cur deus homo?* See Stanley J. Grenz, *The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (New York: Oxford, 1990), 245.

beings they are enabled by the Spirit to see the glory of the Son of God in his obedient suffering. For this reason, John writes that Jesus' departure from his disciples was good for them.⁶ Therefore Jesus' ascension, as Stanley Grenz states, is not merely the historical prelude to the completing work of the Spirit, but also indispensable even in a theological sense.⁷

Pannenberg grounds the Spirit's involvement in the process of reconciliation in the *proleptical* nature of the Son's ministry of *Stellvertretung* on the cross that is to be subsequently worked out through the gospel.⁸ But this fails to explain that Jesus' crucifixion is rather in itself the once-for-all event of reconciliation.⁹ The Son, by his suffering on the cross, has reconciled all humanity and brought it into a new loving relationship with the Father. This is based on the fact that the Lordship of God, in terms of which reconciliation can be expressed, has already been accomplished in Jesus' crucifixion, while its culmination is still in the future. Hence, the work of the Spirit is to be understood as applying this all-sufficient event of reconciliation, leading to a future consummation.

What, then, is the relationship of the Spirit's work to that of the exalted Son? The concept of reconciliation as the action of the triune God in his intertrinitarian relationship allows one to understand that the action of each person of the trinitarian God is interrelated with, and dependent upon that of the other. Thus Pannenberg's emphasis on the intimacy of the activity of the

⁶ John 16:7.

⁷ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 130.

⁸ One can share this understanding with Schwöbel, *op. cit.*, 197.

⁹ See the sections on "Reconciliation as the Intertrinitarian Activity Bringing about God's Lordship in *Universalgeschichte*" in chapter four, and on "*Sühne* as *stellvertretendes Strafleiden*" in chapter six.

exalted Son and the completing work of the Spirit is cogent. They are "different aspects of *one and the same divine action* for the reconciliation of the world",¹⁰ just as the self-offering of the Son and his being offered up by the Father are one and the same event. The exegetical basis of this is in Paul¹¹ and John.¹² For both, according to Pannenberg, the work of the Spirit and that of the risen Son are to a large extent parallel.¹³ In particular, Paul identifies the exalted Son with the Spirit, though not in an absolute sense. This intimacy enables one to see that the work of the Spirit is *the activity by which the exalted Son brings the individual under the Lordship of the Father*.

How does the Spirit bring humanity into reconciliation with God? True independence, which the Son by his reconciling death secures, is essential for a loving fellowship with God. However, it had been drastically eliminated by sin, and thus must be renewed. This renewal is made possible only when humans accept death as their own final destiny, since the Son, only by his self-offering to the Father on the cross, is united to the Father. But the acceptance does not arise from *extra nos*, but *intra nos*. It occurs as *Befreiung* of humans' own identity.¹⁴ It is precisely here that the Spirit works. It can be seen with Pannenberg that he renews humans' inner existence so that they can accept their own finitude, and thus participate in the reconciliation that was achieved by Jesus Christ in his death.¹⁵

How can the process of the renewal by the Spirit be understood? From

¹⁰ Italics by the writer. *ST-II*, 450; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 497.

¹¹ Cf. 2 Cor. 3:17; 5:20; 2:17; 12:19; 13:3; 1 Cor. 12:13; 6:17; 15:4; Rom. 5:11; 8:9, 10.

¹² Cf. John 14:17, 20, 24, 26; 16:3, 13, 27; 15:26; 7:14; 14:10, 24, 26.

¹³ *ST-II*, 450; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 217-18.

¹⁴ *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 497.

anthropological viewpoint, Jesus' dedication to the Father on the cross is a fulfilment of human destiny, namely, the openness to God and his Lordship.¹⁶ By this the Son is united with the Father and reconciles humanity to the Lordship of the Father. This implies that humans participate in the reconciliation won by Jesus' death when they overcome the bondage of sin, namely, the alienation from God and society, and egocentricity, so that they can be open to God and his Lordship. Rightly, Pannenberg explains that the Spirit elevates humans from an "egoistic" to an "ecstatic" existence.¹⁷ Only when humans become "ecstatic," can they be in Jesus Christ, and thus share through faith in him the reconciliation won by Jesus in his death.¹⁸

What does this "ecstatic" existence with Christ imply? According to Pannenberg, first, believers are no longer in bondage to one another, "for Jesus as the Son of the Father is for his part fully God and therefore the man who gives himself up for others." The Spirit enables believers to participate in Jesus' sonship, and in his love for the world. Second, believers are not estranged from themselves. This is because "with Jesus they are with God who is the origin of the finite existence of all creatures and their specific destiny." Thus this "ecstatic" existence with Christ can be expressed as "liberation, not merely in the sense of elevation above our own finitude, but also in the sense of attaining afresh by this elevation to our existence as the Creator has

¹⁵ ST-II, 452; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 499.

¹⁶ *Vide supra* the section on "The Universal Sonship of Jesus" in chapter three.

¹⁷ ST-II, 451; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 498.

¹⁸ Pannenberg deals with this theme of faith and its significance for the doctrine of justification in chapter thirteen, *Systematische Theologie*, vol. III (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, English version not yet published).

affirmed it and reconciled it to himself."¹⁹

It is to be noted here that this "ecstatic" elevation to the position of being in Christ by the Spirit does not mean that human existence is no longer differentiated from that of the Son and the Father. Even though humans are by faith in union with Christ, they are still different from the Son and thus from the Father. The acceptance of this existential distinction is required for fellowship with the Creator. This is justified by the fact that Jesus, by his self-differentiation from the Father, is united as the Son with the Father. Human participation in the sonship of Jesus thus means that they share his relationship of dedication to the Father."²⁰ Another part of this sharing is the acknowledgement that humans differ "from Jesus not only as he is another man but as he is also the one who alone in person is the Son of the Father."²¹ Men and women participate in the filial relation of Jesus to the Father only when they recognise this existential difference.

How, then, can the Spirit carry out his work? The intertrinitarian character of reconciliation compels one and Pannenberg to answer to this question by reference to the intertrinitarian relationship of God. The Spirit is God himself.²² Basil of Caesarea testified that the Spirit belongs together with the Father and the Son in one Divinity.²³ However, the Spirit differentiates himself from the Father and the Son by revealing, through the apostolic

¹⁹ ST-II, 452; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 499.

²⁰ JGM, 346.

²¹ ST-II, 453; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 500.

²² See Allan D. Galloway, *Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 106-15.

²³ See H. Dörries, *De Spiritu Santo: Der Beitrag des Basilius zum Abschluss des trinitarischen Dogmas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 62, 160 on *De Spiritu sancto* XVI, 40., cited in, JGM, 173.

proclamation, the glory of the Son in his passion and death and therein leading men and women to know the heavenly Father in the Son. Thereby he is united with the Father and the Son, and works out the reconciliation brought about by the Son's suffering on the cross. This corresponds to the way that Jesus, by the obedient offering of himself to the Father and his being offered up to death by the Father, reconciles the world to him. Since the risen Lord himself is absent, according to John,²⁴ the Spirit always stays with humans to teach the truth of the Father and the exalted Son and the Lordship of the Father in the Son.²⁵ In this way, the Spirit completes the reconciliation that took place in Jesus' death.²⁶

But Pannenberg's emphasis on the relational dimension causes him to restrict the work of the Spirit simply to the enabling of humans to accept their own human destiny so that they can be reconciled to their Creator. Jesus, by his ultimate self-offering to the Father, is the Son of God and reveals himself as *the Lord over all things* in the world, rather than simply as an example for humans' acceptance of their own finitude. Thus the work of the Spirit is to be understood to lead men and women not only to confess the crucified and risen Son as Lord but also to substantiate his Lordship continuously in all realms of their life in the world.

²⁴ Cf. John 7:39; 14:26; 16:4.

²⁵ Cf. John 14:14, 26; 16:13.

²⁶ *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 500. *ST-II*, 453. Pannenberg deals with this theme in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. I, 341f. *ST-I*, 314f.

7.2. THE SON'S RECONCILING ACTIVITY THROUGH THE GOSPEL

Through the apostolic proclamation the risen Son continues in the Spirit his ministry of *Stellvertretung* to bring the world under the Lordship of the Father. It is thus the Son's dynamic message of reconciliation. The original meaning of the term "gospel" is first defined.

7.2.1. THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE GOSPEL

For Paul the gospel is defined as the apostolic message of reconciliation in that its content is the crucified and risen Lord in whose death God has reconciled the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19). It is also described as the message of Christ in which Jesus Christ himself speaks (2 Cor. 2:12; 9:13; 10:14), and as the "gospel of God" since God acted in Jesus Christ.²⁷ The Synoptic gospels, however, use the term "gospel" in a different way. Mark sets forth the gospel as the message of Jesus himself (cf. 1:14). This, according to Pannenberg, is why the term "gospel" was used for comprehensive presentations of the Jesus tradition.²⁸ The term was allegedly introduced by Paul to the post-Easter community, and then transferred from Pauline usage to the message of Jesus and after that to his history.²⁹

Peter Stuhlmacher asserts that this term can be traced back to the Old

²⁷ Cf. 1 Thes. 2:2, 8:2; 2 Cor. 11:7; Rom. 1:1.

²⁸ Cf. Mark 1:1; 1:14. *ST-II*, 455; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 502. See also J. Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (1933, 6th ed. 1952), 43, cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 502.

²⁹ So E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (11th ed. 1951), 29, cited in, *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 502.

Testament concept of the messenger of eschatological peace³⁰ because the central content of the message of peace is the dawning of God's Lordship.³¹ In content, as Ebeling,³² Barth,³³ and Pannenberg³⁴ understand, this is similar to the message of Jesus concerning the coming reign of God and its inbreaking in his own work. Whether Jesus saw himself as the proclaimer of eschatological peace has been disputed. Stuhlmacher does not acknowledge any historical evidence for this possibility.³⁵ Pannenberg³⁶ and Wilkens³⁷ argue against this that the figure of the messenger of eschatological peace³⁸ as mediated through the Qumran community, in which he is connected to the figure of the Teacher of Righteousness, still had a role in Jewish life in the days of Jesus.³⁹ This leads Pannenberg to see that the term "gospel" primarily refers to its content, that is, the saving presence of God's Lordship. This is a remarkable insight. Only when the gospel has to do with the inbreaking of God's rule that brings salvation, is it the word of God. In this sense, the gospel, which is primarily concerned with God's reconciling action in Christ, is the channel through which the Son in the Spirit brings humanity under his Lordship.

³⁰ Peter Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium, I: Vorgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 116ff.

³¹ *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 502-03.

³² Gerhard Ebeling, *Dogmatik des christlichen Glaubens, vol. II: Der Glaube an Gott den Versöhner der Welt* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1979), 93f.

³³ *CD*, IV/2, 197f.

³⁴ *ST-II*, 456; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 503.

³⁵ Stuhlmacher, *op. cit.*, 243. Cf. *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 503.

³⁶ *ST-II*, 456; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 503.

³⁷ See Wilkens, *Römer*, I, 75, excursus "Evangelium", cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 503.

³⁸ e.g., Isaiah 52:7.

³⁹ Pannenberg borrows Stuhlmacher's finding of the reference to Qumran community which linked the idea of the figure of the Teacher of Righteousness, 1QH 18.14. See Stuhlmacher, *op. cit.*, 142ff. Cf. *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 503.

It is to be noted here that there is a difference between Jesus and Paul in their definitions of the content of the gospel. For Jesus the focus of the saving presence of God's Lordship is in his future. For Paul, however, the saving significance of the gospel rests on God's reconciling action that has already taken place in Jesus' death.⁴⁰ Yet, as Pannenberg indicates, since the past events of Jesus' history, and especially his death, contain within themselves the future inbreaking of divine Lordship, the apostolic gospel is still in its content the means by which God's future lays hold of the hearers even after the death of Jesus.⁴¹ For Stuhlmacher, according to Pannenberg, the righteousness of God is for Paul the beginning of his new creation, though the eschatological manifestation to all the world is still in the future.⁴² This new creation is revealed through the word of reconciliation through Jesus' death. This is why the early church changes the gospel *of* Jesus Christ to the gospel *concerning* Jesus Christ.⁴³ The Crucified and risen Lord himself became the content of the gospel.⁴⁴ Therefore, if the original content of the gospel is the saving presence of divine Lordship, the Pauline concept of the gospel as the message of reconciliation has relevance to the original meaning of the term.

But Pannenberg's attribution of the content of the gospel only to the coming Lordship of God fails to give due weight to the past and the present references to it: divine Lordship already accomplished in the past event of

⁴⁰ ST-II, 458; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 505.

⁴¹ ST-II, 459.

⁴² P. Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus* (Göttingen, 1965), 74ff., esp. 75, 81, cited in *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 504.

⁴³ ST-II, 456; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 503.

⁴⁴ Pannenberg understands this through his comparative exegesis of Old Testament prophecy and the Synoptics, that is, Isa. 52.7; 61; cf. Mark 1.15; Matt. 11.5.

reconciliation, and its present reality experienced by believers. Further, the direct identification of the future Lordship with the process of universal history is subject to the criticism that the proclamation of the gospel is concerned with God's redemptive Lordship over all things in the world which is in tension with universal history, though mediated in it.

7.2.2. *THE GOSPEL AS GOD'S DUNAMIS*

Given that the gospel is the inbreaking of God's Lordship, it can be defined with Pannenberg as God's power imparting his Lordship. The Lordship is active now in the proclamation of the gospel. Just as Jesus' message of the coming Kingdom is God's dynamic, bringing his royal reign to the hearers, the apostolic message, whose main contents are the cross and resurrection, is also the dynamic word of reconciliation. Calvin rightly conceives this.

Calvin interprets the gospel in terms of the Kingdom of Christ. Calvin relates the calling of the Gentiles to Christ's Kingdom. The calling is seen as the means by which Christ's Kingdom expands to the ends of the earth.⁴⁵ There are some indications that the calling of the Gentiles did take place at the time of Christ's coming.⁴⁶ In *The Institutes* Calvin writes, however, that it occurs in the apostolic proclamation after his ascension,⁴⁷ rather than his earthly ministry. Apostleship is seen as the first establishing of Christ's Kingdom through the preaching of the gospel.⁴⁸ This leads one to see that the gospel, for Calvin, is the *dynamic* message which mediates Christ's Kingdom.

One agrees with Pannenberg that the gospel is delineated as the power

⁴⁵ *Calvin's Commentary on Psa.* 47.10.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴⁷ *Inst.* II.xi.12.

⁴⁸ Calvin emphasises this point in his *Inst.* IV.iii.4; *Calvin's Commentary on Mathew* 28.19.

of the Spirit for reconciliation since the Spirit works in the gospel.⁴⁹ The gospel comes “with power” to humans as it is proclaimed in the power of the Spirit. This is in keeping with the Pauline view that the apostolic proclamation is filled with the Spirit, for the exalted Son himself speaks from heaven.⁵⁰

Pannenberg perceives this power in a general sense. But this fails to explain why, in reality, not all hearers of the gospel receive it.⁵¹ For this reason, one should see that the gospel dynamic works for the reconciliation of the elect, not of everyone. Another question emerges at this point: can the gospel be seen as God’s *dunamis* primarily in terms of the future Lordship of God? The preaching of the gospel does not remain merely as hope for God’s future reign. It is rather chiefly concerned with a present submission to that Lordship which the Son has already achieved by his death. The eschatological future is guaranteed by this submission through the proclamation of the gospel.

What is the relationship of the apostolic proclamation as God’s power to the law?⁵² Ebeling defines the gospel as *Wortgeschehen*.⁵³ Pannenberg, however, makes the criticism that he refers to the word of God in general, including the law, and thus regards the law as a preparation for the gospel in *Heilsgeschichte*.⁵⁴ This relating of the law to the gospel in Pannenberg’s view

⁴⁹ Cf. 2 Cor. 3:7ff.; 4:4-6. This concept has appeared in his early writings. For instance, in his monograph Pannenberg describes the word as “added” by the Spirit on the exegetical ground that for Paul the risen Lord is identified with the Spirit, *JGM*, 174.

⁵⁰ See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 132.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁵² For an excellent discussion see Michael Welker, “Security of Expectations: Reformulating the Theology of Law and Gospel”, *The Journal of Religion* 66 (1986): 237-60.

⁵³ Ebeling, *op. cit.*, 93.

⁵⁴ Ebeling, *op. cit.*, vol. III, 254f., 291.

is not in keeping with the Pauline understanding which confines the function of the law to a historical preparation for the gospel.

Barth describes the gospel as the “law of faith” since it is God’s claim on humanity.⁵⁵ The only difference between gospel and law is that the gospel is the origin of the law. Pannenberg accuses Barth of disregarding the difference between the gospel and the law in salvation history. Whereas the law belongs to the old covenant, Pannenberg argues, the gospel is the basis of the new covenant. The law comes to an end when the message of eschatological salvation is proclaimed.⁵⁶ The relationship of the gospel to the law is therefore not constitutive.

But this raises the question: is this extreme separation of the gospel from the law exegetically valid? The gospel and the law are undoubtedly not the same. Yet this does not mean, in light of the unity of the Old Testament and the New, that the law does not implicitly include good news about God’s Lordship, the content of the gospel. Further, the New Covenant incorporates the writing of the law in the heart as well as the atonement.⁵⁷ The gospel viewed as promise⁵⁸ comes first, and the law comes next in order to facilitate an appropriate response to the grace of the gospel.

7.2.3. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL AS THE EVENT OF RECONCILIATION

Given that the apostolic message as God’s *dunamis* is the means by which the exalted Son reconciles the world to the Lordship of the Father, it is

⁵⁵ CD, IV/ 3, 393-97.

⁵⁶ ST-II, 460; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 506.

⁵⁷ Cf. Jer. 31: 31ff.

closely connected to the process of reconciliation.⁵⁹ But Barth fails to make clear the interconnection between these two. For him, Jesus' death is a "self-contained" event of reconciliation. Thus the apostolic proclamation does not function to effect reconciliation but simply makes this event known.⁶⁰ However, Edmund Schlink correctly emphasises the interrelation of the reconciliation in Jesus' death to the subsequent process of proclaiming this event through the gospel.⁶¹ Pannenberg, by the same standard, can be approved with the argument that the apostolic message does not simply testify to the significance of Jesus' death, but actually performs a reconciling operation. It is itself the continuation of the process of reconciliation.⁶² It can thus be taken for granted that Pannenberg charges Barth with restricting the proclamation to a mere "report" of the event of reconciliation, while accepting his view that it brings the news of the cross and the resurrection.⁶³

His understanding of the apostolic proclamation as an event of reconciliation is based on the concept of reconciliation as the entire process of the triune God's action in the totality of human history. The proclamation of the reconciling significance of Jesus' death extends that event further for its complete realisation in the coming Lordship of the Father. Pannenberg writes,

The issue in the history of proclaiming this event is the movement from anticipation to actualisation. To this extent the apostolic

⁵⁸ Cf. Rom. 1:2; Gal. 3:8.

⁵⁹ One can agree with Grenz that in the proclamation of the gospel the exalted Son is at work, *op. cit.*, 127.

⁶⁰ CD, IV/1, 76. See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 147, 246.

⁶¹ Schlink, *Ökumenische Dogmatik Grundzüge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 421ff., esp. 424f.

⁶² ST-II, 458; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 505. See Grenz, *op. cit.*, 127.

ministry of reconciliation is itself reconciliation, though it is the reconciliation once and for all effected by Jesus on the cross that is at work through the ministry of the apostles and the proclamation of the church.⁶⁴

However, the strength of Pannenberg's view of the relationship between the apostolic proclamation and the event of reconciliation in Jesus' suffering on the cross leaves him with a problem. The close relationship between the two presupposes, not weakens, the all-sufficiency of the event of reconciliation that took place in Jesus' crucifixion. The subsequent proclamation of the significance of this event is always dependent upon the once-for-all event. Thus the assertion that the proclamation of the gospel should not remain only a report of the past event does not mean that it constitutes in itself the event of reconciliation. It is rather the means by which the Son *actualises* the all-sufficient event of reconciliation through the Spirit.

7.2.4. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN

The gospel is concerned with the saving presence of the Lordship of God in the Christ event. Since the Lordship includes all areas of human life, the scope of the gospel should be seen in a broad perspective extending beyond the individual dimension. This is consistent with the message of Jesus and the multi-faceted conception of the gospel in the New Testament. Thus it can be asserted with Barth and Pannenberg that the content of the gospel is not

⁶³ *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 505. CD, IV/1, 76.

⁶⁴ *ST-II*, 413.

limited only to the individual dimension, especially, forgiveness of sin.⁶⁵

Pannenberg bases this understanding on the conception of the Lordship of God as the universal political destiny of humanity, which is identified with the process of universal history. As it is merely an aspect of this Lordship, the individual dimension is removed from a central position in understanding the gospel. This conflicts with the Lutheran concept of the gospel which lays stress on individual forgiveness of sin "solely in terms of the convicting function of the law, to which the gospel brings forgiveness of sin."⁶⁶ The Lutheran concept of gospel, according to Pannenberg, is based on the individualised view of salvation and can be traced to the medieval sacrament of penance.⁶⁷

But it can be argued that, as Paul teaches, forgiveness of sin is the central message of the gospel. The Lordship of God, the content of the gospel, aims at the redemption of the whole area of human life. If the apostolic proclamation is construed in terms of this redemptive Lordship, the fact that this Lordship includes all realms of human life does not exclude the foundational place of the individual dimension, particularly forgiveness of sin.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ CD, IV/ 3, 370.

⁶⁶ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 132-33. Pannenberg provides against Luther an exegetical argument that Romans 10:15 mainly refers to the proclamation of the message of salvation, bound up with the eschatological salvation, rather than forgiveness of sin, and that Isaiah 52:7 is concerned primarily with the fact that the reason for joy is the dawning of God's Lordship. See *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 507, ST-II, 460-61.

⁶⁷ ST-II, 461; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 507-08.

⁶⁸ See the section on "Reconciliation as the Intertrinitarian Activity Bringing about God's Lordship in *Universalgeschichte*" in chapter four.

7.3. THE SON'S RECONCILING ACTIVITY **THROUGH THE GOSPEL AIMED AT** **FOUNDING THE CHURCH**

7.3.1. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL AND THE CHURCH

If the proclamation of the gospel concerns itself with the progress of God's Lordship, and the Lordship includes a corporate dimension, it is directed to the Lordship among humans. This means that it is intimately related to the emergence of the Christian community, reconciled to God. One can share with Calvin,⁶⁹ Kähler,⁷⁰ and Pannenberg⁷¹ the understanding that the founding of the church is the aim of the apostolic proclamation. For Pannenberg the coming Lordship of God, with which the apostolic message is primarily concerned, is the future communal destiny of humanity in the Kingdom of God, not merely the future realisation of individual reconciliation to God. The proclamation of the gospel thus leads to the establishment of the church that represents the future fellowship of reconciled humanity in the Kingdom.⁷²

Given that the church is the product of the apostolic proclamation, Pannenberg is correct to construe the gospel as the source of the church's existence. What is the significance of the precedence of the gospel over the

⁶⁹ For Calvin the numerical increase of churches can be identified with the extension of God's Lordship, *Inst*, III.xx.42.

⁷⁰ Kähler, *Wissenschaft*, §457, cited in *ST-II*, 462.

⁷¹ *ST-II*, 462.

⁷² Schwöbel, *op. cit.*, 198. Cf. *ST-II*, 462.

church for the completion of the reconciliation that took place in Jesus' death? For Pannenberg it promotes the freedom of faith and its immediacy to God relative to all human authority, including that of the church and its officers. Although the gospel is proclaimed in the church and by its office bearers,⁷³ its authority is not derived from the church. The authority of the church is rather derived from the gospel, which is linked directly to the tradition and history of Jesus Christ. This makes it possible for the individual to acknowledge freely the content of the gospel, that is, the saving presence of God in the person and history of Jesus Christ. For only in the free recognition of the truth of God in the history of Jesus can the reconciliation in Jesus' death reach its goal.⁷⁴

Pannenberg, accordingly, understands even the authority of the Bible only in terms of the gospel and its content. Only insofar as scriptural statements bear witness to this content, do scriptural words have authority in the church.⁷⁵ Pannenberg writes,

The authority of the Bible in the church does not guarantee, then, the truth of individual statements in the biblical books. The church endorses the Bible only for the sake of the gospel, and the gospel only for the sake of the reconciliation of the world by God in the death of Jesus Christ, whom God, by raising him from the dead, instituted the Lord and Messiah of a renewed humanity.⁷⁶

The idea of the divine inspiration of holy scripture presupposes conviction as to the truth of the fundamental elements of Christian faith, rather than

⁷³ ST-II, 463; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 510.

⁷⁴ ST-II, 464; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 511.

⁷⁵ ST-II, 463; *Systematische Theologie*, vol. II, 510.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

guaranteeing the truth of individual sayings. The basis of this conviction lies elsewhere.⁷⁷ This is why the doctrine of the divine inspiration of holy scripture and its authority in the church comes at the end of the doctrine of reconciliation, not in the prolegomena to dogmatics or in the doctrine of the church.⁷⁸

If the fundamental message of the Bible is the saving presence of God's Lordship, the gospel and its contents are to be emphasised as crucial in understanding the authority of the Bible. This does not justify, however, Pannenberg's separation of the gospel from individual scriptural statements. Without the latter, the perception of the former is impossible, and thus both are indivisible. Further, the denial of the divine inspiration of scripture rises naturally from his premise that all theological reflections are to be critically verifiable in the censorious climate of the post-Enlightenment period. But this raises the question: unless the gospel and its contents are presupposed to be inspired by God, how can their authority, distinctive from general statements about the future, be perceived?

7.3.2. THE CHURCH AS THE SIGN OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Given that reconciliation is the action of the Son for bringing humanity under the Lordship of the Father, the Christian community as the product of the activity of the Son in the Spirit through the gospel is intrinsic to the Kingdom of God, the substantial reality of his Lordship. The church is

⁷⁷ This echoes Friedrich Schleiermacher's position that regard for holy scripture cannot be the basis of faith in Christ; rather faith in Christ must be presupposed to allow for special regard for holy scripture. See F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart, 2nd edition (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1928) § 128.

reconciled to God in order to live out the life of the Kingdom. Further, through its renewed communal life in love and justice, the church also proclaims the Kingdom to the world. In this relationship to both the Kingdom and the world, the church can be defined as a "sign" of the Kingdom to the world.⁷⁹ This understanding enables one to perceive with Pannenberg that the church can be seen in terms of a sign of the Kingdom. Pannenberg brings to this view his own Christian ecumenical perspective.⁸⁰ The church manifests itself in its relation to the world. But it concerns itself with the world only in the context of the coming Kingdom that is the future of the world.⁸¹

The nature of the sign which the church gives to the world is related to God's new creation. Pannenberg perceives this new creation as the eschatological reality in the Kingdom which will be attained at the end of human history. The sign nature of the church is thus dependent on the

⁷⁸ On this point Pannenberg follows Schleiermacher.

⁷⁹ The term "sign" in describing the church usually implies its interconnectedness to the Kingdom of God and the world. The terms "sign" and "symbol" of course have become the focus of many important studies in recent years within the field of semiotics. Most studies differentiate between the two; for example, Tzvetan Todorov understands that the sign is opposed to the symbol. The sign is grafted onto indirect signification, while the symbol is onto direct signification. The sign in terms of a generic meaning encompasses the symbol. The symbol thus becomes a special case of the sign. Further discussion, see Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, SJ (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 65-100; T. Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol*, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), 15-59; Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 80-141, 471-557. For Pannenberg's Hermeneutics which undertakes reflection on the sign and symbol, see James C. McHann Jr., *The Three Horizons: A Study in Biblical Hermeneutics with Special Reference to Wolfhart Pannenberg*, University of Aberdeen Ph.D. Dissertation, 1987, 14-40; Anthony C. Thiselton, "Pannenberg's Metacritical Unifying of a Hermeneutics of Universal History with the Scientific Status of Theology", in *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 331-43.

⁸⁰ This is motivated by his personal involvement in the Christian ecumenical movement. See the sub-section on "The Historical Context: the German Church's Struggle Against National Socialism" in chapter one.

⁸¹ In 1969 Pannenberg himself indicates this in "The Kingdom of God and the Christian Church", in *TKG*, 72-101. He also deals with this theme in his article "The Christian Church and the Eschatological Kingdom of God", in *Spirit, Faith, and Church*, ed. with A. Dulles, S. J. and Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), 108-123.

character of the future Kingdom. The eschatological Kingdom, in his view, is not limited to the future of the faithful, but incorporates the common destiny of all humanity.⁸² It is also the political destiny of humanity in which there are universal peace and justice,⁸³ with which all political order is concerned.⁸⁴ In his view, this is based on the fact that the Old Testament expected the Kingdom to establish justice in human society.

This universal and political future is not achieved in this world either by human government or political revolution. Nor has it attained a definitive form in the political or social order.⁸⁵ This is because this order is always open to the abuse of power by those who wield it,⁸⁶ and can enforce only an external peace, and thus remains provisional even though it is built on a Christian foundation.⁸⁷ The Kingdom is rather established by God alone at the end of human history. Until then it is present only in a symbolic way. The church symbolically embraces the ultimacy of social and political life in the Kingdom that is the goal of reconciliation,⁸⁸ thereby being a sign of the Kingdom to the world. As Christoph Schwöbel observes,⁸⁹ this symbolic

⁸² Pannenberg describes this destiny as the "global village."

⁸³ In Pannenberg's understanding, justice is not to be identified with law. Nor can justice be constituted by law because law is abstract and general. True justice is achieved by love which is not only central to its content, but also the fulfilment of the law. This is why Jesus explains the will of God by the commandment of love. Pannenberg progresses this understanding from the idea of law in his essay "On the Theology of Law", in *Ethics*, 23-56.

⁸⁴ W. Pannenberg, "Constructive and critical functions of Christian eschatology," *Harvard Theological Review*, 77/2 (1984), 120.

⁸⁵ *Ethics*, 11.

⁸⁶ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 156.

⁸⁷ *Ethics*, 13.

⁸⁸ *ST-II*, 462. For Pannenberg the state always concerns itself with the provisionality of the social and political life. Cf. *CSSC*, 37.

⁸⁹ Schwöbel, *op. cit.*, vol. I (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 263-64.

function is the primary reason for its existence in the world. Thus the church can be called a "symbolic entity".

Calvin identifies the Kingdom with the historical church, rather than "the elect".⁹⁰ The Kingdom does not exist apart from the visible church, and vice versa. The progress of the Kingdom is thus no more than the numerical increase of churches.⁹¹ This presupposes, of course, that the visible church as the Kingdom is the true church, dependent on the Word of God, rather than the institution. Calvin writes,

To sum up, since the church is the Kingdom of God, and he reigns by his Word alone, will it not be clear to any man that those are lying words by which the Kingdom of God is imagined to exist apart from his sceptre (that is, his most holy Word)?⁹²

Against this, Pannenberg argues that this Kingdom, assured of a part in the glory that has already appeared in Christ, has not yet been attained by the church. It can be present in the church only in the form of sign. Thus the Kingdom is distinguished from the church as an organised community in the world. It is quite possible to conceive of the Kingdom without any church at all.⁹³ The Kingdom has often had to manifest itself in the secular world outside and frequently in opposition to the church. If Christians commit themselves to the communal destiny of the world, they are not necessarily required to be

⁹⁰ *Inst.*, IV.ii.4.

⁹¹ *Inst.*, III.xx.42.

⁹² *Inst.*, IV.ii.4.

⁹³ For the relationship between the church and the Kingdom of God see *JGM*, 371-78. Cf. W. Pannenberg, "Facts of History and Christian Ethics", *Dialog* 8 (1969): 287-96; "The Church and the Eschatological Kingdom", 118-23. Cf. E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 183-84.

members of any constitutional churches. Thus he is willing to employ the phrase "Christians without the church". As Geoffrey Wainwright rightly points out, this view is based on his "sympathy with the long-term victims of the disgust with the institutional, confessional churches that was provoked by the wars of religions" in the German situation.⁹⁴

Pannenberg's perception of the interconnectedness of the church with the future destiny of humanity is related to his view of the meaning of the title "Christ". It is associated with Christ's vicarious working out of God's Lordship. Since the Lordship will be realised in the Kingdom at the end of human history, Christ is inextricably related to the eschatological Kingdom. While Barth identifies the risen Christ with the Kingdom, Pannenberg perceives the exalted Christ as pointing to the final Kingdom. Thus the exalted Christ is not only the Saviour of the individual or of a group of believers,⁹⁵ but is a prolepsis of the common destiny of humankind. This impels Pannenberg to see that the church functions to anticipate and dedicate itself to the future fellowship in the Kingdom. On this view, the concept of the church as the body of Christ is insufficient because it conceives of Christ only within the personal dimension, and thus leaves little room for his universal character. Pannenberg, accordingly, vigorously opposes the concept of the church as a *congregatio sanctorum* or *fidelium*. It focuses, in his judgement, too much on the individual Kingdom, and thus fails to take account of more global forms of

⁹⁴ Geoffrey Wainwright, "Pannenberg's Ecumenism", ed. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 209.

⁹⁵ *TKG*, 75.

community and political life.⁹⁶

The interrelation of the church with the destiny of humanity is also supported by Pannenberg's view of election. The church, for him, is elected as God's new people or the New Israel to anticipate the destiny of all humanity. This is based on two key points in understanding God's election. The first one is that God's election is corporate in character,⁹⁷ rather than being confined to the individual dimension. This is based on the fact that in Israel the unity of the social order and of the nation developed in consistency with God's act of election in history, indicating a connection between "election", "people", and "history".⁹⁸ The election of Israel functions as a testimony to God's will for justice among peoples. The goal of election is thus nothing less than the institutionalisation of God's justice, bringing about the completion of creation and the destiny of humanity in the Kingdom. Divine election is also related to the whole process of human history. The exegetical basis for this is found in Romans⁹⁹ which brings God's eternal election and the historical process together. On this view, according to Pannenberg, Augustine abstracts God's election from his action in history, and thus sees it only in terms of the otherworldly Kingdom. In consequence the election of the church is separated

⁹⁶ Pannenberg relates the concept of the church as one, holy, apostolic, and catholic body to human forms of community and political life.

⁹⁷ As Grenz observes, Pannenberg discusses election at the end of the ecclesiology section while classical tradition deals with it under the doctrine of God. This implies that election is drawn as "a conclusion arising out of a reflection from an eschatological perspective on the course of the corporate history of the people of God". Cf. Grenz, *op. cit.*, 173.

⁹⁸ By means of the post-exilic idea of the remnant, according to Pannenberg, Paul held to the unity of the people of God in spite of the breach with Israel. In the second century, however, the church came to be understood as the people of God over against Israel. However, since Augustine, the corporate view has been overshadowed by the doctrine of individual election, which focuses on the predestination of the individual to the eternal Kingdom of God. Vatican II has recently reintroduced the corporate view.

⁹⁹ See Romans chapters eight and nine.

from its function in the process of human history. But Pannenberg maintains that only one people of God exists. The election of the Christian community is therefore to be perceived as working toward the future destiny of all humankind. Participation in this community constitutes a *prolepsis* of the new humanity in the coming Kingdom of God.

It becomes clear that Pannenberg finds the sign nature of the church only in its *symbolic anticipation of the future universal political destiny of humanity* in the Kingdom. But this is challenged by the critical argument that the church is a sign of the Kingdom in its *present* embodiment and mediation of the redemptive Kingdom. First, the Kingdom, with which the church as its sign concerns itself, is the *redemptive* Kingdom, rather than the future destiny of humanity in the dimension of universal history. God's new creation, in terms of which the sign nature of the church is seen, can be identified with the redemptive Lordship of God over the world because it is implemented only through the latter. This redemptive Lordship is realised in the Kingdom whose aim is to redeem all things in the world including the process of human history but cannot be identified with the process of universal history.

Second, if the church is a sign of the redemptive Kingdom, it has *already embodied* the Kingdom. In Pannenberg's understanding, God's new creation is eschatological in character and thus identified with the future of the world. This creation is anticipated in the church. But the church, through the Son's reconciling action in his crucifixion, has experienced the new creation in the present, while looking towards its consummation. According to John's Gospel, "signs" are concerned with eschatological events that are special demonstrations of the character and power of God. This does not mean that

these events will take place only at the end of history. They have already been realised in the Christ event and the Christian community. These are partial but effective realisations of God's new creation.¹⁰⁰ The presence of the Holy Spirit in the church is the "down-payment" of the future new creation¹⁰¹ because through the Spirit it receives and manifests new life. Only on the basis of these "already-realised" realities of new creation can the church participate in and be related to the future new creation. In this light, therefore, the church is to be understood as the Kingdom, although it is still an incomplete form of it.

Third, the church is a sign of the Kingdom in its *mediation* of the redemptive Kingdom, rather than in its function of *symbolising* the future destiny of humanity. If the church is concerned chiefly with the redemptive Kingdom, the church is reconciled to God to live out the Kingdom but also to be the agency through which God exercises his Lordship over the world. This is based on the intertrinitarian concept of reconciliation in which the Spirit brings about reconciliation through the ministry of the church. The Kingdom is originated by God himself, and is thus neither promoted nor upheld by human effort. This does not mean that the church has to wait for it passively. The church has received from God the power of, and responsibility for, its mediation through the proclamation of the gospel. Therefore it is the task of the church to lead the world, through the apostolic proclamation, into the redemptive Kingdom. From this viewpoint, Calvin correctly contends,

¹⁰⁰ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd edition (Philadelphia: The Westminster, 1978), 76.

¹⁰¹ Cf. 2 Corinthians 1:22.

Christ has entrusted to his ministers his Gospel, which is the sceptre of his Kingdom, and has committed it, as it were, to their keeping . . . by his ministers, has subdued to his dominion the whole world, and has erected as many principalities under his authority as there have been churches gathered to him in various nations by their preaching.¹⁰²

Pannenberg emphasises that through the sacramental fellowship, the church performs its function of symbolic anticipation of the future communal life in the Kingdom.¹⁰³ In the sacraments the church celebrates symbolically the future fellowship of humanity in the Kingdom,¹⁰⁴ and imparts even now to the individual participation in the ultimate fulfilment of the fellowship of humanity in the New Jerusalem.¹⁰⁵ The sacramental communion is thus a *proleptic* form of the communal destiny of humankind in the Kingdom. The significance of the church for the world depends on the degree to which this function is carried out through the sacramental fellowship. It is precisely here that the church has distinctive position in and mission toward society and the world.¹⁰⁶ The sacraments are therefore *signum efficax*.¹⁰⁷ Pannenberg says,

Every celebration of the Eucharist re-enacts the reality that constitutes the foundation of the church, and that happens not only in the sense of memorial but also in the symbolic power of the

¹⁰² Calvin's *Commentary on Psalm*, 45: 16.

¹⁰³ Grenz, *op. cit.*, 156-7.

¹⁰⁴ CSSC, 36.

¹⁰⁵ TKG, 83.

¹⁰⁶ *Ethics*, 11.

¹⁰⁷ Pannenberg cites Augustine, *De civ. Dei* X.5: . . . sacraments, id est sacrum signum; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, III. 60.1; John Calvin, *Inst*, IV.xiv.18.

Eucharist, where the essence of the church itself is alive, present, and effective.¹⁰⁸

However, the typical forms of the doctrine of the Eucharist in the church, in his view, have not sufficiently appreciated the central importance of its symbolic nature. They have distorted it in different ways. The Roman Catholic church turns the Eucharist into a propitiatory sacrifice, offered for human sins. The Calvinistic church celebrates it as a presentation of the holy congregation excluding sinners. The Lutheran church celebrates it primarily as a visible and touchable assurance of the forgiveness of sin to the individual.

But it can be argued against Pannenberg that if the above argument that the church is a sign of the Kingdom in its present embodiment and mediation of the redemptive Kingdom is intelligible, its sign model is found in *prophecy*, rather than in sacramental symbolism. Through the prophetic message the church is called to live out and mediate the Kingdom in the world. According to the Book of Acts 2:17, prophecy itself is a sign. The prophetic message of the church first calls to fellowship with God which can be characterised as obedience to his royal Lordship. The church, the community reconciled to his Lordship, is the realm over which God reigns. The Word is the sceptre of his reign. The church should thus make a right response to his Word. This call to obedience to his Lordship is combined with compassion to lead the world into unity with God.

The prophetic message of the church is also a call to justice. The fellowship of the church with God is intrinsic to its sympathy with people. Neither of them can thus stand alone. The church's obedience to divine

¹⁰⁸ CSSC, 40.

Lordship expands to all areas of human life in the world because this Lordship aims at the redemption of all things in the world. On the one hand, the church has to show the world its life lived in obedience to God's Lordship in every area of its living so that it can elicit faith in unbelievers, as witnessed by John's Gospel. Thereby it becomes a visible church, and thus a sign of the Kingdom to the world. On the other hand, the church is called to bring all aspects of human life in the world into his redemptive Lordship. The church is thus required to increase integrity and justice in human society. The church should not fight against the world, but serve it with love.

If the church is to be seen as a sign of the Kingdom in its embodiment and mediation of the redemptive Kingdom, aiming at the redemption of all things in the world, its sign nature is essentially related to the unity of humankind. The church is reconciled to God in order to live and work out the unity that is characteristic of the Kingdom.

On this view, Pannenberg correctly conceives the sign nature as being closely connected to the unity. Nevertheless, from the perspective of *Universalgeschichte*, Pannenberg restricts the sign nature merely to the church's *symbolic anticipation of the future political unity of all humankind* in the universal Kingdom. The church functions to pioneer the future fellowship of humanity,¹⁰⁹ thereby being a sign of the Kingdom. This leads him to fail to make it clear that the church experiences in the present the spiritual unity of

¹⁰⁹ This conception of the church as a sign of the Kingdom of God in relation to the future unity of humankind is in accordance with the Second Vatican Council's statement on the church in 1963. It writes, "The church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all humankind", *Church*, 151.

humanity, already accomplished by the reconciling action of the triune God in the Christ event, looking to its culmination.

The unity of humanity is characteristic of the redemptive Kingdom of God. The ground for this lies in the unity of God. The sovereign reign of God creates unity among men who are subject to its redemptive power. In this fellowship individual and the social destiny are not separated, but interrelated to one another. However, Pannenberg understands that this unity will be realised only at the end of human history, and thus is identified with the political future of all humanity. Since the one God is the ultimate future of humankind, the future of humanity will tend toward its unity.¹¹⁰ This perception of the universal political unity of humanity leads to difficulty in explaining how the future reality, which is the goal of the spiritual unity, is presently lived out and substantiated in the world by the church. This unity is not separated from political unity but nevertheless cannot be identified with it.

The concept of the unified reality of humankind in the Kingdom makes the problem of social unity a religious one. This is, according to Pannenberg, because religion articulates the awareness of the future destiny of humankind, overcoming the antagonism between individual and society.¹¹¹ If the conflict

¹¹⁰ *TKG*, 61.

¹¹¹ Pannenberg agrees with Teilhard de Chardin that there is a convergent drift - a drift toward unity - in the evolution of the human race, especially in the modern phase of human history. For both, the decisive condition for this is the human capability for reflection that is related to the ability to form universal ideas. The ability is connected to the fact that a human being does not have unity of his existence himself and is constantly looking for a unity beyond himself of which he is an integral part. The unity of society is thus constitutive of individual human identity, although it is transcended in turn by the quest for the universal. However, the convergence toward unity has been ambiguous because there are tensions between the individual and human social destiny. This is the intricate situation that apparently does not allow any simple way to avoid alienation. The antagonism between the individual and society cannot be solved definitely under present conditions of human history. The solution presupposes the fulfilment of human destiny in the individual as well as society, and would require that all human individuals be granted a share in that perfect society. For this reason Pannenberg combines the Christian eschatological perspective of the Kingdom and the

between the individual and society could be eliminated by political and economical changes, and a truly human society thus established, he stresses, religion would be truly unnecessary for society.¹¹² However, politics and economics are seen to have no such capacity. Moreover, if the redemptive Kingdom is understood to be mediated and substantiated in the world, Christian faith cannot be an exclusively private concern. As Pannenberg rightly claims, God who is the subject of religious truth is an all-determining reality.¹¹³ If he were the God of only those who profess faith in him, God would not be God. Religious talk about God must, accordingly, be valid for all interpersonal relationships. Therefore the unity of society is a crucial concern to the church.

How, then, can the church carry out its social task? Pannenberg is correct to contend that the church can perform such a responsibility effectively when it achieves its own unity, thereby showing society a model of the unity of humanity.¹¹⁴ However, that is not all. Since the church is a sign of the Kingdom in its present embodiment and mediation of the Kingdom, it is called

resurrection of the dead. The expectation of the Kingdom thus implies that "only when God rules and no human possesses dominating political power any more, then the domination of people by other people and the injustice inevitably connected with it will come to an end." The sovereign rule of God over humankind will bring about a society without the rule of human over human, and thus will accomplish the social and political destiny of humankind. Although the Kingdom exceeds everything that could be achieved by human efforts, it provides an appropriate criterion for measuring the degree of achievement in social and political effort and change. There is a correspondence between the future Kingdom and human history in spite of its deficiencies and perversions. The correspondence of the social and political urge toward the unity of humankind with the unity of the Kingdom which is to come testifies to the fact that human history in the midst of its perversions continues to be the creation of the God whose Kingdom is coming. See *Ethics*, 65-70.

¹¹² *Church*, 83.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹¹⁴ Pannenberg, "The Christian Church and the Eschatological Kingdom of God", 123.

by God not only to live out the unity in love and justice but also to substantiate it in all areas of human life.

Until as late as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, according to Pannenberg, unity of religion was understood as the indispensable basis for the unity of society.¹¹⁵ However, the denominational conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought about the privatisation of Christian religion. Pannenberg analyses two reasons for this. The first one was the desire to preserve the political unity of society. In that period the only way to preserve political unity was to avoid religious differences. In such circumstances religion itself becomes a more private matter. The other reason is that since the beginning of modern times the confessional churches have not provided any basis for a unified society but have rather disrupted it, becoming into private associations of individual believers engaged in denominational conflicts, caused by dogmatic uniformity and intolerant claims.¹¹⁶ In consequence the separation of state and religion has been justified.¹¹⁷

The church's failure to acknowledge its role in modern society, Pannenberg continues to explicate, has led to the authoritarianism of the older forms of Christian tradition. These authoritarian elements – for instance, clericalism, dogmatism, the view of Scripture as the authoritative divine word, even the authoritarian notion of faith as obedience – have confined the church to a sectarian ghetto, forcing it more and more into a minor political position. As a direct consequence, it cannot make an adequate contribution to a

¹¹⁵ *Ethics*, 14.

¹¹⁶ Pannenberg, "The Christian Church and the Eschatological Kingdom of God", 122.

¹¹⁷ *Ethics*, 17.

desperately needy society and world.¹¹⁸ The tragedy of modern Christianity, he claims, lies in the fact that the church has failed to overcome its authoritarian character.¹¹⁹

How then can the church achieve its own unity? Pannenberg's two proposals are sensible. The first is Eucharistic spirituality. Following the Lutheran tradition,¹²⁰ he emphasises the communal dimension of the Eucharist: communion with Christ and communion among believers. The Eucharistic communion not only expresses and celebrates the unity of the church but serves as the means to unite the church. The corporate presence of Christ with believers at the Lord's Supper brings a sense of unity to the church, and helps it to overcome differences in doctrines or theological formulations.

The experience of Eucharistic communion across the barriers that still divide the Christian communities created in many cases a new sense of Christian unity that in the final result may well contribute to the reunification of the Christian communities.¹²¹

But Pannenberg relates the Eucharistic fellowship to the future destiny of humanity. This eschatological fellowship has already been fulfilled by Jesus in an anticipatory way,¹²² through his celebrating the meal with his disciples and sinners.

¹¹⁸ *TKG*, 93.

¹¹⁹ *Ethics*, 17-18.

¹²⁰ The Lutheran church perceives the church as a communion of the faithful on the basis of the communion with Jesus Christ that each of individual members shares. Cf. *CSSC*, 40.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

¹²² *JGM*, 206; *Church*, 118.

Jesus celebrated the presence of the eschatological Kingdom of God in the simple form of the meals he took together with his disciples, but also with Pharisees, with "tax collectors and sinners", who by the intrinsic symbolism of the joint meal were accepted by Jesus as candidates and citizens of the eschatological Kingdom of God.¹²³

This eschatological dimension naturally imparts the universal outlook which embraces every single human being. It can bring individuals from isolation to reconciliation with the Christian community so that they can participate in a shared world. This is why Eucharistic spirituality is required for the church to be a true anticipation of the future unity of humanity. However, this view requires substantiation in explaining that the Eucharistic fellowship is redemptive in its essential nature. This communion is based on the fact that the redemptive eucharistic spirituality is the goal of Jesus' sacrificial devotion.

Pannenberg's second proposal for achieving church unity is ecumenism. A truly ecumenical church can experience its own unity, and thus can become a model of the unity of humanity. The church, by its synthesis of pluriformity and unity through ecumenism, even though this is not totally achieved, can become a symbol of the future universal unity. Pannenberg maintains that even doctrinal consensus is not essential for unity. Within the future-oriented thought, all Christian traditions or formulations are conditioned by history, and thus provisional in character. The finality of religious truth is found only in the Kingdom that is yet to come, although it has been anticipated in the Christ event. For this reason, the multiplicity of theological traditions is not an obstacle to the attainment of church unity, but provides a real opportunity for the church to explore or to reformulate

¹²³ CSSC, 46.

Christian faith through mutually recognising different traditions or formulations of the faith.¹²⁴

Pannenberg conceives the catholicity of the church in terms of its unity. Genuine catholicity does not necessarily mean uniformity of all formulations, whether in matters of liturgy, discipline or doctrine, but the pluriformity of Christian claims in these fields. Even amidst the multiplicity of its persisting traditions and separate communities the church can develop a new institutional expression of its unity.¹²⁵ This justification of the pluriformity of Christian religious experience and knowledge represents, by itself, a new type of unified religious formulation.¹²⁶

Only when the church achieves unity in this way, Pannenberg claims, can it make a contribution toward the unity of society.

If Christians succeed in solving the problems of their own pluriformity, they may be able to produce a model combining pluriformity and the widest moral unity that will also be valid for political life.¹²⁷

Within this ecumenical context, Pannenberg has a positive attitude toward other religions. If unity is achieved through the reciprocal recognition of the continuing differences in doctrine, polity, in faith and love under the shared knowledge that one's own faith and polity are provisional, there is no need to shut Christianity off from other religions. Other religious traditions must be

¹²⁴ TKG, 101.

¹²⁵ Pannenberg, "The Christian Church and the Eschatological Kingdom of God", 117.

¹²⁶ Pannenberg, "The Future and the Unity of Humankind", 77.

¹²⁷ W. Pannenberg, "Christian Morality and Political Issues", *Faith and Reality*, trans. John Maxwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 138.

seen as concerned with the future unity of humankind and can thus contribute toward the common destiny. He writes,

Christians and non-Christians alike can share the insight that if they are to achieve their human destiny of unity through peace and justice, they must achieve it through unity with God.¹²⁸

This understanding presupposes that the significance of religion is primarily for the unity of humanity. Only in this framework can the church overcome the religious hatred of the past without sacrificing its identity, and thus can serve as a sign and an instrument of the unity of humankind.¹²⁹ The unity of the church "symbolises the eschatological solution of the most pressing problem of modern society: to achieve and preserve unity without eliminating plurality."¹³⁰ A more pluriform but united church may achieve this better than the confessional churches.¹³¹ Pannenberg believes that the Christian ecumenical movement, by providing a model of unity in plurality, will turn out to represent¹³² the most far-reaching contribution of Christianity to the political future of humanity.¹³³

Pannenberg's problem is that ecumenism is perceived only from the eschatological universal framework. Christian unity is seen merely in terms of the future political unity of all humanity which is identified with universal

¹²⁸ *Church*, 154.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹³⁰ *TKG*, 101.

¹³¹ Pannenberg, "The Christian Church and the Eschatological Kingdom of God", 122.

¹³² Pannenberg, "The Nation and Human Race", 109-119.

¹³³ Pannenberg, "The Future and the Unity of Humankind", 77. Pannenberg says, "The ecumenical movement can make a contribution toward the unity of all humankind not only by taking Christian positions on the contemporary problems of secular society, but also, more

history.¹³⁴ However, Christian ecumenism is essentially a spiritual unity through Christ's reconciling suffering on the cross. The universal political unity is to be seen as an implication of this redemptive fellowship which is marked by love and justice. Hence, through ecumenism the church should primarily embody and mediate the redemptive unity, which believers have already experienced by faith in Christ, in all realms of human life, rather than only anticipation of the future universal political destiny of humanity.

7.4. CONCLUSION

The discussion of the Son's reconciling action in the Spirit in his post-Easter history has focused on the argument that the Son continues to represent humanity in the Spirit for the coming Lordship of the Father. As an exploration has made clear, Pannenberg's intertrinitarian view of the reconciling action of the Son in the Spirit in terms of God's Lordship is laudable. Within the intertrinitarian framework, the work of the Spirit is the activity of the exalted Son to continue his ministry of *Stellvertretung* in him for the realisation of the Father's Lordship. The Spirit differentiates himself from the Father and the Son by bringing humans, through the gospel, to know the Lordship of the Father in the Son, thereby completing the reconciliation in Jesus' death. The proclamation of the gospel is the means by which the risen Son in the Spirit brings humanity under the Lordship of the Father. The gospel is thus the divine dynamic word of reconciliation which is filled with the

importantly and decisively, through overcoming its own basic problems that delay the unity of the church.", *Church*, 165.

¹³⁴ Pannenberg deals with this theme in his article "The Future and the Unity of Humankind", in *Ethics*, 195-97; "Churchless Christians", in *ibid.*, 21-22; "The Unity of the Christian Church and the Unity of Humankind", *ibid.*, 150-65.

Spirit. The proclamation of the gospel is primarily concerned with the progress of God's Lordship that includes a corporate dimension, and thus aims at the establishment of the church. The church embraces the communal destiny of humanity in the Kingdom of God, thereby being a sign of the Kingdom to the world.

But Pannenberg's view does not evade problems. Above all, his concept of the intimacy between the action of the Son and the Spirit on the basis of the proleptic nature of Jesus' crucifixion is not true of the intertrinitarian thought. This intimacy rather presupposes the all-sufficiency of the cross, rather than an anticipatory nature. This leads to another failure to see that although it is the practical outworking of reconciliation, the proclamation of the gospel does not constitute the event of reconciliation, but actualises the once-for-all event of reconciliation in Jesus' death. Further, the over-emphasis on the relational dimension restricts the work of the Spirit to the enabling of humans to accept their own finitude in order to be reconciled to God. This overlooks the fact that the Spirit leads humans to confess the risen Son as Lord and substantiate his Lordship continuously in all realms of human life. Moreover, his perception of the gospel in terms of God's Lordship fails to see that it is chiefly concerned with a divine redemptive Lordship and thus individual forgiveness of sins is central for the scope of the gospel. Finally, the *universalgeschichtlich* concept of the sign nature of the church in its symbolical anticipation of the future universal political destiny of humanity fails to see that the church is a sign of the redemptive Kingdom, already realised in Jesus' death, in its prophetic embodiment and mediation of it.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

The distinctiveness of this study lies in the interpretation of Pannenberg's concept of reconciliation (1) *within the framework of the mutual self-differentiation of Father, Son, and Spirit as the manner of their reconciling action* and (2) *in terms of God's Lordship*.

Most of earlier studies of Pannenberg's christology have focused on the human level of Jesus' history and thus have construed Jesus' death as his destiny that he accepted only passively. These studies have also repudiated the intrinsic relationship of the cross to God's Lordship.

However, Pannenberg's recent works, especially *Systematische Theologie*, show that his theological articulation has developed from the earlier writings. A distinctive aspect of this advance is the intertrinitarian perspective from which all theological doctrines are formulated. The mutuality of the trinitarian self-differentiation is not only the mode of the triune inner life of God, but also the way by which the trinitarian God reconciles the world to himself.

Within this perspective, the cross as the expression of Jesus' extreme subordination to the Father is crucial for the *Selbstverwirklichung Gottes* in the world. It anticipates the deity and Lordship of God which will be realised only at the eschaton. Thereby Jesus *is* the Son as the proleptic person of the future realisation of the deity of God, and *reconciles* humanity to God and brings it under his Lordship. Therefore Jesus' crucifixion is not his destiny,

but *the reconciling action of the Son to achieve the future Lordship of the Father*. This is decisive for Pannenberg's understanding of reconciliation.

The strength of this treatise rests upon the fact that it has made clear this point, which earlier studies of Pannenberg's doctrine of reconciliation have overlooked. This point receives further substantiation by the following summary of the whole discussion of Pannenberg's doctrine of reconciliation and its re-appraisal.

The significance of Pannenberg's christology in the history of Christian thought lies in the stress on the historical reality of Jesus as the ground for all christological inquires and on the primacy of futurity. The historical and theological settings motivated Pannenberg to work out this christology. The struggle of the German Church to defend itself against German National Socialism provided a social and political, especially *future-oriented dimension*; his critical reaction to existential theology and *Heilsgeschichte* theology came out the perspective of *Universalgeschichte* which is both open to critical scrutiny and eschatological. The influence of Barth's christology, particularly the concept of the Christ event as God's self-revelation and the trinitarian formulation, together with Hegel's dialectical logic of *free differentiation and relation* and concept of universal history, was crucial for the overall shape of Pannenberg's new project.

Within the intertrinitarian framework the identity of Jesus as the Son has been established as it relates to God's Lordship. Pannenberg's approach to this identity progresses from the historical reality of Jesus to the recognition of the eternal Son, rather than from the concept of the eternal Logos being sent in human nature and the soteriological motif. This method leads to the perception

of Jesus' identity within the historical contexts of *Traditionsgeschichte* and the Late-Jewish apocalypticism, the main theme of which is the Kingdom of God. The path "from below" emphasises the *personal* unity of the concrete man Jesus with God, which is reflected in Jesus' self-consciousness, rather than the Chalcedonian formulation of a unification of two opposing essences. This unity is conceived indirectly in Jesus' human relation to God as his Father, rather than to the eternal Son. Jesus' self-distinction from the Father is characteristic of this relationship. Thus this self-differentiation in his earthly life, especially Jesus' ultimate dedication to the Father on the cross is the inner basis of his divine sonship. Jesus, by this intertrinitarian relationship, anticipates the future realisation of the deity and Lordship of the Father. Thereby he is established as the Son. Jesus' subordination to the Father and his Lordship can be expressed as the self-humbling and *kenōsis* of the eternal Son. It is also the content of Jesus' freedom, and proves Jesus' sinlessness. Only in this dedication is Jesus identical with the Son. Since the subordination of the man Jesus to the Father and his Lordship originates in the eternity of God, he is the eternal Son. Jesus by this subordination as a radical expression of the openness to God fulfils the destiny of all humanity. He is a *prototype* of a future new humanity into which all humankind is reconciled through him. In this sense he is the universal Son. The uniqueness of Jesus' self-distinction from the Father is historically confirmed by the pre-Easter claim of Jesus to authority in his proclamation and mediation of the imminence of God's Lordship and by his resurrection. The former clarifies Jesus' dedication to the Father on the cross in the sense that he claimed that authority only for the Father and in service of his Lordship. It requires a future complete

verification. God, by the historical event of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead to a new life with God as a prolepsis of the eschaton confirms that the pre-Easter history of Jesus was his dedication to the Father and his Lordship, and Jesus' earthly claim to authority. Thereby Jesus' divine sonship is noetically and ontologically confirmed.

The cross has been argued as the reconciling action of the Son to bring the world under the Lordship of the Father. Above all, reconciliation is defined as the sovereign action of the triune God in his mutual self-differentiation which is directed to the world, rather than to God himself. This intertrinitarian action of God brings about his Lordship. The action is *universalgeschichtlich* in that it encompasses the entire process in human history, which is directed to the future reconciliation of the world from which God's Lordship derives and takes place proleptically in the Christ event.

Based on this intertrinitarian character of reconciliation, the pre-Easter history of Jesus is the active performing by the Son of his reconciling office in order to bring the world under the Lordship of the Father, rather than the passive fulfilment. The earthly action of the Son is a prolepsis of the future Lordship of God which is worked out by the exalted Son in the Spirit through the gospel. Jesus' self-differentiation from the Father on the cross is the activity of the Son to reveal the eternal Fatherhood of God, his own eternal sonship, and his love. Within the intertrinitarian thought, the Son's self-offering to the Father on the cross is his being offered by the Father. The Father, by making his deity and Lordship dependent upon the Son, dedicates himself to the Son, and thus participates in the suffering of the Son. The interrelation of three levels of Jesus' history, which is confirmed by the Easter

event, leads to the assertion that the *munus triplex Christi* is the three aspects of one reconciling of the Son. This understanding, a modified form of the older Protestant doctrine of the *munus triplex Christi*, overcomes the weakness of earlier works which conceived them only in terms of Jesus' earthly ministry.

The Son executes his reconciling office in the form of *Stellvertretung* so that humanity may participate in the process of reconciliation. He by his supreme dedication to the Father on the cross represents all humanity in order to bring it under the Lordship of the Father. The Son suffered in human place the full punishment which both Jews and Gentiles deserved for the sin of turning aside from God and his Lordship. This concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* is justifiable on the ground of the validity of *Stellvertretung* as a universal phenomenon in a human social life. This validity is established by the ancient Israelite corporate conceptualisation and practice, and the modern view according to which guilt and its expiation are transferable. Jesus' death does not exclude but anticipates the death of others who in union with Jesus in the act of baptism die in *hope* of participation in a new resurrection life. Jesus, by accepting his own death, the seal of his self-differentiation from the Father, is the paradigmatic Son. Others acknowledge their own finitude and thus share in his sonship which is characteristic of liberation from all kinds of bondage in order to serve God and his Lordship.

Within the intertrinitarian perspective, in the post-Easter history of Jesus the exalted Son continues to perform his reconciling office in the Spirit to lead humanity to accept the Lordship of the Father. The Spirit makes the glory of the Father and the Son known to humans through the gospel, thereby

completing the reconciliation brought about by Jesus' death. The proclamation of the gospel is the means by which the risen Son in the Spirit continues to represent all humankind. It is the dynamic word of reconciliation and thus constitutes the event of reconciliation. The activity of the risen Son through the apostolic proclamation aims at the establishment of the church that symbolically anticipates the universal political destiny of humanity in the Kingdom of God.

One can agree with Pannenberg on the following points. The first is that within the intertrinitarian outlook Jesus' death is understood as the action of the Son. In love the three persons of the trinitarian God by their mutual self-differentiation are united to each other. In this way they reconcile the world to their trinitarian communion. The immanent intertrinitarian relationship belongs together with the economic intertrinitarian relationship. The triune God reveals himself in his economic action for the world. Within this outlook, the cross as the expression of the ultimate dedication of the Son to the Father is not only the mode of his divine sonship, but also the manner by which he reconciles humanity into a new loving relationship with God.

The second point is that the reconciling action of the Son is seen in terms of God's Lordship. The trinitarian mutual self-differentiation as the eternal triune life of God is the manner by which the trinitarian God actualises his Lordship through the reconciliation of the world. This is because the exercise of this Lordship is integral to the existence of God in Trinity. This leads to the understanding that the Son, by his perfect dedication to the Father *on the cross*, makes room for the Lordship of the Father, thereby being not only united with the Father but also reconciling the world to the Lordship of

God. The Kingdom of God as the full reality of his Lordship is the goal of this reconciling action.

The third point is the emphasis on the historical reality of the self-differentiation of the Son from the Father in which the Son performs his reconciling office. The eternal trinitarian reciprocal self-distinction as the immanent and economic trinitarian relations is mediated in human history. Jesus' dedication to the Father on earth is the historical embodiment of the eternal Son and the historical action of this Son for the reconciliation of the world. Therefore this action is to be perceived objectively.

But Pannenberg's concept of reconciliation is not free from problems. Above all, his concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* is inconsistent with the intertrinitarian character of reconciliation. The Son for Pannenberg suffered in the place of humanity the full punishment which it deserved for the sin of rebellion against God and his Lordship. This is justified by the Old Hebrew concept of collective liability and contemporary *Wirklichkeitsverständnis*. It is to be noted here that the concept of the cross as the reconciling action of the Son is based on the view of reconciliation as the action of the triune God in his intertrinitarian relationship. Thus the concept of God is determinative of the character of the Son's reconciling action. Pannenberg is aware of this because in his dogmatics he intends to articulate all doctrines in relation to the doctrine of God. The problem is that his concept of *stellvertretendes Strafleiden* is justified only when God is viewed as a punishing God. But God loves *contra legem*. In the ancient world of Israel God is understood as the One who does not punish but saves through expiation and also forgives. Also, in modern spiritual life God is experienced as the Father who loves in forgiving the sinful

deed of men and women through their repentance, rather than as a punishing God. This problem leads one to argue that Jesus' crucifixion is the Son's *participation, in love, in the passion of humanity*, the consequence of its sin of disobedience to God and his Lordship in order to lead it to the love of the Father and his Lordship.

Secondly, his emphasis on the retroactive establishment of the Son's reconciling action on the cross by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is not faithful to the *intertrinitarian framework*. For Pannenberg this event decides the meaning of the pre-Easter history of Jesus because it institutes the so-called "other history". Only this "other history" makes it possible to prove the uniqueness of Jesus' self-differentiation from the Father and thus to perceive Jesus' extreme dedication to the Father on the cross as the reconciling action of the Son. Without this history, Jesus' earthly course remains at the human level of Jesus' history. Thus he is not the Son and the cross is simply Jesus' destiny, rather than the action of the Son. However, within the concept of the trinitarian mutual self-distinction as the immanent and economic relations, only the self-distinction of Jesus from the Father constitutes noetically and ontologically his divine sonship and the reconciling action of the Son. Thus already in his pre-Easter history, insofar as it is the expression of his self-distinction from the Father, Jesus is the Son, and, as such, acts to reconcile the world to God the Father. This is finally affirmed by God in Jesus' resurrection which belongs to one of the Christ events. The correlation between the cross and the resurrection presupposes this fact.

In this regard, thirdly, the retroactive confirmation of the earthly history of Jesus by his resurrection is *historically* inconceivable. In

Pannenberg's view, there is a noetical and ontological tension between the human level of Jesus' history and the history of the Son before the resurrection. But the concept of the intertrinitarian framework permits one to argue that the earthly path of Jesus itself is the mode of the self-disclosure of his personal unity with God and the manner by which the Son reconciles the world to the Lordship of the Father. This is based on the fact that within the notion of the unity of the immanent and economic trinitarian relations, Jesus' pre-Easter dedication to the Father is the historical embodiment of the eternal Son and the historical mediation of the reconciling action of this Son. Jesus existed as the Son in his entire life and, as such, reconciles the world to God and brings it under his Lordship. Jesus was already conscious of this identity, and claimed his personal authority in relation to the Father in his proclamation of God's Lordship. Since he was the Son, he could be perfectly obedient to the Father and to his mission up to death. It is not true *historically* that Jesus died as a blasphemer. The Son by his ultimate obedience to the Father and his Lordship shares the consequence of human sin so that he may bring the world under the Lordship of the Father. It was not the resurrection which proved the blasphemy of the Jews and the Gentiles. They were already sinners because the closing of their minds to God made them reject the new covenant which God gave through his Son. Since Jesus was the Son in his pre-Easter history, he rose from the dead, not vice versa. Therefore the retroactive constitution of the meaning of Jesus' pre-Easter life by the resurrection is probably thinkable in a theological sense, but not in a historical sense.

Fourthly, Pannenberg's *universalgeschichtlich* view of the Son's earthly action only as a *prolepsis of the future reconciliation of the world*

bringing about the Lordship of the Father is inconsistent with the intertrinitarian framework and the historical terms to which he holds fast. The Son's dedication to the Father on the cross not only reveals the deity of the Father and his divine sonship, but also reconciles the world to God and brings it under the Lordship of the Father. But all this is only in anticipation of the eschatological reality which will be realised only at the end of human history.

However, from the intertrinitarian and historical standpoint, the historical reality of Jesus' subordination to the Father and his Lordship on the cross has already accomplished the reconciliation of the world, as well as revealing his eternal sonship, rather than a prolepsis of the future reconciliation of humanity. The Lordship of God, in terms of which reconciliation can be understood, has already been realised in Jesus' death. Since the exercise of his Lordship over creation is integral to the deity of God, the trinitarian reciprocal self-distinction is not only the mode of the eternal trinitarian communion of God but also the way by which the triune God achieves his Lordship in the world. Within this perspective, Jesus' self-distinction from the Father is the historical manifestation of the action of the trinitarian God to achieve his Lordship which had already been realised in eternity. The future Lordship of God is the culmination of the already-realised Lordship of God in the crucifixion, rather than being proleptically present in it. Therefore, the continuity and unity of the Son's earthly action with the activity of the risen Lord for the reconciliation of the world is not grounded in the anticipatory nature of the cross, but presupposes the all-sufficient event of reconciliation in Jesus' suffering on the cross.

Finally, Pannenberg fails to explain that the reconciling action of the Son is to establish *the redemptive* Lordship of God. The perspective of *Universalgeschichte* leads Pannenberg to see that this action is to achieve the universal Lordship of the Father which can be identified with the course of universal history. Since this Lordship is corporate in character, the individual dimension, especially forgiveness of sins, is not regarded as central in understanding the action of the Son.

But through his self-offering to the Father on the cross, the Son has revealed himself as Lord as one who is chiefly concerned with *redeeming* all areas of human life. Further, although this redemptive Lordship includes the social, economical, political, cultural, historical, and cosmological dimensions, individual forgiveness of sin is crucial for this Lordship. This is because it is integral to human existence before God and thus is the basis of other areas of life. Thus it is pivotal for the action of the Son to reconcile humanity to the Lordship of the Father. This action is mediated in history and yet cannot be perceived as history. Thus its process is still in tension with history.

The summary and reappraisal of Pannenberg's concept of reconciliation leads to a brief constructive interpretation of the reconciliation of the world.

Jesus' suffering on the cross is the ultimate *obedience* of the Son to the Father. It is the action of the Son to reconcile the world to God and bring it under his Lordship. The trinitarian reciprocal self-giving is not only the mode of the triune eternal life of God but also that of the trinitarian economic action of God for the world.

The whole life of Jesus, especially his crucifixion, is the historical form of the ultimate *obedience* of the eternal Son to the Father, and thus manifests his service to the Father and his Lordship. In this historical reality Jesus glorifies the Father and brings about his Lordship in the world. Thereby he is affirmed as the divine Son even before his resurrection.

This obedience is the outcome of the trinitarian reciprocal love which constitutes both the eternal intertrinitarian immanent and economic relationship of God. This love has already been revealed in the coming of the Son in the form of the man who was made sin and in his historical life. The cross as the reflection of his extreme dedication to the Father is the demonstration of the full extent of this love.

The obedience of the Son to the Father has a reconciling significance for all humankind. The trinitarian mutual love of God is linked to the love for the world. It would bring humanity to a trinitarian fellowship of God in love. The Son's perfect obedience to the Father on the cross implies his self-giving in love for the world. The Son shares in the consequence of human rebellious existence against God, rather than bearing his wrath. Thereby he has expiated the human sin of disobedience so that humanity may live a new obedient life to God and his Lordship. Jesus' execution on the cross as the historical mediation of the eternal trinitarian communion of God is constitutive for, and reveals, this reconciling meaning. Jesus' resurrection finally affirms this historical revelation, not in a retroactive sense.

The Son came to the world in flesh so that he might bring the world under the Lordship of the Father. The Son as a man has also put to death the old sinful humanity by his constant identification with humanity in sinfulness

and death. The incarnation of the Son, therefore is not a mere prerequisite of the reconciling action of the Son, but is related to it.

The obedience of the Son on the cross is his action to reconcile humanity to his Lordship over all things in the world which can be identified with the Lordship of the Father until the eschatological culmination. The divine sonship of Jesus is dependent upon the exercise of his royal reign. The reconciling action of the Son is directed to the establishment of his Lordship. If the trinitarian mutual self-differentiation is the way by which the triune God achieves his Lordship over creation, this Lordship is not simply a consequence of something that the Son does. Rather, through the whole life of the Son, insofar as it is lived in obedience to the Father, he establishes his Lordship. This does not deny, however, the central significance of the cross as the unconditional obedience to the Father for establishing his Lordship. Since this Lordship is redemptive in character, aiming at redeeming all areas of human life, forgiveness of sins is crucial for this Lordship. In addition, this redemptive Lordship is mediated in history and yet cannot be perceived as history.

The obedience of the Son to the Father on the cross is the all-sufficient action of the Son to bring humanity under his Lordship. This is based on the understanding that the cross is the historical embodiment of the eternal trinitarian mutual self-giving as the mode of the triune inner life of God and the way by which the trinitarian God establishes his Lordship. The Son, by taking the consequence of his ultimate obedience to the Father upon himself, has already revealed himself as Lord and accomplished his Lordship. The

eschatological future reality is the universal manifestation of this revelation and the culmination of his Lordship.

The Son through the Spirit substantiates his Lordship by bringing men and women to confess him as Lord and share in his filial relationship of love and obedience to the Father. The gospel ministry is the means of this activity. The Son through the proclamation of the gospel establishes his church that not only lives a life of obedience to his redemptive Lordship but also mediates it through its prophetic message, thereby being a visible sign of the Kingdom.

Finally, this study leaves the following three questions. First, how can one articulate an alternative to the path "from below" and the path "from above" in conceiving the reconciling action of the Son? This leads to the second question: How can one suggest a new scheme, which is faithful to the reality of the Son's reconciling action, going beyond the future-orientated and past-orientated scheme? Thirdly, how can one overcome the problem of tension between the perspective of *Heilsgeschichte* and that of *Universalgeschichte* in understanding the reconciling action of the Son to lead the world to the Lordship of the Father over all realms of human life?

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