



University  
of Glasgow

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>

Theses Digitisation:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/research/enlighten/theses/digitisation/>

This is a digitised version of the original print thesis.

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Enlighten: Theses

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>  
[research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk)

INDIVIDUATION AND PARTICIPATION:  
A Study of Man in Community in the Theologies of  
Wolfhart Pannenberg  
and  
Emil Brunner

HALLETT E. LLEWELLYN

being a thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Glasgow  
Department of Systematic Theology  
March 1976

ProQuest Number: 10644280

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10644280

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	i
SUMMARY .....	ii
INTRODUCTION .....	vii

### CHAPTER ONE:

#### HOW MEANING ARISES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL IN COMMUNITY - BRUNNER

(A) The Question of Meaning .....	1
(B) Brunner and Pannenberg and their Common Concern .....	4
(C) Brunner's Position .....	13

### CHAPTER TWO:

#### BRUNNER'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

(A) The Basis of Brunner's Ethical Position .....	49
(B) God as Timeless .....	69
(C) God as Existing .....	88

### CHAPTER THREE:

#### PANNENBERG'S CONCEPT OF GOD

(A) A Prolegomenon for Pannenberg's Doctrine of God .....	99
(B) God as Future .....	120
(C) Assessment of Pannenberg's Concept .....	146

### CHAPTER FOUR:

#### JESUS FROM ABOVE OR BELOW?

(A) Theologians of Revelation .....	167
(B) Jesus From Below .....	172
(C) Jesus From Above .....	203



## CHAPTER FIVE:

### HOW MEANING ARISES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL IN COMMUNITY - PANNENBERG

(A) The Question of Appearance.....	222
(B) The Self Beyond Appearance - Brunner.....	227
(C) The Self In Appearance - Polanyi and Mead.....	238
(D) The Individual and the Community - Pannenberg.....	242
(E) The Challenge of Pannenberg's Perspective.....	253

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER TWO.....	255
------------------------------	-----

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	262
-------------------	-----

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to those who made this period of study, and the completion of this work, possible. Gratitude is expressed to Pine Hill Divinity Hall, Halifax, Canada for a post-graduate scholarship and to The United Church of Canada for their encouragement and financial support. Special thanks must be expressed to Mr. Jon Vickers, a church elder in my last congregation in Canada. His financial assistance substantially lessened the worry of subsistence while studying.

During a period of six months in Munich, Germany, Dr. Wolfhart Pannenberg graciously gave of his time to discuss various aspects of his theological position which were relevant to this thesis. The sessions with him were very stimulating and rewarding. I am also deeply indebted to my supervising professor, Dr. Allan D. Galloway. His supervision, constructive criticism and constant encouragement were invaluable.

I am, of course, grateful to my wife Karen and daughter Jennifer for their love and understanding during this period of research. Karen must receive special thanks for the long hours of work involved in typing the final copy. Her patience and thoughtful care in this task were indicative of her continued support, assistance and encouragement without which I would not have been able to complete this work.

## SUMMARY

Man's search for meaning has involved him in political, social and religious area of life. In many cases his concern has been directed exclusively in one or other of these areas. Indeed, it can be said that man's perspective on reality, particularly throughout this century, has encouraged such compartmentilization of life. 'Meaning' (fulfillment) has generally meant the commitment to one concern to the exclusion of another. As a result, conflict has developed with each discipline arguing for the ultimacy of its own claim. The church, for example, has found itself at odds, many times, with political activity for this reason. This thesis challenges the heart of such devisive thinking. Throughout, I argue for one reality in the question of meaning. Using the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg for support, I present a perspective in which politics, society and religion are viewed as participants in the same reality, although with distinctive contributions.

More specifically, in dealing with the question of meaning, I approach the subject of the individual's relationship to the community. This subject inevitably arises and is crucial to any serious contemplation of man's quest for fulfillment. Where and how does the individual look for satisfaction in his quest? To my knowledge no adequate response has been presented to this question. Politically, we are witnessing a struggle between those forces that claim ultimacy for the community and its meaning, and those forces which defend the rights of the individual above all systems and structures. The same struggle is present economically between defenders of socialism and

defenders of capitalism. Theologically, a struggle is also in progress. There are proponents of a pietistic tradition who argue for a transcendence of the individual above the world for true meaning. On the other hand, there are proponents of a position who advocate a more worldly, secular theology which claims meaning as purely immanent in the world.

In this thesis I am treating the subject from the theological point of view. It is my conviction that man's search for meaning is dependent on where and how he sees his God. Every man in search of fulfillment is engaged in a religious exercise whether he recognizes it or not. Thus, no man can escape the question of God. This thesis deals specifically with this question and its suggestive perspective on the relationship between the individual and the community. It is my contention that no conception of God, thus far presented, deals adequately with the matter at hand. Present concepts fall short of a comprehensive understanding. Either value (meaning) is divorced from fact, in which case the community of man loses its significance, or value is united with fact in such a way as to deny man the honor of freedom and openness. In either case, the requirements of personal existence, for which unity and freedom are necessary conditions, are not met. I suggest that theology can no longer proclaim a God with any degree of credibility unless it meets such conditions. The challenge of atheism is mentioned, particularly its claim that present day conceptions of God deny man freedom with their deterministic implications.

The criticism I make is that protestant theology has been weak in meeting this challenge and is presenting a God incredulous to the

modern mind for this reason. To substantiate this, I chose Emil Brunner, a theologian who wrestled seriously with man's ethical dilemma. He offered the protestant world a suggestion of the proper relationship of the individual and the community in the question of meaning. I believe that Brunner, although distinctive in his expression, represents a general weakness of the protestant position in this century. This weakness rests basically in the conception of God outlined by him. The suggestion I make is that Brunner's God implies a search for meaning 'above' the events of life. At the same time, there are deterministic implications in his understanding of the existence and actuality of God.

To counter this position I chose Wolfhart Pannenberg, whose theology is, I have argued, challenging and promising in relating theology positively to the quest for meaning in personal and community life. Allan Galloway writes of Pannenberg's promise and challenge in this way: "I find in his doctrine of the Trinity more ethical power than in any exposition since Ritschl's. It invites us to participate in the life of God by participating fully in the history of our own time. We are invited to do this in such a way as to live towards the fulfillment of all history in the justice and love of God in the final resurrection of all flesh."<sup>1</sup>

The contribution of this thesis rests in the attempt made to draw out the ethical power and promise of Pannenberg and to show his relevance to the question at hand. There are residual problems

---

<sup>1</sup>Allan Galloway, Wolfhart Pannenberg (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1973), p. 115.

left unsolved, but it is my conviction that unless theology moves in the direction Pannenberg points us we can no longer proclaim the Christian faith with much ethical cogency.

In the first chapter, Brunner's position with regard to the individual's place in the community is presented. It is suggested that the establishment of meaning for the individual took place without significant regard for the community. At the same time, Brunner's position is challenged for its deterministic implications, denying the individual his freedom.

The second chapter is devoted to an investigation of the foundation of Brunner's ethical expression. It is argued that his concept of God as an a-temporal, existing in pure actuality, more than anything else determined his perspective on community and its meaning.

In the third chapter, Wolfhart Pannenberg's theology is examined. Specifically, his concept of God as Future is analysed. I draw out its promise and strength in holding together what are seemingly two exclusive understandings: the all-determining sovereignty of God and human freedom. It is argued that unless these understandings are inclusive of one another, the Christian faith will continue to appear irrational to the modern mind. Criticisms of Pannenberg's views are considered and important aspects of his thought, by this means, are elucidated.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the support structure claimed by both men for their respective positions. An attempt is made to clarify the Christological positions which enabled the two theologians to make the claims they have made. It is argued that much recent biblical scholarship lends support to Pannenberg's position.

Having defended the soundness of Pannenberg's concept of God as Future, I then draw out its implications for the individual and community. The concept is commended for its promise in guaranteeing the right and significance of each. The reciprocity between the individual and the community essential for harmonious social life is presented as an important contribution of his reasoning. Meaning, it is suggested, is to be found not 'above' the events of life but 'in' them. And yet, final meaning is presented as something reserved for the future. Indeed, the argument presented is that the community of man is the Future present in an anticipatory manner. This directs the individual to his community for his destiny and meaning and yet frees him from it at the same time.

## INTRODUCTION

In choosing Emil Brunner and Wolfhart Pannenberg as the two principal theologians of this study, I am aware of the vast study and scholarship that has already been devoted to their work. Pannenberg, although relatively recent on the theological scene, has already attracted the attention of scholars who have favorably and unfavorably interpreted him. Although it would not be possible to do justice to all of this research, a good deal of attention was paid to this material.

I have not offered anything new in the outline of Brunner's social ethic. What I have done is to challenge the relevance of this ethic with respect to the meaning of the individual's life in community. I have done this by focusing on Brunner's concept of God. This, to my knowledge, has not been done although much has been written on both his social ethics and his understanding of God. Specifically, God's relationship with time has been investigated. The participation of God as the focus of meaning and value in fact, has been discussed. The long-standing philosophical debate about the relation of fact and value is relevant at this point. Some reference has been made to this. However, no attempt was made to give full coverage to the philosophical issue. Any such attempt would require a separate thesis. The position I have taken theologically, however, does suggest lines along which a philosophical argument might proceed.

I have taken the main interpretations and expositions of Pannenberg into consideration. Various writers, such as Don Olive, Frank Tupper and Allan Galloway have attempted to clarify



his position and ask questions for further research. The latter author has been particularly helpful to me on various points. This thesis has taken up some of the areas which Galloway has considered very promising in Pannenberg. I have used Pannenberg's theology to work out a new understanding of the individual's social position. The trinitarian relationship, particularly, is considered and I have used Pannenberg's understanding of the Trinity to shed light on a problem at the heart of our social existence. In this sense, I have attempted not only to interpret Pannenberg but also to expand his conceptions in their wider application.

## CHAPTER ONE

HOW MEANING ARISES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL IN COMMUNITY - BRUNNER

(A) The Question of Meaning

Throughout this thesis the word 'meaning' will be used for a particular purpose. The word itself has various intents, therefore, it is necessary to define it more precisely. It may be used in reference to an action which a person has undertaken, as expressed in the sentence, "I meant to take the first road". In other words, 'meaning' may denote intention of action. 'Meaning' may also be a word referring to the proper use of language. In the sentence, "The rose is a happy rose", it would be proper to question the use of the word 'happy'. Is it meaningful to use 'happy' in this context? 'Meaning', thus, may be a word that refers to the proper use or usage of words. In many philosophical circles today this is the case.<sup>1</sup>

The word 'meaning', however, may be used with reference to life itself. This is the case not only in the expression, "Life is very meaningful for me" (positive value), but also, in the expression, "What and where is the meaning of my life?" (significant value). The latter expression refers to the truth of life. In this context then, one is speaking not only of an analysis of words and their proper use,

---

<sup>1</sup>I refer to the following: The Theory of Meaning ed. G. H. R. Parkinson (Oxford University Press, 1974), L. Jonathan Cohen, The Diversity of Meaning (Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1962), and Essays in Conceptual Analysis ed. Antony Flew (Macmillan, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1966). The distinction between usage and use that I make is in keeping with the distinction Antony Flew makes in his article, 'Philosophy and Language' (Essays in Conceptual Analysis, pp. 1-21). I shall be using meaning, truth and significance synonymously throughout this thesis.

but of an analysis of human experience in order to elicit the significance it contains.<sup>2</sup>

It is in this context that the word 'meaning' is applied with much ethical and moral implication. This usage of the word will be employed throughout the thesis. In so doing, the intention is to pursue the matter as academically as possible, with the hope that the study may have relevance for the practical question of meaning in daily life. The main interest of the research will centre around the position of the individual and the community. The question under investigation will be: How does meaning arise for the individual in the community? The nature of the relationship that exists between the two will be also the aim of this inquiry. In its pursuit other questions will receive consideration: Is meaning to be found in the actual process of life itself? Is meaning something imposed upon reality either by ourselves or by a divine being? Such usage of the word 'meaning' involves, in turn, questions as to the nature of man, reality and experience, which will be dealt with directly and indirectly.

---

<sup>2</sup>It can be said that one of the usages of 'meaning' by G. E. Moore is similar to the one we are employing in our study (cf. Principia Ethica (Cambridge University Press, 1903) p. 35). There are, of course, many usages of the word by Moore (cf. E. D. Klemke, The Epistemology of G. E. Moore (N. W. University Press, Evanston, 1969) ). Our usage of the word is clarified further by Langdon Gilkey: "We need.....what we are calling "meaning" if we are to live creatively and actively. Here the problem of meaning is existential, referent to life, rather than intellectual and semantic, referent to symbols and their usage. To have meaning in this existential usage is to have the sense that what we do, the life we live, the activities that make up our days, have or will in the future have some sort of value for us, for others, for the community, for the course of history, and so on." (The Renewal of God-Language (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., New York, 1969) p. 336).

The question of meaning is to be discussed theologically. This is not to make the discussion exclusive of that which takes place in other disciplines of thought. The question receives the attention of the philosopher, as well. In approaching it theologically, no attempt is being made to disregard the philosophical contribution. This contribution is indeed valuable. The search for an answer is facilitated only by dialogue and openness of thought.

There is some doubt, however, as to whether philosophy is relevant to the intention of this thesis; that is, whether 'meaning' (truth and significance of life) is an appropriate subject for philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Important as this is to philosophy itself, it will not be pursued in the main body of this work.

---

<sup>3</sup>See an article by Kai Nielsen, 'Linguistic Philosophy and Beliefs' (Philosophy Today, No. 2, ed. Jerry H. Gill (The MacMillan Company, London, 1969) pp. 52-72). Kai Nielsen argues that meaning, in the sense referred to above, is not really apposite to philosophy. Nielsen says the real duty of the philosopher is, after Wittgenstein, to deal with conceptual confusion by trying to give "an accurate description of the function of our language" (p. 65). For Nielsen, linguistic analysis is the proper task of philosophy; it is the philosopher's job to deal with the logical grammar which must be employed if our conceptions are to be clarified. It is in the light of this conviction that he approvingly quotes Wittgenstein: "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language." (p. 66).

It is highly questionable, however, whether Nielsen has escaped the usage of meaning which we are seeking to employ. Language is such an integral part of what it means to be human, in that it is our ability to speak that separates us from the animal world, that it is difficult to see how our understanding of language can be so absolutely divorced from human nature and reality. In the doctrine of 'logical grammar', for example, Nielsen is implying definite things about the nature of words. Jonathan Cohen points out that the theory of meaning, within the doctrine of 'logical grammar' is atomistic. Words are seen to have meaning in themselves; that is, to be universal in scope, so that one word means one thing for all time. In other words, this theory sees the word as unalterable, unchanging and timeless in scope. All

(B) Brunner and Pannenberg and Their Common Concern

The relationship between the individual and the community is a problem that rests at the heart of our social existence, today. This is the prime concern of this study. The nature of this problem has a great deal to do with the manner in which the 'meaning' of life is perceived.

---

(<sup>3</sup>continued)

philosophical disagreements are, therefore, superficial as they arise out of a confusion of the proper meaning of a particular word. Cohen writes, "The thesis that there is a massive central core of human thinking which has no history is made true by definition." (The Diversity of Meaning, p. 85). "It is an irony of philosophical history that many of those who were keenest to reject the theories of atomic facts at one time propounded by Russell and Wittgenstein fell unawares into an equally fallacious theory of atomic concepts. The rule-of-word-use philosophy, which largely under Wittgenstein's later influence was to replace the reductionist approach of an earlier generation, led through its doctrine of logical grammar to another kind of atomism that now stands in need of repudiation." (Ibid., p. 87).

The thesis that Cohen convincingly suggests is that the word is a 'social institution'. (Ibid., p. 52ff.). It arises out of, and is changed by, the cultural situation in which it develops and grows (Cohen could find support in Antony Flew's distinction between use and usage). In reference to the philosopher Trier, Cohen writes: "Trier thinks that every such field, like the German vocabulary of mental comprehension which he himself has investigated so thoroughly, should be regarded as being contained within larger and larger fields until the totality of the language is reached. When one discovers that in 1300 'wisheit' no longer expressed the unity of intellectual, technical, courtly and religious knowledge that it did in 1200, nor has any other word taken its place, the change to be noted is an integral change in Middle High German. Not only that: it is also a change in the outlook and attitudes of the medieval German community. The history of a linguistic field embraces the history of several words mutually related in use, together with the story of their synonyms, antonyms and associations. It is therefore, as Trier sees, a contribution to the history of ideas, albeit the ideas of a single speech-community, whereas the old history of word-meanings, as conceived by Saussure, belonged wholly on the verbal plane." (Ibid., p. 57). In referring to Trier's ideas with such approval, Cohen revokes any notion of a private language, such as Locke suggested (Ibid., p. 60). He emphasises, instead, the complex network of associations which makes a word what it is. The historicity of a word or words is something to which Cohen refers repeatedly. He writes, "...there is nothing specially mysterious about the conceptual plane of semantics or the relation of the history of ideas to history in general." (Ibid., p. 56).

From what we have said, it can be seen that the discussion now in linguistic philosophy is not so unrelated to the concern of this thesis. The meaning of the self in relation to the community is not unlike the meaning of a word, its history and growth.

In many theological and philosophical circles meaning is understood as an imposition from above<sup>4</sup>, in the sense of divine predestination or pre-established laws and regulations. Within this frame of reference there is ethical significance much different from the understanding of meaning from below, which is the position to be defended throughout this exposition. The consequences of these respective positions will also be dealt with as we proceed.

Emil Brunner was a theologian who wrestled seriously with the protestant ethic in this century. He represents the 'above' ethical position as we have stated it.<sup>5</sup> The concern he expresses for the individual in the community is another reason for consideration of him. He has offered us one of the major understandings in Protestantism today as to how meaning arises for the individual in the larger community. At the same time, the major weaknesses of the protestant position can be revealed from an examination of his thought. The tendency toward individualism, which Tillich criticises,<sup>6</sup> and the

---

<sup>4</sup>The distinction indicated in the words 'above' and 'below' has immense significance. This will become evident when we come to the discussion on Christology with respect to the positions of Brunner and Pannenberg. Any system or thought which sees man as the product of another action, divine or historical, rather than an active participant, may be classified as meaning from 'above'. This could apply to H. Popper's historical conception in philosophy as well as to Brunner's historical thought in theology. The hazard in understanding meaning from 'above' is a determinism that destroys man's freedom. This will be elaborated later in the chapter.

<sup>5</sup>Brunner is not the sole representative of the position criticised in this thesis. One could also turn to Barth, Bultmann, Thielicke, or Bonhoeffer, for ethical systems which lead to consequences considered unsatisfactory in the light of this dissertation. This is not meant to group these men together without recognition of the uniqueness of their respective positions. It could be shown, however, that they are joined in their similar conception of meaning from 'above'.

<sup>6</sup>Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era (Nisbet & Co., Ltd., London, 1951) p. 227.

presence of determinism, which has always been an issue in Calvinistic theology, are both present in his thought to a degree that requires serious consideration. The Divine Imperative<sup>7</sup> will be used for a deeper analysis of this criticism.

Wolfhart Pannenberg has been selected for research because his protestant position offers much promise in overcoming the weaknesses to which we have referred. This promise rests in his understanding of meaning from 'below'. From this perspective he relates the individual and the community in a manner that gives due recognition to the existence of each. The reciprocal relationship that is established between them, in his thought, offers a new challenge to the current discussions on man's social existence.

For both Brunner and Pannenberg, meaning has universal reference; that is, it refers to the totality of all that is. Meaning is the truth of existence which man continually seeks but cannot wholly experience on earth. For both theologians, meaning in historical reality also has a negative aspect about it. Of course this is a statement which cannot be made without qualification. Pannenberg, for example, expresses the negative element in a way that attributes much social and ethical relevance to man. Brunner's expression of the negative, on the other hand, leaves man with little ethical significance in his social existence.

When Brunner writes that meaning is totality and wholeness,<sup>8</sup> this writer has little quarrel with him. He expresses himself quite

---

<sup>7</sup>Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative (Lutterworth Press, London, 1937).

<sup>8</sup>Emil Brunner, Christianity and Civilization, Volume I (Nisbet & Co. Ltd., London, 1947), p. 60.



in accord with the central motif of our thesis when he writes:

Just as one cannot be satisfied with the single meaningful word, but only by the meaningful connection of single meaningful words through the spiritual unity of a speech as a whole, or a book as a whole, so the spirit in seeking for meaning demands the unity of man's life as a whole.<sup>9</sup>

Brunner continues: "Where this question of total meaning ceases to be asked, the spirit is in a state of disintegration, and human life is about to perish in a sub-human, animal existence."<sup>10</sup> This same search for unity in life lies at the centre of Pannenberg's theological programme. His effort is directed toward providing a theological understanding that will accomodate the sense of unity and innate desire for wholeness, evident in all of life. In Basic Questions in Theology, Pannenberg writes:

...it is unnecessary to dispute the fact that the need for an encompassing unity that makes it possible to experience even the multifarious as a positive wealth is so deeply rooted in human existence and in the structure of human reason that it inevitably brings up the question of the extent to which this religion or that can provide a basis for a universal unity in the experience of reality, which is very likely the criterion of its relevance and saving power - and thus, perhaps, of its truth, too.<sup>11</sup>

An important difference between the two writers is the way in which the individual is related to the whole. Brunner saw this relationship in an immediate sense, in terms of one's relationship with God, to a degree that gave little significance to the historical process of life. Pannenberg views this wholeness as anticipation in a way that bestows significance on the reality of history. It may be said that meaning,

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>11</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Volume II, trans. George H. Kehm (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1971), p. 82.

for Brunner, comes to man from beyond history; man receives it. For Pannenberg, on the other hand, man strives for meaning within history. He does not imply, however, that meaning is imposed solely by man.<sup>12</sup> Rather, man is a participant in that meaning. The distinction between reception of meaning, in a passive sense, and participation in meaning, in an active sense, is a valid one in the light of our thesis.

The following quotations illustrate the diversity of the respective positions of Brunner and Pannenberg:

...it is explicitly affirmed that this temporal existence, taken by itself, is meaningless, even contrary to meaning. ...Historical life does not have meaning in itself. It acquires it from outside itself, and where this happens, there this earthly history comes to its end, there the new aeon begins, life eternal.<sup>13</sup>

The historical process - and this means the one course of events with which historiographical inquiry has also to do - is essentially a process of the transmission of tradition. 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 affected by them lives. To be sure, this happens for the most part in such a way that they call into question the previous forms of tradition and provide an impetus for their transformation and reconstruction.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>There are men who represent this position; that is, who see man as the sole purveyor of meaning to history. One could mention, in this context, H. Popper, K. Nielsen and J. P. Sartre. It is difficult to see how the concept of moral responsibility can have any weight if this notion is maintained. If one simply receives meaning, as Brunner suggests, then responsibility is taken from man. On the other hand, if man alone gives meaning to history, to whom is he then responsible, or to what? Moral responsibility can be defended only if man is understood as both a receiver and provider of meaning. It is the latter position for which we shall be arguing.

<sup>13</sup>Brunner, Christianity and Civilization, Volume I, p. 72.

<sup>14</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Volume I, trans. George H. Kehn (SCM Press Ltd., London, 1970), p. 90.

Notwithstanding their differences, Brunner and Pannenberg are united in their concern for the problem before society. Both men focus attention on the relationship of the individual to the community. At the same time, they both stress the interdependence of the two.<sup>15</sup> In Justice and the Social Order, for example, Brunner writes of the equality and the inequality of human living. He speaks of the freedom of the individual, but also, of the rights of the community over the individual. This can be exemplified by the following:

God has so created men that they must be together, not only in marriage and the family, but in work too, in mutual give and take, in the co-operation of "each according to his kind." ...Independence of the individual and membership of a whole, free assent and submission of the individual to the purpose of the community, the rights of the individual over the community and the rights of the community over the individual - these are the inevitable conclusions of reflection on the order of creation. One does not only need the other; from the standpoint of the community, he has a right to what the other has and he lacks. From this standpoint, every purely individualistic attempt....which takes the rights of the individual as its point of departure is demonstrably unjust, as unjust as the collectivistic standpoint, which reduces the individual to an element without rights of an abstract, inclusive community. None should be strong for himself alone, none weak for himself alone.<sup>16</sup>

To illustrate this point in Pannenberg's writing, one could cite these words:

Men seek community. This shows that the

---

<sup>15</sup>See Brunner's The Divine Imperative, pp. 293 ff; Justice and the Social Order, trans. Mary Hutteringer (Lutterworth Press, London, 1945), pp. 54-80, and Man in Revolt, trans. Olive Wyon (Lutterworth Press, London, 1939), pp. 278ff. See Pannenberg's What is Man?, trans. Duane A. Priebe (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1970), pp. 82-95; and Theology and the Kingdom of God (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1969), pp. 121ff.

<sup>16</sup>Brunner, Justice and the Social Order, p. 68.

destiny of all men is the same. In one and the same community many individuals seek fulfillment of their individual striving. The paths of the individuals are quite diverse in relation to one another, and their contributions and roles within their groups are diverse. Still, the goal for which they strive is very much common to all: the community that ties them together. Even if each individual group is limited in number, it still stands in interconnections with other groups in a nation, and the nation in a community of nations.<sup>17</sup>

Both Pannenberg and Brunner are in agreement as well on the ever present tension at the centre of our social existence. They recognize the constant tendency in human affairs to relegate the individual to a pinnacle of importance at the expense of the community, and vice versa, the tendency to subvert the individual to the demands of the community. They acknowledge the corruption of human life that can and does take place when either one of these facets of existence is given expression at the expense of the other. Brunner characterises the tension with the words, individualism and collectivism.<sup>18</sup> Pannenberg, in recognition of the tension, writes, "The individuals separate themselves individualistically from the common tasks, or they use social arrangements only for their own purposes. Or else the existing society equates itself with man's destiny and, as a consequence, imposes an absolute claim on the life of the individuals, disregarding their personality."<sup>19</sup> These two scholars are significantly different in the way they seek to resolve our social dilemma. This project is, in essence, an examination of their proposed resolutions.

---

<sup>17</sup>Pannenberg, What is Man?, p. 83.

<sup>18</sup>See Chapter XI of Brunner's Justice and the Social Order, pp. 72-80, for a discussion of the problems that arise from this tension.

<sup>19</sup>Pannenberg, What is Man?, p. 94.

It should be stated from the outset that this writer is sympathetic to Brunner's analysis of our social problem. He attributes much of the social tension to a misunderstanding. The individual is thought of as an entity existing in self-sufficiency. The community, on the other hand, is regarded as a separate reality which opposes it. He expresses the misconception by writing:

The whole of modern philosophy is a "Robinson Crusoe" affair, expressed in abstract terms; it is an attempt to interpret the individual human being solely in the light of his own personality, and society as the coalescence of such individuals. This attempt corresponds absolutely to the attempt made at the same time by science to explain the world of phenomena in terms of isolated atoms, and it is perhaps scarcely accidental that almost at the same time the eighteenth - and nineteenth-century theories of atomistic physics broke down men began to reflect anew upon the nature of the relation between the individual and the community.<sup>20</sup>

In this light, relationship is then seen simply as a series of adjustments to keep each reality in check. Depending on the circumstances, whether they favour the individual or the community, one receives more recognition than the other. Brunner concludes that when such understanding exists in society, "No adjustment between the two is possible, for it is impossible to make one "Good" out of two kinds of sin."<sup>21</sup> The proper perspective, he suggests, rests in the Christian faith. "In the Christian faith the individual is so defined that he cannot be imagined apart from the community, and the community that it cannot be imagined without the individual."<sup>22</sup> To support this, Brunner resorts to the personalistic philosophy of Buber and Ebner. The 'I' is

---

<sup>20</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 294.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

essentially related to a 'Thou' and the fundamental question is, "...whether this Self, is from the very outset related to the other (to the "Thou") apart from whom the "Thou" cannot even be imagined, just as we cannot conceive of a suspension bridge which is only suspended from one tower, whether from the very outset freedom is regarded as relation with the "Thou".<sup>23</sup>

It should be noted that Pannenberg expresses himself in similar personalistic language. He, too, speaks of an encounter between an 'I' and a 'Thou'.<sup>24</sup> It is to Pannenberg's credit, however, that he uses this personal language with much social relevance. Brunner, on the other hand, divorces the 'I - Thou' encounter from historical reality which accentuates the social tension. The reasons for this will be set forth as we proceed. It will be shown that the 'I - Thou' encounter, in Brunner, is not so much an observable reality on the plane of history but a reality that transcends it. Thus, any talk of community, which is basic to such language, leaves relatively untouched the boundaries of man's social, political, cultural and economic community to which he is referred in his existence.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 636. Brunner's words are encouraging and helpful here in that they stress the interdependence of the self and the community. Unfortunately, his words cannot be accepted at face value; they do not contain the implication we might see in them on first reading.

<sup>24</sup>Pannenberg, What is Man?, pp. 88ff.

<sup>25</sup>It is a common criticism of much of the personalistic thought that the 'Thou', is treated too subjectively. In turn, this gives the impression of having no extension in the facts of existence. See, for example, the criticism of H. D. Lewis, in 'The Elusive Self and the I - Thou Relation' (Talk of God (MacMillan and Co. Ltd., London, 1969) pp. 168-184). Brunner must share some of this criticism because of his unwillingness to grant the person an objective reference. Person, thus, is thought of too subjectively. His suggestion of a direct encounter implies this. One of the aims of this thesis is to show the weakness of this notion. It is doubtful if the subjective - objective category can be avoided when one speaks of encounter, either with another person or God.

(C) Brunner's Position

Brunner understands man's position in community as one that is 'placed'.<sup>26</sup> An investigation of his understanding of man's meaning must take this placement into consideration. Man is born into definite, fixed 'orders' which regulate and guide his existence. The significance of such guidance will be referred to later in the chapter.

To gain a better understanding of what Brunner means by man's 'placed' existence in terms of 'orders', the idea of 'the calling' is examined. "God", writes Brunner, "calls into His service this particular person, in a particular set of circumstances, and at a particular time, that is, here and now."<sup>27</sup> He suggests that this is one of the most important truths to be received by man. It is an idea which he traces back to Paul and Luther. He says it has little to do with the present connotation of calling in the modern world. 'Calling' is not to be equated with a simple division of labour, as we have come to understand it, but rather, in its original use, denoted a liberating and religious experience.

Brunner says 'calling' represents the situation in which God has placed man in the world. He does not decide for or against it, but accepts it as his Sitz im Leben. Here, we find our neighbour. We meet him not with an uncertainty, but with a defined area of location. For Brunner, this 'location' has been predestined from the beginning of time. We are given our appointed place.

---

<sup>26</sup>Brunner writes of this placement in this way, "Here what matters most is not the improvement of one particular place in the world, of conditions and circumstances - although such procedure has its own, secondary importance - nor the search "for the right place for me," but the thankful acceptance of the place, at which I am now set, from the hands of Providence, as the sphere of my life, as the place in which, and according to the possibilities of which, I am to meet my neighbour in love." (The Divine Imperative, p. 203).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

It should be noted here that the appointed place of which he speaks is from the hands of God, the Creator, not God, the Redeemer.<sup>28</sup> The 'orders', in other words, have a different function to perform on God's behalf, from the redemptive activity of God in Christ. One must be cautious at this point, however, as this distinction, vital to our thesis, is not always clear in Brunner. For example, in another instance, he writes in a way that suggests a correlation of God's creative and redemptive activities. The degree or method of this correlation is not made clear, however. And in the absence of such clarity, it is questionable whether a claim for it can be made. Nevertheless, he writes:

A certain kind of Lutheranism holds the disastrous dogma that the various "orders" are not subject to the command of Jesus Christ, but only to the rule of reason. This clever distinction is far too easy to be true. It is true, of course, that the "orders", as the Lex in an imperfect and sinful world, can only perform their service if they are understood and used in their own legal spirit; it is also true that it is nonsense to apply to them the Sermon on the Mount as an ideal law. It is true that their characteristic legality can only be understood by means of reason. But it is totally false to draw the conclusion that in the sphere of the "orders" Christ "has nothing to say."<sup>29</sup>

In the interpretation of one's calling, Brunner recognizes the validity of biological and anthropological studies in what they

---

<sup>28</sup> See Brunner's The Divine Imperative, pp. 122-131 and also The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, trans. Olive Wyon (Lutterworth Press, London, 1952), pp. 315ff., for further clarification of this distinction. Consider the following statements from Brunner: "...the State will never, never be governed by the Word - in the sense of the Gospel - but exclusively by the word of the Law, quite simply by the Decalogue, which is not the actual "Word" of Christ." "Where the State or the Family are mentioned...., the New Testament does not speak of Christ, as ruling through His Word of reconciliation, but simply of the "ordinances of God"." (The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, p. 318).

<sup>29</sup> Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 217.



reveal about man's natural situation in this world. It is his opinion that they must inform man about his calling, and that man must recognize knowledge, should it come from the natural sciences or from the fields of psychology and philosophy. A proper understanding of his situation depends on this. One does not find a negative attitude, on Brunner's part, toward the value of these particular disciplines of life. They are valuable in the information provided about the Creator's purpose. Brunner writes clearly about the value of such knowledge: "...it is our duty to preserve and develop the life of our neighbour, so far as this is possible to us, according to our knowledge of the processes which maintain and enhance life; and it is our duty to serve him "in his existence as a human being," and in his "growth as a human being" - according to our knowledge of the rules which govern this existence and the growth of human life."<sup>30</sup> There is here no attempt to discredit the reasonable faculty of man in the discovery of the God-given aspects of our existence.

Our 'calling' or placement in life is determined, however, not only by the laws and rules that form man biologically and psychologically. There are, as well, laws which Brunner calls 'created orders'.<sup>31</sup> They unite man in a community. In other words, there are laws which govern man individually and laws which confront him collectively in community. In reference to the communal 'orders', Brunner writes,

---

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 209. It is important to emphasise that Brunner gives reason a place in man's life. How vital it is in terms of the meaning of life remains to be seen.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

"By this we mean these existing facts of human corporate life which lie at the root of all historical life as unalterable presuppositions, which, although their historical forms may vary, are unalterable in their fundamental structure, and, at the same time, relate and unite men to one another in a definite way."<sup>32</sup> Brunner gives a summary of these 'orders' in several places throughout his writings.<sup>33</sup> It is not necessary to give a detailed description of these different orders, here. However, for the purpose of this study, some reference must be made to the significance they hold for the individual.

Brunner writes of the order of marriage as the first institution in which man is placed. Marriage, in other words, is not something man chooses to create for himself; he must realize it as the will of the Creator. The relationship between two people in marriage makes this institution, for Brunner, closest to the personal ethical sphere. It should be noted, however, that Brunner is not prepared to call this institution, or any of the institutions to be mentioned, 'personal'. He writes on this subject: "Both man and woman, as man and woman - not as persons - are dependent members of a whole which stands above them."<sup>34</sup> This important point will receive further attention later.

Closely related to the order of marriage is the order of the family. In some places, he groups marriage and the family together in one order of the sexes.<sup>35</sup> In any case, Brunner refers to these

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>33</sup>See The Divine Imperative, pp. 33ff, and also, Justice and the Social Order, pp. 64ff.

<sup>34</sup>Brunner, Justice and the Social Order, p. 64. The emphasis is mine.

<sup>35</sup>In The Divine Imperative he groups them together (cf. p. 333). In Justice and the Social Order, however, he mentions them as separate, distinctive communities (cf. p. 66).

forms of community as the 'primal' or 'plastic' forms and what he means by this qualification is uncertain.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps the suggestion he is making is that they are orders outside which man cannot function, in the sense that they are the most natural laws of his existence. However, when he speaks of the next form of community, that of labour, he considers it very basic and natural, as well. He writes, "Man is so made that he must live by drawing his sustenance from the earth."<sup>37</sup> The word 'primal', in reference to the sexes, might be simply an expression of recognition of its priority in creation as told in the biblical account of Genesis.

As well as the orders of marriage, family and labour, Brunner discusses the state. In considering this form of community, he adopts a position which may be regarded as betwixt that of Calvin and Luther. In keeping with Calvin, he considers the state to be a natural order, ordained by God as part of creation. It is seen as necessary to man's basic nature. The state is regarded, thus, not as an instrument solely to keep sin in check, but as an order in its own right. On the other hand, Brunner is prepared to recognize, with Luther, the essential part played by the state in the control of sin. In his writings, Brunner has a stronger tendency toward the latter persuasion. He writes:

....in every actual state. ...we have to distinguish three elements: the realization of community, in accordance with the divine creative purpose; a disciplinary order, which creates a kind of community by forcible means, and forms the necessary basis and the harsh framework of civilized life; and an illegitimate, unjust, merely factual selfish, grasping, almost daemonic exercise of power.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup>Brunner, Justice and the Social Order, p. 67.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 446.

Culture and the church are listed as the other forms of community. Unlike the others, which are purely natural in their origination (except the state in a certain sense), these forms of community are intellectual and intentional in their formation. What Brunner is suggesting here, is that they are orders which develop with man, rather than orders which precede him. Nevertheless, they are not simply of man's imagination; this is not an implication Brunner would endorse. Rather, they exist, as with the other orders, because of something innate in man which make them necessary; that is, because of the 'psycho-physical nature of man'.<sup>39</sup>

When Brunner lists the church among the orders, he is referring to the visible church, the church as a sociological fact in the world. It has nothing to do with faith, but with man's need for organization. In this sense, the church can be said to be a natural order because it meets the demands of the psycho-physical powers within him.<sup>40</sup>

One has little quarrel with the forms of community Brunner has identified for us. With him, we recognize the structures that involve us as individuals in the world. There can also be agreement on the human needs these communities fulfil.

The question Brunner makes central, which must concern us now, is: What relation do these community structures have with 'meaning'? In his own words the question is: "What should be faith's attitude towards these forms of social life?"<sup>41</sup> He continues to write,

---

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 334.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

".....the most important task of a Christian ethic of society is that of throwing light upon the relation between the natural existence and understanding of the existing forms of community, and the Divine Will, perceived by faith."<sup>42</sup> It is assumed here that Brunner's word 'faith' and our discussion of 'meaning' are closely related. Throughout his writing, he speaks of faith and hope as inseparable, in the sense that the hope of man (his quest for truth and meaning), is the content of faith.<sup>43</sup> Thus, when Brunner asks the question of faith's relation to the structures of community, the whole issue of 'meaning' is brought forth. The answer he presents for our consideration is the important point for us, not merely the description of the structures of community themselves. Since the various structures of community are observable facts of history, it is natural that Brunner should

---

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 336.

<sup>43</sup>See Brunner, Eternal Hope, trans. Harold Knight (Lutterworth Press, London, 1954), p. 28. Brunner uses the word person to convey our idea of 'meaning', as well. Personal existence is one in relation to the 'Truth' of life. Throughout The Divine Imperative he seems to use person, faith and love interchangeably in our sense of 'meaning'.

The question Brunner poses for us at this point is one that has received attention throughout the corpus of his writings. It is one that has occupied the attention of many other theologians as well. It centres around the question of correlation. It has been considered in the discussion of the relation between: question and answer, form and content, and fact and faith. Such questions have been central to Karl Barth, Rudolph Bultmann, Gerhard Ebling, Paul Tillich and, of course, Wolfhart Pannenberg, with whom we are especially concerned. As early as The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon (Lutterworth Press, London, 1947), Brunner expressed a profound interest in this matter. However, he did not offer any convincing answer to the question. In speaking of the relation of Jesus Christ to history, he wrote, "One question which it is very hard to answer is that which inquires into the measure of the concern which faith has with the realm of fact at all..." (Ibid., p. 167).

question their relation to faith. This is so because faith, for him, is not an historical fact attained through the understanding.

At first sight, it might appear that Brunner, in his ethical position, is close to that which G. E. Moore called the 'Naturalistic Fallacy'.<sup>44</sup> This arises, says Moore, from the claim to derive 'goodness' from the natural facts of life. For Moore, fact and value are separated in the sense that 'goodness' is a non-natural property and cannot, therefore, be derived from a natural fact of history.<sup>45</sup> Such criticism of Brunner is made by N. H. G. Robinson

---

<sup>44</sup>For a good summary of this fallacy, as well as the current positions in moral philosophy, see G. J. Warnock, Contemporary Moral Philosophy (MacMillan, St. Martin's Press, London, 1967). The naturalistic fallacy is defined by Moore himself in his book, Principia Ethica, p. 10.

<sup>45</sup>We are introducing the subject of fact and value, which may appear foreign to theology. This, it may be said, is to raise an issue of much discussion in itself, that of the relationship between theology and philosophy, in which the fact/value discussion is current (see Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, trans. R. A. Wilson (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1973), pp. 116-145, where this debate is taken up with some very constructive suggestions). This writer shares Pannenberg's opinion that because the two disciplines are referring to the same reality, that of history, there is much to be gained in dialogue. Philosophy can point to experiences which are essential for the relevance of theological statements. Theology, on the other hand, may offer some very helpful perspectives on reality in the light of the revelation of God in Jesus. Pannenberg writes, "Philosophical criticism can help theology to achieve an understanding of the conditions of a credible way of speaking of God, which makes more careful distinctions and is better adapted to man's experience of himself and his world in nature and history. It can also help theology to study in a more impartial way the relevance of the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth to mankind and to the whole of reality. Like all other statements which are concerned with the totality of the meaning of existence, theological statements go beyond the antagonisms and absurdities of the world as it now exists, and beyond the fragmentary nature of reality. But the measure of their importance is the extent to which they show themselves capable of taking into account the fragments of reality, and the wholeness to which these fragments point because they lack it. It must do so not merely as a theoretical fiction, but in rational confidence of a future success, a confidence inspiring the attitude of the present moment." (The Idea of God and Human Freedom, pp. 138-139).

(<sup>45</sup>continued)

For this reason, the discussion that is current in moral philosophy about fact-value is very relevant to this thesis. This is so especially as it can be shown that Brunner's theological position leaves us with a fact-value separation in history. This would give man little moral and ethical initiative. Similar consequences arise from the philosophical position that maintains a separation between fact and value (see the criticism G. J. Warnock makes in his book, Contemporary Moral Philosophy, with regard to Moore's position and those who follow him). Philosophically speaking, if existence and value are separated, then little room for moral and ethical argument remains. Without a reasonable basis for our ethical statements, or facts upon which to base them, they are in danger of becoming purely emotive in character. This, in turn, may lead to the abdication of ethics itself (see N. H. G. Robinson, The Groundwork of Christian Ethics (Collins, St. James Place, London, 1971), particularly chapter three, where he convincingly argues that the positions of Professor Ayer in Language, Truth and Logic and Professor R. M. Hare in The Language of Morals results in the abdication of ethics). When goodness is not seen as a possibility in 'fact', ethics become a "human and subjective phenomenon" (The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, p. 59). It is merely emotive, expressing approval and disapproval of conduct, or, it is prescriptive, that is, it simply offers advice. In either case, ethics become subjective evaluation without an objective basis to which the terms true and false would apply. Ethics would then have significance only in terms of personal like and dislike, only in terms of its strength to persuade another to a point of view without the possibility of justification. The incentive for ethical and moral growth, thus, would be absent.

Moore's position, of course, cannot be called emotive or prescriptive but 'intuitive'. He is not denying the existence of the good, rather, he is saying one cannot derive it from facts. It is not a natural property. Nevertheless, it can be argued that with such a separation of value from fact, Moore weakens man's ethical position and is subject to the criticisms stated above. Although Brunner arrives at a separation of fact and value in life, differently from Moore, the ethical consequences are much the same. Little room is left for Moral argument in Brunner and many of his ethical statements tend to be more assertive than rational. N. H. G. Robinson, in his earlier book, Faith and Duty (Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1950) states that much of Brunner's ethical position, with regard to man's situation in the world, is determined by this separation of fact and value and that an argument philosophically or theologically that shows that this is not the case, would severely weaken the strength of his argument. (Ibid., pp. 38-39).

Helen Oppenheimer, in an article 'Christian Flourishing' (Religious Studies, Vol. 5, No. 2, December 1969, pp. 163-171), writes, "...many philosophers since G. E. Moore have been so sensitive about the dangers of drawing any 'ought' from any 'is' that they have neither looked themselves, nor urged theologians to look, for any more reliable connection between the nature of things and what one ought to do. Meanwhile many splendid pleas have been made for the autonomy of ethics." (Ibid., p. 163) Oppenheimer's article is suggestive of the direction theology might go in working toward a solution to the problem. She argues that among the facts which are not valueless are those of the Christian Doctrine. In our understanding of these facts, we can reach a position that may help resolve the dilemma on the philosophical level. Using the concept of rewards, which she claims as present in the gospels, she defends her claim that it is possible to relate what ought to be the case with what is; reward, in terms of sanctions, are what the Lord Himself defended as recognition of what is valuable in life. While defending her claim that fact and value are related, she is equally

in The Groundwork of Christian Ethics:

...it seems a fair charge against him that, in spite of an extensive and often illuminating treatment of the subject, he had not really grasped the unique character of the moral, the normative, that reality which constitutes a law for man in his freedom and sets the sphere of the distinctively human apart from, even if linked with, the natural. On the contrary, so far from appreciating and expressing the unique character of the moral, Brunner's ethical

---

(<sup>45</sup>continued)

concerned that one not remain in this position, for this would deny one the necessary impulse for true flourishing. She writes, "The old otherworldliness said glibly that human miseries do not matter: the new this-worldliness appears to say that they are all that matters, that the Almighty is only interested in squalor and social problems, that he is not so much a god of the gaps as a god of the glooms, that since he is willing to be present in the evil we must not look for him mightily to prevail over it...It may begin to foreshadow a Christian view of flourishing, which will need to be subtle in its linking and balancing of material and spiritual, this-worldly and other-worldly. The plain earthly meaning of flourishing will not have to be repudiated but rather transmuted into a still empirical but more profound concept of blessedness, to which the key will be the idea of fulfillment." (Ibid., p. 170). Oppenheimer's suggestion, in the above, is that fact and value though related are, at the same time, separated. Only this can do justice to all aspects of human existence.

A. D. Galloway (see 'Fact and Value in Theological Ethics' (Religious Studies, Vol. 5, No. 2, December 1969, pp. 172-178)) makes a similar point when he states that the problem of moral life really does not centre around the union of fact and value. We are actually born into situations which already have moral implications. The moral problem is in separating them. How does man get from under the natural union of fact and value in which he finds himself in life? He claims that there is a secondary sense of ought which enthrals us morally in a situation, either by birth or otherwise, and a primary sense of ought which breaks that enthrallment and gives a basis for reform, change and growth. Galloway, thus, is advocating a position of both-and with respect to the fact-value question. To separate the two absolutely, would subject one to a position, theologically or philosophically, that gives the individual little room for ethical argument. On the other hand, to relate the two completely, even if this relationship be understood, theologically, in God (Galloway's position), would be to opt for a position which offers little incentive for renewal and change. The position defended in this thesis, by examination of the fundamental facts of our faith, is one that strives for a happy medium between the two extremes. Our argument will be that both identity and separation are needed and defensible in terms of our faith. This, of course, will involve a new understanding of God.



thought was pervaded by the naturalistic fallacy, the error of deriving 'ought' from 'is', the moral from the natural, the mistake of subordinating the former to the latter instead of affirming its supremacy as the true supernatural.

This characteristic of Brunner's ethical thought is apparent in his treatment of the various orders, as when he attempted to derive the ideal of marriage as a life long relationship between one man and one woman from the bare natural facts that every child is the offspring of one man and one woman and that two people in love resent the intrusion of a third party.<sup>46</sup>

It can be stated that Robinson's charge against Brunner is unfair.

'Naturalistic Fallacy', in my understanding, speaks of the 'good' as something definable; that is, it is a property of some act or thing. It is analytical. This is opposed to Moore's definition of the 'good' in his Principia Ethica. Moore was contesting the possibility of deriving 'good' from the natural facts of our existence. In his opinion, it is impossible to defend a statement about goodness by an appeal to natural and historical realities. Brunner similarly states that goodness, in the sense of what ought to be the case in life, is not a possibility from the world; it cannot be understood or perceived by looking at the natural world. "The fact", he writes, "that a terrible gulf yawns between that which is and that which ought to be, that the relation between them is not merely that of the imperfect to the perfect, but that they are actually in opposition to one another, was not always so - it is the result of that original perversion of truth..."<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup>Robinson, The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, p. 234.

<sup>47</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 114. There is a difference between Moore and Brunner that should be noted. Moore does not deny the existence of good in the world. He says there is an 'intrinsic good'. Brunner denies this. Moore says only that such goodness is indefinable; it cannot be analysed or read from the natural facts of existence. This is the point on which Brunner and Moore would be in agreement; goodness is not an analytical quality. It cannot be supported outside itself. Brunner says, with respect to God, that God alone is good. The Goodness of God is not capable of verification or analysis.

Robinson does present the argument, "But for sin, Brunner would have represented the Christian ethic in exclusively descriptive terms."<sup>48</sup> Whether this is the case or not is debatable. It remains for Brunner, nevertheless, that no possibility exists of deriving an ought from an is or value from fact. The facts of community, therefore, which are observable to the common man apart from faith, are not essentially related to the good, or the 'ought' of life. There is no 'Naturalistic Fallacy' here on Brunner's part.

Robinson's first criticism of Brunner, above, is modified later in the same work in a way that concurs with our criticism. In comparing Brunner with Bonhoeffer he writes:

By Brunner too the orders and their laws were apprehended under the categories of preservation and preparation; but Brunner assigned to them a third significance, a significance for faith and for the Christian life, as providing guidance. It is important at this point, however, not to jump to conclusions nor to magnify this concession, for it did not take Brunner much further than Bonhoeffer and it did not qualify the negative attitude to natural morality. The reason is that, as Brunner himself made clear, this guidance does not contain any ethical sentiment but has rather 'a more technical function: that of giving the right direction'. Time and again Brunner described the orders as providing no more than a framework for the Christian life and as 'based upon a standard of law which is totally different from that which is known by faith'.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup>Robinson, The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, p. 235.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 196-197. One would be remiss here if some comment were not offered on the content of Robinson's very helpful book. He is dealing with, and working toward a solution for, the same problem that concerns us in this thesis. He writes of the problem in this way: "The truth....can be distorted in one or other of two opposite directions, for faith may be represented either as an existence or a life other than, and unrelated to, the various possibilities of human historical existence, or else, contrariwise, it may be set forth as something wholly explicable in human and historical terms. Accordingly, to the dilemmas already

(<sup>49</sup>continued)

recognized in which modern Protestantism is deeply involved - those between formalism and naturalism, between a system of divine determinism and one that gives a central place to human decision, and between a heteronomous account and an autonomous one - there must be added the dilemma between a representation of the Christian ethic which finds the heart of the matter in a mythological warfare beyond history and one which is severely this-worldly." (Ibid., p. 255). Throughout his book, he examined, in some detail, the various ethical expressions of men such as Barth, Brunner, Cox, Robinson and Lehmann and found them wanting in areas relevant to this thesis. His efforts are directed toward bridging the impasse that has developed in protestant ethical thought in this century. Robinson's analysis of the problem and his concern to relate the Christian more significantly to the world are important to our dissertation. He endeavors to relate throughout his work, the Christian faith to natural morality in a way that may preserve the one claim aspect of morality (Ibid., p. 266).

The method of Robinson's correlation, however, is unclear. In spite of his severe criticism of other theologians, his removal from them is not significantly distant. He is concerned that one be related to the historical world of our existence for the sake of content. "For the Christian it is in and through the choices and decisions which there confront him - not in some mythological 'beyond' or no-man's land - that he must work out his own salvation. The Christian can no more abstract from this context than can the non-Christian. To do so would be to empty his life of all content." (Ibid., p. 264). He is prepared, as the last statement reveals, to give decisive significance to historical reality in terms of the content of one's existence. He makes this point again when he writes, "Ultimately and in origin the moral order is personal. It is not just an impersonal realm or reality to which it is the distinctive merit of persons to give peculiar attention....Ab initio it is itself personal;...." (Ibid., p. 278).

While saying all of this, the impression one receives in other parts of his book is that the truly decisive aspect of life is something added to historical reality. It is, in a sense, supra-historical reality, although Robinson does not use that term. He does, however, use language that implicates him in this direction. He can speak, for example, in these terms. "....the Christian must be alive and alert to the in-breaking of God's Kingdom at this point or that, the advent of the personal realm in the fullness of its substance,..." (Ibid., p. 276). He leads one to believe that without this 'in-breaking' man's sin devalues historical reality. He writes, "...when the Christian finds his endeavor frustrated and obstructed by the complexities of the historical situation and by the resistance of the world, he is bound, in solidarity with that world, to confess his own unworthiness, and so to acknowledge what Professor Reinhold Niebuhr has called 'the relevance of an impossible ethical ideal'..." (Ibid., p. 281). Also, one has the strong impression that, although the non-Christian is involved in historical life along with the Christian, the Christian is really occupied with a different placement in that historical realm. He is between the times, "between...the time of God's fulfillment of time itself and history." (Ibid., p. 272). In the final analysis, Robinson does not clearly state how historical existence and the Christian faith are correlated.

Robinson, in this quotation, has singled out Brunner's basic position with regard to the orders and the significance given to them.

In his chapter, 'The Threefold Meaning of the Law', Brunner describes the functions of the orders with the words, discipline, repentance and guidance. The word 'law' and 'order' can be used synonymously in our argument as Brunner himself writes: "We describe the sum-total of all these forms of connexion between human beings, in so far as they are also - on the one hand - subject to the control of the will, and - on the other hand - primarily simply effective as present forces for the maintenance of order, by an artificial word: Lex;..."<sup>50</sup>

Preservation and discipline are the primary functions of the orders, in Brunner's opinion. "As orders", he writes, "...they are always a means by which sinful humanity keeps the final consequences of sin at bay: that is, disorganization and chaos. Further, since we must accept humanity as it is, in the actual situation of the moment, these orders are also the only means by which those final consequences of sin can be kept at bay. By this very fact they prove that they are the gift of the Preserver of the world."<sup>51</sup> In the role of preservation, Brunner states that the orders have no connection, or association with faith; that is, they have nothing to do with the actual truth of life. As preserving orders, therefore, they do not convey any element of meaning to the individual's life. Again, let us refer to Brunner for a clearer understanding of this point.

---

<sup>50</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 141.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

For although these orders are necessary for the sake of love, most decidedly the behaviour they require is not the kind which we would expect to mete out to our fellow-man in love, if we were dealing simply with two individuals. Our "official duty" is "harsh", objectively technical: the human relation which it requires to men is external: its method is that of the forcible control of the masses, indeed it seems to be wholly opposed to love. To carry it through it needs the use of force, possibly of physical force, even to the point of taking human life.<sup>52</sup>

The second role of the orders is repentance. Brunner's intention in listing this function is quite clear. All he wants to convey is that man needs something to make him aware of his sinfulness in the sight of God, before he will repent. Man must first realize the condition or state of his degradation before he can actually turn from it. The 'Lex', in this sense, is the 'schoolmaster'<sup>53</sup> that leads us to Christ. Brunner's reasoning in this respect could be expressed like this. Man, as he lives within the orders, will gradually be brought to a point of realizing his distance from the meaning and fulfillment of life. This is an experience, says Brunner, that every human being will eventually reach. Despondency will result.

Before continuing, the following comment could be made. If Brunner were saying that all human beings were confronted with a 'limit' in life, then one could agree. Recognition of a 'limit' in life is familiar to us. We all feel a sense of incompleteness. In the light

---

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 143. One could ask Brunner here if man's turn to the good must always come by way of one's sense of corruption. Might it not come as a positive awareness or expectation of greater things?

of this, Brunner's statement, "I can do no more.",<sup>54</sup> is justified.

Gordon Kaufman writes about man's experience in this way:

All that we ever experience directly are particular events of suffering, death (of others), joy, peace, etc. It is only in reflection upon these and the attempt to understand ourselves in the light of these happenings that we become aware of our limitedness on all sides. Along with this awareness of our being hemmed in, powerful emotions of terror, despair, revulsion, anxiety, and the like, are often - perhaps always - generated, and this total intellectual - emotional complex may then be called the "experience of finitude"...or something of the sort. But it must be observed that this "experience" of radical contingency is not an immediate awareness of restriction, as when one butts one's head directly against a stone wall; it depends rather upon a generalization from such occasional immediate experiences of limitation to the total situation of the self.<sup>55</sup>

Langdon Gilkey writes in a similar way about man's limiting experience. "We are all deeply if dimly aware", he writes, "that we do not finally control our own being, that all too easily something or some force can snatch our life, and the forms of security on which it depends, away from us. As the reality of our finite being was felt from the inside as strength and as vital joy, so here the contingency of our finite being is felt from the inside as anxiety. In this experience we "know" that our existence is given to us and not created by us;..."<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup>This is Brunner's expression to describe man's absolute despair. It could also be an expression describing the 'limit' to which other writers refer (see Gordon Kaufman, 'On the Meaning of "God": Transcendence Without Mythology' (New Theology, No. 4, ed. Martin Marty and Dean Peerman, (Macmillan Col, New York, 1967, pp. 69-98), pp. 69ff., and Langdon Gilkey, The Renewal of God-Language (The Bobbs-Merrill Co., New York, 1969), pp. 313ff.)

<sup>55</sup>Kaufman, 'On the Meaning of "God": Transcendence Without Mythology' (New Theology, No. 4), p. 81.

<sup>56</sup>Gilkey, The Renewal of God-Language, p. 319.

This has some similarity to Brunner's expression. When Brunner speaks of despair he refers to a state in which man dwells. Man realizes that he is falling short of the true, fulfilling experience of life. He tries to live by the commandment of love but finds himself repeatedly thwarted by his efforts to do so. At times he even works against that which love demands.<sup>57</sup> For Brunner, this awareness of our situation makes us turn to God for true meaning.

Speaking in a negative way about this experience is not peculiar to Brunner. Gilkey, for example, refers to the 'Void' that can be experienced in life.<sup>58</sup> However, Brunner, in contrast, sees the negative always as impersonal or unloving. In other words, Brunner does not see anything within this particular experience of life that might have positive value. This is the significance of his thought when he says that duty and goodness have nothing to do with each other.<sup>59</sup> A sense of duty has nothing to do with the love of God. Rather, it reveals that we are living outside the love of God. Any sense of ought, obligation, or limit to our present state, means we are not in the love of God. "The sense of "ought" shows me the Good at an infinite, impassable distance from my will."<sup>60</sup>

The implication one receives, on the other hand, from the writings of Kaufman and Gilkey, is that such limitation to existence, rather than being negative with respect to the personal, is of the nature of the

---

<sup>57</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 227.

<sup>58</sup>Gilkey, The Renewal of God-Language, pp. 319ff.

<sup>59</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 74.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

personal itself. In consequence, one may say that the experience of 'limit' in life is of the love of God rather than the 'wrath' of God, as Brunner would have us believe. As such, it may show us the true nature of God Himself. This suggestion will be developed further as we proceed.<sup>61</sup>

Enough has been said here to show that there are ways of understanding the 'limit' in life, as expressed in the Brunnerian phrase, "I can do no more", than as evidence of our radical opposition to the good. It can be shown that the orders themselves, which Brunner regards as impersonal, may be understood in terms of love. They can be given much more personal value than he attributes to them. It is possible, it can be argued, to maintain the supremacy of the personal, as Brunner wishes to do, without separating it so radically from life and its functions.

---

<sup>61</sup>For many writers, limitation is a fundamental experience of the personal in life. This is the point Kaufman makes when he writes, "...selves...experience the external personal limitation of other selves engaged in activities and programmes running counter to their own - i.e., the clash of will, decisions, and purposes - but precisely because matters of volition and intention are subjective, this experience is neither simply internal nor external but is interpersonal and social;..." ('On the Meaning of "God": Transcendence Without Mythology' (New Theology, No. 4), p. 84). Gilkey, even more vividly, refers to the personal value of the 'limit' of life when he writes: "Out of this ontological situation, of course, arises the possibility of the peculiarly human characteristics of our contingent being. We are aware that we are; we are aware that we are in a world, and that we are moving into a future; we can communicate with others; we can think, conceive, make symbols, create projections, and ask questions. And this awareness subsists both on the level of mood or state of mind, and on the level of symbolic, conceptual, explicit consciousness or thought. We are or exist in terms of our awareness, our decisions, our self-creation; our essence is in this sense our "existence". Thus our environment becomes a world, a temporal passage, a unity which we see as a whole and about which we can and must wonder, think, and ultimately master cognitively, and so into which we inevitably inquire. In our understanding of our world, furthermore, we are involved in the inescapable search for unity and coherence; correspondingly, our self becomes penetrated by self-awareness, by freedom, and by our projects into the future. Thus we are our projects, what we decide for the future..." (The Renewal of God-Language, p. 333).



It seems that Brunner moves in this direction in his reference to the third function of the orders, that of guidance. Brunner says the law, even for faith, does not lose its significance. It serves the purpose of being a God-given exposition of what it means to be "in Christ". To be "in Christ" is, for Brunner, the only true good of life. He writes, "Where is man when he is in his right place?" He follows the question with the answer: "True being" means being "in Christ"; for "Christ is my righteousness". God's Being in Christ, however - once again not as a quality but as act - is His being in love."<sup>62</sup> Brunner is even prepared to modify an earlier statement that there is no determination of the good 'beforehand' by saying, "The claim to know the Good beforehand, to be able to "deduce" it from the principle of love, which primarily and in principle we must condemn as a misunderstanding of the nature of the Good, is not to be totally condemned...This "deduction" of the Good which can be known beforehand and defined in terms of casuistry is not, it is true, the Genuine Good, but it has a place in the definition of the true Good."<sup>63</sup>

The question we must ask ourselves at this point is: What extension is Brunner willing to give to the law or the orders in the definition of the true Good? There is no clear answer to this question in his writings. The best insight, however, can be gained by examining the 'conflict of duties' situation mentioned in his chapter 'The Calling'. As this question is so important to this whole chapter, indeed to the whole thesis, a few pages must be devoted to its investigation.

---

<sup>62</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 164.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

Firstly, it should be noted that in the matter of the 'conflict of duties', Brunner has some contradictory statements. On the one hand, he says that a 'conflict of duties' cannot be avoided in life. "To be a Christian...does not mean something static, but it means grace and decision. Only through the painful pressure of the apparent conflict of duties - and indeed of a conflict of duties which is unceasing and constantly repeated - do we reach the perception of the Divine Command, and in so doing joyfulness and confidence in action."<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, he says that a 'conflict of duties' should not arise for faith, as in faith, the conflict ends. There can be no conflict in faith. It "...is the chronic disease which afflicts every system of legalistic morality."<sup>65</sup>

However, it is the former statement above, that Brunner emphasises as the actual position of the Christian. For instance, Brunner does not maintain that the law and the orders are perfect. They are imperfect. Question of appropriate action in a situation may therefore arise. Brunner is not being Kantian in his ethics at this point. According to Kant's ethical system, any law which claims justification in one situation must be claimed as true for all situations. Laws are universal and absolute to him. With this thought, obvious problems arise. For example, there are situations in which one might have to do wrong to bring forth good. Telling a lie in order to preserve human life is a case in point. If to tell the truth and to preserve human life are both inviolable obligations, as with Kant, then there is an irreconcilable problem in this illustration. Two absolute claims are in conflict. With Brunner, however, this problem does not arise.

---

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

He recognizes the various laws as imperfect. Thus, conflict is a possibility. Ethical decision arises in the situation at hand.

In stating Brunner's position, one might say there are tendencies in every order which point the person in the direction of a certain duty. The family, the state and all the orders, have duties that are peculiar to them, which warrant recognition. They are God-given commands in which one's calling is found.

Brunner makes an important distinction here in the discussion of duty. He speaks of a 'schedule of duties', in the sense that there are various duties which command recognition in life. At the same time, he speaks of man's 'real' duty arising within a situation when these various duties come into conflict. In some situations, a duty may be clear and straight forward. To tell the truth, for example, may be self-evident, like giving the proper time when asked. In other situations, this duty (telling the truth) may come into conflict with a duty of another order. In the case of war, when allegiance to one's state commands us, it is proper to inquire as to the 'real' duty.

One moral decision must be made in this ethical situation. One could imagine, as well, a conflict developing between the marriage order and the order of the state. For the sake of life's preservation, the state might command activity of the woman and the man contrary to the nature of marriage. How does the individual decide in this situation? What determines his course of action? How is goodness found? "In a situation of this kind", writes Brunner, "I must proceed as follows: with the help of my "schedule of duties" and in the light of the various claims which clamour for my attention and constantly overlap - all of them apparently justifiable and necessary - in the spirit of faith (and this means, too, in view of the actual situation) I must listen

to the Divine Command in order that I may be able to do what I am really bidden to do, that is, my real duty."<sup>66</sup>

Brunner's distinction between one Divine Command and many divine commands is important here. The one Divine Command,<sup>67</sup> or the 'one' Good, is the important thing in any ethical situation. The claim he is making is that the schedule of duties (the many divine commands), in terms of the laws and the orders, can help us see the one Command in a given situation. At one point, he is very explicit in this matter. The laws and orders, he states, "....can prepare the decision of the individual as carefully as a conscientious legal adviser prepares the decision of the judge by the most careful consideration of all possibilities."<sup>68</sup>

The use of this analogy is encouraging. Its implications are far-reaching. A judge arrives at his decision after much deliberation of thought. Only then does he offer his judgment. This is not done, however, without an awareness of the heavy responsibility involved. The possibility exists that he may be wrong in his judgment. Therefore, a judge must proceed cautiously in every judicial decision. In spite of this, in retrospect, decisions have been wrong; a sense of tragedy follows which accentuates his personal responsibility. Justice sometimes may also involve the exclusion of one good for another. The question of the 'tragic' arises once again.

In using this analogy, it seems that Brunner must endorse these implications as well. In other words, the right decision in a situation must be responsible and rational. The possibility of tragedy must accompany it, making the person liable for blame. At the same time, it is this liability for blame that constitutes the basis of freedom

---

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

for the judge. His decision is neither dictated nor compelled. If human responsibility is to be maintained in each situation, liability for blame and praise must exist.<sup>69</sup>

It is precisely these implications, however, that Brunner evades in man's ethical situation. In the end, he leaves us with the mere assertion of a correlation between the schedule of duties and the good. He does not go on to show the method of the correlation. Without a clear correlation, the implications of the judicial analogy cannot be applied. Brunner's lack of clarification on this point is unsatisfactory. He writes about the dilemma of decision in this way, "...it is not I who have to decide..., but the point is that, in faith, in this situation in which I have to decide, I am to hear the concrete Command of God Himself."<sup>70</sup>

From the above, it seems that Brunner's position involves the following consequences: responsibility in an ethical situation is God's responsibility; goodness, rather than a quality one deliberates upon (using the judicial analogy) or a quality perceived by man, is something determined for him in a particular situation.<sup>71</sup> Brunner's expression points in this direction when he writes, "The Good consists in always doing what God wills at any particular moment."<sup>72</sup> Further

---

<sup>69</sup>Sir Isaiah Berlin has done a good job in pointing out the necessary connection between human responsibility and praise and blame in a situation (see 'Historical Inevitability' (The Philosophy of History, ed. Patrick Gardiner (Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 161-186)). Further reference will be made to this.

<sup>70</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 229.

<sup>71</sup>I am using 'seems' as a cautionary measure. Further examination of Brunner's thought will reveal that the above impression of Brunner needs much qualification. It will be argued that a timeless quality exists in Brunner's God. This exempts even God from ethical responsibility in the world.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

support for this understanding of him can be seen in the following:

"Christian ethics is the science of human conduct as it is determined by Divine conduct."<sup>73</sup> How the schedule of duties helps in the situation is very difficult, if not impossible, to see. God, alone, is the determinant of good, rather than man or something in his situation. Ethics, it seems, has become what Brunner calls, 'human conduct determined by divine conduct'. Further evidence of this impression can be found in the following remark: "...the law which guides...no longer contains an ethical sentiment - the ethical sentiment,....resides in faith - but a more technical function: that of giving the right direction."<sup>74</sup> In the foregoing, the orders and laws of man's existence, and thus his community, receive little importance in terms of 'meaning'. There is nothing 'good' in the orders. They have little or no extension in the determination of the good. Confirmation of this can be seen in Brunner's thoughts on change, reform and justice. This will be developed later in this chapter.

Certain problems arise from Brunner's expression thus far. The danger of individualism is present. If there is no determination of content in relation to the 'good'; that is, if there are no standards by which one can judge the goodness of an act, then judgment is left with the individual alone. Value has become purely subjective. The danger in this kind of ethical thinking, in terms of the social ills it has and can produce, are too obvious to

---

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

mention.<sup>75</sup> With this, anything could be claimed as good by any individual in any situation.

In spite of the dangers, it can be argued strongly that such subjectivism is not actually applicable to Brunner. Individualism would imply man's determination of the good apart from the community. Brunner is not claiming this. Goodness is not something any individual can attain with or without community. It is rather a gift from God. Responsibility with respect to the good is taken away from the individual in all situations. God alone is good. Rather than individualism, therefore, a strong case for determinism in Brunner can be made.

N. H. G. Robinson sees this determinism as one of the central problems of Brunner's whole ethical expression. He comments on

---

<sup>75</sup>In an article entitled, 'Martin Buber's Ethics and the Problem of Norms' (Religious Studies, Vol. 5, No. 2, December 1969 (Cambridge University Press), pp. 181-194), Charles Kegley criticises Buber for the same kind of epistemological confusion that we see evident in Brunner. He is of the opinion that Brunner and Buber have much in common. He writes, "For him revelation is an event, a happening, a living, dynamic meeting (shades of Emil Brunner's, The Encounter) with the Eternal Thou, as in the case of Abraham." (p. 185). He goes on to write, "With this view of revelation, of a highly personal encounter of man with God, what emerges is, on the surface, a clearly situational ethics rather than an ethics of principles. On this issue Buber would appear to have made his position entirely clear: 'I know no system', 'I oppose "situation" to "principles", the "unclean" reality to the "pure abstraction".' Astonishingly he wrote, '...there is not the slightest assurance that our decision is right except in a personal way'." (p. 185). To a statement by Buber that a situation furnishes its own interpretation, Kegley writes, "Now, how a situation furnishes its own interpretation, Buber never, to my knowledge, makes clear, nor can I imagine how it could, or even, if it seemed to or claimed to, guarantee to us that its interpretation was correct. This sounds like subjectivism of a very dangerous sort." (p. 193). "What is at issue....is the problem of criteria. So here: what are the criteria for assessing contradictory claims to being 'knowledge of God', 'Will of God', God's action in the World'? In the absence of clear criteria....the poetical and paradoxical reign." (p. 193).

Brunner's statement "....ethics is...human conduct as it is determined by Divine conduct" in this way:

....when he had offered this definition it seems preposterous that Brunner should have claimed that 'here the antithesis between freedom and necessity is removed'. It is removed only in the sense that one side, freedom, has been totally overshadowed and destroyed. It is certainly true, as Brunner claimed, that the Gospel is 'concerned with the release of man from bondage'; but while it is important to preserve the sense that the state from which man is rescued by divine grace is one in which he cannot possibly help himself nor contribute in any way to his own salvation, it is no less important to safeguard the insight that the being thus released from bondage is man, a self-determining being who is responsible for his plight, and that this is no merely interesting additional fact about him but stands in the closest possible relation to the affirmation of his redemption.<sup>76</sup>

Is Robinson correct in implicating Brunner in such a deterministic position? To this question, we give an affirmative reply. Further analysis shows that Brunner has removed from his expression one of the main sources of indeterminacy in ethics, that of human responsibility.<sup>77</sup> This can be shown by returning to a thought alluded to

---

<sup>76</sup>Robinson, The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, p. 176.

<sup>77</sup>I am not implying here that 'determinacy' cannot, in any sense, be equated with freedom and human responsibility. There is always a determined aspect to life. We shall be dealing with this further in the thesis. Strict determinacy, however, in the sense that no contingency is possible, denies man his freedom and thus responsibility. To my knowledge, at least, there are no convincing arguments which hold responsibility and strict determinism as compatible concepts. Ernest Nagel in his article 'Determinism in History' (The Philosophy of History, pp. 184-217), makes a good criticism of Berlin that is relevant here. Berlin in denouncing determinism completely leaves unexplained the existence of the self. Nagel writes, "....he appears to have an irresolvable puzzle on his hands of how to identify the human self - a puzzle that arises from his so construing the nature of that self, that any trait or action which stands in relations of causal dependence to anything whatever, is automatically cut off from being a genuine phase of the self." (p. 210). This identity of the self is something we shall be arguing for in our thesis.



above with regard to praise and blame. It is logical that responsibility involves the liability to praise or blame. To be responsible one must be liable for the consequences, good or bad, that follow from an action. Determinism, on the other hand, in taking away man's responsibility, removes him from any liability for an action undertaken. 'Isaiah Berlin, wrote about the situation in this way:

If the history of the world is due to the operation of identifiable forces other than, and little affected by, free human wills and free choices (whether these occur or not), then the proper explanation of what happens must be given in terms of the evolution of such forces. And there is then a tendency to say that not individuals, but these larger entities, are ultimately 'responsible'. I live at a particular moment of time in the spiritual and social and economic circumstances into which I have been cast: how then can I help choosing and acting as I do? The values in terms of which I conduct my life are the values of my class, or race, or church, or civilization, or are part and parcel of my 'station' - my position in the 'social structure'. Nobody denies that it would be stupid as well as cruel to blame me for not being taller than I am, or to regard the colour of my hair or the qualities of my intellect or heart as being due principally to my own free choice; these attributes are as they are through no decision of mine. If I extend this category without limit, then whatever is, is necessary and inevitable. This unlimited extension of necessity, on any of the views described above, becomes intrinsic to the explanation of everything. To blame and praise, consider possible alternative courses of action, accuse or defend historical figures for acting as they do or did, becomes an absurd activity.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup>Berlin, 'Historical Inevitability' (The Philosophy of History), p. 171.

It is difficult to deny that, in certain respects, an individual is what he is psychologically and biologically. Because of his inheritance, there are certain propensities in every man for which blame or praise would not be applicable. One can say this without giving way to a rigid theory of determinism such as behaviourism would have us accept. A theory such as the latter, to re-echo Berlin's words, would make praise and blame absolutely absurd. Another agent, either in the form of a divine deity or latent force in the universe, would then be held answerable for all consequences, good or bad.

In the light of this, one reads Brunner with criticism. He exonerates the individual in all ethical situations. As a later chapter will show, with such exoneration, the depth of personal existence vanishes.

At this point, an important clarification must be made. In mentioning Berlin, we are not equating Brunner with the former's account of determinism. Berlin's argument is that an agent, divine or otherwise, determines everything in history. In this way, he leaves man without responsibility for the events of life. Brunner is saying something quite different. It is important in our analysis of him that his distinctive position be made clear. Brunner does not say that God determines every act of man, although on cursory reading, this could be a possible interpretation of him.<sup>79</sup> Some of the statements we have already examined bear this out. On the contrary, the case will be made in the next chapter that Brunner allows God no such penetration of and extension in reality. Brunner's position is that God as Good (God alone is Good) comes to man a-temporally in

---

<sup>79</sup>Refer back to footnote (70) of this chapter.

faith. Faith has little or no relation to fact, but, at the same time, constitutes the good. Faith is not an effort on the part of man, not something man does, but a gift from God. It comes to man by the Spirit, says Brunner.<sup>80</sup>

Regardless of the contrast of Brunner from Berlin, the danger to man's freedom remains unchanged. Praise or blame still cannot be attributed to man. Goodness is still not something man decides for in relation to the world. God removes praise and blame from man, and thus, his freedom and responsibility. He does so not by directly deciding or determining everything that happens on earth, as with Berlin. He does so by removing the Good from man's time scheme and determining it elsewhere. This is equally a determinism that destroys man's responsibility for the meaning of his life.

Some clarification of this point can be seen by examining the concept of 'conflict of duties' at further length. As stated earlier, in a conflicting situation one might be confronted with the existence of two possibilities for good. A decision might involve the exclusion of one good for the other. How is one to react to this situation? If one were to turn to W. D. Ross, for example, whose position has man similarities to that of Brunner,<sup>81</sup> one would see an expression of compunction toward the unfulfilled duties in every ethical situation.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> See Brunner's The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, trans. Olive Wyon, (Lutterworth Press, London, 1949), p. 29.

<sup>81</sup> See Dale E. Burrington's article, 'The Command and the Orders in Brunner's Ethic' (Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 20, 1967, pp. 149-164). This article was particularly helpful in drawing out the similarities of the theological and philosophical positions, or more specifically, the positions of Brunner and the moral 'intuitionists' such as Ross and Pritchard. Burrington makes the following statements that are helpful to the reader in understanding the comparison suggested above. He writes, "The doctrine of Divine Command....makes Brunner's ethic have some striking similarities to some secular intuitionistic moral theories, particularly to the theories of 'perceptual intuitionists' in morals." (p. 153). "However, the reader will note that the Command ethic contains a reference to God's will in the determination of particular duties; therein lies a major difference between Brunner's

Brunner, in contrast, says that any such feeling is only an indication that the Divine Command has not been heard.

For further understanding let us turn to a concrete example. Suppose in the birth of a child a decision had to be made between the life of the child and the life of the mother. Let us suppose the decision went in favour of the child, either by the will of the doctor or the self-sacrificing attitude of the mother. One would naturally feel, in that decisive situation, that a tragic element was involved. This is so because of the presence of a 'lesser of two evils' situation, or more positively, the acceptance of only one good to the exclusion of another. Either way one is aware of a calamitous element. This makes for a very dramatic ethical moment. Such moments are not uncommon to the experience of man. He daily finds himself confronted by feelings of pain, hurt, loss and thus, tragedy. Man is tragic in these situation only when he realizes the human responsibility that is involved. This falls in line with W. D. Ross.<sup>83</sup>

Brunner, on the other hand, denies the validity of such feelings.

---

(<sup>81</sup>continued) Command ethic and secular intuitionistic moral theories. According to Brunner, it is God's Command which makes a particular course of action obligatory, and not some intrinsic characteristic of the situation itself; Brunner says that no thing or situation is good in and of itself....Because Brunner's intuitionistic language differs in this way from the language of the more common secular moral intuitionism, one might well call Brunner's Command ethic 'auditory intuitionism', and the secular version 'visual intuitionism'. Brunner's own use of auditory language in describing moral experience seems to be dictated by the theological nature of his ethic and its biblical background." (pp. 153-154). I would stress, against Burrington, that in Brunner's thought, no historical situation may be called 'Good'.

<sup>82</sup>W. D. Ross, The Right and the Good (Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 28.

<sup>83</sup>It is possible, of course, to recognise the tragic element in life and still not see it fully in relation to man's responsibility.

Faith for the person removes blame or praise.<sup>84</sup> Brunner writes clearly on this point in the following way: "In any case the Christian must never become "tragic" about it; he may appear so to others - as, for instance, a statesman, who out of responsibility for his people must take a step which will expose him to the reproach of disregarding moral obligations - but he himself knows that this neglect is only apparent. How can it be "tragic" to obey God?"<sup>85</sup> The implication that one gains from this is that, as long as one has faith or the intention of love in an act, one is absolved of

---

(<sup>83</sup>continued) I think here of such a writer as Alfred Whitehead who, in his book Adventures of Ideas (University Press, Cambridge, 1933), looks upon tragedy as part of the 'Creative Advance' and thus not really something that one should feel compunction for but welcome as evidence of Man's progression. One gains this impression in the following words: "Decay, Transition, Loss, Displacement belong to the essence of the Creative Advance....The enduring Societies with their rise, culmination and decay, are devices to combine the necessities of Harmony and Freshness. There is a deep underlying Harmony of Nature, as it were a fluid, flexible support; and on its surface the ripples of social efforts, harmonizing and clashing in their aims at ways of satisfaction. The lower types of physical objects can have a vast endurance of inorganic life. The higher types, involving animal life and the dominance of a personality primarily mental, preserve their zest by the quick succession of stages from birth, culmination, to death. As soon as high consciousness is reached, the enjoyment of existence is entwined with pain, frustration, loss, tragedy. Amid the passing of so much beauty, so much heroism, so much daring, Peace is then the intuition of permanence. It keeps vivid the sensitiveness to the tragedy; and it sees the tragedy as a living agent persuading the world to aim at fineness beyond the faded level of surrounding fact. Each tragedy is the disclosure of an ideal - What might have been, and was not: What can be. The tragedy was not in vain." (pp. 368-369). Similar views are expressed by Teilhard de Chardin (see Ernst Benz's book Evolution and Christian Hope (Doubleday & Co. Inc., New York, 1968) p. 263).

<sup>84</sup>Brunner does mention in The Christian Doctrine of God that natural knowledge leaves man without excuse in this world. He makes no attempt to explain what he means. What he intends is certainly not obvious (p. 121).

<sup>85</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 205.

praise and blame by God. In the end, although Brunner may have taken a different path than that outlined by Berlin, man remains locked into meaning for existence that is determined for him. He is removed from the responsible freedom which we normally associate with personal existence. Berlin again writes in a manner helpful to us: "....any assertion that they should have acted thus or thus, might have avoided this or that, and deserve....praise or blame, approval or condemnation, rests upon the presupposition that some area, at any rate, of their lives is not totally determined by laws, whether metaphysical or theological or expressing the generalized probabilities of the sciences."<sup>86</sup> I would add here to Berlin the presupposition, as well, that goodness have some location in historical reality. It is this presupposition that is missing in Brunner.

Let us now return to the question with which we began this chapter. How does meaning arise for the individual in community? The answer, in the light of Brunner, can now be seen. Meaning is that which man passively receives apart from and above the orders and structures of the community that envelops him. From our investigation of the functions of community, even to the function of guidance, a mere technical purpose was all Brunner granted. Instead of a frame of reference in which the individual and the community meet in recognition of a common good, one finds a viewpoint that holds them essentially apart. The role of the community is given little significance in the determination of the individual's meaning. It is very difficult, in the light of this, to see how respect and honor can be paid to the community. It lacks essential importance.

---

<sup>86</sup>Berlin, 'Historical Inevitability' (The Philosophy of History), p. 167.

Such a perspective can only feed the indifference of man to the conditions of his existence. It would leave him, at the end of the day, with little incentive for justice and reform. It may even increase the dangers of violence in society. Too little respect is accorded the past and the traditions upon which society is built. Relegating the structures of life to a mere technical function, as Brunner is doing, would weaken their significance for man's being. The violent revolutionary's conviction that meaning resides on the other side of the past and present facts of life would thus gain support.

The insignificance of community in Brunner can be seen further if we look at his attitude to justice, reform and change. One suspects that unless the community and its structures are given an essential relation to an individual's life then the need for justice and reform will not be seen as urgent.<sup>87</sup> This sense of urgency is missing from Brunner's own writings.

It would involve another chapter to detail Brunner's thoughts on justice. He has written a book dealing specifically with the topic.<sup>88</sup> For our purposes, however, it is sufficient to summarize his convictions in this direction. A good place to begin would be

---

<sup>87</sup> Jürgen Moltmann makes a comment in his book, Hope and Planning, trans. Margaret Clarkson (SCM Press Ltd., London, 1971), which is worth repeating here. He writes, "The theology of ordinances, which seeks standards for the shaping of the historical stream of events, is manifestly always in danger of suspending the eschatological theme of this shaping. The application of the eschatology of the 'longed-for Last Day' leads to the justification of the opposite to that which is expected here in history. Thus in the stabilization of the 'two kingdoms', any crossing over of the dividing line is regarded as 'chiliasm' - even in the allegedly eschatological justification which the South African Reformed Church has given for the policy of apartheid: any communion of the races in Christ is rejected as utopia and chiliasm." (p. 128).

<sup>88</sup> Brunner, Justice and the Social Order.

with Brunner's statement in his chapter, 'Static and Dynamic Justice':

The Scriptures understand life, not as unchanging being, but as a drama, with beginning, middle and end. It is true that this history is not primarily related to earthly life as such. This history, which moves forward to its goal, is the specific history of the salvation of man, and not history in general. Nor does the fact of existence of itself imply participation in this history. That participation is won by faith. Hence it would be exceedingly misleading to transfer the dynamics of the history of salvation in toto to general history, as Hegel did. Those dynamics are not of the kind that can find expression in the sphere of mundane justice.<sup>89</sup>

Brunner's separation of justice from the essential salvation of man (the truth and meaning of man) can be seen here. It is difficult to see how Brunner can continue to talk about dynamic justice in any significant sense in the light of this separation. The differentiation that he makes between static justice (absolute justice set by the orders) and dynamic justice (relative justice made possible because of sin) does not, in the case of the latter, make justice any more powerful or essential to the individual's life.

It is true that Brunner speaks of justice with reference to systems and institutions.<sup>90</sup> We must strive, he says, to improve them whenever we can and wherever necessary. However, the separation of such improvement from the core of personal existence (justice is not concerned with the person)<sup>91</sup> cannot help but weaken the thrust of the arm of justice. Brunner confirms this assessment when writing

---

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., pp. 91-92.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 25.



the following:

Anyone who really cares for justice must suffer deeply from the enforced acquiescence in a great deal of injustice because it forms part of a system which, even with its great weaknesses and imperfections, is nevertheless better than the disorder which arises when men attempt to improve an imperfect system with inadequate means. Hence the attitude of the Christian faith to justice and reality is essentially a conservative one, because the scope of fruitful individual interference in a given system is relatively narrow in comparison with the vast distance between the individual and the system.<sup>92</sup>

Unless Brunner can relate justice in some manner to the field of meaning, in a way that is true of Hegel, whom he rejects, there can be little room for dynamic justice at all. Man's activity, politically, socially and economically remains restricted without the correlation to be suggested in this thesis. Without the essential relation of man's activity and the events of his life with 'meaning', concern for justice would be negated. Man's position would be, thus, as Brunner states it:

Faith is completely successful because it is the work of God; not as our own act, but as the act of the Holy Spirit. This is what God desires from us: that we should withdraw to this "innermost line of defence", that we should "flee for refuge" to Himself. Once this has been done, the Good has been achieved - whatever else may have been achieved. Thus God wills that we should see the futility of our own action, and expect success from Him alone, that we should despair of our own action, in order that we may put our whole confidence in His act alone.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>93</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 284.

All of this, of course, has much relevance to our understanding of the self. Brunner's expression to this point leaves the self and its meaning very much without context, at least the context of reality as we experience it. Meaning is acquired above the historical events of life, not in them.

Without this firm foundation in our eternal Origin, and without the firm goal in the eternity at the end of the ages, man literally lives "for the day"; he is like a mayfly which lives for a day, and then disappears; his life is played out on the surface of the finite. Only through his relation to eternity does he acquire depth; the "surface" is the finite, the temporal, eternity alone is "depth". And this dimension of "depth" is the same as the dimension of "meaning". Either life has an eternal meaning or it has no meaning at all. For what is meaning, if it can be finally swallowed up in meaninglessness, and annihilated? And what sort of "meaning" would there be without an eternal foundation?<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, p. 304.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BRUNNER'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

## CHAPTER TWO

### BRUNNER'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

#### (A) The Basis of Brunner's Ethical Position

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to provide a foundation for Brunner's ethical position. This is important as the weaknesses of the position can be overcome only if we understand the rationale from which it develops. This thesis will present a challenge to this rationale. Questions of an ontological nature will arise and be dealt with. As much as Brunner might be opposed to questions of ontology, in relation to the Christian faith, it will be argued that his Christian foundation for the individual's placement in life centres around a particular understanding of God. This, in itself, raises questions as to the nature of time and reality. These are specific ontological questions. In what follows, an attempt will be made to develop this.

In the closing pages of the last chapter, an effort was made to explain Brunner's understanding of 'meaning' for the individual in the community. It was suggested that his understanding would weaken man's community and, at the same time, threaten the essential freedom of the individual. It was seen that Brunner's thought, when followed through to its conclusion, implied a determinism. 'Meaning' is imposed upon the individual in a situation. This is so, not apart from the community in the strict sense, but with little regard for the community's demands and structures.

If Brunner's understanding were taken seriously, social ethics, consequentially, would remain static. The danger of individualism would arise as well. Social ethics would remain static because of the basic, mechanical function the community is said to perform in the situation of life. To function merely as a preserver of life does not

suggest much promise for change and reform. The strong danger of individualism exists because the individual is left in his ethical decision without the wisdom of thoughtful consideration of one's situation, or the judgment that may arise from reflection. This is so, in spite of Brunner's repeated statements on the guiding purpose of the community orders and laws. This thought, we found, did not lead the individual in the direction of serious community involvement. In the end, however, we suggested that the tendency toward individualism was arrested by the presence of determinism. Individualism, in the sense of the self's free choice in a situation, is really exclusive of strict determinism. Brunner, thus, escapes such criticism. However, when an individual is put in a community situation that has no relation to the determination of the good then the danger of individualism with all of its social destructiveness threatens.

Decisiveness, for Brunner, in the determination of the good,<sup>1</sup> has very little to do with the community. He maintains a negative attitude in this matter throughout his writings. This is in keeping,

---

<sup>1</sup>Brunner, at times, makes a distinction in his discussion of the good. He is prepared to recognize the existence of pagan virtue, with Luther, and state that for all men there is some awareness of what is right and what is wrong. He writes, "Within Original Sin the distinction between 'good' and 'evil' has not been obliterated. The fact that we are 'all sinners' does not mean that we can do nothing good - in the usual ethical sense of the word - that we can only do evil...It is perfectly possible to combine being a sinner with being 'good' in the ethical sense; indeed, in the last resort the fact of being or not being a sinner has nothing to do with the difference between the morally 'good' and the morally 'evil';..." (Man in Revolt, pp. 153-154). The good to which Brunner refers here, however, does not and cannot, have any relation to the ultimate 'good', that is, the truth about human existence. Without this association, which Brunner refuses to make, the significance of natural morality is destroyed.

of course, with Brunner's attitude to natural morality or general ethics. It would be helpful to consider this attitude briefly. It will serve to substantiate our findings in the first chapter with respect to the 'meaning' of the self, and lead us into the main topic of this chapter.

As with his statements on the significance of the community in the determination of the good, Brunner's views on this matter are difficult to pinpoint. One is faced again with statements that lend themselves to wide interpretation and a certain measure of inconsistency. In spite of this, however, his expression is clear enough to establish a position for him.<sup>2</sup>

At times, Brunner can speak of natural morality in a positive way. He writes in the early pages of The Divine Imperative:

Thus it is true that man - although he does so reluctantly, and does not admit it - actually always gives a reply to the question: "What is the Good?" In the last resort, therefore, moral scepticism, like all scepticism, is a flight from one's own reality and a form of self-deception. Every one who acts, every one who lives as man with a human consciousness, acts "ethically"; that is, he acts within the dimension determined by the ethical question.<sup>3</sup>

It would appear that Brunner is granting natural morality some

---

<sup>2</sup>For a critique of Brunner's position on the topic of natural morality and general ethics, see two books by N. H. G. Robinson: Faith and Duty (Gollancz, London, 1950), and The Groundwork of Christian Ethics. In the latter book, he gives a very sympathetic and yet critical review of Brunner's position.

<sup>3</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 18.

significance in relation to the meaning and truth of life. Even to have an awareness of the 'Good' as Brunner seems to be suggesting in the above, should provide man with the positive value of hope. Life, in the final analysis, is not devoid of all meaning and emptiness. That there is such a thing as 'Good' or 'meaning' should have the effect, at least, of offering man incentive for life. Even if there were no possibility of its achievement now, it should provide strength to endure. Is this not a positive value? One must ask, at the same time, whether it is possible to have awareness of the 'Good' without content? Is not Brunner, thus, giving the 'Good' placement in fact? This would really give morality positive value.

Encouraging as these speculations and questions evoked by Brunner's statement might be, enthusiasm is dampened when we analyse his thought more closely.

In the development of the self, says Brunner, one is faced with a graduated series toward higher and higher forms of existence. It begins at the level of immediacy and ends with the moral idea itself. It is not, he says, until man comes to the moral idea that he approaches the personal. Here, as was not the case with the other stages (custom, civilization, culture), one is confronted with personal decision, in the sense of 'Thou Shalt'.<sup>4</sup> Brunner seems to be saying here that the self cannot be personal until this moral stage is reached. Until it exists by itself without the boundaries associated with the other stages the self is not existing as a 'person'. This, at least, is consistent with our findings so far. He sees the self<sup>5</sup> arising apart

---

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 27

<sup>5</sup>Brunner's understanding of the self will receive further treatment in the last chapter.

from the community which envelops it. He is saying, in effect, that it is in the moment of decision that the personal appears. For this reason, he is prepared to say that the moral stage is closest to the personal.

Having established this positive relation of morality with the personal, he proceeds then to negate all correlation. The moral, in fact, is the most distant stage from the truth of life, that is, from the personal and 'Good'. He states that there is a 'gradual loss of meaning and interest in life' until, with the last 'rung of the ladder', the worst stage of all, that of the moral, is reached.<sup>6</sup>

That Brunner is heaping confusion upon confusion here cannot be denied. He is speaking in one breath of a positive and negative value of the moral life. He makes no attempt to clarify his position as he proceeds. He writes, for example, "The more profound the forgetfulness of God, the more deeply does human existence sink down to the level of animal immediacy or natural life. On the other hand, the highest stage, even when only within the sphere of separation from God, means a very close approach to the truth of God. It is characterized by the command "Thou Shalt", by the view of Good as Law. This does not mean that in this legal view of the Good man is somewhat nearer to the truth, but that he is nearer to the place where the breach occurred, that is, that here man is both very near to the truth, and yet very remote from it."<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 64-65.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 64.



Robinson, in commenting on Brunner's statements in this respect, says he has presented morality to us ".....as a pursuit of the Good and as a flight from it. Consequently, the matter urgently demands a more careful statement. It is not a finally satisfactory answer to our question to say, as so far Brunner appears to have said, simply that the relation subsisting between Christian faith and natural morality is both positive and negative. A more precise formulation is plainly required."<sup>8</sup> Robinson's criticism here is a valid one. Brunner's formulation of faith's relation to morality is unsatisfactory. The aim of this thesis is to state the case more precisely. Our argument will, at least, suggest lines along which such formulation can proceed. It will be suggested that morality must be related more essentially to God Himself. Only then can it be given its place, without making it absolute, at the same time.<sup>9</sup>

In further comment of Brunner's position, let us state an important point. For Brunner, moral man is engaged in a hopeless task. Man is trying by means of reason to give a description of the good, so he may then follow it. This proposal is, in Brunner's

---

<sup>8</sup>Robinson, Faith and Duty, pp. 40-41.

<sup>9</sup>The whole discussion of the relevance of natural morality is important to the task at hand. It bears directly on the question of the place of the individual in community. If morality is given no significance, then man's quest for the truth is wrenched from his historical life and the structures that make up his life. The danger of individualism emerges once again. Robinson recognizes this when he says that Brunner does not sufficiently guard himself against the charge of 'Antinomianism'. "Has the 'ought' of faith a definite and objective content? For antinomianism is a real danger for any theory which takes the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as covering almost the whole ground of Christian ethics and regards genuine goodness as belonging to men only as they are found within the activity of God." (Faith and Duty, p. 49).

mind, an absolute impossibility. What 'is' the case in life and what 'ought' to be the case, as we suggested in the last chapter, are radically divided and separated. Any attempt to synthesise them is doomed to failure. Natural morality, in terms of 'meaning', is presented in a completely negative fashion. Brunner expressed this when he wrote, "....the picture presented by natural ethics is that of a heap of ruins."<sup>10</sup>

It is in the light of this 'is-ought' separation that Brunner makes his simple classification of morality into naturalism and idealism. Natural morality inevitably ends in one of two positions. "In the philosophical ethic as usual there are actually only two great systems which confront one another, which are related to the fundamental contradiction in philosophy as a whole: the Naturalistic view of ethics, which starts from the fact of existence, and the Idealistic view, with its sense of obligation or the Moral Idea."<sup>11</sup>

In Brunner's opinion, there are obvious defects in each form. Naturalism is wrong because it takes existence as it is. It becomes the sole criterion of what should be done. It operates in fact without a sense of obligation as it becomes simply utilitarian in principle. Whatever works, or whatever produces pleasure, is the thing one should do. Brunner complains that such a theory leaves the human race at a level of the pleasure and the desire only. It is void of a real sense of ought. "Ethics then means - according to its theoretical content - the natural causal explanation of the supposedly mysterious supernatural "morality", and in its practical

---

<sup>10</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 67.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 35-36.

content it is simply Utilitarianism. The sense of obligation and the "moral laws" are abbreviated forms of the experience of humanity in respect of that which I find useful and pleasant."<sup>12</sup>

Idealism, on the other hand, is wrong because it is void of any sense of content. It concentrates on the sense of duty in life without giving man any clear indication of the content of that duty. For Brunner, Kant was the principal representative of this form of natural morality. Nothing in the sense of what is, that is, from observable phenomena, can tell us what ought to be. Thus, the sense of duty is the only thing valuable. Duty for duty's sake is the manner in which Brunner chooses to describe it.

It is ironic, that Brunner, at times, comes perilously close in his position to this very form of Idealism. When he refers to the sense of obligation, which one feels in a particular situation as the awareness of the 'Good', he comes close to emptying the ethical of any content. The similarity of Brunner to Idealism is revealed again when he writes, "The motive of conduct becomes our standard of success. We do not infer the goodness of the action from the fact of success, but we deduce success from the goodness of the motive (which is ultimately hidden from us)."<sup>13</sup> Here, form without content, for which he criticises Idealism, is present.

Nevertheless, we can agree with Brunner's criticism of these two positions. Naturalism and Idealism when exercised, one to the exclusion of the other, are ruinous to human life.<sup>14</sup> The position

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>14</sup>Any ethic that seeks a separation of what 'ought' to be from that which 'is' present at hand can be said, with Brunner, to be Idealistic. Platonic ethics could be used as an illustration of this

(<sup>14</sup>continued)

position. With Plato, true reality existed in a form beyond that which is visible in the empirical world. Life, in which we exist and carry out our functions, is appearance only. It does not add or contribute to the 'real' above us. The aim of all life is to bring into realization, as much as possible, the idealized good, which we can only represent in a typological manner. In The Republic, for example, Plato does not try to describe states. He describes what is essential or typical in them. In this manner he sought to construct an objective system of ethics that went beyond pure desire and whim. The good towards which man pointed his life was objectively real. It ought to be realized not because men desire it or wish it, but because it is the good. We have here a classic example of the separation of existence and value that leads to the idealism of which Brunner speaks. Pannenberg recognizes this separation in Plato. "Since Parmenides at the latest, and especially under the powerful influence of Plato, the tendency to separate appearance and being has been dominant. The world of appearance, of doxa, is considered a mixture of being and non-being, of a lesser order than the being which exists in itself. In Platonism this latter being is depicted as the being of the ideas, which is reflected only imperfectly in the appearances and which remains inaccessible to sense perception....This being is held to exist in itself, eternally and unchangeably; the appearances in which it is reflected add nothing to it." (Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 128). Pannenberg sees evidence in Plato that shows he understood this separation as untenable, but was unable to break from it in thought.

It is difficult to find a writer who would endorse such strict separation today. As pointed out, Brunner does not guard himself sufficiently against this form of ethics. It would not be proper, however, to call him a Platonist. Brunner, in some parts of his writings, indicates that a correlation exists between the 'Good' and reality. He fails to provide the concepts, however, to make it understandable. Perhaps C. H. Dodd comes closer to Platonic idealism than Brunner by separating history from the absolute. The event plus meaning idea that is present in Dodd is indicative of this. History, for Dodd, has no meaning in itself; it is merely a mirror through which shines the absolute values of the eternal world. At one point he writes, "Time is, as Plato said, the moving image of eternity" (The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1936), pp. 87-88).

Naturalism, as Brunner describes it, could be represented by Jeremy Bentham (cf. Brunner's Glaube und Ethik (Vortrag, gehalten in der Kunstgesellschaft, Thun, Krebsler & Co., 1945, pp. 7-30), p. 9, in which Brunner criticises Bentham's ethic for its naturalism. Brunner says that Bentham seeks to remove the metaphysical foundation of Kantian ethics and base ethics on natural facts alone.). In Bentham, we see a morality which allows phenomenal reality absolute participation in the determination of the good. The greatest happiness of the greatest number becomes the yardstick of ethical and moral deliberation. In the publication, An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (W. Pickering, Lincoln's - Inn Fields, London, 1823, Chapter I, Section I, p. 1), Bentham wrote, "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne." If the danger of

in this thesis will be one in which Naturalism and Idealism, as exclusive ethical stances, will be ruled out. However, this will not be at the expense of the truth present in each system. A synthesis of the respective positions must be established if ethics is to remain human. Brunner's weakness rests in his failure to provide such a synthesis. Naturalism and Idealism are, and will always be, the inevitable consequences of man's moral effort. It is for this reason that Brunner's search for 'meaning' excludes moral and ethical argument.

With Brunner's criticism of Naturalism and Idealism, we can agree. Exception is taken to his intransigence with respect to their separation. His position rests on a premise which is seriously questioned in itself. A statement by Robinson pinpoints this understanding of Brunner:

If every theory, actual and possible, must be either naturalistic or idealistic, and if naturalism and idealism are, each in its own way, essentially defective, then nothing more need be said and Brunner seems to have proved his point. But this appearance of logical necessity is appearance only, for behind the classification into naturalism and idealism there lies the bare assumption that what is and what ought to be are absolutely separate. It is from this that Brunner starts; and yet, clearly, it is not an opinion which can safely be taken for granted.<sup>15</sup>

---

(<sup>14</sup>continued) Platonic ethics is the separation of existence and value, the danger in Bentham's theory is the inseparability of the two. One is then left with a position that provides little opportunity for critical reflection on the conditions and situations of life. If the 'good' is seen absolutely in terms of what is, then man is left alone with himself, enthralled with his own situation.

<sup>15</sup>Robinson, Faith and Duty, p. 38.

Robinson's criticism of Brunner is valid because Brunner does work from the premise: what 'is' and what 'ought' to be are separated. Brunner writes of this premise himself:

If we try to remove the antithesis between that which is and that which ought to be (which is, indeed, the presupposition of all ethics), into man himself, we are obliged to split the Self of man into an intelligible Self and an empirical Self.<sup>16</sup>

While agreeing with Robinson on the premise of Brunner's position,<sup>1</sup> one questions whether he is right in classifying it as a bare assumption. This gives one the impression that there is no deeper foundation for the premise. It can be argued that this is not the case. Indeed, there are a number of reasons for his separation of 'is' and 'ought'. It is important to search for the primary reason in order to challenge him properly. Without such challenge, Protestantism, which he represents, will remain detached from the secular events of history in its search for 'meaning'.

Robinson himself, in The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, searches for the underlying thought behind Brunner's premise. It is no longer a bare assumption. He singles out the doctrine of sin as the main source of the theologian's attack on secular ethics. In his opinion, this is the reason for Brunner's classification of secular ethics into naturalism and idealism. He writes, "Unless Brunner's view of sinful man can be accepted his treatment of general ethics cannot carry any conviction but must stand condemned....In itself Brunner's drastic shortcut with ethics has nothing to be said for it; and its justification must be sought elsewhere in the interpretation and articulation of Christian truth and, in particular, of the doctrine of

---

<sup>16</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 46, 46.

sin."<sup>17</sup> He goes on to give support for this assertion in some of the statements Brunner makes with reference to general ethics. Robinson's interpretation here could be strengthened, of course, by excerpts from The Divine Imperative. Brunner writes, for example: "...natural ethics is dominated by the principle of self-seeking and self-reference";<sup>18</sup> that is, it is solely an attempt to become self-sufficient. Brunner, thus, can make the conclusive statement, "...in the last resort it is precisely morality which is evil;...the worst state of man is that in which he has complete confidence in himself."<sup>19</sup>

At this point, it is not necessary to argue with Robinson on the relevance of Brunner's doctrine of sin in connection with his attitude to general ethics. It is a matter of little question that Brunner sees man's life riddled by sin. With him, sin is not the absence of something that will be in the future. It is the destruction of a good that was. Man's natural existence, therefore, is seen as being in opposition to God.<sup>20</sup> Thus, this is one reason why Brunner refuses to relate existence with the 'meaning' of that existence. Value, in terms of the 'Good', cannot be realized by man.

---

<sup>17</sup>Robinson, The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, p. 50.

<sup>18</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 69.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>20</sup>Brunner's attitude on this matter can best be seen in Man in Revolt (pp. 114ff). He writes, "All is good in him because it has been created by God, but all this good proceeds from God's creation, stands under a law of evil, or rather, sin. The order of the whole, the final motive, the final connexion, the unity, the fundamental direction, is not good because everything has been dislocated....By sin the nature of man, not merely something in his nature, is changed and perverted." (p. 137). "Existence is now turned in the opposite direction." (p. 136).

If one were to look at Brunner's polemical attack on Liberalism, one would find the chief source of his criticism directed towards its understanding of sin. Liberalism,<sup>21</sup> especially that represented by Ritschl, was guilty in not taking sin with sufficient seriousness. Thus, it attempted, in Brunner's opinion, to build a Kingdom of God on moral grounds.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>Liberalism is very difficult to define under one simple heading. It covers a heterogeneous collection of ideas. The movement had wide influence in America and Europe, particularly Germany. It disclosed itself in a variety of ways and degrees. It was in Germany, however, that the school of thought was actually pioneered under the leading names of Ritschl, Hermann and Harnack. Langdon Gilkey in his book, The Renewal of God-Language makes an attempt to define it. "Liberalism was one of the most courageous and momentous movements of theology in all of Christian history. First of all, let us note that it was 'secular' in two specific and important respects: (1) it accepted as normative criteria for theology the dominant scientific, philosophical, historical, and moral ideas of its culture; and (2) it regarded Christian faith as relevant and important solely because of its creative potentialities for the transformation of the common, historical life of mankind, that is, of the secular world of social history." (p. 76). He includes in the field such figures as Hegel, Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Rauschenbusch, Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne.

<sup>22</sup>In The Mediator Brunner writes strongly against Liberalism, particularly that of Ritschl. Brunner took exception to his thought on various points. He saw Liberalism as confidently rationalistic. In his opinion, it destroyed the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. It made the truth of Christianity a-priori; that is, it is something existing before Christ which Christ served in his life on earth. Brunner writes, "The significant element in the event of Jesus is this, 'that historically this Idea first received shape and form through Christ.'" Obviously, this has nothing whatever to do with revelation in the Christian sense of the word." (p. 60). Brunner criticised the Liberal position for erecting a standard of judgment by which Christ may be judged as Revelation. The criteria consisted of the ideas of God as 'love' and the Kingdom of God. Christ was valuable to human history as someone who perfectly introduced these ideas. He, more than any other historical figure, suitably embodied the pre-arranged conditions of human fulfillment. With such an introduction, man could rationally proceed to build up the Kingdom of God on earth. The reason for such rationalistic confidence, in Brunner's opinion, was the superficial view of sin Ritschl entertained. Brunner claims that Ritschl did not look upon sin as radical opposition to God. Rather it was only ignorance. Brunner writes, "... given Ritschl's whole conception of the human situation before Christ came, to him sin cannot be anything else than ignorance." (p. 137). In Brunner's opinion, Liberalism saw sin not as alienation between God and man, but as subjective unawareness. It was not an actual separation of human life from God, but a state or feeling with no corresponding objective reality. Redemption then became, in this view, not the removal of but the



Along with Brunner's concern for Liberalism's interpretation of sin, however, one might suggest an epistemological challenge as well. Ritschl, for example, frequently wrote in a manner Brunner would find difficult to accept. "The idea of ethical perfection both in our action as well as in the development of our own character is not necessary simply in order to establish our imperfection, but rather has its value for us in what we believe is our destiny in relationship to it. Unless ethical perfection is held out as an attainable goal, the will cannot be motivated to strive persistently toward it."<sup>23</sup> What is stressed here is the possibility of ethical perfection. The value in religion for Ritschl rests in its power to bring this about. There is in Ritschl the idea that the value of something is known by its practical results

---

(<sup>22</sup>continued) "...building up of something which does not yet exist." (p. 135). This again, would suggest something disagreeable for Brunner. Forgiveness, rather than a free gift of God, without which man would be hopeless, would be viewed as an earthly possibility. This would come from viewing sin as ignorance rather than radical opposition to God (see pp. 44, 6ff.).

There is little question, in the light of the above, that sin was a dominant theme in Brunner's theological expression. It did much to shape his convictions about human existence and the possibility of ethical activity in this life. Against Brunner's static view of sin, we find ourselves closer to Robinson's description in dynamic terms (see The Groundwork of Christian Ethics, pp. 216ff.). This would involve a different understanding of the self than the one found in Brunner. If, for example, the 'self' is understood less as substance and more as process then that which separates man from God (sin) must be seen in a similar light.

For a different interpretation of Ritschl's view of sin from that of Brunner's, we recommend David Mueller's book An Introduction to the Theology of Albrecht Ritschl (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1969) pp. 65ff. Mueller's suggestion that Ritschl's view of sin is social in character, is more in line with this thesis, than Brunner's thought on the matter (p. 72).

<sup>23</sup> Mueller, An Introduction to the Theology of Albrecht Ritschl, p. 137.

and effects on man and his world.<sup>24</sup> Thus, goodness would be something judged in terms of the phenomenal reality of experience.

Brunner would be opposed to this. This is shown in the following statement: "The Ritschlian conception of the Kingdom of God is just as fully influenced by immanental ideas of History as of Reason;..."<sup>25</sup> Brunner writes of his contrasting position this way:

...we see the love of God in the fact that He does not desire to have His glory in anything other than in the coming of His Kingdom, in the perfect fellowship of men with Him, the Creator, and with one another. By this I mean nothing even remotely resembling the ideas of practical reason, of a goal of culture and humanity immanent in history. The Kingdom of God lies beyond the bounds of philosophy of history, all processes of culture, and all attempts to unite men with one another; it is the Kingdom which will be set up by means of Resurrection and Judgment.<sup>26</sup>

The practical receives little attention in this assertion. 'Good' in terms of the ultimate good<sup>27</sup> (personal good) is divorced from any

---

<sup>24</sup>Mueller writes, "Ritschl's concern is to accentuate the practical effects of man's justification and reconciliation. We saw above that he could express this idea by speaking of man's dominion over the world. Hence even as Ritschl's definition of religion requires that man's attitude toward God have as its correlate his attitude toward the world, so man's justification through God's verdict carries with it - if properly understood - man's changed attitude toward the world." (Ibid., p. 114).

<sup>25</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 612.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>27</sup>Let us keep in mind that Brunner can speak of good in a single sense (Ultimate Good) and in a plural sense. The latter refers to the rational distinctions we make with reference to the moral quality of an act. Brunner would not speak of Good in terms of its practicality. Ritschl, as we have mentioned, used this notion. If there is fault in Ritschl for overstressing the practical, Brunner fails in not associating it with the Good. It can be argued that to equate the two without qualification would be a fallacy. To keep them strictly apart, however, would make any discussion of the Good irrelevant to the concrete world in which we are living. It should be noted that there has been a great deal of discussion in this century on the definition of the good. In this connection, reference is made to Mary Warnock, Ethics Since 1900 (Oxford University Press, London, 1960).

notion of practicality. In this attitude, one can see a Kantian epistemological bias against knowledge of things eternal. Thus, there are good reasons for saying that Brunner's persistent separation of what 'is' from what 'ought' to be is because of this philosophical influence.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Brunner writes approvingly of Kant and critical philosophy in this manner: "It is no accident that Kant held fast to the thing-in-itself, in spite of the dubiousness of the concept. This concept denoted for him the insuperable barrier between us and the truth itself. If this dualism is set aside by the evolution of thought, we are forced, without realizing it, into Hegelian Monism" (from Paul Jewett, Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation (James Clarke & Co. Ltd., London, 1954), p. 91).

Before Kant's time, faith and science were treated in a similar fashion; that is, there was no sharp bifurcation of knowledge, each with its own respective and exclusive sphere. This axiom was broken by Kant when he delineated the spheres of faith and knowledge so that one had no relationship with the other. For Kant, faith was distinguished from knowledge by its sphere and object. Knowledge had to do with sense perception. The knowing activity was restricted to the establishing of determinate relations between perceptions given under the forms of space and time. Thus, in giving the cause of a phenomenal happening, knowledge gained by science was valid. In Kant's opinion, we can never know a thing as it is in itself. It only appears to us. We, too, shall be speaking of a reality that appears. Unlike Kant, it will not be spoken of in such a radical manner. For him, the phenomenal world, the world of sense perception, had no relationship with the numenal world, the realm of faith and religion. Faith became the means by which we enter the numenal realm and scientific knowledge was not applicable. Man's experience was extremely limited or non-functional when it came to matters of faith.

It appears that Ritschl, in his theology, overcame some of this Kantian scepticism by suggesting that one is able to know things in the light of their effects. Brunner, on the other hand, held firm to the Kantian theory. Refer to Cornelius Van Til's book, The New Modernism (James Clarke & Co. Ltd., London, 1946), for a strong argument of this viewpoint. See also an article by George A. Schrader, 'Brunner's Conception of Philosophy' (The Theology of Emil Brunner, ed., Charles Kegley (The Macmillan Company, London, 1962), pp. 111-133), where the author writes of Brunner's bias for critical philosophy in determination of the scope of reason. His point is well taken that Brunner is not depreciating man's use of reason, but that he errors in accepting critical philosophy as the sole criterion in such a matter.

It could be noted here that Ritschl, even with his departure from critical philosophy, still failed to take history seriously. Some writers claim that for him 'meaning' is imposed upon reality. Philip Hefner makes a good case for this in his book, Faith and the Vitalities of History (Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1966). He writes, "I am suggesting that Ritschl's theological work is beset by incongruities which undermine his own intention to permit history to shape the content and strategy of that work. This incongruity arises from his inability to permit history to permeate his theological methodology as a factor which in its own integrity is worthy to function normatively." (p. 98). He suggests that Pannenberg shows, of recent theologians, the most promise in this matter.

Enough has been said to show that the premise of Brunner's ethical position could come from various sources. We have mentioned only two, the doctrine of sin and critical philosophy. Either source could be submitted as the possible groundwork for his position.

For our purposes, we will concentrate on another facet of Brunner's thought. Although not unrelated to the above suggestions, it is distinctive enough to warrant serious reflection on its own. It will be suggested that the weaknesses of Brunner's ethic (lack of 'meaningful' community and presence of determinism) can be attributed to the manner in which he conceives the God of faith. This can be a relevant area of discussion, not only because the question of God is a timely one in the theological scene, but, more importantly, it is in this area that Brunner looked for a solution to the ethical separation of 'is' and 'ought'. He thinks that it is in this area of theology, that is, in relation to our concept of God and how God is revealed in Jesus, that our social thinking is shaped. In speaking, for example, of the relationship between the Father and the Son, or more specifically, of the difference between them, he writes, "If we take this idea seriously, we find that this leads to conclusions which are of the greatest practical significance, even for our attitude towards social and ethical questions."<sup>29</sup> While agreeing with Brunner in this statement, a critical

---

<sup>29</sup>Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, Dogmatic Vol. I, p. 229. It would be safe to say that the doctrine of God is fundamental to the ethical thinking of both Brunner and Pannenberg. Pannenberg writes of its relevance in this way: "Christian ethical failure is closely related to a misunderstanding of the doctrine of God." (*Theology and the Kingdom of God*, p. 112). One cannot deal with the doctrine of God in a general way within the limits and objectives of this thesis. It is necessary to confine the research to the two men in question. At the same time, it could be stated that both men represent two important trends present in theology. Brunner has much in common with Barth, Bultmann and Bonhoeffer while Pannenberg shows some similarity to the thought of Teilhard de Chardin and Whitehead. Thus, a detailed examination of these two men will encompass, by implication, a much wider field of thought.

While stating this, it is the conviction of the writer, that Pannenberg

analysis will be made of the particular concept of God he presents.

In beginning the analysis, let us again state that for Brunner there is a radical separation of value and existence on the plane of history. Historical reality cannot offer man any areas of value in terms of the 'meaning' of human existence. Natural morality is rendered meaningless by its inevitable division into naturalism and idealism. This is the lasting state of man's natural life as Brunner describes it for us. The question that is directed toward us now and which must be explored throughout the rest of this dissertation is: How do we escape from the state of alienation which rests at the heart of ethical life?<sup>30</sup> In the response made by Brunner to this question can be seen the source of his problem. In essence the response can be seen in the following excerpt from The Divine Imperative:

If then it is impossible to solve the problem of ethics within the sphere of immanent ethics based on reason, because irreconcilable antithesis are continually and inevitably reappearing, we may put the final question: Can religion solve the ethical problem?..what we mean here is a real religion of revelation,

---

(<sup>29</sup>continued) offers something very unique in his doctrine of God. With his understanding, he leads us into exciting and promising avenues of thought for the social and ethical life of man. It was this promise that determined our choice of him. While sharing the same ethical concern of Brunner, that of relating the individual to the community, he deals with the question in a manner that assures the recognition of both. In his conception of God, he offers us an ontological basis with liberating and creative social ramifications. The question of individuation and participation is taken up with the protection, limitation and justification of each. Brunner's understanding of God, on the other hand, has within it an ontology that leads to the criticisms directed toward him in the first chapter. This will be elaborated as we proceed.

<sup>30</sup>In Pannenberg, the separation of 'is' and 'ought' is natural to existence apart from sin. There is, of course, an all important identity that he speaks of, as well. With Brunner, given his doctrine of God, there is difficulty in seeing how any identity can be claimed.

in which God confronts the human "I" as "Thou", in which man does not dispose of the divine truth, but receives it in an act of self-communication on the part of God, and in which this act of communication is not the same as the deepest act of self-reflection but an event, in which from beyond human possibilities God Himself discloses Himself to man.<sup>31</sup>

Can we, Brunner is asking in the above, solve the ethical question by removing the fact-value dilemma in God for the individual? Can we obliterate the dilemma of 'is-ought' for the individual, by excluding it in the communication of God to man? In other words, can it be excluded in God Himself, for God communicates nothing in his revelation but Himself?<sup>32</sup> Brunner answers this question in the affirmative.

The Christian faith ought to give an answer to this question. If it is certain that in the revelation given to it it does possess the truth, not a truth, the truth which is given by God, and not merely a truth which has been discovered by man, through the processes of knowledge, that it possesses absolute and not relative truth, then surely this certainty includes an affirmative answer to that particular question.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, the antithesis Brunner sees at the centre of life is removed in God. This is so, he says, in such a way that the individual is taken seriously yet not at the cost of the community, and the community is taken seriously yet not at the cost of the individual.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 50.

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter four in Brunner's The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Volume I.

<sup>33</sup> Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 51.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

This last claim of Brunner will be held in serious question as the implications of his doctrine of God lead in another direction. It was suggested in the opening chapter that Brunner's thought when analysed does not protect the significance of the community. Rather, its position becomes inconsequential to the personal 'meaning' of the individual's life. It was seen, at the same time, that there is a determinism in Brunner to a degree that destroys human freedom. This is indicated by the statement, "The Good consists in always doing what God wills..."<sup>35</sup> Thus, in actual fact both the individual and the community fail to receive the necessary significance to guarantee personal existence. Our claim is that these things are so basically because of his understanding of God.

What are the consequences of Brunner's suggestion that the fact-value or is-ought dilemma is removed for the individual in God? What does this suggestion infer about the nature of God Himself? Let it be noted at this point, we did not say fact and value or is and ought are joined in God for the individual. This suggestion will be dealt with later as it is in opposition to our interpretation of Brunner. It is important that clarity be established on this point.

Two things emerge from Brunner's proposed solution to our ethical dilemma. They are both related to his concept of God and directly effect the social and ethical position of man's life: (1) God is timeless and (2) God exists. Let us deal with these in turn as they are vitally important to what follows in the thesis.

---

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

(B) God as Timeless

It was suggested that Brunner granted little significance to the structures of community. In his search for meaning, man's participation in the events of life was not stressed as vital or essential. In the discussion that is to follow, these observations have a great deal of import.

Significant community exists for man only when it is given a degree of participation, high or low, in the essence of human life. That is to say, only where the facts of life are accorded value in sufficient degree are we able to look upon community as important. Experientially, this is an aspect of everyday life. Fact and value are actually joined for man in society. That community has meaning is, thus, an accepted fact common to life. There are institutions, such as the family, which are regarded as institutional values. From them what ought to be the case can, to a degree, be derived. In this sense, fact and value are joined.<sup>36</sup> The community structure has

---

<sup>36</sup> John R. Searle in an article, 'How to Derive 'Ought' From 'Is'' (Philosophical Review, Vol. 73, 1964, pp. 43-58), points out that the Linguistic analyst fails to make note of the distinction between brute fact and institutional fact. 'Smith made a promise', for example, is a much different statement than 'James is six feet tall'. The former is made within, and contains meaning and significance only within a certain institution, the institution of promise. The latter statement is made outside the context of an institution. Searle's purpose was to show that it is not illogical to derive an 'ought' from an 'is'. The significance of his argument, however, is just as important for another implication. A great deal of life is lived out in a contextual atmosphere, without which the individual would not have any meaning. Searle was prepared to concede the existence of brute fact to a certain extent. It is highly questionable, however, whether any statement of fact can be called 'brute' in any sense. Even the statement 'James is six feet tall' is uttered with some purpose in mind.

A contribution of Hegel's thought is that he refused to accept the fact-value separation of Kant's system. This was so, says W. H. Walsh (Hegelian Ethics (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1969), p. 47), not on logical grounds but because it was morally intolerable. He was opposed to the Kantian outlook which made the morally valuable and the 'everlasting ought to be' separate from the facts of life. Hegel's aim, he says, was to point out the interrelatedness of all existence. He did not deny that the individual exists, but he did deny that the individual was complete within himself. He sought to bridge the gap of fact and value by stressing the social environment in which man lives and pointing out that morality is embodied in institutions (Searle's suggestion above).



meaning because value has location and extension in time, in the facts of ordinary experience. If such identity were absolute, then individuality and contingency would be denied to life. If fact and value are inseparable, or are made to appear so, there can be no basis for individuality as man is then determined in life simply by that which exists around him. He remains enthralled, as it were, by that which surrounds him. However, it is not our intention to give identity absolute place. The only implication intended is that there is some sense in which fact and value are united in time. One might go on to say that this is a necessary condition if there is to be unity and duration of existence which we normally associate with community.

In theological ethics, this means that if community is to be given an essential place in life; that is, if the fact-value nexus is to be defended, then God must be thought of in such a manner as to commit man to this understanding. In other words, God must be thought of in essential relationship to the facts of existence or time. Only then can the 'Good' have a basis in fact. This means one thing is ruled out from the beginning. God must not be thought of as timeless.

It is necessary to deal with this point at some length, for it is vital to the rest of our argument. If God is timeless, then there follows the consequences for community indicated above. It is precisely this timelessness that is implied in Brunner's doctrine of God. It is suggested in his proposed solution for man's ethical dilemma. Brunner at no point in his writings boldly states, as with Schleiermacher,<sup>37</sup> that God is timeless. Nevertheless, it is implicit enough in his thought, for a case to be made against him.

---

<sup>37</sup>See Nelson Pike, God and Timelessness (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1970), pp. 6ff.

In his book, God and Timelessness,<sup>38</sup> Nelson Pike says that the concept of God as timeless involves two basic things: one, God has no duration in time, or no extension in temporality, and two, God has no location in time. The two qualities, location and extension, imply each other in Pike's estimation. For purposes of discussion, however, he has separated them. Clearly, Pike has given us the presuppositions for any talk of God in or out of time. When one applies his criteria to Brunner, the timelessness of his God concept is evident.

That Brunner grants God no location or extension in time can be verified in the following way. For his proposed solution to the ethical dilemma of life, Brunner turns to religion. More specifically, man is removed from the dilemma in God who communicates Himself.<sup>39</sup> To return to a point alluded to earlier,<sup>40</sup> it is significant that Brunner does not say fact and value are united for the individual in God. This is something to which Brunner would not concede. To say, unqualifiedly, that fact and value are united in God would suggest God is present as an existing being in time. Consequentially, this would give God duration in time. Nelson Pike draws his reader's attention to this when he writes: "If at each moment between three o'clock and four o'clock one could say, truly, that God exists now (i.e., at this moment), it would then follow that God exists at each moment between three o'clock and four o'clock. This would entail

---

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>39</sup>In his book, Christianity and Civilization, Vol. I, pp. 34ff., Brunner again states his solution to man's ethical situation. He says the truth of God has nothing to do with either subject or object but is beyond both. In God, that is, subject and object or fact and value are removed for the individual. (p. 35). (Also see Brunner, Truth as Encounter, trans. Amandus W. Loos (SCM Press Ltd., London, 1964), p. 85).

<sup>40</sup>Refer to p. 68 of this thesis.

that the life of God has duration; for what is it to have duration if it is not to exist at each moment in a temporally extended interval?"<sup>41</sup>

Clearly, this is an understanding one would not draw from Brunner's concept of God. He does not want to associate God, in any manner, with the time process. In this connection, for example, Brunner writes, "...God is not Himself involved in the Time process."<sup>42</sup> He continues to write of the nature of God, "The question of the temporal or the non-temporal cannot touch the divine Nature. The most we could say would be to speak of God as above time...."<sup>43</sup> Thus, it is possible to say that the nature of God is immutable for Brunner. God in his nature cannot change. It follows if God is such that he cannot change, that is, if he is immutable, then he cannot have any essential relation to time. He can have neither extension nor location in time. Again I turn to Pike for support of this reasoning.

Assume for the moment that if a given individual has location in time, it would at least be consistent.....to say that that individual persists for more than one moment. Further...if it is consistent to say that a given individual persists for more than one moment in time, it is consistent.....to say that that individual undergoes change. Under these two assumptions, if a given individual is such that it is logically impossible for that individual to undergo change (i.e., if a given individual is immutable....) then that individual is such that it is logically

---

<sup>41</sup>Pike, God and Timelessness, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, p. 270.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 270. Brunner is doubtful of the idea that fact and value are united in God. The danger of pantheism is present with such an idea. He writes, "A connection between the "ought" and the "is", between law and life, is only possible by means of a pantheistic speculation which is suspect alike on ethical and philosophical grounds." (Brunner, God and Man, trans. David Cairns (SCM Press, London, 1936), p. 33).

impossible for it to exist for more than one moment in time....and if a given individual is such that it is logically impossible for it to exist at more than one moment in time, then it is also such that it would logically impossible for it to have location in time.....<sup>44</sup>

If God can have no location in time, then at no point or to no degree can it be said fact and value are united in God. Thus community, theologically speaking, has no grounds for significance. This is assuming, of course, that community can have 'meaning' only if the facts of existence have some degree of essential value. A case can be made for this, theologically, only by conceiving God, in his essence, as related to time and the time process. Brunner has not done this.

Since this is so important in the whole discussion of man's participation in society, it is necessary to substantiate our findings from other statements in Brunner's writings. That God has an aspect of timelessness in his nature is implied throughout his works, in spite of his inconsistencies.

The suggestion that God is timeless for Brunner is meant to convey the thought that in no earthly event is God 'meaningfully' present. Or to restate it, the 'Good' is not a possibility within history. This is so, regardless of the distinction he makes between special and general revelation or natural grace and grace of redemption.<sup>45</sup> He is prepared to grant God a presence in the world with this distinction. It is even a presence which is observable by looking at the world. God, after all, created everything and left his imprint on creation. As

---

<sup>44</sup>Pike, God and Timelessness, p. 43.

<sup>45</sup>See Brunner's, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, pp. 154ff. See also the first chapter of The Mediator.

Brunner expresses it, "God has given the world its "orders", and it is precisely in these orders that He constantly reveals His Creator-Spirit, and His Power as Creator.....This constancy of the order of Nature, and of the forms of Nature, is the expression of the divine will, of the limitations imposed by God, and of the divine faithfulness."<sup>46</sup>

The separation of revelation into special and general categories does not nullify the interpretation of Brunner thus far. Natural grace or general revelation is not personal. It is not 'meaningful'. There is no saving truth within general revelation. When dealing with the 'orders', in the first chapter, the impersonal, mechanical quality of their nature was emphasised. The 'orders', for Brunner, are within the general revelation of God. Thus, the understanding that God's nature is without time is applicable.

It must be admitted that Brunner has a logical problem before him arising from his treatment of the 'orders' and general revelation. As stated earlier, Brunner will not accept any notion of the participation of God's essential nature in time. The location and extension of God in time, we reasoned, would be against his conviction. This is where the problem arises. Pike has shown us the impossibility of speaking of God's creation without involving Him essentially in time. To create is to have location in time.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps it was this realization that made Brunner speak of creation without a beginning or an end. Chronological time is not part of Brunner's understanding of creation. Creation is, rather, a statement defining

---

<sup>46</sup>Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, Dogmatics Vol. II, p. 152.

<sup>47</sup>Pike, *God and Timelessness*, p. 117.

human existence<sup>48</sup> and not something related to a before or an after. This could also be the reason why Brunner speaks more of God's preservation of the world than his creation of it. The former might avoid the association of God and time. From deeper analysis, however, it is impossible to speak either of preserving or supporting the world without relating God essentially to time. Pike has pointed out again that talk of preservation fares no better than the doctrine of creation itself.<sup>49</sup> He uses the illustration of the sea supporting the ship. One cannot talk of such support in a timeless sense, that is, without temporal extension. To maintain the non-involvement of God with time, as Brunner wishes to do, one would have to speak of God's supporting and preserving powers in an a-temporal sense. And this logically cannot be done.

To return to the topic at hand, there is further support for the concept of God as timeless in Brunner's favorite expression of God as 'Absolute Subject'.<sup>50</sup> This is an expression which only leads Brunner more deeply into the position for which we criticise him. In relationship with God, he says, man does not enter into relationship with fact, or with something. He writes:

We understand that when God speaks with me the relation to a "something" stops in an unconditional sense, not simply in a conditional sense as in an ordinary human encounter. When I stand opposite to God, I am face-to-face with him who unconditionally is no "something," who in the unconditional sense is pure "Thou." Therefore

---

<sup>48</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, p. 8.

<sup>49</sup>Pike, God and Timelessness, p. 117.

<sup>50</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, p. 14.

I have nothing to "think"; that is to say, I have nothing spontaneously to disclose. He alone is Discloser. In this relation of facing one another, not only that "which" is opposite becomes something other - a Thou instead of a something - but the entire relation undergoes a fundamental change...<sup>51</sup>

God is, thus, beyond any kind of objectivity in terms of our world;

He is 'only Subject'. Brunner continues to write:

The idea of God of faith is only gained in the sphere of faith, not in that of meta-physical, neutral thinking, which only produces neutral "objective" results. True theological thought should never leave the dimension of revelation, the "I-Thou" relation, in order to pass into the dimension of the "It". Since thinking about God continually leads theologians to slip into the tendency to regard Him as an object, they need continually to reverse this tendency by moving back to the original situation: revelation-faith. True theology, therefore, must not only begin with the knowledge of God as the absolute Subject; its one, its sole task, is to make this clear.<sup>52</sup>

The importance Brunner attributes to the Subjectivity of God in maintaining His Sovereignty and Lordship over time, can be defended.

---

<sup>51</sup>Brunner, Truth as Encounter, p. 115.

<sup>52</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, p. 141. Brunner would find much difficulty with Ian Ramsey's talk of cosmic disclosure as providing a "basis in fact" for all our theological assertions ('Talking About God: Models, Ancient and Modern' (Philosophy Today, No. 2, (The Macmillan Company, London, 1969), pp. 155-179)). "I would claim", writes Ramsey, "that it is quite clear that cosmic disclosures are ontologically privileged in so far as they disclose that which confronts us as basic "given," that which is set over against ourselves in every situation of this kind, that which individuates the Universe." (p. 167). Similarly, Gordon Kaufman, in speaking of the meaning of God, refers to the experiential limit of life which reminds one of the One who limits man ('On the Meaning of "God": Transcendence Without Mythology' (New Theology, No. 4), p. 74). From an ontic analysis, that is, a description of the kinds of experiences human beings enjoy in the world, we can gather fact, or 'disclosures'. In Ramsey's terminology, they have an objective content and lead the experient to talk about God.

If this were the sole intention of his expression, there would be little debate with him. To make God subject to anything would be an infringement on his Lordship and Sovereignty, without which God would not be God. At least, this is the traditional understanding of the word God. Any attempt Brunner makes to protect this understanding receives this writer's support.

Clearly, however, Brunner wants to make more of the expression than this. With it, he wishes to proclaim as well the absolute Subjectivity of God, in the sense that there is no objectivity in his nature. And it is to this intention that exception is taken. The reality of God would lose its intelligibility to modern man in the process. There would be no purpose to any discussion of God in 'fact'. Philosophical inquiry about the truth of life would be made, of course, irrelevant and impossible.<sup>53</sup> But what is more important in our debate with Brunner, community would be relegated to a minor role in the meaning of the 'self'. The 'Good' would have no objective reference.

Brunner's thinking, at this point, is not unlike that of Martin Buber. And this is understandable since he had a great deal of respect for him. Buber's influence on the theologian cannot be

---

<sup>53</sup>George Schrader made this criticism of Brunner when he wrote, "It is meritorious to insist upon the transcendence of God and the uniqueness of faith and revelation. But it is unfortunate if this emphasis either makes God irrelevant to the world or introduces a bifurcation between the God of philosophy and ordinary experience and the God of Faith. If that occurs, the transcendence of God is maintained at the cost of His reality, and the purity of faith at the price of its intelligibility." ('Brunner's Conception of Philosophy' (The Theology of Emil Brunner, ed. Charles W. Kegley (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1962), pp. 111-133)).



denied.<sup>54</sup> Buber's understanding of God as pure "Thou", to whom nothing of the "It" world can be ascribed, was probably influential in the development of Brunner's whole doctrine of God and, as well, his thought of man. For Buber, God transcended the object-subject antithesis of

---

<sup>54</sup>Brunner admits to this influence himself (cf. Kegley, The Theology of Emil Brunner, p. 11). Certainly the similarity of Brunner with Buber's personalism can be seen in the former's understanding of the 'self' (for a consideration of the influence of personalistic philosophy on the thought of Brunner, see an article by Paul K. Jewett, 'Ebnerian Personalism and Its Influence upon Brunner's Theology' (Westminster Theological Journal, Vol. XIV, No. 2, May 1952), p. 113ff.). The discussion of the self will be reserved for the last chapter. There, the ramifications of both Brunner's and Pannenberg's thought will be elaborated on. The difference between them will be stressed. It is a difference expressed in the following: "Brunner sought support in the arguments of the personalistic anthropology of Buber and Ebner, but their thesis, which was also adopted by Gogarten, that the human "I" is unthinkable without a "thou", and is ultimately constituted not by the "thou" of our fellow men, but by the absolute "thou" of God, depends upon separating personal I-Thou relationships from the practical concerns of the human experience of the world...." (Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 89).

Unless objectivity may be spoken of in reference to God then community and the practical concerns of life will remain separated from the personal. Our suggestion with Pannenberg, will be to take the subjective-objective dichotomy up into God, while making God sovereign over it. Only in this way, can we hope to show how the community of man has value. Only in this manner, can it be thought of as personal.

George Schrader criticises Brunner for thinking of God without objectivity. His thoughts are worth repeating in this context. He writes, "It is I think, both bad theology and bad metaphysics to maintain that God is pure subject. The notion of a subject is surely a philosophical concept which has been assimilated by theology, or if you prefer, even as it may have been independently developed by theology. We need not claim that we know God perfectly, either on the basis of natural knowledge or revelation. But if we are to talk or think meaningfully about God at all, we must reflect on what we mean or can mean in referring to God as a Subject. Could He, for example, be in any sense a subject unless He were self-related, unless He were a self? And if He is an object to Himself and necessarily so, how does this in any way militate against the possibility of knowing Him as an object? In other words, in knowing Him as an object might we not in some way know Him as self and, even as a subject? Moreover, if God is related to the created world and to finite persons, must He not reflect this relatedness in Himself? Is not the creation some sort of expression of God in objective form and, if He is a living God who is present to His creation, does this not entail that God is more than pure Subject?" (The Theology of Emil Brunner, p. 126).

the natural world and could never be thought of with any notion of objectivity. This is pointed out very well in Paul Pfuete's interpretation of Buber. In his following statement a strong resemblance to Brunner can be seen.

There is however, says Buber, one Thou which can never become an It, the eternal Thou, or God. Though we speak of God as He, the true meaning of His approach to man and His "address" to man is found only in the sense of the relation of an I and a Thou. God lets himself be spoken to personally, and speaks only to persons. God, by his nature, never ceases to be Thou for us. He who knows God may at times know remoteness from God and the pain and barrenness of the tormented heart; but he does not know the absence of God: it is only man who is not always....faithful to the truth of meeting with the Thou. We cannot, declares Buber, define or measure or use God. God cannot be expressed: He can only be addressed.<sup>55</sup>

Pfuete continues to write the following words in reference to Buber.

Not only does the Thou-world transcend mathematical time to endure in presentness; it is also not set in the context of Space. In the Thou, both space and time fade in the background. I do not meet my Thou in some time and place. I can, of course, place him in time and space; indeed, I continually do just that. But each time I do it, I transform our person-to-person relation into an understood connection. I do violence to the truth of the meeting with Thou. The context of the Thou-world is the center, "where the extended lines of relation meet - in the eternal Thou."<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup>Paul Pfuete, Self, Society, Existence (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1961), p. 144.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 155. See pp. 216-217 for Pfuete's own criticism of Buber's thought on the pure subjectivity or pure 'Thouness' of God. H. D. Lewis, commenting on Buber (and again this could apply equally to Brunner) writes, "It has often been urged by myself among others, that there can be no mere encounter. This seems certainly true in our ordinary dealings with each other. How can I encounter anyone unless I know something about him? In like manner religious life, at least all but the most incipient, has some filling or content obtained from some experience of God or divine disclosure. Religion is not just the sense of the being of God. It contains more precise beliefs about what God is like, how He deals with us and how we experience Him, what He requires of us and so forth. Some account must be given of this and the way it is warranted. We cannot just cry 'Encounter', and dodge the issue." ('The Elusive Self and the I-Thou Relation' (Talk of God), p. 179).

From the discussion, thus far, the case we are making against Brunner, with regard to God and time, should be evident. With him, the concepts remain mutually exclusive.<sup>57</sup> The consequences for man's community remain as stated.

To add further support to our analysis, however, focus may be directed toward Brunner's thought on the nature of time. A few pages will be devoted to this consideration, as the relation of God to time (time and eternity) is vital to the discussion throughout this work.

It is sometimes difficult to tell whether the exclusiveness of God and time in Brunner is because of the manner in which he conceives God or because of his negativity of time itself. Which comes first could be a matter of debate. We have chosen to argue from the standpoint of his God concept. Nevertheless, an investigation of his thought on time will support our contention that a timelessness is present in his idea of God.

---

<sup>57</sup>In one place Brunner states categorically that there is no essential relationship between Jesus Christ and the structures of community. He writes, "Where the State or the Family are mentioned... the New Testament does not speak of Christ, as ruling through His Word of reconciliation, but simply of the 'ordinances of God'." (The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, p. 318). In a similar way, Brunner writes, "At first sight, however, the idea that God's 'metaphysical' Being is not only 'God as He is in Himself' (Subject), but also God as He is 'For-us', is objectionable, because it seems to suggest that such a relation of God to His creation should be reckoned an integral part of the Nature of God, which, indeed, is unthinkable." (The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, p. 193). One can understand Brunner's objection to correlating Christ completely with community. However, it is a matter of debate whether Visser't Hooft, whom he refers to, implied the strict directness of relationship that Brunner assumes for him when he writes, "...it is sufficient to know the Gospel of Jesus, the Saviour, in order to lay down norms of conduct for the State, education, law, culture..." (The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, p. 320). While agreeing that a strict correlation is not defensible, we do not agree to the total absence of correlation, as with Brunner.

Time, for Brunner, is a reality, characterized by inevitable waste-fulness. It is, thus, not a level of reality to be classified as personal. Human activity in time has about it, it is true, a certain measure of purpose. This was seen in the preserving and manipulating functions of the orders of creation, which are time bound. There is as stated, however, nothing essentially important about this. Thus the valuelessness of time is, in actual fact, the real significant thing emerging from contemplation of the orders.

As we suggested, truth is concerned with the wholeness of life in Brunner's writings. Time, being a fleeting experience is dis-associated from wholeness. The 'primal experience of the time-factor' can best be summed up in the words, 'time passes away.'<sup>58</sup> "Everyone knows", writes Brunner, "that the moment which was just now and is now gone never more returns....Precisely this feature, the character of the one-way street, this time-form which is different from space by the fact of its linearity and irreversibility, is "the deepest source of the world's sorrow".<sup>59</sup> This is the reason for Brunner's hostility to any thought of Utopia or progress on the plane of profane history.<sup>60</sup> The contingencies that would precede such a

---

<sup>58</sup>Brunner, Eternal Hope, p. 43.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>60</sup>Brunner makes a distinction between profane history and proper history. Profane history is the level of historical reality in which we all participate. Proper history is history from God. Time, in which we participate, has no essential relationship with the latter (cf. Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, trans. A. J. D. Farrer and B. L. Wolf (Ivor Nicholson and Watson Ltd., London, 1937), pp. 123ff.).

goal in history would never participate in the end result. He writes:

This belief in meaning which made intelligible both the individual and the whole has been dissolved by the rationalistic faith in progress, by hope based on self-security. But this attribution of meaning, as we have already seen, was only possible by a sort of forgetfulness. For what sort of meaning could the progress of humanity give to my life, the life of the individual man? The individual had, as it were, in order to attribute meaning to history, to resign meaning for himself in favour of a meaning for humanity as a whole. For no doubt a vaguely conceived humanity in the remote future might well share in the goal of progress, but not he, the individual man, of to-day. Humanity must, as it were, form a pyramid where each generation would climb higher than its predecessors until the last, climbing over all the others, reached the top.<sup>61</sup>

This writer sympathises with Brunner's suspicion of Utopian ideals. It is our conviction, as well, that complete wholeness (truth) cannot be attained within the scope of historical time. However, Brunner's refusal to grant any measure, or appearance, of wholeness to time is not accepted. The theme being developed in this study will stress the participation of the individual in an 'anticipated' wholeness of time. This is an idea taken from Pannenberg which has immense social and ethical relevance.

Brunner's scepticism of man's progressive development stems from his negative attitude toward time rather than, as with Pannenberg, the thought of life's incompleteness on the plane of history. There is no sense in which wholeness may be experienced in time, as time continually falls away from itself in wastefulness.

---

<sup>61</sup>Brunner, Eternal Hope, pp. 82-83.

Meaning or wholeness, for Brunner, is found only above time. It is above profane history, in another realm where God is present and existing as love. To illustrate this point, the following statement is cited:

Christian faith knows nothing of any history of the world in the sense of a unity. Its unity is not historical, but that which belongs at once to "Urgeschichte"...It is not the course of history as such that is of interest,...Rather what is of interest is the lightening-flash in history of what lies behind history, the effective self-assertion of a factor that by its very nature does away with history, viz. the reality of divine revelation.<sup>62</sup>

Brunner's depreciation of historical time here is not unlike the attitude expressed by modern nihilism.<sup>63</sup> His description of historical reality, apart from the Christian faith is expressed in a way that is very nihilistic in character. His denial of any purposeful role (meaning) to secular morality and ethics, is indicative of this. At one point in Brunner's earlier writings, he dares to suggest that outside the Christian faith there is little that can help man in distinguishing good from evil. In reference to Nietzsche and Hitler, he says there is no reason why ethics, left to itself, should not turn out to be similar to that of the totalitarian dictators. "Nietzsche, Hitler and Mussoline," he writes, "have

---

<sup>62</sup>Brunner, *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 126.

<sup>63</sup>By nihilism is meant that philosophy of existence which stresses the questionableness of all things; there are no answers. The questionableness of life is in itself not nihilistic. It is rather, the acceptance of questionableness as the final verdict of all things. If no answer can be given to anything, the result is that spoken of by Albert Camus in *The Rebel*: "...the hopeless gap between the question of man and the silence of the universe." (Vintage Books, New York, 1956, p. 9).

done humanity the great service of making it plain what nature is like left to itself."<sup>64</sup>

Brunner is suggesting by his picture of time as inevitable wastefulness, that facts of history, being without value, can be given any value. Facts are of no account in the evaluation of the truth of life. The inference is that facts of history are 'brute' (without value) in character. They cannot be interpreted unless one recognizes the extreme subjectivity in doing so.

Brunner was, undoubtedly, influenced in this attitude by the nineteenth century historiography present in his time. With his acceptance of the depreciation of existence in Kant, it would not have been difficult for him to concur with this particular historical-critical study prevalent during his earlier scholarship. The positivistic assumptions of such study were in harmony with his own intentions.<sup>65</sup>

Nineteenth century historiography, which made its most vigorous contact with the Christian faith in the critical-historical study of the scriptures, operated on the premise that value had no relation to fact. R. G. Collingwood in his book, The Idea of History,

---

<sup>64</sup>Brunner, Glaube und Ethik, p. 12.

<sup>65</sup>David Hume is considered by some to be the father of this historical positivism. He undercut the rational principles of Enlightenment philosophy with an epistemological scepticism. Tillich points out that what Hume did for England, Kant accomplished on the continent; he destroyed the natural, rational, foundations for belief in God, leaving the natural world void of any moral and religious valuation. Tillich says that Kant imprisoned man in his finitude without any way of escape. In this way, he represents the attitude of Protestantism. Man was left with the facts of historical existence emptied of meaning (cf. Paul Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology (SCM Press Ltd., London, 1967) p. 64ff.).

writes about this premise in a way that is helpful. He says the nineteenth century historian accepted two rules in the treatment of the facts of history:

- (i) Each fact was to be regarded as a thing capable of being ascertained by a separate act of cognition or process of research, and thus the total field of the historically knowable was cut up into an infinity of minute facts each to be separately considered.
- (ii) Each fact was to be thought of not only as independent of all the rest but as independent of the knower, so that all subjective elements (as they were called) in the historian's point of view had to be eliminated. The historian must pass no judgement on the facts: he must only say what they were.<sup>66</sup>

The positive contribution made by the historical-critical method of the nineteenth century historian is not questioned. Through their persistence they helped to point out the fallacy of verbal inspiration in relation to the scriptures. The questionableness of authorship and of the scientific premises under which certain books of the bible were written were brought into the open. Many of the traditional views of the orthodox Christian faith were rightly challenged. Brunner recognized the value and authority of this research in these words, "...the church...has had to renounce many "historical facts" hallowed by tradition but not forming part of the substance of the faith, and has had to recognize the claims of historical research."<sup>67</sup>

On this, one can agree with Brunner. The results of historical criticism cannot be disregarded without falling into the pitfalls of biblical fundamentalism. These are too numerous and too obvious to

---

<sup>66</sup> R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford University Press, London, 1946), p. 131.

<sup>67</sup> Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason, trans. Olive Wyon (SCM Press Ltd., London, 1947), p. 283.



mention at this point. However, it is possible to accept the fruits of such research without accepting the premise under which it was carried out, namely, historical positivism. In questioning the world-view of biblical times, the historical-critical method was itself tied to one just as deserving of criticism. Brunner, as well as other dialectical theologians of his time, failed to challenge this. Rather, he merely accepted it and established the claims of the Christian faith 'above', in another realm. It is this acceptance that is difficult to defend.

Nineteenth century historiography was concerned not so much with the denial of the essential facts of the Christian faith, such as the existence of Jesus and events of his life,<sup>68</sup> as with the application of meaning to them. History was regarded only as the compilation and establishment of facts. And it was sufficient merely to discover and state them. However, no interpretation or judgement of them was permissible. This would violate their neutrality. Thus, history became the disinterested, objective task of pinpointing facts on a time line of no significance. As stated, Brunner and other dialectical theologians endorsed this. If not directly, then indirectly by making no attempt to meet the historians on their own ground. He allowed them supreme reign on the question of the nature of historical fact. Faith was placed in a realm outside history and

---

<sup>68</sup>It should be noted that events such as the Resurrection and the Fall, by the very fact that they were unusual to natural events, were denied the qualification of history. David Hume's scepticism expressed in his Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Second Edition (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1902, Sect. VIII, Part I) that, "Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new...." (p. 83), remains the postulate of the historical-critical method.

was thought of, at least by Brunner, as immune to historical and scientific invasion. This is verified in some of his writings.

In a sense, Brunner does not deny the applicability of historical criticism to the Christian faith. At one point he writes, "If faith postulates as absolutely necessary certain historical facts which can be proved by historical science to be non-existent, then that faith is erroneous."<sup>69</sup> With the next breath, however, Brunner can speak of faith as unconcerned with the relative knowledge gained from historical science. "Faith makes full allowances for the relative character of the formation of opinion which is effected by the process of historical research. It is faith in particular which sees more clearly than the majority of critics how very uncertain are all historical statements. It is precisely faith which does not take established results into account."<sup>70</sup> Brunner continues, "He (Brunner is referring to the believer) is always ready to compare his judgements of faith about the realm of fact with the results of science, but he knows beforehand that, ....science may indeed assault his faith, but can never really refute it."<sup>71</sup> The 'beforehand' of Brunner's statement separates

---

<sup>69</sup>Brunner, The Mediator, p. 166.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 170. Pannenberg says such escape to another realm 'above' history, as we suggested of Brunner, was typical, as well, of the existentialism of Bultmann and the pre-history of Barth. He writes, "Their common starting point is to be seen in the fact that critical-historical investigation as the scientific verification of events did not seem to leave any more room for redemptive events. Therefore the theology of redemptive history fled into a harbour supposedly safe from the critical-historical flood tide, the harbour of a suprahistory - or with Barth, of pre-history. For the same reason the theology of existence withdrew from the meaningless and godless course of "objective" history to the experience of the significance of history in the "historicity" of the individual." (Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, p. 16).

the realm of faith from the realm of fact. Faith is left in the precarious position of having no factual foundation. Thus, God gives 'meaning' to life a-temporally. With this thought, the significance of community is seriously weakened.

(C) God as Existing

In the preceeding section, it was suggested that the weakness of Brunner's concept of community rested in the timelessness at the heart of his doctrine of God. In this section the other major weakness of his ethics, the presence of determinism, will be investigated. Such a thought is contrary to the freedom and individuality of life and, thus, must be challenged. Again, this challenge can come best by analysing the basis for this particular aspect of his ethical formulation. If the weakness of community can be seen in his concept of God as 'timeless', then the denial of individuation with determinism, can be seen in the concept of God as 'existing'.

The two concepts, God as 'timeless' and God as 'existing' have much in common, in that God as 'timeless' implies an 'existing' being. Timelessness, as such, would logically entail the absence of any future reference. It would mean the completion or 'existence' of something. Without a future reference in the concept of God, it is difficult to escape the notion of an 'existing' being. The latter, it will be debated, has within it implications irreconcilable with human freedom and responsibility. God as 'existing', however, does not necessarily imply God as 'timeless'. This will be dealt with below.

To begin our investigation, A. D. Galloway's article 'Fact and Value in Theological Ethics'<sup>72</sup> is helpful in focusing attention on

---

<sup>72</sup>A. D. Galloway, 'Fact and Value in Theological Ethics' (Religious Studies, Vol. 5, No. 2, December 1969, pp. 172-178).

the problem before us. Galloway writes of the enthralled positions in which humans live. He uses the word 'enthrallment' to refer to the fact-value nexus manifested in life's experience. In a son's relationship with his father, for example, a relationship may develop in which the son is enthralled with the father. That is, he patterns his life after him as much as possible. In this situation, the son does not grow emotionally and intellectually; he does not mature or exercise an individual expression necessary for maturation. The reason for this is that the father is regarded by the son as perfect and complete in all respects. In this sense, it would be proper to say the father 'exists' for the son. For the son, fact and value are absolutely joined in the father. And with this his freedom, which is a prerequisite for individuality and maturity, is eradicated by what is. The son reaches a stage of idolization in which his life can be said to be determined by that of the father. At this point, any relationship with the father would be static and restrained; value is seen to be present and complete in what is at hand.

Galloway makes the point that only when the child is able to break from the fact-value nexus, that is, see the father in a sense as non-existing, does he acquire the incentive for maturity and individuality. Only then can he have the freedom necessary for growth and change. It should be understood that Galloway is not saying there are no situations in which the fact-value nexus is proper and good. Galloway would be prepared to argue that the identity of fact and value, such as institutional values, is necessary and unavoidable in life.

Other important statements are made later in his article, however, which we hold in question. When he says the task of the present day moralist should be directed toward the separation of fact and value in ethics, there is no objection. But when he states that only in God is the fact-value nexus unassailable, it is difficult to agree. Man can worship, says Galloway, only because it is not possible to separate fact and value in God. The suggestion is made that such a separation would be tantamount to a limitation in God. Limitation, in turn, is contrary to the confession of His infinite goodness, mercy, wisdom, majesty and glory. He reasons that if anyone tried to accomplish the separation of fact and value in God:

....he would be failing to understand what the Word 'God' means or to grasp what those who talk about him most convincingly are getting at. He would have failed to recognize the kind of thing that is being said when it is confessed that God is infinite in goodness, mercy, wisdom, majesty and glory, etc. He would have failed to perceive that to believe in God as God (at least in the Judao-Christian sense) entails the belief that there is no humanly attainable limit to the significance of God as the exemplar of flourishing. He would have failed to see why in this case, as distinct from the case of creatures, the temptation to abstract the principle of value from the fact and so attain release from enthrallment is a temptation. He would fail to understand the part played in biblical mythology by the temptation 'ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil'.<sup>73</sup>

The conclusion Galloway draws is that only in relationship to God is 'enthrallment' lasting and absolute.

---

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

The motivation behind his reasoning is quite clear. He is rightly protecting the sovereignty and glory of God without which He would not be worthy of worship. For example, in commenting on the thought of Pannenberg he writes, "With good reason it has always been held in the Christian tradition that if God lacks some perfection yet to be developed then he is not truly God."<sup>74</sup> The caution Galloway is making in this context is valid. At the same time, the question can be asked: Can one speak of enthrallment with God and maintain freedom and responsibility? In other words, is there not a determinism present in such an argument?

In saying that the fact-value nexus is unassailable in God, is one not implying things similar to those of statements about human enthrallment? In effect God would be complete in his essence and as such would have no new possibilities open for Him in His essence. In other words, what is being said is that God 'exists'.<sup>75</sup> And He 'exists' for us, as the father in Galloway's illustration was said to 'exist' for the son. Where there is no future with respect to God's nature, one must say that God 'exists' and does so in 'fact'. There are problems with such reasoning.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup>A. D. Galloway, Wolfhart Pannenberg (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1973), p. 96.

<sup>75</sup>This argument is relevant because God as 'existing' is true of Brunner, as well. Brunner differs significantly in that God 'exists' for him a-temporally. This will receive further attention.

<sup>76</sup>Helen Oppenheimer follows Galloway's article in the same periodical (Religious Studies, Vol. 5, No. 2, December 1969, p. 179) with the caution that it is too simple to suggest that we can idolize each other but only worship God. "We can idolize God", she writes. What Oppenheimer is saying has relevance to this thesis. If I understand her correctly, she is referring to the possibility of restricting God in His freedom, that is, making God subject to God. When man idolises someone, or God, he restricts their freedom of action, by regarding essence as complete. There is no future in their being as they are what they are; everything that happens does so because of what they are (shades of Hegel's concept

(<sup>76</sup>continued)

which will be referred to later). Oppenheimer continues with this important statement: "...there are elements in our relationships with each other here and now which it is perhaps not presumptuous to suggest point towards some kind of fulfillment of relationships in a satisfying harmony for which 'worship' would be the only adequate word." (p. 179). This statement suggests something Pannenberg refers to when he writes, "The arrival of what is future may be thought through to its conclusion only with the idea of repetition....in the sense that in it the future has arrived in a permanent present." (Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 142).

There is currently much argument in the philosophical field, particularly linguistic analysis, over the possibility of the statement, God 'exists'. Their concern is different from ours but not unrelated. The concern of the linguistic analyst is whether or not any sense at all can be made of the word God and what it is we are saying when we use the word. Does the expression 'God is' have a corresponding reality? Perhaps, they suggest, this is purely an evocative statement which lacks verification. Kai Nielsen, for example, in an article entitled, 'The Intelligibility of God-Talk' (Religious Studies, Vol. 6, No. 1, March 1970, pp. 1-21) discusses this whole subject. Nielsen is not looking at the statement, 'God exists', from the standpoint of its metaphysical ramifications; his argument hinges on the possibility of metaphysics itself. He questions whether or not linguistic analysis undermines metaphysics completely. Nielsen, in the end, is very positivistic. He feels that verification of religious statements is necessary for them to have any degree of credibility and intelligibility. He doubts that such verification is possible. He writes, "...surely many people - and I am among them - can make nothing of 'disembodied action'. Religious people, or at least those who reflect, are themselves perplexed about it. To those who think they can understand it, it is well to ask them, in a concrete way, for the truth conditions of their claims. If they can give none, we have good grounds for being sceptical that they, their protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, understand what they are saying." (p. 17).

Statements that have no historical factual basis have no meaning or relevance for Nielsen. This is understandable as one would be left with pure assertion which is too often the case with Christian proclamation. However, the other insinuation he makes which must be and is seriously questioned today, is that metaphysical statements can have no basis in fact (cf. an article by James W. Woelfel, '"Non-Metaphysical" Christian Philosophy and Linguistic Philosophy' (New Theology, No. 2, ed. Martin Marty (Macmillan Company, New York, 1965), pp. 50-62) in which the author explains the challenge that comes from the linguistic analyst and offers some suggestions to meet it.). It is not within the scope of this thesis to deal specifically with this question but hopefully matters will be discussed in our study that will throw some light on it. This may not come via Brunner's thought because he himself is among the theologians of revelation who reject the relevance of metaphysics. He may be called a 'theological positivist' (throughout his writings, Brunner's attack on metaphysics is evident and strong, as for example, in The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, chapter 16). In Pannenberg, however, there is an entirely different approach. In his theological programme he brings metaphysics and historical fact into closer agreement.. His theological method has much promise in dealing with this question. In his system, the metaphysical attributes of God (His immutability, etc.), are related to reality in a way that gives them relevance to our actual existence.

One of the main problems is the implication of determinism and, thus, the denial of human freedom. For a deeper appreciation of the perplexities involved, an article by Nelson Pike, entitled 'Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action',<sup>77</sup> is referred to. He does a good job in showing the irreconcilability of the statement 'God exists' with the proclamation of human freedom. The author is not arguing in favour or against the statement 'God exists'; he is only drawing out the logical consequences of such a statement. He writes, "... there is a selection from among the various doctrines and principles clustering about the notions of knowledge, omniscience, and God which, when brought together, demand the conclusion that if God exists, no human action is voluntary."<sup>78</sup> Pannenberg is equally convinced that human freedom cannot be maintained when God is thought of as an existing being. He writes, "An existent being acting with omnipotence and omniscience would make freedom impossible. But such a being would also not be God, because it could not be the reality which determines everything, for the reality of freedom, of human subjectivity, would remain outside its grasp."<sup>79</sup>

Pike is not saying that God cannot be thought of in any manner that would include human freedom. He is stating only that there must be another conception of God and his relationship to the world than the one in the statement 'God exists', if human freedom is to be defended. His argument proceeds as follows. If God is omniscient

---

<sup>77</sup>Philosophy Today, No. 2, ed. Jerry H. Gill (Macmillan Company, London, 1969), pp. 120-141.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp. 120-121.

<sup>79</sup>Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 109.



(to deny Him omniscience would be tantamount to denying Him his Godness)<sup>80</sup> then one must also say God in His knowledge cannot be mistaken. He can hold no false beliefs. Therefore, Pike continues, if God cannot hold any false beliefs, and if he knows the future, that is, if the future stands "equally directly before Him as the present stands before us", then the following can be said to be true.

Choose an event (E) and a time (T2) at which E occurred. For any time (T1) prior to T2 (say, five thousand, six hundred, or eighty years prior to T2), God knew at T1 that E would occur at T2.<sup>81</sup>

Pike continues to write:

Last Saturday afternoon, Jones mowed his lawn. Assuming that God exists and is (essentially) omniscient in the sense outlined above, it follows that (let us say) eighty years prior to last Saturday afternoon, God knew (and thus believed) that Jones would mow his lawn at that time. But from this it follows, I think, that at the time of action (last Saturday afternoon) Jones was not able -- that is, it was not within Jones's power -- to refrain from mowing his lawn. If at the time of action, Jones had been able to refrain from mowing his lawn, then (the most obvious conclusion would seem to be) at the time of action, Jones was able to do something which would have brought it about that God held a false belief eighty years earlier. But God cannot in anything be mistaken. It is not possible that some belief of His was false. Thus, last Saturday afternoon, Jones was not able to do something which would have

---

<sup>80</sup>Pike writes, "...any person who is not omniscient could not be the person we usually mean to be referring to when using the name 'God'." ('Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action' (Philosophy Today, No. 2), p. 121).

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

brought it about that God held a false belief eighty years ago.<sup>82</sup>

If God is said to 'exist' and to be omniscient, the conclusions Pike has reached would be very difficult to refute.<sup>83</sup>

Having stated this, let us return to Brunner's concept of God. In doing so, care must be taken as he differs significantly on a particular point. Firstly, it was suggested that God as 'existing' is an appropriate characterization of his thought. Essentially, God is complete, for Brunner; that is, there is no sense in which God can be incomplete in His essence. Brunner writes, "...what can be lacking in One from whom alone we receive all we can know! What could be lacking in Him who is the Source of all Norms, the Lawgiver who has given all laws! Even to put the question at all is foolish."<sup>84</sup> Brunner is not really prepared to argue for or against the perfection of God as he feels this would make God's nature dependent on earthly standards.

Having established that 'God exists' is appropriate for Brunner's thought, let us remember the 'timelessness' in his God. The question

---

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp. 124-125.

<sup>83</sup>In the concept, God 'exists' one is necessarily making God subject to God; that is, his freedom is derived from the previous existence of His essence. Pannenberg criticises Hegel for not allowing for freedom in his system of thought, because of the prior concept from which everything follows by necessity (Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 172). Pannenberg states something which Pike has pointed out, as well, "The traditional theological doctrine of God has no solution to this dilemma. Hegel shares with it the acceptance of an absolute being which already exists before the act of divine freedom." (Ibid., p. 173).

<sup>84</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, p. 288.

is before us, therefore: Is it possible to proclaim God as existing a-temporally, that is, in a timeless fashion. Here again, mention is made of Nelson Pike as he has dealt with this question at some length. Arguing from the viewpoint of Boethius, he says such a theological expression can be made without engaging in logical contradiction. He writes:

We say that there exists a prime number between 5 and 9. Some contemporary philosophers have suggested the following account of the term 'exist' as it occurs in this statement. Suppose that at three o'clock I said: 'There exists a prime number between 5 and 9.' What I said was true. But it does not follow that at four o'clock the statement: 'There existed a prime number between 5 and 9' could have been uttered truly; nor does it follow that at two o'clock the statement: 'There will exist a prime number between 5 and 9' could have been uttered truly. There is no use for the locutions 'existed' or 'will exist' when talking about numbers. It follows (on this account) that had I said at three o'clock that there exists a prime number between 5 and 9 now (meaning at this moment), my remark would have been incorrect. Had the prime existed at three o'clock (as would have been affirmed had I said at that time that it exists now), it would follow by the ordinary meaning of tensed phrases, that at two o'clock the future tense existential claim could have been made correctly and at four o'clock the past tense existential claim could have been made correctly. The conclusion is that there is sense of 'exists' (present tense) that does not bear the usual logical relations to 'existed' (past tense) and 'will exist' (future tense). To affirm of something that it exists in this special sense of 'exists' is not to affirm that the thing in question exists in the temporal present.<sup>85</sup>

Assuming from the above that one can say God 'exists' in an a-temporal sense, how does this statement hold with reference to the earlier criticism we made of the determinism present in Brunner's thought?

---

<sup>85</sup>Pike, God and Timelessness, pp. 12-13.

Pike argued for determinism from the standpoint of God in time. Foreknowledge, he claims, is possible only if the expression 'God is Eternal' does not imply a timelessness. "If God knew that a given natural event was going to occur before it occurred, at least one of God's cognitions would then have occurred before some natural event. This, surely, would violate the idea that God bears no temporal relations to natural events."<sup>86</sup>

How is one to interpret this qualification in terms of our claim for Brunner? Is there still thus, a determinism in Brunner's concept of God when, as we argued, there is a timelessness present? Has Pike nullified our criticism?

In answer, it can be said that Brunner's determinism differs from the strict historical determinism spoken of by Pike. One could not claim for Brunner that every step of man and every activity in which he engages is determined by God. He would not endorse this nor is it evident in his writings. Nevertheless, as we indicated at the end of the last chapter, there is a determinism with him in another sense. In the sense that 'meaning' or truth is divorced from the facts of existence, in that God has no association with them, the good for which man longs thus, is given to him, that is, determined for him. The concepts of freedom and responsibility are denied him, at the same time, because he plays no part in the determination of the good. Let us remember that, for Brunner, good is a quality that belongs to God alone and has no relation to historical existence. Praise and blame, thus, which would be involved in any concept of man's responsibility, is removed. God determines man's goodness and 'meaning'.

---

<sup>86</sup>Pike, 'Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action' (Philosophy Today, No. 2), p. 123.

If value ('meaning') is something above 'profane' history, then decisiveness, which is the essence of human freedom, is denied him. One can then say in an important sense that man's life is determined. His responsibility is removed.

....true Good can never flow from ....feverish intensity of effort, from all this labour and pain, from all this painstaking endeavour to attain the Good, but simply solely from the central source of goodness as a state of existence. The "Good" which issues from effort is, for that very reason, not really good; the Good must descend from above, not be striven for from below, otherwise it lacks genuineness and depth.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup>Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 163.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PANNENBERG'S CONCEPT OF GOD

## CHAPTER THREE

### PANNENBERG'S CONCEPT OF GOD

#### (A) A Prolegomenon for Pannenberg's Doctrine of God

In the first two chapters Brunner's position, with reference to the individual and the community, was established. His concept of God was analysed in an effort to determine the basis of his ethical stance. In doing so, it was suggested that neither the community nor the individual were given a sufficient degree of significance in the question of 'meaning'.

In an effort to resolve the stated problem in society and to find a corrective for the Protestant position expressed by Brunner, attention will be focused on the thought of Wolfhart Pannenberg. More specifically, his concept of God will be analysed and compared with Brunner. Before doing this, however, our purpose will be served by looking first at the conditions and factors for which he seeks recognition in his God concept. The latter can be understood much better if this groundwork is done.

In the second volume of his Basic Questions in Theology, Pannenberg writes, "....it is unnecessary to dispute the fact that the need for an encompassing unity that makes it possible to experience even the multifarious as a positive wealth is so deeply rooted in human existence and in the structure of human reason that it inevitably brings up the question of the extent to which this religion or that can provide a basis for a universal unity in the experience of reality, which is very likely the criterion of its relevance and saving power - and thus, perhaps, of its truth, too."<sup>1</sup> In this statement much insight

---

<sup>1</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 82.

of the concerns with which Wolfhart Pannenberg approaches Theology is given. A glimpse of the method by which his theological statements are formed is also shown.

He writes, in the above, of the structure of human reason and the nature of human experience. Existence is given as the basis by which to judge the relevance and acceptability of religious expression. His method, thus, in contrast to that of Emil Brunner, is one rooted in an ontic analysis of life, that is, a description of the types of experience human beings enjoy in being in the world.<sup>2</sup> Pannenberg chooses to call his approach, 'Theological Anthropology', that is, theology that takes due cognizance of the fundamental experiences of man and the self-understanding they imply.<sup>3</sup>

His determination to proceed with his theology in this manner is rooted, basically, in his understanding of history as the field of God's activity and life. As the title of the book Revelation as History<sup>4</sup> implies it is within the realm of historical reality that man seeks his meaning. Religion and history, thus, are essentially correlated. As a human being, one is not required to search outside history and human existence in order to experience God. More importantly, such natural and historical experiences of God have saving

---

<sup>2</sup>There are theologians who are prepared to argue, with Brunner, that this theological method gives too much attention to human realities. It is too philosophical in approach and, thus, does not warrant the name of 'revelation' theology (cf. Lothar Steiger, 'Revelation -History and Theological Reason: A Critique of the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg' (Journal for Theology and the Church, Vol. 4, 1967, pp. 82-107)). Pannenberg is sometimes prepared to see a similarity between his method and Brunner's (cf. Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 89).

<sup>3</sup>Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 93.

<sup>4</sup>Revelation as History, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. D. Granskou and E. Quinn (Sheed and Ward, London, 1969).



significance.<sup>5</sup> The urgency of an anthropological approach to theology is, Pannenberg says, in the need to make God understandable to the modern mind. He writes:

Anyone who tries to speak of God today can no longer count on being immediately understood - at least, not if he has in mind the living God of the Bible as the reality which determines everything, as the creator of the world. Talk about the living God, the creator of the world, is threatening to become hollow today, even on the lips of the Christian. The term "God" seems to be dispensable, if not indeed an interference, in the understanding of the reality of the world in which we exist, determined as it is by science and technology. The everyday life of every person, and the Christian too, is conditioned by a life and thought without God. This lived atheism is today the obvious point of departure for all thoughtful reflection. Even the mere question whether God exists and who he is needs special justification today if such a question is to lay claim to being taken seriously by men generally....<sup>6</sup>

As indicated, atheism presents the challenge with which theology must now wrestle. Atheism, which treats religion and God as unessential aspects of man's being, and even more, which sees religion as a dehumanizing force in man's life, is the principal challenge in the effort to give the word 'God' credibility. Pannenberg refers especially to Feuerbachian atheism. He quotes Feuerbach as saying, "religion ....is consciousness of the infinite; thus it is and can be nothing else than the consciousness which man has of his own that is not finite and limited, but infinite nature."<sup>7</sup> The idea of God in the

---

<sup>5</sup>We shall try to make this understanding clear in succeeding chapters. The words 'an experience of God' were qualified with 'saving significance' because in the theology of Emil Brunner there are experiences of God in the natural world that are not saving experiences (cf. Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics*, Vol. I, pp. 227ff.).

<sup>6</sup>Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, Vol. II, p. 201.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 186.

light of this criticism is regarded only as the product of man's self-alienation. It is the projection of anxieties and longings into an imaginary heaven. "Theology", writes Pannenberg, "has to learn that after Feuerbach it can no longer mouth the word "God" without offering any explanation; that it can no longer speak as if the meaning of this word were self-evident....."<sup>8</sup>

This claim of the self-evidence of God, was central to Karl Barth's thought and dialectical theology in general. It is seriously disputed by Pannenberg. Barth, he suggests, accepted the criticism of Feuerbach as a strengthening force for the Christian faith. However, this was for no reason other than showing the barrenness of any attempt to reach God by means of anthropological consideration. For Barth, the criticism of atheism only emphasised the special position of the Christian faith with regard to knowledge. Atheism, in actual fact, accentuated the Christian experience as one immune to any criticism from the rational and historical realms of knowledge. In Barth, and this is true of Brunner as well,<sup>9</sup> revelation has no dependency on human knowledge. Thus, statements of faith are not liable to attack or criticism from any human source.

Pannenberg condemningly refers to this thinking as a cheap form of modernity and one of the real sources of Christian weakness at the

---

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>9</sup>There are statements throughout Brunner's writings that can support this claim. Indeed, Brunner's theological method as a whole prevents him from giving any credence to the theological significance of man's power of reflection. In Man in Revolt, for example, he writes: "The demand of reason....destroys the content of the Christian conception of God. For this content cannot be conceived as a rational content; it can only be believed as a revelation. In reason man remains by himself, shut up within the self-sufficient reason; in faith, however, he is approached by the self-revealing 'Thou' who addresses him 'from without'." (p. 242).

present time.<sup>10</sup> His comment has some validity and should be considered. By retreating from true dialogue with atheism and claiming a special area of 'meaning', the social relevance and force of the Christian faith could easily be reduced.<sup>11</sup> This would obviously weaken Christianity in the world. It also could have a cheapening affect in rendering theological statements or statements of faith meaningless. If no argument or evidence can be presented in relation to the truth or falsehood of a statement then the statement must be classified as meaningless. Thus it becomes something different.

In a theological statement there is a cognitive element; one is stating something to be true. Barth and Brunner, by their insistence on revelation apart from reason, only give support to the linguistic analyst (Ayre, Hare and Austin) that utterances in theology are simply common expressions of emotion and exhortation. They are not statements in which truth or falsity would logically arise. To give support to this kind of thinking would ultimately undermine the Christian faith and the fact upon which it rests.

Thus, Pannenberg's opposition to this theological retreat and his challenge to the church to meet atheism on its own ground is welcomed. Anthropology is that common ground. The church, says

---

<sup>10</sup>Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 88.

<sup>11</sup>This is not to deny that Barth (and even more such post-Barthians as Moltmann) have proved to be among the most effective theologians of the political left with its deep human concern and involvement. Nevertheless, they have failed to provide it with the "human face" which it so obviously lacks. Until man's political activity is correlated with God's activity, in some way, politics will not remain "human".

Pannenberg, must take into consideration the arguments, results and problems that are expressed and developed in every field of study. Unless God can be shown to have credibility here and, in turn, unless our conception of God can be reconciled with any realities uncovered, then the Christian faith will be incredulous to modern man. Pannenberg writes of the Christian's predicament:

If it cannot be shown that the issues with which religion is concerned, the elevation of man above the finite content of human experience to the idea of an infinite reality which sustains everything finite, including man himself, are an essential of man's being, so that one is not really considering man if one ignores this dimension - if this cannot be shown with sufficient certainty, then every other viewpoint with which one may concern oneself in this field is an empty intellectual game, and what is said about God loses every claim to intellectual veracity.<sup>12</sup>

The inference made in this statement is that unless our religious expressions match the realities of the world they remain doubtful. This, in effect, works both ways. There is a challenge here directed to anthropology to give a deeper and more penetrating analysis of its subject. Are there not dimensions of existence that may be explained only in terms of religion? Pannenberg has dealt with this clearly in his book, What is Man?. The other challenge is directed to religion. Careful and thoughtful attention must be paid to the implications of religious statements for reality itself. If such implications are opposed to, or do not concur with, the basic experiences of man, then we are faced with the loss of what Pannenberg has called 'intellectual veracity'.

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 88-89.

Pursuing this line of thought, briefly, will help us to understand Pannenberg's choice of concepts in relation to God. In particular, the relevance of his concept of God as 'Future', which is peculiar to him, will be underscored.

As stated, Pannenberg regards it essential that statements about God have some means by which they can show truth or falsity. That is to say, theological statements must be answerable to fact just as other statements purposing to contain cognitive material. His argument<sup>13</sup> with respect to this matter is cogent, and helpful to the discussion in the rest of this chapter. Pannenberg admits that the logical positivists have made a valid point in demanding verification of statements. "A statement that in principle cannot be checked would be no statement at all. As a statement, it would be meaningless."<sup>14</sup> He takes exception, however, to the requirements for verification which the positivists have laid down. Their demand for sense data as the only legitimate source has, in his estimation, proven to be prejudicial, unacceptable and controversial. "Verification in the strict sense of logical positivism by reduction of statements to sense data is certainly not attainable in theology. But even statements of natural law in the natural sciences do not satisfy such a requirement, since no general rule can be verified by a finite number of individual cases."<sup>15</sup> He agrees in principle that

---

<sup>13</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'The Nature of a Theological Statement' (Zygon - Journal of Religion and Science, Vol. 7, No. 1, March 1972, pp. 6-19).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

there must be some possible means of control for statements that are made or we end in a position of meaninglessness. He feels, however, that there must be broader and less precise means of checking statements for content than those permitted by the positivists. In defence of this, Pannenberg offers a convincing suggestion.

He says every statement is of the nature of an hypothesis. This applies to theological statements as well as to all other statements containing cognitive material. In fact, this means they can be judged true or false. Truth and falsity are not self-evident judgements and this is, in his estimation, especially so with religious expressions.<sup>16</sup> Pannenberg notes that there might be a difference between theological statements and statements of another kind. For evidence in science, a direct appeal can be made to the subject at hand. Through immediate laboratory inspection the data necessary to substantiate the hypothesis can be provided. In theology this is not possible. The subject of theology (God) cannot be visibly pointed to and thereby claimed as the proven basis of theological theories and hypotheses. This would be impossible for two basic reasons. Firstly, the reality of God is not complete in terms of human knowledge. Secondly, perhaps more importantly, to claim God as directly accessible for verification would contradict the claim of divinity made of Him. It would, in effect, make Him one subject among others. This would logically be opposed to our

---

<sup>16</sup>It should be noted here that Pannenberg is undertaking a mammoth task as some of his predecessors (Barth and Brunner in particular) declaimed any association with the principle of verification in matters of faith.

understanding of 'God' as that reality which determines everything.

Pannenberg, thus, introduces a broader and wider basis by which the relevance, truth and falsity of religious statements are to be judged. He writes:

Statements about God, about his acts and his revealing himself are therefore not directly testable by a sort of inspection of their subject matter. But this does not mean that they are not testable at all: It is also possible to test statements by an examination of the consequences that can be derived from them. Statements about divine reality and actions are testable by reference to their implications for the understanding of finite reality insofar as God is maintained to be the all-determining reality.<sup>17</sup>

It is a much accepted standard that the truth of a statement can be gauged by whether or not the derived consequences match reality. In seeking a definition of a horse, for example, one might say the horse is a quadruped and all-powerful in strength. Having made that statement, one could then proceed to draw certain consequences or implications about the horse and its relationship to reality. It could be taken for granted that the horse could then move a boulder one thousand times its weight, for example. From man's observation of the horse, however, he knows this to be a falsehood. No horse has ever displayed that kind of strength; thus, the original statement about it was false. It would then be necessary to redefine 'horse' in the light of the facts, so that statement and fact are reconciled. The credibility of every statement, that is to say, the degree of truth, depends on the compliance of the statement with reality as experienced.

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

In a sense, Pannenberg is applying this same standard of judgment in his defence of Christian statements.

He starts with the presupposition that God is an all-determining reality. One cannot fault him with this qualification. In both the biblical and philosophical traditions, this is what is understood by the word 'God'. In any statements about God this implication must be present or one is seriously departing from what is logically entailed in the word. Whatever is to be said about God, or whatever concept is chosen in reference to him, this meaning must be included. Otherwise, it may be safe to say, we are not speaking of the same subject at all.

Assuming then that God is the reality that determines everything, the truth of any statement about God can be examined by testing it against the experiences of finite reality. The question is, thus, asked: Does the former have determinative significance? To state it more adequately in Pannenberg's words, "....statements about God can be examined as to whether their content is really of determinative significance for all finite reality as it is available to our experience.....To the degree that this is the case, one can speak of a corroboration or confirmation of theological assertions."<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 12. This is the reason why Pannenberg finds theologies that refer to a direct encounter with God unacceptable, as if the Subject of the religious statement could be investigated immediately. Immediate encounters, in the sense that Brunner describes them, become invalid in the light of the requirements that Pannenberg is articulating in the above.

For our purposes we need not pursue Pannenberg's argument any further at this point. He does go on, in the article to which we have referred, to state that it is really in the history of religions that one can best see the truth of the above argument. This is so because the anticipated, all-determining reality, which is implicit in human experience as we know it, is really thematic in religion. He writes, "In the ongoing process of religious life, traditional beliefs and rituals are continuously tested for the capacity of the traditional gods to integrate the continuously changing experience of reality." "In this process, it is again and again an open question whether there arise strange powers which manifest



Having reached this point, the question can be asked: What realities of life are there in experience which must be assured in any formulated concept of God? This question takes us back to the statement of Pannenberg with which we began this chapter, particularly the part that reads: "....it is unnecessary to dispute the fact that the need for an encompassing unity that makes it possible to experience even the multifarious as a positive wealth is so deeply rooted in human existence....."<sup>19</sup>

These words imply two basic aspects of human existence which must be maintained: unity and contingency. As man lives out his life, says Pannenberg, he experiences reality in terms of these two dimensions. It is important to stress here that these are not deductions that Pannenberg is making from an assumed statement about God; they are rather conclusions reached by process of induction, from analysis of life as we experience it.

Pannenberg's contention is that human life is meaningful (personal) only if due recognition is given to both aspects. Indeed, the problem of man in society has been, as stated in the beginning, his failure to guarantee these realities of life in his political, social and economic creations. This, Pannenberg would say, has added to the impersonalization of man in our time. His own theological efforts

---

(<sup>18</sup>continued) themselves in concrete experiences and which the inherited traditions fail to explain." (p. 15). In conclusion he writes, "....a provisional corroboration of theological hypotheses seems to be within reach and will be possible to the same degree that they illuminate the problems of the religious traditions and the implications of meaning in present experience." (p. 19).

<sup>19</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 82.

have been directed toward a resolution (even if only theoretical) of the problem. There is some validity in arguing that without a convincing theoretical presentation little practical progress will be made in the establishment of personal existence. Pannenberg is important in this respect.

Any talk of personal existence for Pannenberg involves the presence of contingency (individuality) and unity. The latter may be interpreted in more practical terms as community. The question of personal being can be given no suitable answer other than one evolving from the discussion of individuation and participation. It must also guarantee the significance of each. Pannenberg writes:

....only contingent events can be perceived  
as personal acts.....<sup>20</sup>

He adds:

There must be something more than contingency to justify understanding events as personal acts. Otherwise to speak of a contingent event may mean little more than to refer to the apparently erratic character of happenings. Contingency is not enough to give events a personal quality. The required additional factor is the identity of the power that is operative in a series of contingent events, a unity behind contingent self-expressions.<sup>21</sup>

The discussion at this point has importance in that no attempt has been made, thus far, to show that community and individuality are essential to personal existence. It was suggested earlier that these two aspects did not receive much significance with Brunner, in his consideration of the 'Good' (meaning). However, it was not suggested there could be no 'meaningful' (personal) existence apart from these elements. Any argument in this direction would serve to strengthen

---

<sup>20</sup> Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, p. 58.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

our criticism of Brunner. It would also underscore the forthcoming consideration of Pannenberg, especially with respect to his concept of God.

In speaking of the conditions for personal existence, Pannenberg is endeavoring to establish a relevant prolegomenon for a doctrine of God. For this purpose, his analysis is directed primarily to secular experience. At this level, he searches for material from which to formulate his theological assertions.

From his search Pannenberg discovers, first of all, that man in the daily exercise of his life experiences life as contingent. Secular man affirms life increasingly in terms of events that come to him unexpectantly and without planning. There is a sense of being in the world, in the midst of events that have no apparent necessary cause or rationale. Modern secular experience, as Pannenberg defines it, is characterized by the feeling, or the awareness, that life is open beyond every existing structure. He refers to this awareness as 'openness to the world'<sup>22</sup> and in his own words describes it this way: "Man is not bound to an environment, but is open to the world. That means he can always have new experiences that are different in kind, and his possibilities for responding to the reality perceived can vary almost without limit."<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup>Pannenberg, What is Man?, p. 3. The meaning of this phrase which comes from the German 'Weltoffenheit' is used by Pannenberg with several intents: (1) Openness of man to his world; (2) Openness of man beyond his world; (3) Openness of the world to new elements in its future. In each case, however, the freedom and individuality of life is the focus of attention.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

There is nothing original in his analysis of human existence in this fashion. He is merely pointing out a facet of life which has been growing increasingly in society.<sup>24</sup> Particularly in modern times, man does not feel tied to necessary structures or ultimate models of existence on this earth. He feels free to organize himself and to create meaning for his own life. Nothing is imposed on him from beyond his actual contact with reality. Secularism, as we understand it today, is a viewpoint firm in this claim. Freedom has become its watchword in recognition of the contingency of life. Langdon Gilkey writes clearly of this attitude in this way:

Secularism has interpreted our existence within the world as if man's being were to be understood solely in terms of those finite forces with which he obviously interacts: the nature that has produced him, the social environment that shapes his capacities, and the latent powers that reside in him. It has emphasized, therefore, the contingency of man's existence and all that surrounds him, the relativity and transience of all that appears in history and so all that he can accomplish, and his autonomy and freedom in a world without ultimate coherence and so one in which he alone can be the creator of security and of meaning.<sup>25</sup>

As the above affirms, secularism sees life solely in terms of contingent reality. Pannenberg is only re-echoing this fact and re-affirming its essential association with personal life.

---

<sup>24</sup>Langdon Gilkey affirms that contingent awareness has been growing since the seventeenth century and arose, perhaps, as an end result of seventeenth century science. He goes on to speak of the enormous influence Darwin had in creating this awareness. "More than any other result of modern inquiry, his theory of origins seemed to displace man from his former setting within an eternal rational order, or a purposefully willed order, and pictured him as the product of the blind law of selection combined with random mutations." (Gilkey, The Renewal of God-Language, p. 40).

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 251.

This claim for the personal value of contingency is not difficult to understand. Man generally has found those situations which imprison him in life, impersonal. This would include anything that prevents a control or share in his destiny. He feels inhuman and impersonal in those circumstances that deny him freedom of movement and decision. This is especially so when conditions, which are not congruent with the givenness of reality, are forced upon him.<sup>26</sup> An essential requirement of a free man is the feeling that he, in some sense, can be the creator of his own meaning. It is the claim of the atheist that any affirmation theological, or otherwise, is suspect and incredible when it fails to guarantee this.

On the other hand, to stop with this affirmation, as if one had said everything about personal existence, would be wrong. Pannenberg mentioned another factor which must be taken into consideration in any relevant theological discourse. Once again his claim is derived from an ontic analysis of life rather than an ontological statement about man's being. This is always the procedure in his writings. Any statements of ontology are made in the light of man's ontic awareness.

Part of that awareness, he notes, is man's search beyond himself toward an ultimate which is not present in any final form in

---

<sup>26</sup>Existentialism, above all, has stressed this aspect of human existence. In its expression, it has emphasised freedom and responsibility as essential to man's humanness. If man is forced to adapt to existing structures and is given standards without any chance of response, he is not existing authentically. One could also appeal to modern psychoanalytic theories for support. Psychological health is affirmed in terms of the power in the individual to rise above external authorities and the Super-Ego. As well, Whitehead may be cited in his assertion that each entity comes to realization through a self-creativity in freedom. Pannenberg finds himself, thus, well supported in his accentuation of contingent reality.

the actual process of life. Life, in other words, is forever seeking a unity, that is, an ultimate in which fulfillment can be found. Man is by nature historical. He is historical in the sense that decisions of action and destiny rest with him periodically. But, he is historical in another important sense, expressed in the following: "...not only is the individual act of decision historic, but each man also lives in an interconnected series of events, which involves both his own decisions and also the things that happen to him. Together these things constitute his history, which is entirely particular and unique."<sup>27</sup> Life, in other words, involves the experience of unity or wholeness. This, says Pannenberg, is the other pole of human existence without which it would not be personal. Pannenberg's contention is that contingency itself, the awareness that life is finite, limited and open, leads to the dimension of unity. However, he says, this desire for unity has been denied its just recognition by secular society itself.

The awareness that nothing is permanent (contingent) has been turned by secular society into an absolute negative. This has fostered a mood nihilistic in its character.<sup>28</sup> It is this mood that requires challenging, not by bringing in knowledge claimed outside the secular field but by a thorough-going analysis of secular experience itself.

Langdon Gilkey stresses this same point in his writings. He says if life were a series of unrelated and insignificant acts with no inner telos or strong bonds of community, then the inner sense of one's own

---

<sup>27</sup>Pannenberg, What is Man?, p. 139.

<sup>28</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 219.

reality would disappear.<sup>29</sup> Thus, he rejects the affirmation of secularism that defines life merely in terms of the contingency that is basic to it. He writes:

This human world is, to be sure, a world of relative, mutually dependent beings in common interaction with one another. Nevertheless, it is also a world where our own contingent existence must be affirmed; where knowledge and understanding of that network of interaction is possible; a world also characterized by the search for meanings and values in what we do there and in the history in which we participate; a world filled with the urge both for freedom and community, for selfhood and its integrity...<sup>30</sup>

In substantiation of his claim for unity, Pannenberg appeals to several factors in life. In reaction to the position of Nihilism, which treats the questionableness of life as absolute, he points out the sound fact, that all human inquiry is made with the intention of an answer. To inquire about human life in any other sense, for example that by which the nihilists proceed, is to inquire in abstraction from present assertions. This is unrealistic.

Both this nihilism and the opposed views that confront its negation with mere affirmation, bespeak a spiritual indolence. Concrete, critical reflection upon the tradition and on the situation of current experience does not reach the point of nihilistic dissolution because, although it makes use of the same negative dialectic, it does not do so in abstract isolation, as nihilism does, but as an element of its inquiry into the essential content about which it is reflecting. Solely for the sake of this essential content must all previously given answers be superseded. In this attitude, critical inquiry remains directed toward the content that will appear in the form of a new answer.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup>Gilkey, The Renewal of God-Language, p. 347.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>31</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, pp. 219-220.

Pannenberg has considered an aspect of human inquiry which is more realistic than that propounded by the nihilists. Inquiry is always made in the context of an expected answer, or response.

For further support of man's unifying experience, he points to the desire of an individual to have the recognition of others. There is an innate tendency in everyone to seek confirmation of his tasks from others around him, or by the society in which he lives. It is a common desire to seek support and approval, or adversely disapproval, from those to whom our efforts are directed. Recognition, says Pannenberg, means the certainty that we have not laboured in vain and that we have participated in the universal human destiny by developing one's own uniqueness.<sup>32</sup> It is his contention that in seeking the approval or disapproval of other human beings, man is reaching out for meaning that is common to all. Such meaning does not imply uniformity which destroys the 'unique'. Rather, it refers to a unity which co-ordinates all uniqueness in a common purpose. It is in marriage, friendship and comradeship, he affirms, that this unity of life is best displayed.<sup>33</sup> Even the conscience, he brings to our attention, is a demonstration in the individual of an extension of meaning beyond himself.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup>Pannenberg, What is Man?, p. 86.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>34</sup>In another expression, Pannenberg speaks of the tension at the center of human life between the ego and reality. This tension, he claims, is basic to life. There is an innate tendency in man for the ego to draw all things into itself. This, Pannenberg claims, is a manifestation of the unity which is essential to personal life. "Men", he writes, "have rightly striven again and again to incorporate everything real in some way into the world that they have constructed for themselves. This is because a person's own living space and plan



In asserting that unity is basic to the personal, Pannenberg has support in other studies. One could turn to modern thought expressed in the fields of Psychology, Philosophy and Sociology for verification of the same contention.<sup>35</sup> Pannenberg is no

---

(<sup>34</sup>continued) for life can be stable only if it corresponds to the whole of reality. Only in a world that is a unity can our life succeed as a whole and remain or become healed, that is, whole." (Pannenberg, *What is Man?*, p. 61). It is Pannenberg's conviction, however, that this tension is a natural thing to man and not something inherently evil. Unlike Brunner, he relates this tension to meaning by taking it up into God. It is not eradicated in our relationship with God.

<sup>35</sup>George Mead in his book, *Mind, Self and Society* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1934), speaks of the unity or community of man in a way that confirms much of Pannenberg's reasoning. Mead also speaks of freedom as an essential in life. Personal existence is possible only when both individuation and participation have their place. He speaks of the 'generalized other' and by this he means the attitudes, morals and values assumed by the individual from his community. These things become part of his meaning. In every individual, he says, there is an 'I' and a 'Me'. The 'Me' is that element in life (attitudes) which the individual adopts. When an individual reflects or decides he has certain data before him (p. 176). This data is not outside the common attitudes and values that are around him. The 'I' is the individual's response to this 'Me' (p. 177). It is the answer which the individual gives to the attitudes which others (the community) take toward him. This 'I' is the novel element in life; it is the freedom, that is, the contingent factor of reality, that must exist if human life is to mature into the personal. As stated, Pannenberg saw personal life as inclusive of both realities. With George Mead, it is evident, as well, that individuation and participation must somehow be held in balance if life is to continue humanly. The 'I', Mead is quick to point out (p. 178), is uncertain and unplanned in its response. There is no mechanical necessity that makes the 'I' what it is. At the same time, its identity depends on the 'Me'. This distinction between the 'I' and 'Me' is, according to Mead, that which keeps life progressive and exciting. The self is a social process because of the dynamics of these two phases. If it were not for these phases, says Mead, there could not be conscious responsibility or novelty in experience. (See also Peter L. Berger, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London, 1971), pp. 150ff.).

Eric Fromm in his book, *Man For Himself* (Fawcett Publications, Inc., Greenwich, Conn., 1947, pp. 55-58), speaks of the need in man for orientation and devotion. He talks of the inevitable dichotomies at the center of human life which man cannot escape. "He has to strive for the experience of unity and oneness in all spheres of his being in order to find a new equilibrium." (p. 55).

stranger, for example, to George Mead, Peter Berger and their analysis of the social dimension of man's life. Indeed, it could be argued that proof for a different understanding of personal existence would be difficult to defend and far less credible<sup>36</sup> in

---

(<sup>35</sup>continued) There is even talk today of the existence of two distinct spheres of the brain which support our findings. It is being speculated that the right side of the brain, for example, produces new ideas, while the left side of the brain deals only with facts. The right side, in other words, would be in line with the 'I' to which Mead refers. The left, that which deals with the orthodox and the conventional, would be in line with the 'Me' ('Use Your Right Brain' (Insights and Innovations for the Management of Change, ed. F. D. Barrett, Vol. 5, No. 2, March 1975)).

<sup>36</sup>One might turn to the philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre as a challenge to the comprehensive analysis of man which Pannenberg is suggesting. Sartre recognizes the inalienable freedom of man and the necessity of this freedom in the pursuit of life. But with Sartre there is no recognition of the other dimension of life suggested, that is, community. He speaks of absolute freedom or contingency. The first source of freedom, according to Sartre, is the basic thesis of existentialism: existence precedes essence. Because there is no essence which pre-determines what will or will not be, each individual is absolutely free and entirely self-responsible (L'Être et le néant (Librairie Gallimard, Paris, 1943), p. 515). Man is free, for Sartre, because he is completely undetermined. He maintains this in spite of the fact that he also says man is determined by the interpretations others put on his actions. Notwithstanding this slight inconsistency, however, it would be right to sum up Sartre's position by saying that man is free. This is so first, because he is nothing to start with and second, because he makes his own attempt to become something. Man, thus, is solely responsible for what he becomes. The freedom of man for Sartre, is expressed in the notion of 'lack'. "Freedom makes only one with lack, it is the mode of concrete being of the lack of being." (p. 652). (For this interpretation of Sartre, and the quotations, I have consulted the work of Harold Hatt, Cybernetics and the Image of Man (Abingdon Press, New York, 1968), pp. 112-121).

Pannenberg does a good job in countering Sartre's argument (cf. Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, pp. 221-222). He points out that Sartre's concept of 'lack' is in view of "the particular totality which it is lacking". If this is so, says Pannenberg, then the existence of man at least presupposes the possibility of that totality. "And insofar as it is the case that the ground that makes it possible can lie neither in man himself nor in the extant world, it is always previously presupposed in the existence of man and his world as the reality that supports them. This reality is therefore not simply "hypostatized" as transcendence beyond the world, nor is it only the "ideal" that man projects in his desire for self-realization, since he is instead already dependent for all self-realization upon that supporting reality, which is antecedent to all such projections as the ground of their possibility." (p. 222). Thus Pannenberg argues, man is determined always by this totality which manifests itself in life constantly, if only in a provisional form.

the light of life's experience itself. To be creative within the strong bonds of community, is to render life human and personal.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup>Let us note here that Pannenberg's concept of person, with which we deal in the last chapter, is one that is constituted by two poles; a determined pole which is the community and a contingent pole which is the individual. Both must receive proper recognition. What has happened, largely through the influence of Decartes, is that a dualism has been set up between the determined pole of personality and the contingent. Decartes saw minds, the free aspect of the person, as immaterial and operating separately from the body. The body, on the other hand, was a machine for Decartes, inhabited by the mind. Although immaterial, the mind was able to respond to the material world and act upon it. This led to what Gilbert Ryle called the 'dogma of the Ghost in the Machine' (Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind (Hutchinson and Co, London, 1949), pp. 11-18). Brunner did not escape the implications of thought associated with Decartes when he expressed the I-Thou relationship. We shall see this in our argument later in the thesis.

Ryle feels that the theory of mind-body dualism is based on what the analytic philosophers refer to as a category mistake, which is simply using a term in a way that is inappropriate for it. Ryle gives an example of what he means. If you were to show a person around a university campus and at the end of the tour he were to reply, "You have shown me the library, the classrooms, the administration buildings and the dormitories, but you have not yet shown me the university. When will we see it?", this would be a category mistake (for this and other examples, see The Concept of Mind, pp. 16-18, 22-23). This, says Ryle, is a category mistake because it is putting the university in the same category as the buildings that make up the university and this cannot be done. Much of our thinking about the mind, according to Ryle, is a category mistake in that we think of the mind as a thing that must enter into relationship with the body somehow. The mind is not a thing; it is an action of a person, says Ryle. There is no such thing as an absolute separation between what is done by the mind and what is done by the body. They are part and parcel of the same person. It is persons who are in process, who act, and the mind and body are aspects of this process.

In referring to Ryle, a criticism by H. D. Lewis should be noted. Ryle, he says, tends too much in the direction of materialism and does not see enough separation between mind and body. He writes, "Suffice it to note that while Ryle is not an outright materialist, in the sense of straightway telling the whole story of our conduct in terms of nerves, muscles, states of the brain and so on, he leaves us nothing besides the observable physical behaviour and certain more or less consistent dispositions. The purposing, which makes our conduct other than mechanical or accidental, is thought of entirely in terms of dispositions, and however ingeniously....this is extended to cover the cases where....we seem rapt in thought, it just goes against the obvious facts of everyone's experience, namely that we have mental processes of which each person is aware at the time in the very fact of having them." (The Self and Immortality (The Macmillan Press Ltd., London, 1973), p. 59).

(B) God as Future

The problem to deal with now is one of considerable magnitude. If the nature of personal existence is as suggested, that is, if individuation and participation are both essential ingredients in the development of personality, then theological relevance depends on the expression of ideas and concepts that are inclusive of these facts. Anything else would render theology meaningless as a discipline.

At no point, says Pannenberg, is this so important as in the concept of God. If religion is to regain its relevancy in man's life then the concept of God which it offers must have 'determinative significance for all finite reality as it is available to our experience.'<sup>38</sup> Thus, God cannot be thought of any longer without a concept that will be determinative of the realities of contingency and unity in human experience.

There are two problems that arise here, and Pannenberg recognizes them. For God to be determinative of unity, it must be shown, in some way, that the tendency in man for unity is a reality incomprehensible within man himself. It must be shown that a reference outside man, in the sense of an all-determining reality, is required for explanation. Secondly, it must be shown that this reference, which is the totality of everything, is personal. This means it must be the guarantor of freedom or contingency.

Pannenberg dealt with the first problem in his criticism of Jean-Paul Sartre which has been alluded to.<sup>39</sup> He showed how Sartre's concept of 'lack' is only understandable in relation to and in recognition

---

<sup>38</sup>Refer back to footnote 18 of this chapter.

<sup>39</sup>Refer back to footnote 36 of this chapter.

of a totality of things outside man. He suggested that Sartre's argument for 'lack' leads logically to this conclusion itself.

Pannenberg's reasoning with Sartre would be applicable, as well, to the thought of Eric Fromm. Fromm states, for example, that the tendency in man for uniqueness and orientation needs no other reference other than man himself.<sup>40</sup> Ideas, he says, which man cannot help from projecting, are simply an attempt to bring about a state of equilibrium in life, as much as this can be done. The suggestion that "man is not free to choose between having or not having "Ideals"<sup>41</sup> indicates an element of compulsion about them. Does this not lead Fromm away from his inference that they are simple projections of man and imply, in turn, something beyond man?

To this question one must add that Fromm's idea of man's struggle for orientation and devotion, as a simple process explanatory within man, falls down before the standard which he has set for the truthfulness of an ideal itself. He writes, "We must understand every ideal including those which appear in secular ideologies as expressions of the same human need and we must judge them with respect to their truth, to the extent to which they are conducive to the unfolding of man's powers and to the degree to which they are a real answer to man's need for equilibrium and harmony in his world."<sup>42</sup> The thought that no ultimate reconciliation of the tension at the center of man's life is to be hoped for, as suggested by Fromm, would hardly meet man's need. Man keeps reaching out for an equilibrium, or

---

<sup>40</sup>Fromm, Man For Himself, pp. 48-58.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

a totality of things, and the thought that there can and will not be any solution is unbearable to him for any length of time. Without the hope of reconciliation or equilibrium, man cannot function.<sup>43</sup>

Pannenberg expresses it very cogently when he writes:

To live in the attitude of radically open inquiry without any anticipation of a possible answer is possible under normal conditions probably only with regard to questions which for the people involved in the inquiry are not - or no longer - concerned with the central issues of life. Otherwise there is as a rule an envisaged answer. If no answer appears at this point, that signifies a threat to the very possibility of living, which cannot be endured for very long.<sup>44</sup>

Fromm's "Ideals", thus, fall before his own standards and requirements.

The first problem proposed, to restate it, was that of establishing the reference for unity outside man. This was dealt with by Pannenberg in showing the congruency of the idea with the basic experiences of life itself.

The second problem, however, is even more crucial and not quite so easy to deal with. As Pannenberg himself would be quick to point out, the mere point of reference outside man, for the totality of existence, does not warrant the use of the word God. It merely ".....shows man as dependent upon being encountered by something

---

<sup>43</sup>For Fromm, one of the conditions for the truthfulness of an Ideal is its capacity to empower man. In this context he speaks of hope. In his book, The Revolution of Hope (Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1968), he says that an ultimate shattering of hope would mean the destruction of man. Any Ideal therefore which contains no final solution, or answer, or hope for reconciliation, would destroy man's powers (p. 22).

<sup>44</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, pp. 224-225.

that functions as a supportive ground for the existence of man in its transcending movement into openness, as well as for the totality of all extant reality, the world."<sup>45</sup> The real problem exists in the reconciliation of the following and hitherto seemingly exclusive concepts: the concept of a power outside ourselves which is all determinative, and the concept of person. In using person in this context, the contingent aspect of life, that which makes for free, individual expression, is referred to. The question before us is this: Can an all-determining reality guarantee, at the same time, personal existence in the sense of contingency? If these two concepts can be thought through or presented in a compatible way, then there is a basis for an affirmation of God. Pannenberg expresses the problem in his own words this way:

Obviously, the word "person" automatically brings to the fore an understanding whose combination with the idea of an all-determining power has become unbelievable for us. If I see the matter correctly, the crises of the idea of God since the eighteenth century is connected chiefly with the problem of how the power that determines all reality can be thought of as a person.<sup>46</sup>

This is the challenge, as stated previously, that is directed to religion by Atheism. Does the mention of God as an all-determining reality necessarily exclude the reality of freedom? That is, does it destroy individuality in life? Can we speak of God as the all-determining reality and as the source of individual expression and freedom at the same time? The atheists, and here such names as Nietzsche, Hartmann and Sartre might be mentioned, claim this is an impossibility.

---

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

The affirmation of human freedom, they say, necessarily includes the proclamation of the non-existence of God. The weakness of dialectical theology, of which Brunner was a representative, was its failure to deal with this criticism adequately.

Pannenberg is convinced that the atheist's criticism strikes at the heart of theology. It is a challenge that cannot be taken very lightly. This is so because there is power in the criticism and because a response must be made to it. Pannenberg accepts the atheist's challenge as one with which the theologian must wrestle. There is no thought that the particular discipline of theology, by virtue of some special knowledge, can transcend it; it is a challenge that must be met on its own ground. Atheism in its challenge makes it virtually impossible, in his estimation, for the Christian faith to retain God concepts deterministic as models of reality. Such concepts cannot be reconciled with personality in the important aspects of freedom of choice and decision. Brunner's concept was seen as weak on this score.

Let it be clear, at this point, that there is no suggestion that personality is absolutely without determination. Man is what he is to a certain extent by the environment and community in which he lives. However, if this were a closed determinism, in the sense that contingency (the unexpected) could not have its place, then it would be destructive to freedom. Sartre, for example, could not reconcile determinism and freedom in any manner or degree and opted for absolute freedom. He failed to realize that freedom, with no boundaries, is usually destructive to human life. It can easily develop into licentiousness. It was noted in Brunner that without the aspect of decisive meaning in community the dangers of antinomianism were present. He and Sartre would share similar criticism on this point.



In speaking of the irreconcilability of personality with deterministic models of reality,<sup>47</sup> reference is made to models that allow for no decisiveness on the part of the individual. The problem of God, as the atheists see it, is that all present concepts of Him as an all-determining being, leave no room for this essential freedom. Omnipotence and omniscience, which are the traditional attributes signifying God's all-determinacy, must either be dropped, in which case God would not be God for he would not determine everything, or the conflict between the world and theology must be accepted as inevitable. To continue with God-talk then, it would be necessary to place it above criticism from the secular world. For reasons stated, the latter is no alternative in that it would forever weaken the proclamation of the gospel. The first alternative is also unacceptable for the reason referred to.

Wolfhart Pannenberg attempts a response which is brave, original and very challenging. He brings forth a concept of God which gives ontological priority to the future. He refers to it as God as 'Future'.<sup>48</sup> This expression of his concept of God has biblical foundation, logical construction and promise in terms of the requirements set out thus far. The biblical soundness of the concept will be investigated in a succeeding chapter. Pannenberg's views on the manner of God's

---

<sup>47</sup>When referring to unity, Pannenberg writes, "This unity acquires identity by exhibiting some meaningful connection in the sequence of events. If this meaningful connection is understood in such a way as to replace the contingency of events with deterministic models of reality, the notion of a personal power behind those events is untenable." (Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 58).

<sup>48</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 242.

appearance in Jesus and the message of Jesus himself in the gospels will be important on this matter. The logicality of the concept will depend on the satisfaction it offers to all requirements of the word "God" in our language, without which it would not make sense to speak of God. The promise of the concept rests in the strength it shows in meeting the demands that human existence puts upon it, including those of contingency and unity. It is this latter relevance that is so essential to the discussion in this thesis. The 'personal' cannot be maintained unless the community (unity) is stressed with importance and significance while entertaining the special place of the individual.

It is important that the reader realize the basic intention of this writer in referring to Pannenberg. It is the promise within his concept that will be stressed most of all. In using the word promise, the embryonic position of Pannenberg's ideas is stressed. He does not claim to have resolved all the theological dilemmas brought forth in the discussion at hand. At the heart of his theological method is the suggestion that everything is open and provisional. This is the case with his own work. Therefore, in what follows, residual problems will arise which will not receive further attention by this writer. This is so, not only because it is beyond his capabilities to resolve them, but also because the present work does not depend on their resolution here. To restate it, our aim is to elaborate the promise in Pannenberg's thoughtful expression. In doing this, the writer realizes that he draws upon Pannenberg's own expression a great deal. This will be so sometimes without an attempt to explain the exact meaning of his phrases. In spite of this, the intention of this work should remain clear.

Pannenberg's claim is that unity and contingency cannot be maintained without giving ontological priority to the future, that is, without employing the concept of God as Future; the latter logically entails the former.

With this expression, Pannenberg stands apart from, albeit very sympathetic to, theological and philosophical systems of thought which tend toward progressive development or necessary causes. This refers to the systems which give ontological priority to the past. Any system which sees the future as necessary, because of an innate futuristic direction or push in reality, would be included within this category. In these systems, the future, as well as the incompleteness of things and the changeability of the world, is referred to.

However, the future in such cases is a product from the past, that is, the past receives ontological priority. Such a perspective, Pannenberg argues, denies the essential contingency and freedom that is necessary for personal existence.<sup>49</sup>

If something develops of necessity because of an innate drive within it, then the new that happens does not do so contingently. Thus, it is not free or personal. It is for this reason that Pannenberg criticised the evolutionary optimism of nineteenth century liberalism in its emphasis on the progressive development of man in triumph over the elements of the world. Ritschl, who saw the eventual establishment of man's spirit over nature in the moral kingdom of God, would be open to such criticism. As stated, this was the point of

---

<sup>49</sup>See Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 114f. and also, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 198.

Brunner's criticism of Ritschl. He accused Ritschl for not taking due cognizance of sin in life which would prevent any thought of inevitable progress and optimism.

Pannenberg distances himself from Whitehead and Teilhard de Chardin as well. He has profound respect for both men and has been profoundly influenced and affected by their work and thought. He says he can agree with Whitehead in considering the ultimate elements of reality in terms of single occasions contingently following each other. He also agrees with Whitehead in the thought that each new occasion must apprehend the world it encounters. This would fall in line with Pannenberg's whole understanding of hermeneutics. He writes, however, in criticism of his philosophy, "In Whitehead's own theory the combined effect of a "creativity" which is attributed to matter and of ideal structures (eternal objects) tends to eliminate the novelty and contingency of events, in spite of Whitehead's efforts to offset such a tendency."<sup>50</sup>

Teilhard de Chardin is a more appealing thinker to Pannenberg than is Whitehead. This has something to do with the former's retention of the 'Omega' point as the ultimate point of reference. And yet, within Teilhard de Chardin, the priority of the past, of which Pannenberg is critical, exists. Pannenberg likes his idea of a transcendent spirit which dominates the process of evolution; this thought allows for contingent reality which, as stated, is a necessary condition for a personal universe. Disagreement arises

---

<sup>50</sup> Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 66. This criticism may stem from the fact that Whitehead leaves God open for development, thus sacrificing some of the all-determinacy of God for a creativity that is within matter itself. Pannenberg, as we shall see, while accepting growth in God, makes a vital distinction here from Whitehead. He does not want to recognize the development of God Himself.

over Teilhard de Chardin's whole concept of energy. Instead of thinking of energy in terms of a field of energy which would have been reconcilable with his idea of transcendent spirit, he develops his idea of energy as an 'inside' reality of bodies. In doing this, "...even the movement of self-transcendence and thus the entire dynamic of evolution was attributed to finite bodies rather than - as Teilhard wanted to do - to a principle transcending them as in the case with his point Omega."<sup>51</sup>

Both Brunner and Pannenberg clearly see the danger to the individual's meaning in any such suggestion of futurism. They are united in their concern to protect the value of the individual in his relationship to world history. Both agree that progressive evolutionism denies the self such value. Brunner's conviction can be represented in these words:

....what sort of meaning could the progress of humanity give to my life, the life of the individual man? The individual had, as it were, in order to attribute meaning to history, to resign meaning for himself in favour of a meaning for humanity as a whole. For no doubt a vaguely conceived humanity in the remote future might well share in the goal of progress, but not he, the individual man, of to-day. Humanity

---

<sup>51</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'The Doctrine of the Spirit and the Task of a Theology of Nature' (New Theology, No. 10, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1973), pp. 17-38), pp. 28-29. Teilhard de Chardin has been criticised by others for his futuristic method. Ernst Benz in his book, Evolution and Christian Hope, trans. Heinz Frank (Doubleday & Company, Inc., New York, 1966), points out that present reality and the factors that comprise it, retain little significance in the light of the powerful future that all things move toward. Everything is viewed as a contribution to the process of natural evolution. Even evil is seen in a positive light because it simply exists as a certain phase of the world on the way toward its goal (p. 231). Any evolutionary process which sees newness developing out of a past structure infringes on the rights and freedom of the individual in the social process to which he is referred. Thus, necessity and freedom, in this context, are irreconcilable. And an all-powerful God, which is the context in which Teilhard de Chardin develops his thought, would be less than personal and subject to the abiding criticism of modern atheism stated above.

must, as it were, form a pyramid where each generation would climb higher than its predecessors until the last, climbing over all the others, reached the top.<sup>52</sup>

Pannenberg's opinion is expressed as follows:

The realization of man's being as such requires a community in which everyone has his own proper place, so that in it the conflicts between the individual and society, are overcome. If the unity of man's being as an individual and a member of society is an indispensable condition for the realization of his humanity, it is not sufficient for a balance to be struck in some future order of society between the individual and society, even if this could be supposed possible under the present conditions of human existence, where the common interest must be discerned and furthered by individuals who repeatedly do so from the point of view of their private interests. But even if it were possible to establish the unity of men's individual and common interests in a future society, how then would people of previous generations participate in the destiny of man realized in such a future society?<sup>53</sup>

The distinctive difference between Brunner and Pannenberg, fundamental to our whole discussion, is that Brunner accepts the position of meaninglessness as inevitable on the stage of world

---

<sup>52</sup>Brunner, Eternal Hope, pp. 82-83.

<sup>53</sup>Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 198. This is the same question Russell Norris directs to Roger Garaudy in the concluding part of his analysis of him. Garaudy, Norris claims, is unable, in spite of his diversion from the traditional path of Marxism, to escape the danger inherent within it, that is, the danger of sacrificing the individual for a future utopia. Norris writes that Garaudy himself, is in danger of forfeiting his efforts to preserve individual initiative by subordinating individuality to collective totality. "The question of the inviolability of the individual vis-a-vis the needs of future society leads back to the question of moloch, the false god to which this generation is sacrificed for the sake of speculative, unborn future generations." (Russell Norris, God, Marx and the Future (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1974), p. 197).

history; there is no escape from it. This was evident in his view of time. Pannenberg, on the other hand, suggests a new view of time which places the question of 'meaning' within history while avoiding the pitfalls of futurism. His concept of God is, of course, central to this idea. More attention will be devoted to this later.

If Pannenberg rejects an idea of God that gives priority to the past, for the reasons stated, neither would he accept a concept giving priority to the present, that is, a concept that views all moments of time cohering in an eternal present. In this understanding, there would be no logical order of time in God and this would, in effect, diminish the seriousness of historical reality.<sup>54</sup> As indicated in our last chapter, time has little value if it is not essentially related to God.

In the light of the inadequacies considered in these viewpoints, Pannenberg developed the concept of God as Future. The question he sets for himself, and for us, is: Does the concept of the ontological priority of the future meet demands of the personal? This is a necessary condition if 'God' is to be a relevant word. Does it preserve unity and contingency in human life? There are those who are prepared to argue that the concept does not satisfy these requirements. These criticisms will be taken up in succeeding pages. The first task, however, is to show the relevance the concept has, in the opinion of Wolfhart Pannenberg. For this purpose his chapter entitled 'The God of Hope',<sup>55</sup> in the second volume of his Basic Questions in Theology, is very important.

---

<sup>54</sup>See Galloway, Wolfhart Pannenberg, p. 95.

<sup>55</sup>This, of course, is not the only chapter in which Pannenberg speaks directly about the God of hope. One could turn to many sections of his writings for such expression as it is basic to his whole theology.

It is very difficult to determine the influences on an individual's thought process. It is not to be denied that all scholars come under the persuasion of others, to one degree or another. Pannenberg pays respect to a number of scholars, philosophers and theologians in this sense. Hegel's thought, for example, was a dominant influence on him. Pannenberg's view of 'Revelation as History' is not unrelated to Hegel's thought on the relationship of history to God. Whitehead and the Process Theology that has developed from him could also be mentioned as influential in the growth of his concepts. In the chapter 'The God of Hope', he mentions yet another man, Ernst Bloch, whose insight has been valuable in shaping his thought. Pannenberg writes in reference to Bloch, "Perhaps Christian theology will one day have to thank Ernst Bloch's philosophy of hope for giving it the courage to recover in the full sense its central category of eschatology."<sup>56</sup>

Let us briefly consider Bloch as this will lead into the discussion of Pannenberg's own contribution. Langdon Gilkey, in a review article<sup>57</sup> on Pannenberg's Basic Questions in Theology, has convincingly related the thought of Bloch to Pannenberg. It is sufficient here to reiterate some of the salient points he made in his article. These are points Pannenberg himself mentions. As Gilkey says, Bloch has a fundamental sympathy for religion in that it refers man to the future for his meaning and, thus, keeps alive the openness of existence necessary for his freedom. As well, Bloch feels that the

---

<sup>56</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, pp. 237-238.

<sup>57</sup>Langdon Gilkey, 'Pannenberg's Basic Questions in Theology: a Review Article' (Perspective, Vol. XIV, Spring '73, pp. 35-55). I will be referring to Gilkey's article for another reason. He presents a challenge to Pannenberg's thought which is helpful to our investigation.



sense of divine mystery in the 'hidden God' of religion gives and guarantees man's dignity. "Only in relation to the 'hidden God' ....is the problem of what is at stake in the legitimate mystery of the 'hidden man' ....kept open."<sup>58</sup> Thus, Bloch can see the value a God concept might have. However, in his estimation, such value has been dissolved by the concept of God expressed by the Christian faith through the years. The messianic theme with its promise and hope motif became humanized and finally neutralized in the doctrine of the consubstantiality of Jesus Christ with God.<sup>59</sup>

Bloch, finding the God-hypostasis defenseless, dropped the notion while holding onto the future reality which was implicit in it. Instead of deifying the future, Bloch secularized it by referring it solely to the plane of history; thus, history is conceptualized in the expression "S is not yet P".<sup>60</sup> In its implications this simply means that present reality is characterized by an openness and that future possibilities take precedence over everything that is.

---

<sup>58</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 241.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>60</sup>In the article, 'Ernst Bloch and "The Pull of the Future"', (New Theology, No. 5, ed. Martin Marty and Dean Peerman (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1968), pp. 191-204), Harvey Cox writes of Bloch in this way: "But what does Bloch help us to see? How would his thought be capsuled if it had to be described in a few words? Bloch himself, Adolph Lowe reports, was once faced with this challenge. A few years back at a late afternoon tea in the home of a friend, someone challenged the old man to sum up his philosophy in one sentence. "All great philosophers have been able to reduce their thought to one sentence", the friend said. "What would your sentence be?" Bloch puffed on his pipe for a moment and then said, "That's a hard trap to get out of. If I answer, then I'm making myself out to be a great philosopher. But if I'm silent, then it will appear as though I have a great deal in mind but not much I can say. But I'll play the brash one instead of the silent one and give you this sentence: S is not yet P." (pp. 193-194).

For Bloch, this preserves the dignity of man in that it ceases to tie him to any systems, expressions, or programmes of the present; that is, it gives him freedom. Man is assured of his dignity because history is open. Hope, at the same time, becomes history's theme and not something in the past or present. Bloch joins the atheists in their criticism that freedom and essential hope are dissolved, however, by the concept of an 'existing' God.

Pannenberg, as he makes clear in the chapter referred to, accepts a great deal of what Bloch has to say. Although he questions whether Bloch, in actual fact, has done justice to the traditional concepts of God and the implications within them, he does accept the validity of Bloch's criticism that a divine 'existing' being annihilates man's freedom. Also, God Himself, being said to 'exist', can be called into question with the rest of all existing things and beings. Thus, Pannenberg admits that Bloch and the atheists have pointed to a deficiency in the present understanding of God. Before us is the prospect of either dropping the idea altogether, or redefining it in the light of man's basic experience of openness.

Dropping the idea of God would have serious consequences. It would reduce Christianity to the function of mere emotional expression or prescriptive language, as the linguistic analysts have suggested. It would also remove the means of overcoming the inadequacies of Bloch's own position.

Pannenberg, while accepting the open possibilities of reality which Bloch has affirmed, goes on to show how the latter's affirmations are endangered by dropping the notion of God. By doing so, he says, Bloch has not offered man any firm grounding for the hope that is in him.

If one were to attribute such openness to man, one would always be depending on man's psychological incentive to project his wishes into the future and, thus, provide for creativity. As is only too evident, however, from observing certain circumstances of man's behaviour, he can so easily remain satisfied with his present circumstances and achievement. This is surely too common an experience in the life of every man to warrant explicit substantiation in this part of our discussion. If, on the other hand, one were to ascribe openness for new possibilities to potencies and latencies within history itself, then that very openness would be endangered by the notion of causality implied. Causality, in the sense of something new always arising as an effect from a cause, logically destroys any idea of openness and freedom. This weakness, as earlier suggested, is present in the thought of Teilhard de Chardin and to some extent, in the system of Whitehead and Process Theology. Pannenberg says even Bloch referred to latent forces within reality.<sup>61</sup> And, with such an idea, it is difficult to see how he can escape the notion of historical inevitability which is diametrically opposed to individuality and openness. Sir Isaiah Berlin writes of the exclusiveness of such forces and openness in the following:

If the history of the world is due to the operation of identifiable forces other than, and little affected by, free human wills and free choices...then the proper explanation of what happens must be given in terms of the evolution of such forces. And there is then a tendency to say that not individuals,

---

<sup>61</sup>Cf. Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 239.

but these larger entities, are ultimately  
'responsible'.<sup>62</sup>

Dropping the idea of God, thus, is not a real option. It would logically implicate us in the direction stated. The future, in such a case, would be dependent on man's psychological powers or something within history itself. Such a method, says Pannenberg, would also be opposed to the basic experience in reality of reaching out beyond the finite to a completion and fulfillment of existence. He indicated that Bloch himself was unable to escape this notion and, thus, was actually extending the future beyond history.<sup>63</sup>

The only manner of protecting contingency and, at the same time, man's essential involvement with community, according to Pannenberg, is by grounding the future within itself. Man is then going beyond the process of history and inferring a higher power. With this, the question of God once again arises. Pannenberg's argument is that the question of God, in the light of the above, is really unavoidable if personal existence is to be maintained. Thus, he has reversed the criticism of Bloch and the atheist by contesting their position in favour of religion, particularly the Christian faith. Let us go on to show his reasoning on the matter.

---

<sup>62</sup>Isaiah Berlin, 'Historical Inevitability' (The Philosophy of History), p. 171. Berlin writes further: "Whether the causes that are held completely to determine human action are physical or psychical or of some other kind, and in whatever pattern or proportion they are deemed to occur, if they are truly causes - if their outcomes are thought to be unalterable as, say, the effects of physical or physiological causes - this of itself seems to me to make the notion of a free choice between alternatives inapplicable....Freedom to act .....requires a situation in which no sum total of such causal factors wholly determines the result....." (pp. 172-173).

<sup>63</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 241.

His argument would proceed in the following way. If the future has ontological priority, that is, if it is grounded in itself, then certain favorable consequences follow for reality. One, the contingent, which is basic to the personal quality of our life, is assured. Events are not viewed, thus, arising within the field of history itself, as products of existing forces or simply human initiative. This idea would oppose contingency and make meaning uncertain. Rather, events arise as contingent and unexpected and, thus, are truly free. Pannenberg writes in this connection, "...the power of the future is distinguished by the fact that it frees man from his ties to what presently exists in order to liberate him for his future, to give him his freedom."<sup>64</sup>

At the same time, unity is preserved and guaranteed with the employment of this concept. All contingent events are now related to the same future. The future would be the same future for all events as contingent facts of historical existence arise out of the future.<sup>65</sup>

One of the problems, mentioned above, is that of guaranteeing the value and dignity of the individual on the plane of history. Both Brunner and Pannenberg are aware that any utopian notion, such as Bloch proposes, would allow all value to be placed on some subsequent period of history which, at some future date, would reach fruition. All previous factors would thus be sacrificed for this utopia without their personal participation. The ontological priority of the future would protect the contingent against this

---

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 243.

<sup>65</sup>See pp.157f. of this thesis for an account of this claim. There, I have made some attempt to state how events arise out of the future.

loss of value by relating all events to the same future. Brunner, as we have suggested, without the aid of such a concept, could see no possibility for the preservation of meaning other than 'above' history. Meaning, for him, was established in a relationship with God 'above' man's involvement with the social and historical realities of life. As stated, Brunner did not provide any reasonable correlation of the two.

Brunner's refusal to place man's meaning on the construction of some utopia in the future is understandable. However, his complete separation of 'meaning' from history is not a convincing alternative. Divorcing 'meaning' from the social and political realities is at variance with the common experiences of man. Such a practice would render religion, and more importantly Christianity, incredulous to him.<sup>66</sup> The concept of the ontological priority of the future would help to retain the relevance of the Christian faith in that history and the events that comprise it would be essentially in God. This would make political and social matters and, at the same time, natural morality essential to the 'meaning' of life. This will be elaborated in succeeding pages and chapters. First, let it be said that the concept of the 'ontological priority of the future' cannot be employed without giving serious attention to the things that are implied therein.

Two questions present themselves in the light of Pannenberg's concept of the 'ontological priority of the future'. How is one to

---

<sup>66</sup> Barth and Brunner, it should be remembered, formed their theologies during World War conditions. They were experiencing the horrid consequences of man's attempt to conquer the world. In disagreeing with their theological conclusions, there is also great sympathy for their intentions to confront man with the ultimate.

conceive the reality of God? What right would one have in ascribing such power of the future to God? In Pannenberg's estimation, these are two crucial questions for the Christian faith at the present time. The response to these questions also involves matters crucial to the whole discussion of man in community. The last question will be considered first as the very basis of the Christian faith itself is at stake. What justification do we have in ascribing the power of the future to God?

In dealing with any of Pannenberg's arguments the word 'probability' should be used. He does not make absolute claims. This is particularly so with the concept under consideration. He claims only a degree of probability for it in relation to the truth. In Pannenberg's estimation, this is a qualification that must be applied to all attempts to reach the truth. With reference to the Apostles' Creed he writes:

Whether an examination of the truth of the statements in the creed can arrive at a final answer is, it must be admitted, doubtful from the start. Who could definitively settle the question of whether the God whom Jesus preached created the universe? Or whether Jesus rose from the dead and will also raise those who believe in him from death to his own everlasting life? Or the meaning of the Holy Spirit? Who is really capable of settling all these questions? Nobody who has become even remotely concerned. But for the person who tries to discover the grounds of his Christian faith, the important thing is to penetrate so far into the ancient formulations of the creed that their factual basis becomes accessible; then the assurance can spring up that these formulations are not simply empty phrases but point to facts which are accessible to us as well, even where we should formulate these facts differently. Once this confidence in the factualness of the transmitted credal formulae has grown up, faith can trust in the certainty of its foundation, even

though this confidence will never communicate itself without any element of doubt.<sup>67</sup>

Keeping this in mind, let us proceed with the question at hand.

It was suggested that the concept of the 'ontological priority of the future' insures the two essential factors of personal existence. The proposal was made that contingent reality or freedom can only be defended with this understanding. Man is not absolutely determined by something before or in him but is unbounded, in an important sense, toward the future. Having stated this, it can be said that freedom presupposes the future for its existence. If freedom is essential for the personal, which has already been established, and, in turn, is essentially related to the future, then one can say with Pannenberg, "....futurity as a condition of freedom constitutes the very core of the personal...."<sup>68</sup>

The next step, and perhaps the most important, is one that Pannenberg describes as very difficult. It centers around the question of the personal itself and the ground from whence it springs. The difficulty here comes from the atheistic challenge voiced by J. G. Fichte. The personality of God, he says, is nothing but the projection of man's own person outside himself. Pannenberg quotes him as saying:

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

---

<sup>67</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, The Apostles' Creed, trans. Margaret Kohl (SCM Press, London, 1972), p. 11.

<sup>68</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, pp. 245-246.



have not, as you intended, conceived  
God, but only reduplicated yourself in  
thought.<sup>69</sup>

Fichte's claim in this statement is that the personal is grounded only in anthropology. He suggests it is from this basis that the idea originates. Any talk or reference to the personal in whatever context, therefore, must refer back to this anthropological starting point. In this argument, Fichte declared a victory over the claims of the Christian faith. The God of that faith could now be nothing but a figment of man's imagination, that is, an illusion.

How is this criticism to be met? By withdrawing from the realm of experiences open to human life and placing support for the personal in faith as immediate encounter? This method is adopted by Brunner. As intimated, however, such a retreat would have the unfortunate effect of weakening the claims of the Christian faith. Pannenberg reasons that man must meet the attack more directly than this if he is to restore relevance and credibility to the word 'God'. He approaches the problem in the following manner. He says if a close examination is made of man's experiences in life, then it is not so self-evident, as previously thought, that the personal is a product of these experiences. This is borne out by the fact that freedom, which is an essential of the personal, is frequently denied man in this world. This is so in theory as well as in fact. The behaviourist, for example, claims our actions as purely the result of pre-conditioning. There are also theories that look upon man as impersonal, that is, a phenomenon of evolutionary forces working

---

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., pp. 227-228.

themselves out in time. In practice, there are circumstances in which the individual is regarded and treated as a thing. He is manipulated by those who happen to have superior power. The writings of such men as Solzhenitsyn<sup>70</sup> reveals the depth of this impersonal force at work in political systems at the present time. If the personal was as self-evident within man as Fichte claimed, it would be difficult to explain these existing impersonal tendencies. They are expressed not only in the occasional quirk of man's behaviour, but also in the ideological and political structures that embody the impersonal in their creeds.

In the light of this, Pannenberg asks the question: "Does not his dignity as a person have more the character of an article of faith than a demonstrable element singled out from experienced anthropological realities?"<sup>71</sup> He means, is the person not a matter of trust, rather than an awareness based on human experience? In asking this question, Pannenberg is associating the personal with religious experience. He looks at the life of primitive man for an answer to this question. Primitive man personified objects that surrounded him. This was a practice that grew out of the religious dimension of his existence and not from self-reflection. Pannenberg gives the example of the child in play personifying things in his environment. It is known, through the process of time, that such objects are not personal; this does not, however, take away from the personal nature of the power encountered. This personal power

---

<sup>70</sup>Alexander Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago, trans. Thomas Whitney (Collins & Harvill Press, London, 1974).

<sup>71</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 228.

makes a concrete claim upon man through his religious experience and leads him to the probability that the personal is an experience that comes to man and not from him. Pannenberg writes:

A personal conception of the divine reality on the sense described above is unquestionably common to wide areas of the history of religions. It is not in every sense something specific to the biblical understanding of God. On the other hand, there seems to be great differences among the different religions and even between the different deities of one and the same religion with respect to the peculiar manner and significance of their personal character. Thus the personal element in the conception of God in the Olympian religion of the Greeks seems to have been from the first far less important than in the ancient Near East, and here the leading deities of the Tigris-Euphrates valley seem to have had more sharply drawn personalities than those of Egypt. In comparison with them, the personality of the biblical God exhibits still other specific features. This God is characterized by a freedom of action that, together with the exclusivity of his claim upon those in covenant with him, sets the God of Israel off from the other divine figures with whom the people of the ancient Near East otherwise associated.<sup>72</sup>

This understanding of the origin of the personal not only has the important effect of undermining the power of Fichte's criticism of religion and the Christian faith, but also, of associating the personal with God in a way that was previously not possible.

Let us now return to the first question proposed. What consequences would the concept of the 'ontological priority of the

---

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., pp. 231-232 (see also J. Bowker, The Sense of God (Clarendon Press, London, 1973), pp. 45ff., where the author, in comparing different primitive religions, also asks the question of the personal. Is it generated entirely within the social as Durkheim argues? Or is it an experience outside the social?).

future' have for our understanding of God? If the personal has futurity as its essence and if the personal can be related to God through the concrete claim of religious experience, what does this say about God? Pannenberg answers with the statement: ".... the question must now be concerned exclusively with the possibility of a God "with futurity as a quality of being," and therefore a return to the God of theism must be ruled out at this stage."<sup>73</sup>

The significance of this statement should not be underestimated. In considering it, a new concept of God is brought forward. Pannenberg's originality of thought is most clear and challenging in his expression of God as Future. In spite of its rudimentary character, it is an expression that has much promise in meeting the demands of the personal (freedom and unity), while protecting the sovereignty of God (His all-determinacy). It is a conception, at the same time, that must be examined cautiously because of its divergence from the traditional path of understanding.

"Does this mean", writes Pannenberg, "that God is not yet, but is yet to be?"<sup>74</sup> His answer to this question is ambiguously a yes and a no. Yes, there is a sense in which he is saying God does not yet exist. This can be seen clearly if we reflect on the Lordship of God, that is, His rule. To think of God is to think necessarily of His rule over man and creation. Yet it is obvious that such rule and Lordship is not complete; it is not finished. This incompleteness of rule implies, in a very important sense, that God does not yet exist

---

<sup>73</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 242.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

because rule is essentially related to his nature. Pannenberg writes as a conclusion, "Thus it is necessary to say that, in a restricted but important sense, God does not yet exist."<sup>75</sup>

Pannenberg should not be misunderstood when he makes such statements. On the surface it might appear that he is rejecting something of paramount importance to traditional Christianity, namely, the self-sufficiency of God. If this is rejected then it is questionable whether one can proceed with the discussion any further and still hold to the basic intention of the word 'God' itself. But, as seen from our investigation of Pannenberg so far, he means to hold firmly to this traditional conviction. His description of God as all-determinacy infers that God is not subject to any other thing or creature. He writes clearly, "This does not mean that God could not be God apart from the existence of finite beings, for God certainly can do without anyone or anything else."<sup>76</sup> Pannenberg makes this point once again when he comments on the Whiteheadian idea of development in God. He writes, "....we cannot agree when Whitehead suggests that the futurity of God's Kingdom implies a development in God. It is true that, from the viewpoint of our finite present, the future is not yet decided. Therefore, the movement of time contributes to deciding what the definite truth is going to be, also with regard to the essence of God. But - and here is the difference from Whitehead - what turns out to be true in the future will then be evident as having

---

<sup>75</sup>Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 56.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

been true all along. This applies to God as well as to every finite reality."<sup>77</sup>

(C) Assessment of Pannenberg's Concept

In any assessment of Pannenberg's theology it must be stressed that his faults lie not in weakening the power and glory of God. At least it should be said that his intentions to preserve God's sovereignty are strong. Nevertheless, the question must be posed: Is it possible to hold to a sameness in God and to a change in God at the same time? Not a few theologians, in their assessment of Pannenberg's thought (including those who have much respect for his intentions), find this aspect of his thought difficult. It has not been given enough clarity and, thus, creates some confusion. A. D. Galloway, in his recent book on Pannenberg, although very sympathetic to the understanding Pannenberg is offering, finds this one of the weak points that must be reconsidered and clarified.<sup>78</sup>

Langdon Gilkey finds this part of Pannenberg's expression most confusing and under-developed. He says Pannenberg is trying to defend two notions that are theologically, linguistically and religiously different.<sup>79</sup> It is important to deal with Gilkey's criticism at some

---

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp. 62-63. Ian Barbour, who has great respect for Whiteheadian metaphysics in that he finds him closely assimilated to the modern physics conception of nature and the world, admits this is one of the weaknesses of Whitehead's God. He writes, "God acts in the word, the communication of meaning: we have freedom to respond or not, for grace is not "irresistable". Moreover, by limiting God's power, Whitehead absolves him of responsibility for evil, though at the expense of his ability to overcome it. For in this presentation, God lacks both the sovereign control and moral intensity of the biblical Jehovah." (Ian Barbour, Issues in Science and Religion (SCM Press Ltd., London, 1966), p. 443).

<sup>78</sup>See Galloway, Wolfhart Pannenberg, p. 96f.

<sup>79</sup>Gilkey, 'Pannenberg's Basic Questions in Theology: a Review Article' (Perspective, Vol. XIV, Spring '73), p. 50.

length because he has clearly expressed things that puzzle many admirers of Pannenberg's thought.

First, Gilkey does not understand how Pannenberg can escape the notion of development in God. His reasoning proceeds on the basis of the following interpretation. Pannenberg is saying, Gilkey claims, that (a) God as future exists; that God's being is the same during the course of history, in the past, present, and future. "What here (meaning "a") Pannenberg means then by the futurity of God's being is that during the course of history God always acts from the future, that he is always "ahead" of every present as its future, rather than the present ground of events. Thus for Pannenberg God, during the course of history, always "is" and is in relation to every present, but only as the future...."<sup>80</sup> He is also saying, Gilkey claims, that (b) God will in the end be in some sense a different reality than what he is now. "For then God's deity will be realized, manifested and so recognized - he will really be God as ruler."<sup>81</sup> Gilkey goes on to clarify this distinction further in these words:

In "a", and so during the course of history, the future God exists (is real) in some important and basic sense; but he exists as hidden or absent, since he is only effective on history's events from the future and has, for some reason, not yet achieved full control of these events. In meaning "b" the hiddenness obviously drops out, the effectiveness vastly increases, and God then rules completely and so visibly.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp. 50-51.

If we do not make this distinction, says Gilkey, then Pannenberg is left with an almighty, omnipotent, ruling, present God determining all events. If, on the other hand, the distinction is made one cannot escape the thought of development in God's reality.

There is a second problem Gilkey brings to our attention in his analysis of Pannenberg, which we shall mention before responding to the first. It arises from the meaning of God "a", that is, God's relationship or effectiveness during the course of history as a future reality. "Surely", writes Gilkey, "with such an agent reality determining events from the future, the freedom of man and the openness of history are deeply challenged."<sup>83</sup> Gilkey does not think Pannenberg's shift of causality from the present to the future alleviates the problem. He is referring to the suggestion which Pannenberg makes of a reversal in the time sequence. Pannenberg writes of the matter in this way: "Our considerations are based on a reversal of the time sequence usually presupposed in notions of causality. In contrast to formulations about natural order, which describe the impact of past conditions on present and future, we have suggested an idea of creation which understands the present - and each present now past - as resulting from its future."<sup>84</sup> "Now it is obvious", writes Gilkey, "that on this new view, man's freedom from necessitating coercion and so history's openness are not fundamentally challenged by past or present causes or necessities....rather if transhuman causes, especially the divine causality, come in from the future, it is from that direction, and not from the past, that human freedom and the openness of history are really endangered. For a God determining all from the future - and the only relevant deter-

---

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>84</sup>Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 70.



mination is from the future in this view - is precisely the omnipotent ruler on this view of causality that the God of theism, present at hand and omnipotent, was on the old view of causality."<sup>85</sup>

These criticisms are cogent, and helpful in pinpointing some of the confusion that accompanies Pannenberg's statements. When speaking of causality, for example, there is a vagueness of meaning intended. If it were defined in terms of the natural sciences then difficulties as to the openness and contingency of reality would arise. This is not an issue that has any conclusive settlement as it is still open for considerable discussion and debate.<sup>86</sup>

Regardless of the question of causality, however, there are certain things that must be said in defence of Pannenberg, which Gilkey fails to understand or mention. The promise and challenge of his concept will not become clear until these are dealt with.

First, Pannenberg will be better understood if an explanatory statement he made is considered.

....God's becoming and his sameness must be considered more exactly in their relatedness. It will hardly suffice to speak only of a becoming "in the other," as if an inner being of God were to be distinguished that remains completely untouched by such becoming. The maker himself is changed by the production and shaping of another being. The change cannot be held remote from God's inner being. But this does not necessarily affect his identity. To be sure, such identity can be

---

<sup>85</sup>Gilkey, 'Pannenberg's Basic Questions in Theology: a Review Article' (Perspective, Vol. XIV, Spring '73), p. 53.

<sup>86</sup>The question of causality is a timely one in philosophical circles today (cf. The Philosophy of History ed. Patrick Gardiner, in which the question is dealt with at some length, and the series History and Theory (Mouton and Co., S. Gravenage, 1961, '62, '63, '64)). There is much question as to whether causality can be thought of in a strict deterministic sense as with Karl Popper.

conceived together with a becoming in God himself only if time and eternity are not mutually exclusive.<sup>87</sup>

The words at the end of this assertion are extremely important to Pannenberg's whole programme. Time and Eternity,<sup>88</sup> he says, should not be thought of as mutually exclusive concepts. Rather, they should be considered part of the same reality.<sup>89</sup> In his thought, God takes times up into Himself so that it becomes part of His essence. Thus, there are not two separate realities, the reality of God and the reality of time. The reality of God includes time within itself. Therefore, it is impossible to conceive the reality of God as unfinished in the sense of there being a development to Him. This latter idea (Whitehead) makes God subject to time; at a future time, something different from God now would come in to being then. The reality of God is, in Pannenberg's thought, but only in the sense that there is nothing outside the reality of God. Any development then, if that expression can be used (perhaps it would be better to use the word change or movement), would be within God. It would be in God's inner being and not to God as reality Himself. This distinction, on Pannenberg's behalf, is a vital one in defending his understanding of God as an all-determining reality.

Gilkey is forgetting its importance when he writes, "...it is hard to see, granting the vast difference in God's manifestation of his deity, in the level of his effectiveness, in the relation of his power to time (in "b" he acts in the present) between the two notions,

---

<sup>87</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, trans. Lewis Wilkins and Duane Priebe (SCM Press Ltd., London, 1968), p. 320.

<sup>88</sup>The subject of time and eternity will receive further treatment in the next chapter.

<sup>89</sup>More explanation will be given on this when the Christological position is examined.

how there is no development in God's reality, especially if reality or being are defined in terms of God's effective rule."<sup>90</sup> Again, in the light of this, let us state that only if time and eternity are viewed as inclusive concepts can a difference in God be claimed with a sameness. Whether or not it is possible to see time and eternity in this sense has not been supported thus far. This is a question we will reserve for the next chapter. The Christological positions of Brunner and Pannenberg are crucial on this point.

Without immediate attention to this support, this much, at least, can be said. If time is outside God, that is, if time and eternity are not inclusive concepts (Brunner), then time can have no conceivable value, and contingency is thereby threatened. Pannenberg's suggestion that they are not exclusive protects the significance of time and, as well, meets Gilkey's criticism.

Does it not, however, add to the problem of determinism? This is a threatening problem every time God is said to be involved in time.<sup>91</sup> Gilkey pointed to this as a problem in Pannenberg's concept of God, especially the quality of all-determinacy. It was from the conviction that deterministic conclusions could not be avoided that he wrote, "Only an ontological and so theologically conceptual limitation on the divine sovereignty - whether from eternity, from the present, or from the future - can guarantee the openness of history, not a mere change in the temporal locus of God's being and work."<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Gilkey, 'Pannenberg's Basic Questions in Theology: a Review Article' (Perspective, Vol. XIV, Spring '73), p. 51.

<sup>91</sup> Refer to the argument in Chapter II of this thesis, pp. 93ff.

<sup>92</sup> Gilkey, 'Pannenberg's Basic Questions in Theology: a Review Article' (Perspective, Vol. XIV, Spring '73), p. 54.

Gilkey is not alone in writing of this problem in Pannenberg's thought. Ted Peters also made note of it in an article on Pannenberg's apologetic method.<sup>93</sup> He says this is one of the big areas of disagreement between the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer and Pannenberg, in spite of many similarities in their understanding of hermeneutic. Both share the view of a comprehensive horizon, in the sense that the individual's meaning depends on the life forms and nexus that encompass him. For Pannenberg, such a nexus of events extends beyond the limited totality that is present, to ever greater horizons such as peoples and states. It extends beyond all things to the totality of mankind and universal history. Gadamer, on the other hand, saw such a move as destructive to the finitude and freedom of man's life.<sup>94</sup> He says if man was regarded as part of a total horizon then the absolute openness, which is essential for his freedom, would be jeopardized, even if this total horizon were God.

Gilkey thinks the same thing happens when Pannenberg attempts to re-theologize Bloch's concept of the open future. He writes:

For Bloch, although ideals, not-yet possibilities "determine the present" (as final causes), the agents in historical change were presently existing men plus the past and present "tendencies" and "latencies" in the process of history of which Bloch vaguely spoke. Despite Bloch's language, then, his thought involves, as far as the efficient causes of historical change are concerned, no reversal of ordinary causality vis-a-vis time: men in the present, fired by future possibilities, act to bring changes into the immediate future. Thus in his philosophy (since he left "latencies"

---

<sup>93</sup>Ted Peters, 'Truth in History: Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Pannenberg's Apologetic Method' (The Journal of Religion, January 1975, Vol. 55, No. 1, pp. 36-57). See, as well, Pannenberg's article, 'Hermeneutic and Universal History' (Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, pp. 97-136).

<sup>94</sup>See Peters, 'Truth in History: Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Pannenberg's Apologetic Method' (The Journal of Religion, January 1975, Vol. 55, No. 1), p. 49.

merely latent) history could be said to be generally open and free since not-yet possibilities remain undecided (merely possible) until human freedom chooses and enacts them. In Pannenberg, however, these not-yet ideals are "theologized" into an agent reality God, who is "all-determining," "producing events which are the effects of his choices," "so that everything that has come to pass, even in times long gone.... has come about and also has been changed once again through this same power of the future which decides over the present just as it has brought it forth." Surely with such an agent reality determining events from the future, the freedom of man and the openness of history are deeply challenged.<sup>95</sup>

Pannenberg would be the first to agree that both Gadamer and Gilkey have legitimate concerns in their criticisms. Man must always live with the awareness that generalizations and universals of any nature are limited from within history. He cannot succeed in projecting a total horizon that would encompass all things. Pannenberg writes, "....it remains true for the one who wishes to have experiences as well as for the one who is experienced and who knows about being overtaken by continually new experiences, that they can never regard as complete the knowledge they possess or that they may somehow attain."<sup>96</sup> Pannenberg would agree, as well, with the implication of their criticism, that a being existing prior to man's historical reality would destroy the finitude and freedom that are common experiences in life. For this reason, Pannenberg would not accept the main point of their criticism that his thought is deterministic. He points out something with respect to Gadamer that may be helpful in dealing with the criticism from Gilkey.

The whole work of Gadamer, he says, is one which is formed

---

<sup>95</sup>Gilkey, 'Pannenberg's Basic Questions in Theology: a Review Article' (Perspective, Vol. XIV, Spring '73), p. 52.

<sup>96</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, p. 121.

by a partly open, partly tacit, debate with Hegel. With the realization of Pannenberg's own attraction to Hegelian philosophy, there is probably a suspicion that his concept of universal history is plagued by the same inadequacies that afflicted Hegel's system itself. Hegel has been criticised for his notion of history in that it presents history as a self-contained process unfolding with necessity or compulsion. Pannenberg writes, "....Gadamer shuns the "speculative claims of a philosophy of world history....because he sees - with good reason - in Hegel's attempt to sublimate history into "the absolute self-consciousness of philosophy"....a contradiction to the finitude of human experience...."<sup>97</sup>

Gilkey, as indicated, includes Pannenberg in those systems of thought which, as with Hegel, deny the finitude of life. It is debateable whether or not Pannenberg has sufficiently guarded himself against such criticisms. He would be the first to admit that his views on causality, for example, have not been thought through to the degree necessary to insure clarity of thought. Much work in this area remains to be done and Gilkey is right to draw our attention to the shortcomings in Pannenberg's thought at this point. Nevertheless, there is something here that Gilkey is not considering. It is an important aspect of Pannenberg's reasoning if strict determinism is not to be attributed to him.

On this point, I refer to an article<sup>98</sup> in which Pannenberg himself examines the philosophy of Hegel and makes the same criticisms made by Gilkey and Gadamer. What he says in his criticisms is very pertinent to the defence of his programme.

---

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>98</sup>Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, pp. 144-177.

Initially, Pannenberg is very defensive of Hegel against the attacks of his critics. He claims, for example, that the charge of pantheism against Hegel cannot be held. It must be understood that the unity of finite and infinite, of which he speaks, is always referred to as a negative unity.<sup>99</sup> The importance of this concept of negative unity for Pannenberg himself will be noted in the consideration of his views on the relationship of Jesus to the Father.

In spite of his defence of Hegel, however, Pannenberg makes it plain that he departs significantly from him. He stands firm against any idea of the logical necessity of things, for which Hegel was criticised. This is particularly clear in the article to which we referred. He writes:

The idea that God necessarily brings the world into being, and that - in Hegel's own words - "the positing of Nature necessarily belongs to the notion or conception of spiritual life", did not become the main stumbling block for Christian theology without a most serious reason. But it seems to underlie all other theological objections to Hegel's philosophy. The misinterpretation of Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute as pantheism, and a denial of the personality of God, neither of which can be verified in the text of his writings, can only be understood as the supposed consequences

---

<sup>99</sup>Any system that speaks of an identity of finite and the infinite must be careful of the dangers of pantheism. This is a concept that is difficult to reconcile with contingency and particularity. In a sense it would be possible for one, on cursory reading, to make this connection with Pannenberg's theology, as time is taken up into eternity. As with Hegel, however, the concept of negative identity is very important here. In relation to Hegel, Pannenberg writes, "...this is always a negative unity, an identity mediated by the negation and superseding of the finite, which consequently cannot properly be thought of as being contained in God." (Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 162). Pannenberg points out, as well, that in the Phenomenology of Mind a vivid distinction is made between the movement of God within the Trinity and the world process.

imputed to Hegel, of this single assertion,  
the necessity from the nature of the godhead  
of the creation of the world.<sup>100</sup>

As the above quotation indicates, an appreciation of Hegel does not necessarily imply an identification of thought with him. Pannenberg is very much aware of a problem in Hegel and is eager to show his difference from him.<sup>101</sup> It is fundamental, in Pannenberg's thought, that all notion of a prior existence, whether in terms of man or God, be avoided if history is to be kept open and if freedom and contingency are to be supported. Pannenberg feels that Hegel failed most of all in this respect. He praises Hegel for giving us a concept of truth that defies any notion of its complete realization in any one event of life. He supports Hegel's concept that truth carries the individual beyond everything he has or experiences.<sup>102</sup> He very strongly criticises the philosopher, on the other hand, for not allowing truth itself to remain open, for tying it to the Notion (der Begriff) which was complete in itself. The 'Notion' in Hegel's thought took precedence over freedom and everything followed out of necessity from it. With this, contingency and particularity are seriously threatened. Their existence arises necessarily. Pannenberg notes, "In spite of all

---

<sup>100</sup>Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 168.

<sup>101</sup>I say eager here because Pannenberg wants to make a firm distinction between himself and Hegel's thought in this respect so that there is no misunderstanding on the part of his critics of his own position. At the same time, Pannenberg is very sympathetic to Hegel in that Hegel did not have the benefit of the Eschatological understanding of scripture that is available to us now (cf. Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, p. 135).

<sup>102</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 21.



his efforts to allow the particular and the individual to receive their due, and to have the notion find its content only in its renunciation (Entäusserung), he remained fixed in the primacy of the universal. Thus, Hegel could set truth in simple opposition to external history, the kind of thing that should not happen in any understanding of truth that is truly historical and oriented to the contingency of experienced reality."<sup>103</sup>

Hegel's problem, says Pannenberg, was the same one encountered by theologians of traditional Christianity. He allowed the 'concept' to function as complete, that is, as 'existing'. The unity achieved was, therefore, a necessary unity. In this manner freedom is determined by the 'logical nature of the concept' in which the individual and the universal are necessarily co-ordinated. The same thought, Pannenberg claims, exists in the traditional concept of God.<sup>104</sup> God is conceived as existing. Freedom, thus, is determined by this previous existence (freedom is viewed as the existing identity of God), instead of the other way, that is, having freedom determine His identity. The latter is the only way, he says, that contingency is protected. If freedom were viewed as a derivative of a prior being then it could not escape the appearance of necessity, a necessity inherent within the existing being itself.

The only serious alternative to this, he claims, is to conceive God as the 'absolute future of freedom'.<sup>105</sup> Freedom is not viewed,

---

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>104</sup>Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 173.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 174. This is a very difficult qualifying statement. There are obscurities within it which are not dealt with here. No attempt is being made to minimise the vagueness that such terminology

thus, as a faculty of a previous being, but is absolute and unlimited. This is the point Gilkey missed in Pannenberg which is essential in the latter's efforts. Freedom as absolute means there is no future outside itself, that is, it is not a quality of anything else. Freedom as absolute means it is its own future. This means there are no conditions (the 'notion' in Hegel) that establish freedom as a reality. Freedom decides all reality.

There are 'existing' conditions in life in which man may say he is free. People, for example, say this of democratic institutions. To live within democracy is a freeing experience claimed by many. This understanding of freedom has certain validity. While saying this, one must also be aware that this freedom is not absolute. No earthly condition can successively defend such an absolute claim. Therefore, no strict determinism is implied. To say, however, that freedom can be associated with God as 'existing' is a different thing. All conditions and circumstances of freedom would thereby be determined in advance, as God is all-determining. To escape this implication, one would have to proclaim, with Pannenberg, God 'as absolute future of freedom'. Thus, God can decide, change and create with no prior necessity. He is absolutely free. God, it can be said, decides<sup>106</sup> to let the present exist, to separate it from Himself as

---

(<sup>105</sup>continued) brings with it. In spite of this, however, it is promising as a concept in its implications for God's relationship to the world and time. Notwithstanding its obscurity, therefore, it seems a necessary condition of God's nature if the word 'God' is to acquire credibility. Only if God has no prior nature (so that things arise necessarily from Him), can particularity and contingency arise freely. They can truly be said to be gifts from God and not necessary impositions from Him.

<sup>106</sup>The capacity to decide is really the crux of freedom. To be able to decide is to have freedom within oneself. Ultimate freedom means, at the same time, ultimate decision.

future, and to give it an existence contingent in its character. God is not compelled to let go; He decides to let go because His nature is absolutely open and free. In love (one cannot love necessarily) He wills to create and give of Himself so that life may exist.

In every event the infinite future separates itself from the finite events which until then had been hidden in this future but are now released into existence. The future lets go of itself to bring into being our present. And every new present is again confronted by a dark and mysterious future out of which certain relevant events will be released. Thus does the future determine the present.<sup>107</sup>

Thus, for Pannenberg the present is regarded as a gift from God and not a necessary extension of His nature. Man is given freedom in existence because he comes from the absolute freedom of God. In turn, reconciliation is not conceived as the inevitability of a process working itself out nor as the rescue of finite man from sinful reality. Rather, it is the loving desire on the part of God to see creatures at one with Himself and each other. This is an understanding that does not call for Brunner's pessimism regarding progress in the world nor, Teilhard de Chardin's optimism of the world's inevitable improvement. It is an understanding that permits one to work and live in the world with confidence that, in spite of sin, the present world is not meaningless. Pannenberg expressed this in saying that God, being the future of every present, keeps that present within Himself and does not allow it to annihilated.<sup>108</sup>

This is important, as well, with respect to the question of

---

<sup>107</sup>Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 59.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

fulfillment (ultimate meaning). Again, the thought of inevitable progress or, inevitable doom, is removed. In its place is the confidence that God, in his own good time (God being absolute freedom), will bring forth the fulfillment to which life points and for which we hope. Pannenberg does not discuss the extent human life here prepares for this fulfillment, or what degree of importance it is to have.<sup>109</sup> In keeping with his thought on the freedom of life and the relevance of time to God, one can suggest that a great deal of importance is bestowed on man's own activity and planning. There will be a large measure of continuity between this world and the next.

As a final reference to the promise within this concept of God, the sovereignty of God can be mentioned. In any statement of God, this must be defended. In the challenge from atheism, it was suggested that the sovereignty (all-determinacy) of God and freedom were exclusive concepts. This was proven to be the actual case when Brunner's understanding was examined. In the light of Brunner, talk of God implied a determinism. Seemingly, the only way of protecting freedom would be to limit the sovereignty of God. Following Gilkey's suggestion, one might think of an ontological limitation of Him, that is, make God subject to time. The nature of God, not being complete, or 'existing', would assure freedom and contingency. Clearly, however, this sacrifices the all important sovereignty in question. Can one speak of God without proclaiming the latter? This has been argued in the negative. In Pannenberg, the possibility

---

<sup>109</sup>See Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 199 for reference to this issue.

of an alternative to the stalemate has been presented. God as the 'absolute future of Freedom' brings freedom within God Himself. The sovereignty is preserved in that freedom is not outside God. At the same time, God is related to the world in a way that assures the contingent.

In concluding this chapter, one further criticism must be dealt with. We have partially answered the criticism, in dealing with the notion of the absolute freedom of the future as the true nature of God. It is important enough, however, to warrant further focus and attention.

Gilkey, at the close of his review article, posed the question whether the openness of man, of which Pannenberg speaks, is only an epistemological openness. He writes, "....we should note that Pannenberg repeatedly defines that all-important "openness" of history and of the future epistemologically and not ontologically....In all probability it stems from the fact that Pannenberg's thought is primarily related to historical inquiry rather than to metaphysics, and so "the future as open" means for him not so much that future events are as yet undecided by any relevant factors (as, e.g., in Whitehead and Hartshorne), as it means that these events are as yet unknown and unknowable by any possible human inquirer."<sup>110</sup> Gilkey is joined in this interpretation by another theologian, Ted Peters. Peters also thinks Pannenberg makes a subtle distinction between ontology and epistemology. He writes, "....what he is unable to do ontologically he can accomplish epistemologically through his

---

<sup>110</sup> Gilkey, 'Pannenberg's Basic Questions in Theology: a Review Article' (Perspective, Vol. XIV, Spring '73), p. 46.

recognition of the provisional nature of all human knowing."<sup>111</sup>

He continues, "Certainly, Pannenberg does not want to defend a static ontology, but what else could that history in time be beyond a simple striving on the part of man for an understanding of what in principle already is?"<sup>112</sup>

In response, there are statements that support the validity of this criticism. For example, in an interview in The United States of America, when asked if God Himself develops or if it just seems like that to us, Pannenberg said it is only from the human standpoint that one can say God develops; for us there is development in God. From God's standpoint, however, this cannot be said.<sup>113</sup> One could cite other instances where Pannenberg speaks in terms of man's knowledge as the source of man's openness. He writes in this way: "....the end of history can also be understood as something which is itself only provisionally known, and in reflecting upon this provisional character of our knowledge of the end of history, the horizon of the future could be held open and the finitude of human experience preserved."<sup>114</sup>

Gilkey remarks that this distinction is not an unimportant one. And with this we can agree. If the "openness" of man's life is understood only from the epistemological point of view then the con-

---

<sup>111</sup>Peters, 'Truth in History: Gadamer's Hermeneutic and Pannenberg's Apologetic Method' (The Journal of Religion, January 1975, Vol. 55, No. 1), p. 50.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>113</sup>'A Theological Conversation with Wolfhart Pannenberg' (Dialog, Vol. II, Autumn 1972, pp. 286-296), p. 294.

<sup>114</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, p. 135.

clusion that Gilkey himself draws cannot be avoided. What he writes must be said to have logical weight: "...contingency is only our ignorance of the determining divine will, freedom only our subjective ignorance of God's overwhelming influence over us, openness only the hiddenness of his future choices from us, and, since he has thereby determined all past events, history's evil is as much God's responsibility as in any traditional view of God's omnipotence."<sup>115</sup> Epistemological openness, in the sense of a seeking an understanding of what is, would have the effect of reducing God, as Gilkey implies, to the level of a strict deterministic power. This would defeat Pannenberg's purpose. The lack of freedom, for which he criticised Hegel would be implicit in his own thought.

One finds it difficult to imagine that Pannenberg, who is striving so urgently to develop a concept escaping the throes of determinism, would not have been aware of the logical implications such epistemological reasoning would involve. The lack of any mention in his own writings of the distinction Gilkey makes weakens any criticism of him in this respect. He, at no point, makes the distinction this interpretation suggests. When speaking of the openness of man, he does not use the word epistemological. Rather, this is only a possible interpretation of certain statements. These statements must be placed in the wider context of his whole expression.

Contrary to Gilkey and Peters, we affirm that Pannenberg has wrestled with the problems of existence ontologically, as the concept of God which he is expressing is an ontological concept. The very problem Pannenberg presents to us involves the nature of God's reality and this is an ontological problem. What Gilkey and Peters

---

<sup>115</sup>Gilkey, 'Pannenberg's Basic Questions in Theology: a Review Article' (Perspective, Vol. XIV, Spring '73), p. 53.

have missed, and it is crucial to Pannenberg's whole programme, is the point which was dealt with above regarding the absolute future of freedom as the nature of God's reality. Freedom, to repeat the point once again, is not to be thought of as a derivative of an 'existing' God. Peters misunderstands this point when he reduces Pannenberg's God to a 'principle which already is'. When one thinks in terms of God as Absolute Freedom, then nothing is predetermined. God is free to do, act and decide in any way or manner that pleases Him. No prior concept, as with Hegel, limits the sovereignty of God, and the sovereignty of God is secure in that the freedom of man is within Him. When God creates, it is from freedom that He creates and the creature partakes of that freedom, as of the nature of God. Thus, to be in the image of God is to have freedom as the quality of being. New possibilities are opened up by God who separates the future from Himself and gives the present existence. Something new is brought into being, which, although God knew it beforehand, still retains its contingent quality, its newness. This is so also with respect to God's essence. A becoming takes place in God, but not to God, because his nature is absolute freedom.

If we keep this aspect in mind, it is then possible to say with Pannenberg that, "...the movement of time contributes to deciding what the definite truth is going to be, also with regard to the essence of God. But - and here is the difference from Whitehead - what turns out to be true in the future will then be evident as having been true all along."<sup>116</sup> It is clear in this statement that

---

<sup>116</sup>Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, pp. 62-63. Let us remember something stated earlier, that time is taken up into God for Pannenberg. Therefore, a becoming can be said to take place in



Pannenberg does not wish to do away with the epistemological aspect either. At the end, in the Eschaton, he seems to be saying, reality will be an experience of something that has always been and yet something new.

This can be supported by turning to the resurrection. Something entirely new came into being; it was not just an enlightening experience on the part of Jesus or the disciples. It was not just increased knowledge; something new came into being. And yet there is an epistemological aspect to it as well, for what came into being proves to have been true all along, in relation to Jesus' pre-Easter life. This will be pursued at length in the succeeding chapter.

As stated, Pannenberg's concepts are difficult and the one just mentioned is no exception. How can something new come into being if it was there all along? Again, this will receive further treatment in the next chapter. At this point, some clarification may be thrown on the matter by his use of the word 'intention'.

....that an element of God's becoming and being in the other, in the reality differentiated from himself, is one with his eternity requires that what newly flashes into view from time to time in the divine life can be understood at the same time as having always been true in God's eternity. This can be expressed in the form of the concept that the "intention" of the incarnation had been determined from all eternity in God's decree. However, the truth of such an assertion is dependent upon the temporal actuality of that thing, thus in this case the incarnation. What is true in God's

---

(<sup>116</sup> continued) God. At the same time, there is a sameness about God as he is not subject to change or development by anything outside of him. Pannenberg writes of it this way: "Although the essence of God is from everlasting to everlasting the same, it does have a history in time." (Revelation as History, pp. 133-134).

eternity is decided with retroactive validity only from the perspective of what occurs temporally with the import of the ultimate.<sup>117</sup>

The concept of intention here is not meant to be equated with God Himself, else God would once again be a prior concept. We would be back where we started. The intention is from God as Absolute Freedom, thus, there is no element of compulsion or necessity implied. God freely intends his will for man and in doing so offers us, as a gift, the possibility of life. Man is free to respond or not to respond to such possibilities that continually arise from God's intention. This checks any idea of progressive development toward fulfillment. In the end, fulfillment must freely arise from God Himself. Only this will protect man's freedom and God's sovereignty at the same time.

---

<sup>117</sup>Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, p. 321.

## CHAPTER FOUR

JESUS FROM ABOVE OR BELOW?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### JESUS FROM ABOVE OR BELOW?

#### (A) Theologians of Revelation

In the last two chapters, two distinctive conceptions of God expressed by two Protestant theologians were analysed. Some insight was gained as to the consequences for man's life in community which issue from these concepts. In Brunner, there was an implicit determinism which destroyed the essential freedom of personal existence. The concept of an 'existing' God, in Brunner, cannot be reconciled with the contingencies and individuality of life. Such realities are guaranteed only by conceiving God, in some way, as not-yet existing.

Important for our study, as well, has been the attitude to time or temporality implied within Pannenberg and Brunner's respective concepts. We argued that Brunner's thought of God excluded time. The insignificance of community to the 'meaning' of life was attributed to the timelessness of God's nature. It was suggested that unless time and God could be conceived in mutuality, the basis for significant community would be destroyed. Value must be given some location or extension in time before man can proceed with any serious talk about the 'meaning' of community and his participation within it. This extension is inconceivable unless some attempt is made to remove the exclusiveness of God from time. This attempt will be made in this chapter.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the manner in which God is conceived is fundamentally

---

<sup>1</sup>Refer back to p. 151 of the last chapter of this thesis.

important to man's understanding of himself in his search for the meaning of life.<sup>2</sup> Pannenberg emphasises this when he writes:

The key to understanding the inextricable connection between love for God and love for fellowmen is the identity of God's being with the coming of his Kingdom. Christian ethical failure is closely related to a misunderstanding of the doctrine of God. The idea that God is an entity which has the definite mode of its being in some transcendent realm of its own suggested, inevitably, that love for God moves in another direction than love for fellowmen. Consider the pious literature that speaks of our "vertical" love for God and our "horizontal" love for fellowmen. Love for God, it is suggested, takes off for heaven, while love for fellowmen remains on earth. Granted that love for God is supposed to generate love for fellowmen, but they are still two distinct acts. We need more clearly to see that love for fellowmen is participation in God's love; that is to say, love for fellowmen is participation in the coming Kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup>

Having established the relevance of man's conception of God, it is important to consider the basis for our conceptions. Both Pannenberg and Brunner arrive at their respective positions from the standpoint of God's Revelation to man. In other words, both men are theologians of revelation; theologians, that is, who stress the essentialness of God's revelation to man in any understanding of God that develops. With Brunner, there is little question that such priority is absolute. This is indicated in his opposition to any rational approach to the understanding of God. The God of the philosophers, he states emphatically, has nothing, essentially,

---

<sup>2</sup>We have not elaborated on the meaning of the self in community that follows from Pannenberg's thought. This will be reserved for the last chapter. There, Brunner's understanding of the self will be considered, as well.

<sup>3</sup>Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, pp. 112-113.

to do with the God of revelation.<sup>4</sup> He denies that revelation of the personal, living God is a rational and observable possibility in the world.<sup>5</sup> "Either revelation supplies its own grounds or else it is not revelation."<sup>6</sup>

With Pannenberg, some question may arise as to the priority of God's revelation because of his sympathetic treatment of man's reason and the task of philosophy. In contrast to Brunner, for example, he relates philosophy meaningfully to the subject matter of theology itself.

Philosophical criticism can help theology to achieve an understanding of the conditions of a credible way of speaking of God, which makes more careful distinctions and is better adapted to man's experience of himself and his world in nature and history. It can also help theology to study in a more impartial way the relevance of the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth to mankind and to the whole of reality.<sup>7</sup>

He writes further, "Everything depends on whether the Israelitic, primitive-Christian understanding of God - to the extent that it proves itself to be a self-coherent whole precisely in its transformations - has any relationship to contemporary experience of

---

<sup>4</sup>Brunner's position on Philosophy, expressed implicitly and explicitly throughout his writings, changed very little from the beginning of his writings to the end. What he wrote in his The Philosophy of Religion can be taken as representative of his thought throughout. He writes, "By Christian faith is meant, not some universal truth, nor yet some universal religious experience, but a definite fact which as such is opposed to every universal, be it religion or philosophy." (p. 15).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>7</sup>Pannenberg, The Idea of God and Human Freedom, pp. 138-139.

reality."<sup>8</sup>

Superficially, these statements could make Pannenberg a proponent of 'natural' theology. In a sense, such a label would not be out of character for him. This does not mean that, for Pannenberg, knowledge of God can be received apart from, or prior to, God's revelation to man. Pannenberg would not agree that man, apart from God, could by the power of reason reach God. This was the fear Barth had of Brunner.<sup>9</sup> Pannenberg can be classified as a 'natural' theologian only in the sense that temporality or the reason of man are not exclusive of God but essentially related to His nature. There are no sharp dichotomies, in essence, between God and the world, or theology and reason. The relationship is one in which truth depends on harmonization of knowledge gained from both sources, not on the acceptance of one to the exclusion of the other. Pannenberg is not inclined to make pure assertions about the nature of God from an analysis of natural existence, nor vice versa, to make baseless statements about the nature of reality from the revelation of God in Jesus. He argues for a sharing of perspectives, with the belief that one can offer light to the

---

<sup>8</sup> Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 237. Pannenberg writes at one point that the material for theology is the "...record of men's historical experience of themselves in the context of the totality of their world...." (The Idea of God and Human Freedom, p. 97).

<sup>9</sup> I refer the reader to Natural Theology, trans. Peter Fraenkel (The Centenary Press, London, 1946). This is a book comprising 'Nature and Grace' by Emil Brunner and the reply 'No!' by Karl Barth. In it Barth's adamant opposition to natural theology can be seen. One could argue that Brunner's position, against which Barth argues, is not really so different from his own. Brunner would not agree either to a saving knowledge based on the reasonable capacity of man. I believe that Barth more than Brunner, clarified his position firmly on this matter and in a way that did not leave so many questions of interpretation.

other. He expresses this belief in the following statement, "...little would be gained if without further ado we tried to abstract a general concept of appearance from the way in which God came to appearance in Jesus of Nazareth. In so proceeding one would merely arrive at theological postulates for which he could, at most, try to claim general validity. We would rather ask whether our theological example throws light on certain, perhaps otherwise hidden, sides of the general philosophical problem of appearance."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Pannenberg gives priority to revelation in all discussions of the truth. He writes, "Christian speech about God can be verified only in such a way that it is the revelation of God itself which discloses that about man and his world in relation to which its truth is proved."<sup>11</sup>

Keeping in mind the centrality of God's revelation to man, in the theologies of Pannenberg and Brunner, attention will now be focused on their christologies. The support for their respective God concepts comes from the manner in which they understand God's presence in Jesus. I have chosen to characterise their respective positions by the title of this chapter, because 'above' and 'below' are words they use themselves.<sup>12</sup> They are also useful labels for the discussions to follow.

Unless support can be found in the biblical story of Jesus and

---

<sup>10</sup>Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 135.

<sup>11</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, p. 207. In discussing the question-answer problem in theology, Pannenberg shares the thought of Barth that the answer always preceeds the question. He writes, "It would be an abstraction to imagine the questioner as still prior to all contact with reality he is inquiring about. Rather, the question is always framed only in association with the reality in question." (p. 225).

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, p. 33 and Brunner, The Mediator, p. 272.



his own words to his people for a conception of God, that particular conception rests on shaky ground. Jesus has always been rightly thought of in the church as the conclusive revelation of God to man. For our two theologians in question, there is no doubting the finality of such revelation. For both, God is, essentially, revealed in Jesus. There is a difference between them, however, which is crucial for this thesis. Brunner understands God's presence in Jesus from 'above', in terms of Jesus' ontological dependence on the Son. Pannenberg, on the other hand, understands the presence from 'below' in terms of Jesus' dependency on the Father. This distinction will receive further treatment as we proceed.

It has been stated that with Brunner's concept of God as 'existing' and 'a-temporal' neither the freedom of man nor the significance of the community of man is guaranteed. It was suggested, at the same time, that Pannenberg's concept of God as Future provided the necessary conception to assure contingency and unity.

The question to be considered is: How does each man justify his concept in the light of the revelation of God in Jesus? A second question, arising from the first, is: What biblical-critical support can each man offer for his particular view of Jesus as the revelation of God? Without the latter support, it is difficult to see how either theologian can be sufficiently removed from sheer speculation to warrant serious contemplation. This is so, even though Pannenberg's presentation has credibility in terms of man's personal existence.

#### (B) Jesus From Below

Let us begin with Pannenberg. In the light of Jesus, how can he say God does not exist, God must be Future, and time is taken up into God (related essentially to his nature)? All of these statements

were regarded, in our argument, as essential for a relevant social and personal ethic. They are, at the same time, very original and difficult statements to make. They challenge traditional thought and thus, cannot be made without some convincing argument. This is so in spite of the credibility of their implications. Pannenberg has spent considerable theological effort in providing such argument and it is now our task to investigate his presentation. His reasoning may not be conclusive and he admittedly lacks ultimate clarity, but this does not deter the challenge presented to every theologian who considers his position.

It was stated that Pannenberg's concept of God is original and difficult to grasp in the light of the traditional pattern of thought. This stems directly from the manner in which Jesus is presented for our consideration. Normally, in the Christian faith, we are taught to think of the glory of God (δόξα) as fully present in Jesus. There will be an expression of this when we turn to Brunner's christology at the conclusion of this chapter. In Pannenberg, there is a significant departure from this tradition. Jesus is not regarded as the 'direct' manifestation of God's full glory. Rather, God's glory is indirectly revealed in Jesus.

That revelation is 'indirect' is important to Pannenberg's theology. It is an expression upon which everything else hinges. In writing about the difference between direct and indirect revelation he says:

The Word of God would be direct communication if its content were directly connected with God himself, somewhat in the sense of a self-presentation of the divinity....

Indirect communication is distinguished by not having God as the content in any direct manner. Every activity and act of God can indirectly express something about God....

Here the event in question does not have the same aspect as it would if one merely stood under the impact of its content....Here lies the change of perspective.<sup>13</sup>

The change of perspective indicated here is very significant and an effort will be made to clarify it as we proceed. Support for it is gained from the biblical scholarship of Gerhard von Rad, Rolf Rendtorff, Ulrich Wilckens<sup>14</sup> and others who have stressed that in the Old and New Testaments God's glory is not presented in Theophanal terms in the sense of direct immediacy. Rather, it is disclosed in the acts of history which are always transitory and moving. God reveals Himself time and time again in the events of history, but always provisionally and never in His full glory. Man is continually directed toward the future where the full revelation is anticipated. Until then, only partial appearances of God come to man through the acts and events of history. In speaking of Psalm 98 for example, and then of the passage in II Isaiah 40:5, Rendtorff writes respectively:

The point in all these texts is that Jahweh himself becomes visible in his powerful acts of salvation. He becomes known through these acts; whoever sees or experiences them can know God in them. He becomes revealed in them....

The still imminent and future self-vindication of Jahweh comes more and more into the center of expectation and hope. The earlier stress,

---

<sup>13</sup>Revelation As History, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup>See the articles by Rendtorff and Wilckens in Revelation As History, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg, for the supportive scholarship of Pannenberg's position. Pannenberg finds Gerhard von Rad's writings particularly supportive as well (pp. 127ff.). See, as well, Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol. I, trans. D. M. Stalker (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1962), pp. 121ff.

especially the basic one concerning the exodus from Egypt, is not forgotten, but it can no longer be understood as the sole ultimate self-revelation of Jahweh. New and greater things are expected. The full revelation of Jahweh has become an eschatological fact.<sup>15</sup>

The last quotation clearly shows that although one can say God is revealed in the acts of history, this does not mean the act and the content of revelation are identical. Only at the end of history can such identification be claimed. As Pannenberg expresses it himself, "....these acts cast light back on God himself, communicating something indirectly about God himself."<sup>16</sup>

There is nothing original in the claim just made. Most theologians of traditional Theism would admit to an indirectness of God's action in history in the manner stated by Gerhard von Rad and Rolf Rendtorff. Brunner himself admits this in his writings. In The Christian Doctrine of God, he writes, "In the Old Testament, it is true, there can be no question of such a point of view. Revelation is not only that Word of God which is communicated through the "Word" of the prophets, but it is at the same time an action of God in History, an Act of God, which cannot be ranged under the heading of the "Word" or the "Speech" of God."<sup>17</sup> Brunner is at least agreeing that in the Old Testament, there is an indirectness of the revelation of God to man. How this can be reconciled with some of his other statements about God will not be discussed at this point.

Pannenberg departs significantly, important for our thesis, when he carries this 'indirectness' of revelation into the New

---

<sup>15</sup> Revelation As History, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg, pp. 32-33.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>17</sup> Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, p. 22.

Testament and speaks of it with respect to the conclusive and final revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth. In the first thesis of his article, 'Dogmatic Thesis On The Concept Of Revelation', he makes this very plain:

THE SELF-REVELATION OF GOD IN THE BIBLICAL WITNESSES IS NOT OF A DIRECT TYPE IN THE SENSE OF A THEOPHANY, BUT IS INDIRECT AND BROUGHT ABOUT BY MEANS OF THE HISTORICAL ACTS OF GOD.<sup>18</sup>

Pannenberg, as the above thesis states, is extending the quality of 'indirectness' to the New Testament, inclusive of Jesus of Nazareth. This fact will prove to be an area of great difference between himself and Brunner. In Brunner's writings on the New Testament, he speaks only of a 'direct' revelation of God. For example, in The Christian Doctrine of God he writes: "Between us and the Old Testament, however, there stands a new form of revelation, the fulfilment of all that was only promised in the Old Testament, and the actual content of the divine revelation proclaimed by the Apostles and the Church: Jesus Christ Himself."<sup>19</sup> More will be said later about Brunner's concept in this respect.

In considering Pannenberg's idea of indirect revelation in the New Testament, a problem presents itself. It is quite legitimate to say that God acts in history in an 'indirect' manner. Content and form in this case are not identical. No claim for absoluteness and completeness is made for such historical acts. Therefore, 'indirectness' is an appropriate description. In speaking of Jesus, however, the area of final revelation is entered. Such finality is stressed by Brunner, as the reference above plainly indicates. He

---

<sup>18</sup>Revelation As History, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg, p. 125.

<sup>19</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, p. 23.

is justified in this claim. If one is not to depart radically from the Christian faith, one must continue to uphold the conclusiveness of meaning in terms of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Pannenberg stresses the same thing. At the beginning of this chapter, his position as a theologian of revelation was emphasised, that is, one who holds firmly to the centrality of Jesus Christ as the final revelation of God to man. He makes his intentions on this matter very clear at the beginning of his Christological study. He writes:

The distinctiveness of the Christological way of speaking about Jesus resides in its theological character. As Christians we know God only as he has been revealed in and through Jesus. All other talk about God can have, at most, provisional significance. In this sense it may be very meaningful and necessary, even a presupposition for the message of Christ. But the way in which God is revealed through Jesus suspends even its own presupposition, so that one can only speak about God himself in that at the same time one talks about Jesus. Therefore, theology and Christology, the doctrine of God and the doctrine of Jesus as the Christ, are bound together. It is the goal of theology as well as of Christology to develop this connection.<sup>20</sup>

How can Jesus be thought of as the 'indirect' revelation of God, in the sense that the glory of God is not fully present in him, and at the same time, as the absolute revelation of God? This is the question we direct to Pannenberg in the light of his statements. In actual fact he is taking something different from the content and saying it is the same as the content, at the same time. In speaking of Jesus, he writes of the unusual perspective in this way, "...it is just as the One who is different from Jesus that God is in him."<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, pp. 19-20.

<sup>21</sup>Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 135. All of this has direct bearing on the previous argument about God changing and yet remaining the same.

Strange as this reasoning may sound, it is one for which Pannenberg offers biblical support and one which he claims as necessary in bridging the credibility gap between the modern world and the Christian church. He feels it is also a perspective which can enlighten the problems that perplex the philosophical field in the whole discussion of essence and appearance.<sup>22</sup> As strange as the logic of the whole thing may be, it is a perspective that serves well in developing a more constructive understanding of the self and community which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Still, in spite of its promise in this way, how is it accomplished? How can one say an event is 'indirect', as interpreted above, and at the same time say that it is absolute? Pannenberg pursues his purpose by looking at the significance of Jesus from a standpoint different from the traditional one. He views Jesus in terms of his fate rather than his person. Again, as is so often the case with Pannenberg, an original perspective is being presented. His Christology is unique and for this reason caution must be taken. The contrast of this with the traditional approach (concentration on Jesus' Person), will be shown in the consideration of Brunner's Christology.

What do we mean when we say Pannenberg looks at the significance of Jesus from the standpoint of his fate? It is a theological manoeuvre that has much to do with the distinction emphasised at the beginning of this chapter, that of seeing Jesus 'from below'. Pannenberg writes, "For Christology that begins "from above," from the divinity of Jesus, the concept of the incarnation stands in the center. A Christology "from below," rising from the historical man Jesus to the recognition of his divinity, is concerned first of all

---

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 127-143.

with Jesus' message and fate and arrives only at the end at the concept of the incarnation."<sup>23</sup>

By fate, Pannenberg is referring to the crucifixion and the resurrection.

This concept of "Jesus' fate" is intended to include his crucifixion and resurrection. Both were "sent" to Jesus as an occurrence to be suffered and accepted. Neither the crucifixion nor the resurrection was actively accomplished by Jesus....his passion and death remain something that 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.<sup>24</sup>

As the quotation clearly indicates, the crucifixion and resurrection are not to be thought of as events which Jesus accomplished by virtue of the divinity within him. They were events that happened to him.

Again, as will be emphasised from our examination of Brunner, this thought is in contrast to the traditional incarnational approach to Christology. With the latter view, the significance of Jesus is seen from the viewpoint of his Person, that is, as the Son of Man on earth from the very beginning of his ministry, with self-vindicating authority and power. For Pannenberg, such recognition and vindication came only with the resurrection. Thus, the divinity of Jesus (his oneness with God) is viewed retrospectively (by looking back) rather than introspectively (by looking into). Notice should be given here to an important point. Pannenberg is not saying that with the resurrection Jesus acquires divinity. This is the position of Walter Künneth

---

<sup>23</sup>Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, p. 33.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 245.



which he firmly rejects.<sup>25</sup> Pannenberg is saying something much different; he is affirming that only from the standpoint of the resurrection can it truly be said that Jesus' pre-Easter life was divine.

Let us briefly reflect on the meaning of Pannenberg's expression summed up in the following statement:

....the resurrection event has retroactive power. Jesus did not simply become something that he previously had not been, but his pre-Easter claim was confirmed by God. This confirmation, the manifestation of Jesus' "divine Sonship" by God, is the new thing brought by the Easter event. However, as confirmation, the resurrection has retroactive force for Jesus' pre-Easter activity, which taken by itself was not yet recognizable as being divinely authorized and its authorization was also not yet definitively settled. However, this has been revealed in its divine legitimation in the light of Jesus' resurrection.<sup>26</sup>

It is an important aspect of Pannenberg's anthropology that man's life is lived in openness, that every event he experiences is experienced as incomplete and future oriented. Thus, only in the future will the full truth be revealed.<sup>27</sup> Or, to state it

---

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 135. I have not gone into the views of Künneth to verify whether Pannenberg's interpretation of him is correct or incorrect. I merely accept the reference to him as an indication of the view which Pannenberg does not want to be associated with.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>27</sup>The concept of openness was discussed in the third chapter of this thesis. For the original source of this concept see Pannenberg's book, What is Man? (pp. 1-14). See also, his article, 'What is Truth' (Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, pp. 1-28), in which he unfavorably compares the Greek concept of truth as something timeless above the shifting appearance of reality with the Hebrew concept that speaks of the truth as historical, as something that happens. Pannenberg finds support in Hegel for this when he writes, "Hegel's thesis that the truth of the whole will be visible only at the end of history approximates the biblical understanding of truth in two respects. It does so, firstly, by the fact that the truth as such is understood not as timelessly unchangeable, but as a process that runs its course and maintains itself

differently, it is from the future that man receives the proper perspective on the value and meaning of the present.<sup>28</sup> He draws support for this insight from the thinking of Dilthey and Heidegger and their suggestion that it is only from the end, that is, the end of all things, that one can really see the relationship between the part and the whole. He quotes favourably from Dilthey:

One would have to wait for the end of a life and, in the hour of death, survey the whole and ascertain the relation between the whole and its parts. One would have to wait for the end of history to have all the material necessary to determine its meaning.<sup>29</sup>

That this is an anthropological understanding common to much of our experience would be claimed by many. It is so often man's experience that an event in which he participated in years past can be interpreted much differently in the context of his life in the present. The meaning and value man attached to an event in the past can be actually reshaped in the light of the future which is present for him. As life proceeds, the connecting fibres of meaning in an event become different, or perhaps more plain. This, of course, may not always be the case. Some events in the past may always remain obscure in their meaning for man. This, however, can be said to be the exception to life rather than the rule.

Pannenberg is challenging us, in all of this, to stop thinking

---

(<sup>27</sup> continued) through change. Secondly, it does so by asserting that the unity of the process, which is full of contradictions while it is under way, will become visible along with the true meaning of every individual moment in it, only from the standpoint of its end. What a thing is, is first decided by its future, by what becomes of it." (Ibid., p. 22).

<sup>28</sup>See Pannenberg's article, 'On Historical and Theological Hermeneutic' (Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, pp. 137-182).

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

in Greek terms in which truth is conceived as behind the fact. He is encouraging us to think more in terms of Hebraic thought in which truth is conceived as open-ended (not-yet decided). This is important to keep in mind as he is not pleading a special case for the reality of Jesus and his resurrection. He is offering us an insight into all reality and, thus, is challenging us to think of ontology in an entirely different light.<sup>30</sup>

The question that arises in the light of the above is: At what point, or when, can one look back and see the final perspective on an event? At this point, Pannenberg breaks with Dilthey's and Heidegger's thought. As he has pointed out, they regard death (especially Heidegger) as the end of all things. Heidegger claimed that in the anticipation of one's own death life is being lived in the light of the end.<sup>31</sup> Pannenberg questions this statement and asks whether death, rather than rounding out the wholeness of life, does not ultimately fragment it. Only if an individual were able to see his life fully satisfied within the confines of a social construct, he says, would he be able to speak of final wholeness with respect to the individual. This, however, is an experience never confirmed on earth. Whenever a person finds himself enthralled with his group, whether the family, the nation or the society, he experiences a static, impersonal existence. Pannenberg writes about it this way:

....in spite of the truth of the statement that a man can realize his humanity only in community with others, one must affirm that the human destiny which every individual seeks is different from the particular community and society in which he lives. Even if sometime or other the ideal state could be realized, the question would remain as to

---

<sup>30</sup>Refer to pp.247ff. of this thesis for further discussion.

<sup>31</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, p. 166.

the participation of individuals in earlier generations in the destiny of man in general, which is still the destiny of each individual. But if the destiny of the individual man is not absorbed in his relation to society, the question is inescapable whether the individual may expect a fulfillment of his destiny as man beyond death, or whether the question about man's humanity must simply be disregarded as meaningless. In the life of the individual the search for the definition of his humanity finds, as has been said, no final answer.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, the conclusion to be drawn from this is that meaning for the individual life refers man to the future. It is a future, at the same time, beyond death itself and outside the realm of experience as we know it in this life. The future must then be one that comes to man from outside this world but, at the same time, have continuity with this world.

It is in this context that Pannenberg finds the apocalyptic thought of Jesus time, and one which Jesus shared with his contemporaries, socially relevant. He writes, "Whether or not the apocalyptic expectation of a resurrection of the dead can still have binding validity as truth today may be decided by its relation to an understanding of man consistent with the approach and results of a way of thinking that is engaged with all presently accessible phenomena."<sup>33</sup> The 'presently accessible phenomena' to which he is referring is that of the future beyond death experience in human life.

In the pursuit of our answer it is necessary to dwell briefly upon this apocalyptic element. The tradition of the inter-testamental

---

<sup>32</sup>Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, pp. 83-84.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

period, which persisted through to the teaching<sup>34</sup> of Jesus, has varied content depending upon the literature to which one turns. Pannenberg, however, has concentrated on certain features of the

tradition which in his mind make it less obscure to the modern mind.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup>That Jesus shared the basic tenets of Apocalyptic thought is something Pannenberg argues strongly in his book on Christology (cf. pp. 58ff.). Justification for his attempts to do this is supported in a book by A. D. Galloway. He writes, "I think it will be generally agreed that only a very perverse and ideologically motivated scepticism would deny that the Jesus of the scriptural tradition did have a historical prototype and that he proclaimed the coming of God's Kingdom in a context of apocalyptic expectation." (Wolfhart Pannenberg, p. 65).

<sup>35</sup>That there has been much effort spent in theology to divorce the Christian faith from the apocalyptic message cannot be denied. Galloway, in his book, speaks of this denial (Ibid., p. 61). Pannenberg, himself, refers to the attempt in theology to retreat from the findings of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer. He writes, "Both the New Testament exegesis and the dogmatic theology of our century have constantly retreated before the consequences of this insight, not only because such a viewpoint is irreconcilable with our contemporary view of the world, determined as it is by the natural sciences, but also because Jesus' expectation seems to have been proved wrong by the simple fact of history's continuance down to the present day, and hence by the non-appearance of the end of the world which he awaited." (Pannenberg, The Apostles' Creed, p. 49).

Galloway makes a very interesting point when he writes that Pannenberg always looks at apocalyptic thought through Christian eyes, from a Christian perspective. He writes, "On these grounds he is justified in taking up the notion of the end of the 'age' in apocalyptic as that of the completion of history. He is correct in interpreting the cosmic scope of apocalyptic imagery as representing the unity of universal history under God. These are post-Hegelian concepts. But they arise directly from the out-working of the apocalyptic context of the life and action of Jesus - even though it may be seriously doubted whether they were the first thoughts in the mind of a first-century Jew in that connection." (Wolfhart Pannenberg, pp. 63-64). Galloway, much earlier than Pannenberg, spoke to us of the cosmic significance and social relevance of apocalyptic thought in The Cosmic Christ (Nisbet & Co. Ltd., London, 1951), pp. 13ff.). In support of his contention in that work, one could cite the following works of other scholars who have done research in this field: H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic (Lutterworth Press, London, 1944), A. Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1950), D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic (SCM Press, London, 1964).

For an opposing view, I would refer the reader to an article by W. R. Murdock, 'History and Revelation in Jewish Apocalypticism' (Interpretation, Vol. XXI, 1967, pp. 167-187). Murdock writes, "One could think of the future earthly kingdom expected by the prophets as the goal of the history of Israel because it was believed that God was acting in the events of history to bring Israel into this goal. In the case of apocalypticism, however, one no longer has to do with the

Elements of great significance to him include the message that one must look to the end of all events for the full revelation of God and his glory, and that such glory will extend over all men, not just Israel.<sup>36</sup> And, what is all important for Pannenberg is the concept of the resurrection of the dead which pervades the thought of apocalypticism.<sup>37</sup> This is an event, which although lying beyond the experience of man this side of death, nevertheless, for this very reason, is related to all history. At the heart of this resurrection concept, he points out, is the future of the Son of Man who will appear on the clouds of heaven in judgement.

It was only in the context of this apocalyptic thought, especially that which dealt with the resurrection from the dead, that any sense could be made of the fate of Jesus. Jesus' fate was understood as a resurrection event because this tradition, in which he himself stood, created an expectancy of resurrection. To use a modern analogy, Russia would interpret American violation of their air territory as a hostile act only in the expectancy of war. Otherwise, it would be regarded as perhaps a freakish mistake in navigation. So Jesus' fate can be understood as resurrection only within the expectancy of

---

(<sup>35</sup>continued) historical destiny of a nation, but with the eternal destiny of individuals. Hence, one might speak of the future aeon as the goal of righteous individuals, but not as the "goal of all history..." (p. 176). In contrast to this statement, D. S. Russell warns against making a radical differentiation between the prophetic with its emphasis on history, and the Apocalyptic. He writes of the apocalypics, "They read and interpreted the ancient prophecies in the light of the new 'wisdom' which had been given to them with its interest in astrology, angelology, cosmology and the rest, and in terms of the new eschatological expectation of their day." (The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, p. 271). As Galloway suggested with reference to Pannenberg, it is the latter interpretation that is more suitable to the apocalyptic context of Jesus' own life.

<sup>36</sup>See Pannenberg's article, 'Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation' (History as Revelation, pp. 131-135).

<sup>37</sup>See Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, pp. 74ff.

resurrection alive in his time. Pannenberg writes of this necessary context in this way, "Only the traditional expectation of the end of history rooted in apocalyptic gave Paul the opportunity of designating the particular event that he experienced, as Jesus' other disciples had experienced it previously, as an event belonging to the category of resurrection life."<sup>38</sup> So for Paul, as for the rest of the early Christians, Jesus was first seen for what he truly was, in his fate. In this light, they realized the Ultimate had appeared in him. As time gradually moved away from the event, he became recognized as the Son of Man who, it was predicted, would appear on the clouds in the end time. It is necessary to quote Pannenberg once again so that his conviction is made clear. He writes:

As the one who has been taken away to God, Jesus is a heavenly being. His coming from heaven, which was expected in the immediate future and was probably already initiated by the Easter appearances, will bring on the universal resurrection of the dead and judgment, just as the apocalyptic tradition had predicted of the appearance of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven. Thus it is understandable that Jesus was no longer distinguished from the Son of Man, but was himself seen as the Son of Man whose coming was expected in the future, and the tradition about Jesus down to the details was connected with the expectation of the Son of Man....By virtue of the resurrection, Jesus had moved into the role of the Son of Man.<sup>39</sup>

Because the end of all things had taken place in Jesus, it was now possible to see the ultimate and final significance of his pre-Easter life. It was divine, that is, it was one with God. Jesus in his earthly existence, in the particularity of that existence, could now be said to be the Son of Man. In this way, Pannenberg

---

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 68-69.

explains how a particular event in history can claim universal meaning, that is, be seen in absolute terms.<sup>40</sup> Jesus' uniqueness rests in the fact that he, alone, had the ultimate happen to him before the end of all history for the rest of humanity. No one can stand in Jesus' place in the historical time scheme of life. Nevertheless, we have the possibility of becoming sons of God with him. For Pannenberg, Jesus' uniqueness from us rests, as well, in the particular apocalyptic context in which he lived. The Jewish imminent expectation in which Jesus made claims about his Person, is unrepeatable. "Any attempt at repetition would have an anti-Christian character. Therefore, the mode of Jesus' unity with the Son of God so that he is the Son of God in the whole of his human life in the light of his resurrection is equally unrepeatable and unique."<sup>41</sup>

Having established the above understanding let us go on to investigate the important statements about God in the light of Jesus' life.

In Pannenberg's doctrine of God the expression 'God as Future' was used. In turn, this implied that there is at least some sense in which God does not-yet exist. The essentialness of this perspective on divinity for the freedom of man was established. Another conclusion we drew from his thought was that time and eternity were not mutually exclusive concepts but were to be viewed inclusively. The significance of this viewpoint was also discussed. The concern before us now is the basis of such theological statements. This support can best be found in his christology and the biblical material selected by him.

---

<sup>40</sup>Refer back to p. 178 of this chapter.

<sup>41</sup>Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, p. 347.



If Jesus is recognized as the Son of God only from the standpoint of the resurrection, that means, as this man (Jesus), the man among men, he is the Son of God. The identity of essence of Jesus with the Father resides, thus, in Jesus' humanity and not in some metaphysical being over and beyond it.

A. D. Galloway has pointed out this aspect of Pannenberg's thought very well. He says the impasse of the two nature doctrine, which stemmed from the attempt to take the subject of both the divine and human attributes to be the divine, eternal Son of God, is overcome by Pannenberg. He does this by looking at the Subject of the attributes (whatever they may be) as simply the man Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>42</sup>

By thinking of Jesus in his humanity as the Subject of the attributes of Sonship, one can then go on to make the following statements: God and time are not mutually exclusive, or, to put it another way, temporality is taken up into the Godhead; God is in the temporal as the Future.

If Jesus as this man is the Son of God, then room must be made in God, Himself, for what happened in Jesus. Temporality is, by this means, taken up into God. The necessary correlation of fact and value, established as important for the significance of community, is now present. In the light of this, it is now possible to understand God as in temporal events; that is to say, he has location and

---

<sup>42</sup>See Galloway's book, Wolfhart Pannenberg, pp. 128-129. He continues to write, "The traditional solution has served to keep the fundamental problem at bay rather than solve it. The problem is always ultimately that of the credibility of a man who is alleged to be also the eternal Son of God...." (p. 129).

extension in fact. Our contention was that such a perspective is necessary before 'meaningful' community can arise.

However, we are not only saying that God and temporality are united in Jesus; we are saying something else equally important. In considering the trinitarian relationship within the Godhead, we are now offered the perspective that the difference between the Son and the Father is a temporal difference. God differentiated Himself from Himself temporally, so that He is Future in relation to the Son in the Godhead. God is always Future in relation to His Son, and since the Son has no other Subject than Jesus, God is Future in Jesus. This gives us insight into Pannenberg's contention that God, in a sense, does not-yet exist. It also allows us to see the reason why history has gained so much significance in Pannenberg's system. Now the logical relation of time itself appears in God and thus, history in its contingent nature is preserved.

In further support of this presentation, Pannenberg makes a very important biblical manoeuver. He has attempted a very original and exciting solution to an age old problem in biblical theology. For many years, theologians have debated the issue of whether the Kingdom of God was fully present in Jesus or yet to come. The debate has been fostered by the presence in the biblical documents themselves of two different teachings. One speaks of the presence of the Kingdom in Jesus and the other speaks of the future of the Kingdom in Jesus. These have so often been presented as exclusive understandings.

Pannenberg erases such exclusiveness by viewing the Kingdom in both respects. He has presented us with one perspective in which the two may be reasonably held together in the reality of history itself. The Kingdom was present in Jesus, but it was present as the Future. Galloway sums up Pannenberg's position in these words:

If we believe in the final consummation and open ourselves towards it in hope, then we see and value all things in the light of their destiny in God. In this way God's presence in the world is intimately experienced. But this is not a presence which is different from or contrasted with his final coming in judgement and salvation at the end of time. His presence in the world is the orientation of the world toward the end of time.<sup>43</sup>

When God's presence in the world is thought of as the presence of the Future, then reality is interpreted in a way that has immense social and ethical relevance. This relevance will be considered further in the last chapter as we discuss the question of how meaning arises for the individual in Pannenberg's system of thought.

At this point, we must consider Pannenberg's substantiation of his Christological perspective. What does he suggest as biblical support for his presentation? On what does he base the claims of Jesus?

Again, Galloway is very helpful in our understanding of Pannenberg. He clearly brings out a point emphasised by Pannenberg himself in his christology which must be stressed in any interpretation of his thought. Let us quote him on this matter.

This is one which more than a hundred years of intensive historical research and literary criticism of the documents has been unable to settle. However, Pannenberg does ease the situation by minimizing the amount of historical information necessary to sustain his argument. He does not require any precise information about the nature of Jesus' claim to authority. He does not need to know whether he claimed to be Messiah or Son of God or Son of Man. It is enough for Pannenberg to establish that he did make a claim to authority and a demand for decision in relation to his person and message within

---

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

a context of apocalyptic expectation. The true nature of Jesus' claim to authority and call to decision did not and could not become clear until the resurrection. There is therefore no attempt to establish the divinity of Jesus on the basis of his pre-Easter history.<sup>44</sup>

The important points in the above quotation are that Jesus made claims of authority for himself and that he made them within the context of apocalyptic expectation. Both points are essential for Pannenberg if he is to maintain a firm grounding in his christological presentation. He justifiably claims the support of recent New Testament research for the first point. In defence, he turns to the scholarship of such noted interpreters as Paul Althaus, Hermann Diem and Ernst Käsemann, all of whom stress the claim of Jesus of authority which preceded the faith of the disciples. In the statements by Jesus which begin "but I say unto you", which are recognized by Käsemann as authentic, Jesus stresses his superiority of authority over the Rabbi and Moses. This, in terms of the Jewish thought of his time, was nothing short of blasphemy and is thought to be one of the contributing factors leading to his crucifixion. Jesus' position with respect to the law may also be considered as direct evidence of his claim of authority over his contemporary religious authorities. Such a claim could not easily be denied by any serious New Testament scholar, in the light of the statements of Jesus considered most authentic.

The other important point, that Jesus made these claims within an apocalyptic context, is equally supported by most New Testament

---

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 65. For Pannenberg's own statements, with respect to this whole issue, see Jesus God and Man (pp. 53ff.). This is one of the clearest and most emphatic accounts given by Pannenberg of the groundwork for his christology.

scholars. Bornkamm, and even Conzelmann who disagrees with Pannenberg on the futuristic tension of Jesus claim, are two examples.<sup>45</sup> Since Schweitzer, few theologians have been able to deny the apocalyptic context of Jesus' teaching. Because of their misunderstanding of its message they may have, in some way, tried to skirt the full implication of its presence. Nevertheless, the presence itself is rarely, if ever, denied.

Pannenberg contends that part of the meaning of standing within the apocalyptic tradition is that the future remains the pole by which the truth or falsehood of any claims is tested. Jesus, he maintains, had this aspect to his teaching; he never attempted to justify his own authority but referred to the future for vindication. On this point Pannenberg makes much use of the saying from Q, "And I tell you, every one who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God." (Luke 10:8f.).<sup>46</sup>

The word 'never' in reference to Jesus above should be qualified. Pannenberg brings this to our attention by pointing to other sayings of Jesus, especially those referring to his deeds. In the part of Q that deals with Jesus' response to John the Baptist's question of his authority, Jesus refers to his deeds (Matt. 11:5f.), for example, healing the blind. Pannenberg points out that although these statements, in a sense, are defensive ones, they contain no ultimate reference. "Jesus deeds could point to the beginning of the time of salvation, but they could not show unambiguously whether Jesus personally was the one

---

<sup>45</sup>I find it inconceivable that Jesus could stand within the apocalyptic tradition and still claim absolute authority for himself such as Conzelmann suggests. See Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, p. 58.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 58-59.

in whom salvation or judgment are ultimately decided."<sup>47</sup> Luke (12:8), on the other hand, makes this ultimate claim with reference to the future. According to this statement it will only be in the resurrection of the dead, when the Son of Man comes in judgment, that Jesus' claim can be said to be true or false. It is not something that Jesus can give witness to himself. Pannenberg describes the situation in these words:

Thus the whole of Jesus' work remained aimed at the future verification of his claim to authority, at a confirmation that Jesus himself was unable to offer precisely because and insofar as it involved the legitimation of his own person, which is bound to the arrival of the announced end event. The question about such a future confirmation of Jesus' claim by God himself is held open by the temporal difference between the beginning of God's rule, which was already present in Jesus' activity, and its future fulfillment with the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 65. That the saying of Jesus in Luke 12:8, Mark 8:38 is authentic is very seldom disputed. H. E. Tödt in his book, The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (SCM Press, London, 1965), claims Luke 12:8 as an authentic saying of Jesus (p. 55). He claims several other sayings with future emphasis as authentic, viz. Matt. 24:27, Matt. 24:37, (Q): Luke 17:30, Matt 24:44, (Q). In all of these sayings the Son of Man is introduced as a sanction for the present and a challenge offer of Jesus. Bultmann also accepts this Luke 12:8 saying as authentic (cf. Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I (SCM Press, London, 1971), pp. 29f.). However, he draws out the distinction between Jesus and the Son of Man to a point of no connection whatsoever between them. He regards only those passages which stress the distinction as authentic, and those which mention an identification as creations of the early church.

Pannenberg might also claim Reginald Fuller's support in stressing the futuristic aspect of Jesus' claim. In his book, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1956), Fuller stresses the importance of the sayings of Jesus which make a distinction between Jesus and the Son of Man. At the same time, contrary to Bultmann, he interpreted the other 'present' sayings in a manner compatible with this distinction. Fuller differs from Tödt, however, in regarding the relationship that exists between the Son of Man and Jesus in the Luke saying as christological. Tödt regards it as soteriological (cf. Reginald Fuller, The Foundations of New Testament Christology (Lutterworth Press, London, 1965), pp. 122f.). Even Frederick Borsch, who emphasises the identity

Before leaving Pannenberg, one other matter must be mentioned as it is crucial in the apology he offers for his position. As indicated, Pannenberg refers to the resurrection as the event that determined the meaning of Jesus' pre-Easter life. In keeping with the rest of Pannenberg's method, this means the resurrection must be given some historical credibility. It must be made a rational candidate for belief. Bultmann may think of the resurrection as the effectiveness of the cross of Christ. Barth and Brunner may

---

(<sup>48</sup> continued) of Jesus with the Son of Man at the expense of their differentiation, admits in his book, The Son of Man in Myth and History (SCM Press Ltd., London, 1967), that when it comes to the Luke saying (12:8), which he regards as authentic, there is a distinction that cannot be denied. In conclusion, he is even prepared to make the following statement which seems to agree with H. E. Tödt and the others we have mentioned. "Is the Son of Man in these sayings in heaven or on earth? There may be a sense in which he is both, the Son of Man on earth manifesting forth in this generation, and despite men's contempt and rejection, the Son of Man of heaven. As men treat him below, so are they treating the heavenly Son of Man, and so, in the end will they be treated by him." (p. 359). Borsch, it seems, is admitting here a future vindication of Jesus' claim which we have stressed in the above. Earlier in the same book, he wrote, "It was the one above who was the true divinity, who was really enthroned in heaven, while the one below was only his representative, speaking for him on earth during the present age." (pp. 357-358). Borsch is, at least, denying here that Jesus was divine from the beginning (the Incarnational Approach). One finds the conclusion of his book somewhat difficult, however, when he implies that Jesus was adopted at a certain point in his life by God to play the role of the Son of Man, and did so perfectly. He writes, "....there would seem to be a sharp challenge for Christian orthodoxy, for the myth of the Man, as we believe it was understood by Jesus, does not concern itself with one who comes down from heaven to incarnate himself as the Man upon earth. The divine Man is a heavenly figure, and the Man on Earth only himself becomes divine in a qualified sense through his adoption. The earthly Man is given a basically functional rather than ontological office." (p. 407). In saying this, Borsch in the end does not want to make any distinction between the Son of Man and Jesus, as is the case with Pannenberg. He feels that Jesus became the Son of Man (adopted) on earth. He does admit that in the Son of Man tradition there is an earthly Man that is referred to and a heavenly figure. He identifies Jesus with the earthly Man.

It should be pointed out here, however, that Pannenberg's argument for his christology does not hinge upon the investigation that has gone on with respect to these sayings. This, as we have seen, was the point made by Galloway (Wolfhart Pannenberg, p. 65). Pannenberg is not dogmatic in one direction or the other but would say, in the light of the research that has gone on so far, that it is probable that Jesus never identified himself with the Son of Man directly. This was an assumption made by the early church in the light of the resurrection (cf. Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, pp. 56ff.).

think of it as something that is given by the sight of faith and not open to knowledge or investigation apart from that faith. Pannenberg, however, unlike these theologians, has committed himself to a method, that of historical analysis, which he must follow throughout or admit to an inconsistency of thought. This would surely weaken his position. In the light of this the question which must be asked is: Can historical analysis and investigation apply when it comes to a reality such as the resurrection? Or to express it differently: Can historical evidence yield transcendent conclusions? Did they? The resurrection, Pannenberg claims, is the presence of the eschatological Future in the world. As stated, this idea is not new with him. Pannenberg, however, is approaching the event rationally. For him there are no hiding holes in faith. What we want to do in the succeeding argument is show that the uniqueness of the resurrection is not a stumbling block to Pannenberg's theology. It is not our task (nor a possibility) to determine the actuality of the event. If, however, it can be shown to be an event commensurable with Pannenberg's method, then he has proper defence. For this purpose, we turn to Pannenberg's writings themselves. In actual fact, he has provided his own defence.

Pannenberg makes the reader aware that when one speaks of the resurrection of the dead, reference is being made to an event unlike any of everyday life. "To speak about the resurrection of the dead is not comparable to speaking about any random circumstance that can be identified empirically at any time. Here we are dealing, rather, with a metaphor."<sup>49</sup> The word metaphor does not mean that the resurrection is something absolutely out of touch with us. Pannenberg

---

<sup>49</sup>Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, p. 74.



means one can speak only of the resurrection in an indirect manner. In this context, he says it is like awakening from sleep. There is a sense in which the resurrection is 'unknown'<sup>50</sup> to us, in that we have never experienced anything like it in our earthly existence. There is nothing comparable to it. "The intended reality is beyond the experience of the man who lives on this side of death. Thus, the only possible mode of speaking about it is metaphorical, using images of this-worldly occurrences."<sup>51</sup>

Having stated this, it is necessary to go on to the main point in Pannenberg's defence. He says the fact that the resurrection is unlike anything we have encountered in the world and must therefore be referred to only by means of a metaphor, is proof, in many circles, against the historicity of the event.<sup>52</sup> Many people shut themselves off from the historical possibility of the resurrection by assuming as a premise that the dead do not rise. Pannenberg writes about the assumption, or premise, this way:

If one starts from the premise that the dead remain dead, that death is the absolute end, and that nothing like a resurrection from the dead (in whatever sense one like to take it) can ever happen, in any circumstances whatever, this produces so strong a prejudice against the Christian message of the raising of Jesus that one no longer weighs up in detail the exact quality of the evidence with regard to its significance for a total judgment, in the way that is, after all, otherwise the historian's duty and chief business.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 74. I would refer the reader to a comment A. D. Galloway has made about the term 'unknown' in Pannenberg, as it could possibly be open for misinterpretation. Galloway points out that 'unknown' here does not mean there is nothing to be said about the resurrection, otherwise it would contradict the 'doctrine of truth conditions and so of assertive meaning.' (Wolfhart Pannenberg, pp. 72f.).

<sup>51</sup>Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, p. 75.

<sup>52</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, p. 49.

<sup>53</sup>Pannenberg, The Apostles' Creed, p. 104.

Pannenberg contends that such a premise is made by historians through the wrong application of analogy.<sup>54</sup> His reasoning on this matter is convincing and central to his method.

"The really critical point", writes Pannenberg, "for the relation of historical method to theology lies,....less with the historical correlation than with the principle of analogy in historical understanding, which is the root of the comparative method."<sup>55</sup> He refers to Ernst Troeltsch as the principal proponent of the analogical principle used in the wrong way. We have little dispute with this reference. However, he also might have referred to David Hume who applied the use of analogy in his argument against miracles. One must rely on common experience and observation, according to Hume, in the assessment of whether or not something is probable. Let us quote Hume here for he represents, in the following statement, the position that Pannenberg is attacking in his theology. Hume writes:

A wise man.....proportions his belief to the evidence. In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience, he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full proof of the future existence of that event.<sup>56</sup>

To be sure, Ernst Troeltsch represents a similar view which is evident in his essay, 'Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie'.<sup>57</sup> There, he argues that the historical method

---

<sup>54</sup>See Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, pp. 39-55.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>56</sup>Hume, Enquires Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals, Section X, part I, p. 110.

<sup>57</sup>Ernst Troeltsch, 'Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie' (Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. II, Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1922), pp. 729-753).

rests on three interrelated principles. They are important enough in this context to repeat and are listed as follows: (1) the principle of criticism, which means that our judgments about the past are not classified as proofs, that is, as either true or false, but rather they are always open to revision; (2) the principle of analogy, which means that such judgments of probability can be made only if we presuppose that our present experience is analogous to that of past persons; and (3) the principle of universal correlation, which means that all historical phenomena are so interdependent and related, that no change can occur at one point in the historical nexus without effecting a change in all that immediately surrounds it. Historical explanation, therefore, necessarily takes the form of understanding an event in terms of its antecedents and consequences, in terms of its temporal and spatial place in the causal nexus.

It is the second principle that Pannenberg takes exception to in his theology. He reasons that if it is upheld rigidly then the possibility of the 'new' is left out of history. Troeltsch, he says, is being overly anthropocentric by such a method. Pannenberg does not deny that anthropocentrism is part of the analogical method, for one must proceed, "...from what lies closest to the investigator's current state of knowledge."<sup>58</sup> He questions, however, the assumption that this is the only viewpoint that is open to man. Is man's viewpoint all there is to be known about reality? "Who is to say", he writes, "that the only things that can happen are the things which are by nature

---

<sup>58</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, p. 44.

already fully and completely comprehensible."<sup>59</sup>

Pannenberg contends that what happened in Troeltsch, and what has happened to the use of analogy through him, was that a simple method of historical-critical inquiry was turned into a world view, an ontology. He speaks of Troeltsch's 'omnipotence of analogy',<sup>60</sup> which prohibits the acceptance of anything into the historical field that does not match the common experiences of mankind; there must be a fundamental homogeneity of all historical events. This is a negative view of analogy. Thus, its sole function is to limit man's knowledge in the world and tie him to that which is already known.

Pannenberg opts for a more positive role of analogy. The negative use presupposes a world view and is tied to it. It has developed, in other words, the historical-critical inquiry into something absolute. When that world view is questioned itself, we are left with a positive use of analogy rather than a negative one. The use of analogy is then restored to its original intention, a simple tool of historical research. Pannenberg comments on the situation in this manner:

My criticism is not directed against the critical use of the principle of analogy, which is basic to the critical historical method. This use is merely restricted. The instrument of analogy gains precision, if judgments about this historicity or nonhistoricity of events asserted in the

---

<sup>59</sup>Pannenberg, The Apostles' Creed, p. 110. Pannenberg makes an interesting point when he says that generally the physicists and scientists today do not hold to such a closed idea of the universe as we might think. He writes, "The natural sciences try to establish and describe laws from data. They do not decree what may be viewed as a datum in general, and what may not. At most they allow conclusions as to the events with which we can or must reckon. Science by no means determines the horizons of the future." (Ibid., p. 110).

<sup>60</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, p. 45.

tradition are based only on positive analogies between the tradition and situations known elsewhere, but not on the lack of such analogies.<sup>61</sup>

Positive use of analogy, according to Pannenberg, rather than just showing the similarity of events reveals, more importantly, what is new and transcendent. Again, his own words are clear and precise at this point. He writes:

The cognitive power of analogy depends upon the fact that it teaches us to see contents of the same kind in nonhomogeneous things (das Gleichartige im Ungleichartigen). If the historian keeps his eye on the non-exchangeable individuality and contingency of an event, then he will see that he is dealing with nonhomogeneous things, which cannot be contained without remainder in any analogy.<sup>62</sup>

It is Pannenberg's contention that if one adopts the more positive role of analogy (and no reasons exist which disallow such an interpretation of analogy) then a strong argument for the historicity of the resurrection can be made. Historical evidence can yield transcendent conclusions. As a matter of fact, Pannenberg goes further in saying historical evidence did yield such conclusions. He lists the following pertinent facts to be taken into consideration: (1) the list of appearances as listed by Paul in I Cor. Chapter 15. This is, with little doubt, to be dated around 56 A. D., but the knowledge with which Paul speaks was gathered from his visit to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18) shortly after his conversion. If his conversion was around 33 A. D.,

---

<sup>61</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Response to the Discussion' (Theology as History, Vol. III of New Frontiers in Theology, editors: James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (Harper & Row, New York, 1967), pp. 221-276), pp. 264-265.

<sup>62</sup>Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. I, p. 46.

and Jesus' death around 30 A. D., then that speaks of a very reliable source of information. This would give credibility to the fact that the appearances were genuine and not an invention of the later church; (2) the faith of the disciples themselves. There is no way, Pannenberg reasons, that the shock that unquestionably happened to the faith of the disciples, in the face of the crucifixion, could have been overcome, other than through the happening of the resurrection. The disciples were certainly not living in the expectation that the resurrection was to happen in a proleptic sense; they could not have invented it in the light of the apocalyptic tradition. This event was new with respect to that tradition; (3) the number and temporal differences of the appearances. There was no change here of a psychological pyramid as the appearances were in different places. The sheer number of those who saw the appearances is also strong evidence that it was not just an invention of the disciples; (4) the empty tomb. Pannenberg makes much of this argument. "How could Jesus' disciples in Jerusalem have proclaimed his resurrection if they could be constantly refuted merely by viewing the grave in which his body was interred?"<sup>63</sup> No body was produced by the Jewish authorities to refute the claims made by the disciples. The empty tomb, very likely, was an independent tradition from the appearances. This suggests that the appearances were not fabrications based on an empty tomb. On the contrary, if the disciples returned to Galilee immediately after the crucifixion, then the tomb was discovered apart from them. This has extreme probability from the support of the biblical documents themselves. Pannenberg writes

---

<sup>63</sup>Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, p. 100.

about the independence of the two traditions this way: "If the appearance tradition and the grave tradition came into existence independently, then by their mutually complementing each other they let the assertion of the reality of Jesus' resurrection, in the sense explained above, appear as historically very probable, and that always means in historical inquiry that it is to be presupposed until contrary evidence appears."<sup>64</sup> The conclusion, thus, that one reaches with Pannenberg, excluding the premise that 'the dead do not rise' based on the wrong use of analogy, is that the resurrection is a reasonable candidate for belief.

One may also reason that the resurrection acquires rationality in meeting the demands of truth suggested by Pannenberg.<sup>65</sup> Throughout, we have suggested that the credibility of an event or statement depends on the presence within of a unifying factor which, at the same time, gives significance to the multifarious of life. The resurrection is actually a model of these standards of truth, and thus the personal.

It is (as stated) the presence of the eschatological Future. It is thus the unity which determines the meaning of all events past and present. The meaning of events, we argued, is determined retrospectively from the Future. The Resurrection is the presence of this Future. It determined the meaning of the past event Jesus. At the same time, there is not a determinism implied here, which would destroy the contingent in its significance. The events and traditions of past and present also participate in determining the meaning of

---

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>65</sup>Refer back to p. 99 of this thesis.

the eschatological Future; they, in a sense, are acts which make up the Future. The meaning of the resurrection, it was suggested, could only be understood in the light of the past and present events. Thus, in the resurrection we have a model of truth. It is a model of the structure of 'meaning' for which we are arguing in this work. It is a model of the world's relationship to God, of the relationship of creation to the Creator.<sup>66</sup>

(C) Jesus From Above

Let us now turn our attention to Brunner.

Our argument with respect to his concept of God was that God 'exists' and does so 'a-temporally'. Brunner throughout his writings denies any semblance of thought with Plato,<sup>67</sup> which one might suspect in the light of our argument. He writes at one point, "The Living God does not, like the divinity of Plato, stand above the changing temporal process, but He enters into it, indeed He even steps into History."<sup>68</sup> In spite of statements such as this, that show a determination to differ from any Platonic notion, Brunner does not possess the conceptual tools that allow him to escape Plato completely. This

---

<sup>66</sup>See chapter five of this thesis for a fuller treatment of the structure of 'meaning' suggested in the writings of Pannenberg.

<sup>67</sup>Pike quotes Plato with the words, "... 'was' and 'will be' are created species of time which we in our carelessness mistakenly apply to eternal being. For we say that it was, is, and will be; but, in truth, 'is' applies to it, while 'was' and 'will be' are properly said of becoming in time. They are motions, but that which is immovably the same for ever cannot become older or younger in time." (Pike, God and Timelessness, p. 15). Compare this with Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics, Vol. I, p. 270).

<sup>68</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, p. 271.



can be shown if we look critically, at his Christology. He is in the position of others of his day,<sup>69</sup> who would have God and time related, in a certain sense, but fail to provide the concepts that allow for such correlation. This problem arises for Brunner with respect to his thinking on the life of Jesus Christ.

In analysing Brunner's christology, let us keep the shortcomings of his position, as we analysed them, before us. Neither individuation nor participation were given relevant meaning in historical reality, due to the fact that God was said to 'exist' and exist 'a-temporally'. An attempt will be made now to show how this understanding derives directly from his views on christology. In this attempt, there is perhaps no better place to begin than in the area in which the nature of God's own being is contemplated, namely the Trinity. As stated, Brunner finds much social relevance in this area of theological expression and, thus, makes an effort to define it clearly, especially the Son's relationship with the Father.<sup>70</sup> "If we take this....idea seriously, we find that this

---

<sup>69</sup>I refer to Barth, Bultmann, Thielicke and others. By analysing Brunner's position, the criticisms directed toward him could, to a large degree, be applied to a major portion of Protestant thought in the 20th century. In fact, one may say it is a Protestant problem with which we are dealing. As yet it has received no clear answers.

<sup>70</sup>The social relevance of the Trinity has been recently discussed at much length in a book by Jurgen Moltmann entitled, The Crucified God, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (SCM Press Ltd., London, 1973). In this book Moltmann re-affirms much of the understanding we claimed for Pannenberg. Jesus in his death on the cross is taken up into the Godhead in a manner that relates God essentially to the world. Moltmann sees God in the crucified Jesus. "God is not greater than he is in this humiliation....God is not more powerful than he is in this helplessness. God is not more divine than he is in this humanity,...the God event takes place on the cross of the risen Christ." (p. 205). "...the theological dimension of the death of Jesus on the cross is what happens between Jesus and his Father in the Spirit of abandonment and surrender. In these relationships the person of Jesus comes to the fore in its totality as the Son, and the relationship of the Godhead and the manhood in his person fall into the background." (p. 207). Moltmann does not speak of the death of God but death in God. The similarity with Pannenberg is to be noted in the view that action takes place in God, in this respect, and not outside Him or to Him.

leads to conclusions which are of the greatest practical significance, even for our attitude towards social and ethical questions."<sup>71</sup> It is in the area of the Trinity that much of the social relevance of Pannenberg's thought is found. But, we shall have more to say on this later.

Pannenberg's conception of God as Future was defended in christological terms by seeing a temporal difference between the Son and the Father. God separated Himself temporally from Himself in His Son and thus became Future to Himself. Brunner also focuses much attention on the difference that exists between the Son and the Father in the Trinity. He writes of that difference in this way:

Jesus Christ does say, it is true: "I and the Father are one", "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"; but the Scriptures never say: "The Father is the Son and the Son is the Father."<sup>72</sup>

Brunner feels that it is vitally important that this distinction be drawn in any theology. Thus it could be said, Pannenberg and Brunner are united in the degree of importance focused on this aspect of our faith.

Notwithstanding this similarity, they remain apart in one very important matter. For Pannenberg, the difference between the Son and the Father is a temporal difference. In Brunner, there is no suggestion of temporality whatsoever. One sees in him a purely metaphysical separation of Son and Father. What I mean is that there is no notion of time. Both persons have a particular function to perform within the Trinity and one is not Future in relation to the other.

---

<sup>71</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, p. 229.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

Another way of expressing Brunner's thought on this point would be to say that in the Son, God's activity is loving, while in the Father, a 'strange work' is performed. The latter is the experience of God's wrath in life. Brunner's own words confirm this interpretation:

Thus God acts in a twofold sphere: the sphere where God is as He reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, as Salvation, Light, and Life; and the sphere where He is not present in Jesus Christ, namely, as consuming wrath, which destroys, annihilates, and works in darkness. These two spheres are reality; the one is the reality in Christ in which we are set by the saving Word and saving faith; the other is the reality outside of Christ, the world of doom and darkness, out of which we are rescued by Christ, in so far as we believe in Him.<sup>73</sup>

If there is no future in God, in relation to the Son, it is logical to say that God then 'exists' in the Son; that is, in His essence He 'is' (complete) in the Son. There is no sense in which one might say God 'does not exist' in the Son. In terms of God as Love, God is fully and completely revealed. The Wrath of God does not really belong to the essential will of God.<sup>74</sup> God, as He is in Himself apart from man and his sin, is not a God of wrath but only a God of Love fully expressed in the Son.

I find this a strange and difficult expression on Brunner's part. At times one is given the impression that the Father, in his wrath, is just the perspective of man on God because of his sin. Yet one cannot only say this as Brunner sometimes speaks as if the Wrath of God were an active thing in God (one hesitates to call it personal

---

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

as personal implies Love and thus the Son). At any rate, God 'outside of Christ' expresses the encounter man has with God in the natural sphere. "They (Brunner is referring to ideas of God outside of Christ) are also one in the fact that in their effect upon us they are all negative, destructive. Hence they correspond to the wrath of God, under which man stands, so long as he has not entered into the sphere of grace of Jesus Christ through revelation and faith."<sup>75</sup>

How all of this relates to the timelessness of God is an argument which was pursued earlier. In God's essential nature there is nothing of the natural world, nothing of historical existence as we know it, for Brunner equates this essential nature only with Christ, the Son, as Love. As stated, the Son as Love is not in nature and history. In this way, it can be maintained that there is a timeless element within the Godhead. And this leaves no room for an extension or location of God, in his Love or essential will, in the world.

Let us concentrate on this briefly. First of all, we want to establish further evidence that in Christ, God 'exists'. Whether he exists in or out of time is another question, which will be seen shortly. Perhaps we can start by looking at the situation from the standpoint of God's manner of revelation. Here, Brunner may be classified as an incarnationalist; that is, one who sees the divinity of Christ from the standpoint of his birth and not his resurrection or fate, as with Pannenberg. There is, of course, nothing strange in this concept as it is the traditional perspective of the Christian faith. The implication of this approach to the christological question, however, is that the Subject of the divine-human attributes in Jesus

---

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

is the Eternal Son of God and not, as with Pannenberg, the man Jesus himself.

It is not difficult to find support for this in Brunner's own writings. In his *Dogmatics*, for example, in which one must admit to a difference of approach in his study, he still writes, "He Himself, Jesus, is "from above"....The mystery of the divine Nature and the divine Will becomes evident in all that Jesus speaks, does, and is...."<sup>76</sup> As is evident from this quotation, the divine nature becomes the focal point around which all attention is directed. It is the subject from which everything else proceeds and the presupposition underlying all statements of Jesus' work, function and purpose. As stated, Brunner is not alone in this. In fact, since the Council of Chalcedon, it has received the stamp of orthodoxy which has been carried through to the twentieth century. All that was accomplished by Jesus on earth must be seen as the work of the divine nature that was within him.

Whenever the incarnational approach to Christology is stressed, one must think of God's communication to man as direct. In the God-Man event, one is standing under the full impact of the content, as there is no differentiation made between God and the event. God can be said to 'exist' in the event. This is not the case in an indirect communication of God to the world; in this instance the content is different from the event itself.

---

<sup>76</sup>Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, *Dogmatics Vol. II*, p. 336. Brunner is re-echoing his earlier statements about Christ made in *The Mediator* when he speaks of Christ as having historical personality but no human person (p. 319). We shall question Brunner's understanding of the person implied in this christological thought (see chapter V, p. 229 of this thesis).

The objection could be raised, at this point, that Brunner in fact proclaims an indirectness of revelation in the person of the Mediator.<sup>77</sup> Jesus is the Mediator of God to man and thus is not a direct revelation. I think Pannenberg's comment on this expression in protestant thought is pertinent for an understanding of Brunner, and helpful in meeting the above objection. He writes, "Whether the communication is transmitted by means of a third party or is directly delivered to the recipient is inconsequential for the distinction between direct and indirect communication."<sup>78</sup> He goes on to write, "It is not a question of mediateness of immediateness in the act of communication, but whether the content of a communication can be linked in a direct or indirect way with its intention."<sup>79</sup> Since the intention and the content are the same in Brunner, one must say there is a directness of revelation. This much is evident at the beginning of his Christological study when he writes, "Through God alone can God be known."<sup>80</sup> The final impression one is left with is that God is both the medium and the subject of revelation. All indirectness Brunner argued for in the appearance of the Mediator is removed. In this respect, the conclusion that John McIntyre draws in his book, The Shape of Christology seems proper, that if the medium and the subject of revelation are identical and thus known directly, there is no occasion for revelation at all.<sup>81</sup> One must

---

<sup>77</sup>See The Mediator, pp. 334ff.

<sup>78</sup>Pannenberg, 'Introduction' in Revelation as History, p. 14.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>80</sup>Brunner, The Mediator, p. 21.

<sup>81</sup>John McIntyre, The Shape of Christology (SCM Press Ltd., London, 1966), p. 169.

say, at least, in the light of the above, that God 'exists' in his essence in the Son. In other words, there is no sense in which one might say, with Pannenberg, that God's essence has a history in time.<sup>82</sup> What Brunner means by indirectness is not that revelation takes place in something different from God, but that it takes place unhistorically.<sup>83</sup>

If time is to be taken seriously; that is, if the benefits of Christ's salvation are to be extended to time and humanity, then some provision must be made for the extension of the divine in the human.

If we turn to the early Church Fathers, we can see how this logic was part of their whole theological expression. I realize one cannot lump together the theologies of the men of the early church in one neat pattern of thought. They each had their own individual expressions which defies such a procedure. At any rate, there was a tendency and a general thrust to their theology which can be said to be common to all. Their theology, particularly their christology, was expressed with high awareness of the dilemma that faced man in life. Man in falling away from God corrupted himself. The consequences of man's sin extended to the whole man; they were concrete, physical effects, culminating in the fact that man must die. For the early Fathers, what God accomplished in Christ was extended to cover not only sin, but the consequences of sin as well. By taking on our flesh, Christ effected salvation for the whole of man, not away from the body but,

---

<sup>82</sup>Pannenberg, 'Dogmatic Theses On The Concept Of Revelation' (Revelation as History), p. 134.

<sup>83</sup>See The Mediator, pp. 337f., where Brunner speaks of the indirectness of Christ in terms of his 'incognito'. Later he refers to Christ's 'mask', that which history alone can see.

most importantly, with the body. That is to say, the main interest of christology for them was its soteriological benefits worked out with and through the humanity of Jesus Christ. As Athanasius put it:

....And thus, taking a body like to ours, because all men were liable to the corruption of death he surrendered it to death instead of all, and offered it to the Father;...that by all dying in him the law touching the corruption of mankind might be abolished (inasmuch as its power was fulfilled in the Lord's body, and no longer has capacity against men who are like him), and that he might turn back to incorruption men who had reverted to corruption, and quicken them from death by the appropriation of his body and by the grace of his resurrection....<sup>84</sup>

For Athanasius, as with his contemporaries, God had become a man that man might become divine.

What is significant in such theological expression, is the close association asserted between the body, or rather the concrete nature of Jesus Christ, and our own physical existence. In this way, their expression is close to what we argue to be the centre of the gospel message itself: God in Christ has come to man in the totality of man's existence; salvation is the grace of God which restores man as a whole being; in Jesus Christ the divine has become human.

The emphasis they made, however, important as it was to the Christian faith, was clothed in a conceptual framework peculiar to the philosophical climate of the day. However, it cannot be accepted as meaningful in the present. Their thinking must always be seen against the background of the Greek philosophical system of their time, a background in which, as Tillich writes, "....philosophy had

---

<sup>84</sup>Athanasium, 'Salvation By Restoration', *De incarnatione* (c. 318) (*Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. H. Bettenson (Oxford University Press, London, 1963), pp. 47-48).



become religion, and religion had become mystical philosophy."<sup>85</sup>  
To the Greek theological mind, God was the theological counterpart of the Realm of Ideas, the Transcendent above the actual, the Idea above its expression, in whom all universal essences had their dwelling place and in whom all potentialities of being were seen. Awareness of this element of Platonic realism is necessary for us to grasp the expression which the early Church Fathers made of Christ and to understand the full significance the incarnation of God had in their theology. When God became man it was not the humanity of a single individual he assumed; it was humanity in general. Or to put it another way, in the incarnation, God as an individual man assumed universal manhood; an ontological relationship was thus effected with all mankind.

It must be pointed out that for the early Church Fathers all redemptive power of the incarnation was attributed to the Logos. The flesh, in and of itself, had no power unto salvation, but only as it was taken up and used by the Logos. Aloys Grillmeier in his book Christ in Christian Tradition, writing on the thought of Athanasius, says, "The Flesh becomes an agent moved directly and physically by the Logos. It is in this sense that we should understand the summary sentence: 'He became man; for this cause also he needed the body as a human instrument.'"<sup>86</sup> Only someone who was divine, only the Logos, could possess qualities and properties such as immortality and incorruptibility. At the same time, only if he

---

<sup>85</sup>Paul Tillich, A History of Christian Thought (SCM Press, London, 1968), p. 50.

<sup>86</sup>Aloys Grillmeier, S. J., Christ in Christian Tradition, trans. John Bowden (A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., London, 1965), p. 206.

were associated with us in our humanity could these same properties be a redemptive occasion for us. It was this conviction the Council of Chalcedon stamped with orthodoxy when it set out to formulate its definition.

From our standpoint there is much in the christological position of the early church which we would want to criticise. For one thing, much of their language suggests a very mechanical, almost magical, bestowal of salvation, a salvation in which we, individually, are almost non-involved. This impression is not helped by the little attention that is paid to the historical work and activity of Jesus' life. In fact, little attention is given to any specific human element of Jesus' life. As Grillmeier points out, Athanasius himself displayed a general tendency to weaken any human characteristics that Christ may have had. He allowed no basis at all for a human psychology in Christ. By saying, for example, that Christ's anguish was only 'feigned', and not real anguish, that his ignorance was no real ignorance, but only an ignorantia de jure, identification with man on the human level was almost non-existent.<sup>87</sup> This becomes understandable when the decisiveness of God's act was seen for them in the union of two natures and not primarily in any psychological benefit or personal communion that may be established.

In spite of the legitimate criticisms we may have, however, the general conviction left with us by the early Fathers is a good one. The underscoring of the soteriological significance of God's act in Christ, the stress which is placed on the saving power of Jesus' humanity, even though only as an instrument of the divine principle in him, the concern for the physical transformation of human existence,

---

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

are inalienable features of the gospel. They are features which, in the light of the gospel, must remain in any christological presentation made. If the conceptual framework in which they made their emphasis is unacceptable to modern thought, then a more suitable and acceptable form of expression must be found. The task before theology now is to retain the intrinsic gospel but change the expression.

The two nature concept of the early Fathers held its importance and meaningfulness because of the metaphysical and philosophical staging which upheld it. Christ, as true God and true man, at least had a rational basis and logical security. Platonic realism made this possible. It is highly questionable, however, without such philosophical support, whether the incarnational approach to christology can be given any reasonableness. With it, however, it is doubtful whether it can serve anymore as a workable and adequate expression of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. With incarnational christology, that is, christology 'from above', the juxtaposition of the words God and Man convey the idea of a metaphysical happening, a synthesis of divine and human natures. The early Fathers supported this, as we said, but not without the loss of the particularity of Jesus' human existence. Thus, consequentially, not without the loss of the contingent nature of our temporal existence. Using the incarnational approach to christology, with any degree of reason, it is difficult to escape the metaphysical conclusions of the early Fathers. The criticisms made of them with respect to the particularity and contingency of human existence would also apply.

Brunner would not accept these conclusions. He retains the incarnational christology and the two nature concept. He writes, "The Incarnation is the great miracle: it is absolutely objective;

it is utterly impossible to divert it into any subjectivistic directions at all."<sup>88</sup> So the central fact of the Christian faith and of theology, is seen in the fact that the Eternal Son of God took upon himself our humanity.<sup>89</sup> Brunner wants to make it clear, however, that he is not saying God became man or that the divine swallowed up the human.<sup>90</sup> Jesus retains what Brunner calls his human nature.<sup>91</sup> There is to be no denial of the human characteristic, the particularity of his humanity as with the early Church Fathers. He wants to be known as a theologian who supports the 'true men' in Christ, and in The Mediator he makes a deliberate attempt to express this humanness. He writes, "What does the picture of the humanity of Jesus show us? Even as a human being, Jesus, as a man like ourselves, is subject to the Law; since, according to the view which Luther so often and so emphatically stated, He was a "weak" human being like ourselves, who had to eat and drink, who got tired, so also He was a man who had to submit to the will of God, and who had to struggle,...."<sup>92</sup>

But, as we stated with the Church Fathers, it is very difficult to reason from the standpoint of the incarnation and escape the metaphysical implications that deny Christ the particularity of his existence. I believe Brunner realizes this himself for it is the

---

<sup>88</sup>Brunner, The Mediator, p. 322.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 363.

application of reason to the incarnation that he forbids.<sup>93</sup> For him, the two nature doctrine is right but it is not right when one tries to reason it through, or understand it; one must merely accept it as the truth about Jesus Christ, in faith. And one must accept in faith, as well, that the divine and the human in Jesus do not penetrate each other, or at least, the divine does not extend itself to the human nature of Jesus. Two successive quotations from Brunner, one from his Dogmatics and the other from The Mediator, will support us in the above interpretation. He writes:

The Jesus Christ shown to us in the Scriptures accredits Himself to us as the God-Man. One who meets Him with that openness to truth which the Bible calls "faith", meets in Him One who, in the unity of His Person, is both true God and true Man. It would be good for the Church to be content with this, and not wish to know more than we can know, or more than we need, if we are to trust Him and obey Him as we should.<sup>94</sup>

....in so far as Jesus Christ can be known historically, in so far as He belongs to the human sphere, He is Man. His Deity is the secret of His Person, which as such does not enter into the sphere of history at all.<sup>95</sup>

The timeless element we have been claiming as part of Brunner's theological position is becoming clear at this point. The divine is allowed no extension or location in reality. More importantly, there is no correlation with the contingent facts of that reality, which time in God would logically entail. In this sense one could say that both the early Church Fathers and Brunner were presenting positions of

---

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>94</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, p. 363.

<sup>95</sup>Brunner, The Mediator, p. 343 (note 1).

timelessness with respect to God. We remember the argument presented by Nelson Pike<sup>96</sup> that God in time logically involves him in the 'particular' quality of that time. Brunner, by holding to the two nature doctrine, cannot rationally protect this particularity and thus succumbs, logically, to a timeless God.

This timeless impression continues in other statements of Brunner. In the place of the human person, for example, Brunner proclaims a divine Person and, at this point, all matters related to historical personality or humanity in Christ end. Brunner suggests that the humanity of Christ is only the mask behind which the Divine Person is hidden. In turn, the mask is necessary so that we might take the risk of faith, as there is nothing visibly that would give any reasonableness to our decision. "Real decision does not exist on the plane of history. For that is the sphere in which men wear masks. For the sake of our "masquerade," that is, for the sake of our sinful mendacity, Christ also, if I may put it like this, has to wear a mask; this is His incognito."<sup>97</sup> From this, one can see that Christ's manhood is given little place in the whole scheme of salvation.

There are many questions that come to our mind in the light of the above. We ask what is the nature of this mysterious 'Person' behind the mask? What kind of person is it? Presumably, is is not the willing deciding center of the personality, since Christ in his humanity retains the capacity to decide. Brunner finds Luther's understanding of the humanity of Jesus as a willing, thinking being in keeping with his own thoughts on the matter.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup>Refer back to chapter two of this thesis, pp. 70ff.

<sup>97</sup>Brunner, The Mediator, p. 346.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 329.

Without these characteristics that belong to our understanding of the person one wonders what Brunner has in mind. It is indeed a 'mystery' and no doubt this completely mysterious person has a connection, for Brunner, with the apparent irrationality of faith itself. I shall return to this criticism in the next chapter when we discuss, at further length, Brunner's understanding of the human person. Our main point here is to establish that Brunner, in his christology, holds to a timelessness in God which, as argued, is crucial to the insignificance he gives to the community of man in the 'meaning' of life.

The impression of timelessness continues in his Dogmatics even though Brunner has changed his expression a great deal. He admits, at one point, "The way to the knowledge of Jesus leads from the human Jesus to the Son of God and to the Godhead. "The Scripture beginneth very gently and leadeth us to Christ as to a man, and after that to a Lord of all Creation, and after that to a God. Thus I come into it gently, and thus I learn to know God....We must begin at the bottom, and afterwards rise to the heights."<sup>99</sup> The word 'bottom' in this statement would appear to be a reference to what Jesus was as a man 'after the flesh'.<sup>100</sup> It seems to be an assertion that what Jesus was as a man, what he said and did, the kind of life

---

<sup>99</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, p. 322. (Brunner is quoting Luther). I have dealt with the change in Brunner's thought in an appendix at the end of the thesis.

<sup>100</sup>Brunner makes a distinction in The Mediator between Christ 'in the flesh' and Christ 'after the flesh' (cf. p. 346). 'In the flesh' is for him the most appropriate and biblical as it refers to the Divine behind the human. 'After the flesh' suggests too much importance to the humanity of Jesus.

he lived, are in the final analysis important to the recognition of his divinity.

Hopeful as this language appears, one must be cautious in attributing a radical shift of method and position to it. Brunner, at the end of the day, continues to separate faith from history. With reference to the apocalyptic context of Jesus' preaching, he is not prepared to grant any significance in the understanding of Jesus' life, or the meaning of Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus as the Christ stands alone, for Brunner, above all biblical images and contextual concerns. He writes, "In Eschatology once again we see that the decisive question is whether faith is faith in Jesus Christ or faith in the word of the Bible. Jesus Christ Himself....stands above all the discussions of scholars about time-bound apocalyptic. He Himself, not any doctrine about Him, is the ground of faith, as He is also the ground of hope."<sup>101</sup> Thus, Brunner is suggesting that all that matters is faith or unbelief.

In conclusion, one can mention briefly two other areas of Brunner's thought which endorse our interpretation of him to this point. We refer to the doctrine of Salvation and the Resurrection. With the former, similarity can be seen in Brunner with the early Fathers. Salvation is an event that involves little of man's participation. Rather it is something that took place without him and outside him. With the Church Fathers, such an event was filled with time in the sense that the human was taken up into the divine. With Brunner, not even this association with temporality is maintained. Salvation is pictured as an event above the historical process. Man, he says, is subject in this world to forces of evil, to higher powers

---

<sup>101</sup> Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation, Dogmatics Vol. III, trans. David Cairns (Lutterworth Press, London, 1962), p. 345.



that lie above and beyond him. Taking over the dramatic imagery of the gospel writers themselves, he writes of the struggle for power that is going on between God and the hostile powers. God in Christ on the cross defeated these powers. The forces, as he pictures them, are supra-mundane powers; they are spiritual Satanic forces not to be suppressed by any other force than one with equal and superior spiritual strength. Presumably, this spiritual force was the divine person existing in the humanity of Christ.<sup>102</sup> To what extent Brunner was actually committed to the imagery of this account is difficult to say. It does help to show the position of his christology as that 'from above'. He writes:

The background of demonic evil is a necessary part of the Christian picture of history. For what is the Crucifixion but the manifestation of the demonic opposition to the Son of God? Thus also as early as the Apostles' Creed we find this dark side of human history expressed and characterized in the words "suffered under Pontius Pilate.." <sup>103</sup>

The last area, that of the resurrection, is another case in point. For Brunner, it is not an event within the historical continuum. It is something that is beyond historical sight, for faith alone to see. Thus the argument that one encountered with reference to Pannenberg has no place for Brunner. He writes:

---

<sup>102</sup>For a full description of the event of Salvation in the language to which we are referring see The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, pp. 133-147. Brunner is most separated from Pannenberg at this point. The cross is something accomplished by Jesus rather than an event that happened to him (cf. p. 371 of Dogmatics Vol. III).

<sup>103</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation, Dogmatics Vol. III, p. 373.

It is not wrong, but it is at least liable to misunderstanding to designate the event of Easter simply as an "historical event"; for it is not historical in the same way as other events, because the historical event, in the usual sense, is something which, in principle, everyone can perceive. But Easter is not an event of this kind. Historically it is for believers only. It is not part of the historical continuum, but at this point the Beyond "breaks into" history.<sup>104</sup>

Brunner offers us no explanation as to how it is possible for an event to break into history and yet have no extension or location in the same.

---

<sup>104</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, p. 328.

## CHAPTER FIVE

HOW MEANING ARISES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL IN COMMUNITY - PANNENBERG

## CHAPTER FIVE

### HOW MEANING ARISES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL IN COMMUNITY - PANNENBERG

#### (A) The Questions of Appearance

In the light of our examination of Pannenberg's concept of God as Future and the Christological basis that supports it, let us go on to define more precisely the position it suggests with respect to man's place in community. Specifically, we ask: How does meaning arise for the individual in Pannenberg's system of thought? From him, suggestions have come as to new and exciting interpretations of our temporal existence and our nature as man, suggestions which offer a convincing alternative to the protestant position as represented in the expression of Emil Brunner. Our intention in this chapter is to elaborate on these suggestions and to offer support for them from other fields of study. I find that the originality and excitement of Pannenberg's position and expression rests in the fact that for the first time we have a theological perspective on temporality and existence that harmonizes with the basic experiences of life itself. Any expression that guarantees the recognition of both contingency and unity (the individual and the community) deserves our utmost attention.

One must use the word suggest in the above, as Pannenberg has not gone on to develop a new understanding of being from his theological method. He has left this task to subsequent philosophers and scholars with whom he is in constant association and communication. He has presented us with a new and unorthodox reflection on the nature of God and His revelation in Jesus of Nazareth. The relationship that he sees between the Son and the Father, and indeed

the Spirit, has much significance for the manner in which we see our world and our lives within it. Pannenberg has not proceeded, however, to give a detailed picture of the correlation he is making. He admits, himself, that what he is doing is presenting a model or method from which implications can be drawn. In his christology, he expresses the situation with these words, "...the Christological discussions in this book point at every stop to ontological and epistemological implications that need their own comprehensive discussion."<sup>1</sup> He warns against the sheer extrapolation of general concepts from specific theological thought. His caution is expressed in the following words:

....little would be gained if without further ado we tried to abstract a general concept of appearance from the way in which God came to appearance in Jesus of Nazareth. In so proceeding one would merely arrive at theological postulates for which he could, at most, try to claim general validity. We would rather ask whether our theological example throws light on certain, perhaps otherwise hidden, sides of the general philosophical problem of appearance.<sup>2</sup>

It shall not be our task in this chapter to draw up an elaborate metaphysical system based on Pannenberg's thought. This is the work for another major thesis beyond the writer's capability. What we wish to do is simply dwell on the implications within his theology for an understanding of the individual and his relationship with the community. His theological understanding, as we said, is commensurate with our basic experiences in life, for which no rational system of support has yet been developed. Whitehead's system was a

---

<sup>1</sup>Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 135.<sup>135.</sup>

bold and very exciting attempt at such rational support but he has been found wanting in the areas important to personal experience. We questioned whether contingency essential to the freedom of man was sufficiently guarded by Whitehead's thought. In any case, Pannenberg contends that whatever support is developed or expressed for man's experience, it cannot be unrelated to the manner in which we conceive the relationship between the Father and the Son and, in turn, the relationship of the Father and Son with the Spirit. This is our prime consideration.

The whole question of where and how the individual seeks meaning for his existence is largely dependent on the manner in which man conceives his temporal existence. Does such meaning involve him in the actuality of his existence or is it to be found apart from it? Pannenberg's contribution to this question is directly related to the interpretation of temporality implied in the concept of God as Future.

When Pannenberg speaks of temporality he uses the word 'appearance'. It is a word that has had a long history in philosophical thought and it is clear that he claims no originality with the word itself.<sup>3</sup> The originality of Pannenberg's contribution rests in the different concept of appearance suggested in Jesus of Nazareth.

He begins his discussion on the nature of appearance with an analysis of its history from Plato to modern times. The one thing that has characterised its history to this point, he says, is the non-essentiality of appearance itself with the being it represents. Such characteristic of thought he sums up with the following words: "...it becomes understandable that the separation of true being from

---

<sup>3</sup>See Pannenberg's article, 'Appearance as the Arrival of the Future' (Theology and the Kingdom of God, pp. 127-143).

its appearance, the precedence of self-sufficient ideas or substances reposing in themselves over the phenomenal reality of sense experience, remained a dominant motif in the history of thought whenever the notion of appearance became thematic."<sup>4</sup> Such thought of appearance, although he did not devote any time to its discussion, is reminiscent of Brunner's notion of being and existence. We shall see how this is so in subsequent pages.

Pannenberg wants to present something different from this age-long concept. He wants to retain the idea of appearance but, at the same time, present the relationship between appearance and being, or appearance and that which appears, as an essential one. He entertains a reciprocity between essence and appearance and does so by means of his concept of the Trinity. It may be added that in doing this Pannenberg is offering a theological viewpoint that has immense social and ethical relevance. God appeared in Jesus. As indicated earlier, he maintains this by viewing Jesus as one with the Father and yet different from him. There is not just the normal idea of appearance here, in the sense that behind and beyond the appearance the true being exists. He makes the appearance essential by saying it is just as the one different from the Father that Jesus is one with Him; that is, the appearance is of the essence of the Father. The other way of expressing this thought is to say that God is Future in relation to the Son, or in Jesus God is present as the Future. Jesus is the appearance of God and that which appears in

---

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 129. Pannenberg says a distinction between what appears and appearance itself is already implied in the word 'appears'. There has been, to this time, no adequate account of how this is so or how the two sides of the word's meaning are to be united.

Jesus does so in the mode of futurity.

The question Pannenberg asks now is this: Does this interpretation of appearance in Jesus have anything to contribute to the general notion of appearance? Does it offer any insight that may correct the problems that have been connected with the history of this concept? In what follows I hope to give an affirmative response on his behalf and show, at the same time, how his interpretation of appearance has formative power in an expression of the individual's relationship with community.

Part of the problem in the history of the appearance concept was the lack of significance attributed to temporality. Essence, or for our purposes meaning, was seen as existing beyond reality. The latter was treated as a matter of indifference. It did not affect the essence of what 'is' in its self-sufficiency. This can be seen in the thought of Plato and Aristotle. In the Republic, for example, Plato was concerned to express an ideal of the state; his state was a type or model for all states. He was not concerned about the actual existing state; whether or not it actually matched the requirements of the ideal state was a matter of indifference to him. All questions of practicability, which is to say, all matters of temporal actuality, were looked upon as unimportant. His concern was to show what a state must be and if the facts did not match it then that was not really of great consequence. There was an ideal apart from the appearance and the two had no essential connection. Although Aristotle tried harder to relate the two, he still was dominated by the ideal over the appearance; they were never essentially related. George Sabine writing in reference to Aristotle says this:



In so far as the object is to formulate an ideal state, this is not an insuperable objection. For such a state would be dominated by the highest possible kind of life, and Plato, at least, had supposed that an understanding of the idea of the good would show what this is. But to arrive at the idea of the good first and then to use this as a standard for criticising and evaluating actual lives and actual states, was just what made Aristotle despair.<sup>5</sup>

One can understand how meaning or essence, without the essential association with appearance, took on a timeless quality for Plato and Aristotle. Indeed, it is safe to say that the general problem with the concept of appearance throughout history has been that of the timelessness connected with it. Even in Hegel, time is not taken seriously, because appearance, which is an essential part of his system of thought, turns out in the end to be non-essential as the concept of the 'Notion' precedes it; the particularities of history in the end have no real contribution to make.

(B) The Self Beyond Appearance - Brunner

The understanding that something 'exists' or 'is', in the sense of being unessential to its appearance, is reminiscent of Brunner's understanding of the self. In his book on man, Brunner describes him in terms of the formal and material image, and although he feels he is liable to misunderstanding here he continues to use the distinction in his second volume of the Dogmatics.<sup>6</sup> The impression

---

<sup>5</sup>George Sabine, A History of Political Theory (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1937), p. 100.

<sup>6</sup>See Man in Revolt, pp. 499-515 and The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, pp. 55ff.

Brunner wants to convey by this is that there is a part of man (the formal) which is not totally ruined by sin.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the formal, for Brunner, includes the thinking, reasoning and willing aspects of life.<sup>8</sup> These aspects, however, do not constitute the truly human or personal in man. Rather, the truly personal and human is the material image.<sup>9</sup> It was this image that was totally destroyed by sin. In his opinion, one can continue to exist humanly in the formal sense but the personal center of existence (material image), that centre in which the meaning or essence of personality resides (related to the Word of God), has no fundamental relation to the formal.

The 'mask' Brunner speaks of in The Mediator behind which lies the mystery of the person, could be equated with the formal image. The formal image of man's existence could also correspond to the orders of creation in which man is placed in society. They, as argued earlier, have no essential connection with the meaning of the self (material image). Rather, the individual finds his meaning apart from his community involvement. The roles which the individual plays in society via his placement in society are not, in any way, to be identified with his persona. If one may say so, they merely set the stage for man's personal life. Brunner's own words in The Mediator

---

<sup>7</sup>Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, p. 56f. He writes, "...this formal...means something which man can never lose; even when he sins he cannot lose it." (p. 57).

<sup>8</sup>See Brunner, Man in Revolt, p. 502.

<sup>9</sup>See Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, p. 58.

about the nature of personality will help us to understand his intentions.

Everyone possesses a mystery of personality, which is in no wise identical with his historical personality, with the individual human character which is visible to the historian or to the biographer, and can be grasped by him. This mystery of personality lies behind all historical and psychological perception. It lies even behind all self-perception. As human beings we all wear masks, and we see each other and ourselves through masks. We are mysteries to others and to ourselves.<sup>10</sup>

Brunner can thus say that our personality is an object of faith, not an historical form. "...as persons", he writes, "we cannot be known, only believed."<sup>11</sup> It is this conception of person that helps us understand the christological position Brunner developed. If we remember, Brunner separated Jesus as the Son of God, in essence, from his physical attributes. He was a Son of God without qualities. I say 'Son of God without qualities' not to convey the idea that Jesus as the Christ was not a man; this is something Brunner would strongly deny. I mean, however, that the qualities of his human existence played no part in the essence of his Sonship. In the same way, the human self or person is without qualities for Brunner.

Jürgen Moltmann uses the expression, 'man without qualities' to define the understanding of man set forth by sociology. Each individual has a role or several roles to play in society. They

---

<sup>10</sup> Brunner, The Mediator, p. 318.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 319. Apparently, it is here in this mysterious person which is not connected with the deciding, willing aspect of historical personality that the absolute decision of faith is to be made. But again one asks: What is a decision that has no relation to reason, which for Brunner is excluded from faith?

are roles which have laws, habits and customs. Some are fixed and some are flexible, but whichever, they are not to be identified with the man himself. Moltmann writes, "The reality of society and of politics becomes a little theatre of the world, upon which each man plays his role, until he departs, and others take him over. The man himself does not appear in them."<sup>12</sup> The self, Moltmann implies, for homo sociologicus is an ideal apart from or behind the image or appearance that is visible in its historical form. One is compelled to say there seems little difference in this from Brunner's statements about the self.

When Brunner turns to the personalism of Ebner and Buber he does not fare much better. Certainly, as Brunner points out in his Dogmatics, person is not to be understood as substance, that is, a static element existing in itself. Person, he says, is a relational concept.<sup>13</sup> As with all personalistic thought, so with Brunner, person is something that arises in the meeting of the I with the Thou. This personalism allows Brunner to escape a static impression of substance. It does not remove him, however, from the criticism we have been making with regard to the traditional understanding of appearance as something non-essential to that which 'is'. The I-Thou relationship itself becomes, in Brunner, an ideal apart from and beyond all appearances of man in his social and historical existence. It has been given, by Brunner and the other personalistic thinkers, no essential connection with man in his historical form. The center of personality, the I-Thou relationship, becomes something which exists again in faith, as it cannot be discerned from any position within

---

<sup>12</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, Man, trans. John Strudy (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1974), p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics Vol. II, p. 60.

historical existence. It becomes possible thus to talk about a self without the objective particularity of our humanity. Brunner writes:

The encounter between two human beings is ordinarily not personal at all but more or less impersonal. I see "someone." To see someone is not essentially different from seeing something. This someone says something to me. Someone saying "something" to myself - that is, thinking. But now let us put the case that this someone does not say "something" but "says" himself, discloses himself to me, and that I, while he "says" himself to me, "hear himself"; and more, that while he discloses himself to me, and so surrenders himself to me, I disclose myself to him and receive him, while I surrender myself to him. In this moment he ceases to be for me a "someone-something" and becomes a "Thou." In that moment in which he becomes a "Thou" he ceases to be an object of my thinking and transforms the object-subject relation into a relation of personal correspondence: we have fellowship together.<sup>14</sup>

In Platonic fashion, Brunner has made an ideal out of the I-Thou concept; the facts of human existence, the qualities that make up man's humanness, are inconsequential as far as truly personal existence is concerned. He does speak, at certain stages of his thought, in terms of the influence the Christian, that is, the one who finds his personality in the "Thou" of God, can have in his social behaviour. But the influence of which he speaks seems residual, something that rubs off the individual in the process of finding his true meaning apart from such behaviour.<sup>15</sup> The final position of such residual influence is expressed by Brunner in these words: "But

---

<sup>14</sup>Brunner, Truth as Encounter, p. 115.

<sup>15</sup>See Chapter XXV of Brunner's The Divine Imperative.

important as all this action inspired by faith is, yet in faith it is still more important to know that "all our doings are nothing worth," even in the best life."<sup>16</sup>

Brunner proclaims an immediacy of relationship of man with man in his concept of I-Thou, just as he proclaims an immediacy of relationship of man with God in the "Thou" of God. In reference to the latter he writes, "Here there is nothing between God and man, between the person who is being created and the One who creates, nor is there anything above them. Here man is face to face with his God, in the most intimate personal relation. Here alone does the "individual" exist."<sup>17</sup> We saw this same kind of thinking in connection with his conception of the absolute 'subjectivity' of God. It seems that he is treating the person in the same fashion. Man at the center of his personality is pure subject and all objective reference becomes, if not inconsequential, very secondary. In the quotation above, Brunner's talk of a "Thou" apart from the "something" of a person confirms this impression.

To be fair to Brunner, one must understand his objective. He is trying to overcome a perpetual problem of our society, that of the relationship between the individual and the community. He rightly sees, as we pointed out, that the problem can never be solved as long as the individual is treated in its own right as a phenomenon over against the community, or each claims its own separate sphere of operation and justice. They must each, according to Brunner, be seen in their essential togetherness. While agreeing with this thought, we find that Brunner has not provided the necessary concepts that

---

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 301.

allow this to happen. Rather, he has led us in a direction that magnifies man's social problem. His concept of God with its timelessness does not create the necessary perspective to solve the problem rationally.

One should be aware that Brunner, in adopting so much of the personalistic philosophy of Buber and Ebner, was not able to escape the separation of the I-Thou and I-It that dominated their thought. Buber, in his writings, refers to the essential difference between the 'I-Thou' world of the personal and the 'I-It' world of the impersonal. The 'It' world is placed in the context of space, time and causality and is the world that includes man's institutions where he works, organizes and does things. This world, however, is impersonal; it is not related essentially to that which is truly human and personal. "Institutions", writes Buber, "are a complicated market-place, feelings a boudoir rich in ever-changing interests."<sup>18</sup> These aspects of reality lack soul and personality for him. He continues to write, "...institutions know only the specimen, feelings only the "object"..."<sup>19</sup> Although both of these spheres are necessary, Buber does not regard them as essential in the creation of human life, "...this is done by the third, the central presence of the Thou."<sup>20</sup> The individual with its consciousness of experience, race and culture must search in another place for personal value.

That Buber is right in making a distinction between individuality

---

<sup>18</sup> Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. R. G. Smith (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1937), p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

and personality will not be disputed. The two are certainly not synonymous. In fact, what we are arguing for in this thesis is the personalization of the individual through a proper placement and position in the world. We do not share, however, the separation suggested in Buber between the personal and the qualities of the individual's life. As with the homo sociologicus, to which Moltmann referred, so here with Buber (and Brunner), the qualities of man's life that make up his roles and really comprise the historical community of his existence, acquire little value. They become the 'mask' of the real person.

Many have criticised Buber and his personalism for this very reason.<sup>21</sup> H. D. Lewis thinks there is validity in Buber's distinction between the I-Thou and the I-It. He says that what Buber is trying to point to is the distinctiveness and particularity of entities.<sup>22</sup> However, he goes on to say that Buber thinks of the moment of standing in relation as too detached from the varied content of all the experience we have with one another. He writes the following words which pinpoint the weakness of Buber and, for us, Brunner.

---

<sup>21</sup>I refer the reader to the following authors whose writings have been critical of Buber in the manner suggested above: H. D. Lewis, 'The Elusive Self and the I-Thou Relation' (Talk of God, pp. 169-184), and Paul Pfuete, Self, Society, Existence. This author, although very sympathetic to Buber, finds fault with the way he minimizes reason in appealing to intuition. This, he feels, makes Buber too subjective in his theory (cf. pp. 273ff.). See also Michael Theunissen, Der Andere (Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin, 1965), especially pp. 278ff. and pp. 330ff. and Jurgen Moltmann, Man, pp. 78ff.

<sup>22</sup>Lewis, 'The Elusive Self and the I-Thou Relation' (Talk of God), p. 175.



It is not that he denies such experience; he acknowledges, on the contrary, that we have it and need it...But he is apt to treat it as altogether inferior, almost an encumbrance, and not very different in merit and importance from the knowledge of natural objects we require in order to manipulate them. I-It is thus on an altogether different plane, even in the case of persons, from the I-Thou, and the ideal must be always to pass beyond the world of I-It, although for regrettable practical reasons we cannot disregard it, to the more rarefied and truly significant world of I-Thou.<sup>23</sup>

Lewis concludes:

This is indeed a very grave mistake. It takes away all that gives point and direction to our aspirations and our dealings with each other. It renders negligible the judgement, the discernment, the sympathy, the forbearance, which we should cultivate in seeking to know one another, and supply one another's needs, the need for fellowship above all.<sup>24</sup>

As Lewis indicates in the last quotation, there is a destructiveness to historical community contained in too sharp a division between the I-Thou and the I-It. It devalues the wider circle of relationships in which the person assumes a role, works and enters into institutions, that is, those areas that are materially determined. The temporality of our existence is underplayed and thus the significance of community with it.

It is questionable, notwithstanding the insignificance of community that is involved at this point, whether a direct, immediate relation can be said to exist between man in the fashion that Buber and Brunner would have us believe. Perhaps there may be room

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 182-183.

for such a claim in the encounter two people might have as they look each other in the eye and experience a common understanding. Who is to deny that this kind of immediate understanding happens? But is this, at the same time, to deny lesser and more indirect personal relationships? Is it not possible to think of situations that improve and facilitate the human enterprise as being personal? Cannot new procedures, new institutions and programmes make human life more human? Moltmann gives an example of such an arrangement in his book Man which might be worthwhile quoting for it illustrates the point we are making:

....for some time now bank positions have had a notice giving the name of the employee, for instance, Miss A. M. Jones. The completely impersonal performance of purchases and payments is thereby supposed to acquire a personal note. In cases of doubt it is indeed good to know the name of the other person. But normally it is not used. To complete business without friction, only two functions can be found at the counters, the customer paying in and the official placing it to his account. If everyone wanted to develop an 'I-Thou' relationship at the counter with Miss Jones, business would come to a stop, those in the queue would get indignant, and Miss Jones would become impatient. No one denies that he himself can be an 'I' and the bank clerk a 'Thou', but in the game of business transactions everyone has to know what he has to do. This is the rule of the game. And if it is a rule of the game, then the personal element no doubt lies in not taking it too seriously, in using it but not becoming subject to it. All 'I-Thou' relationships exist within the medium of common material circumstances, of common tasks and interests and of a measure of division of labour.<sup>25</sup>

The indirectness of personal experience to which Moltmann is alluding in his illustration points to a different understanding

---

<sup>25</sup>Moltmann, Man, p. 85.

of appearance than that which is associated with Platonic thought and also that which is present in Buber and Brunner. It is not denying the reality of a transcendental Self that is different from the reality of our common experience. On the other hand, it is suggesting that there is an immanent Self, objectified in the temporal arrangements of life. The two are necessary for the development of the person; one cannot be emphasised to the exclusion of the other. Moltmann, in his earlier theological expression, failed at times to provide the necessary concepts that called for this kind of reciprocation in personality. But in his later writings a much more positive case can be made in this respect.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Don Olive, in his book Wolfhart Pannenberg (Wordsbook Pub. Waco, Texas, 1973), speaks of the difference between Moltmann and Pannenberg in a way that is relevant to our thesis. He says the not-yet in Pannenberg's thought is a function and characteristic of historical reality; it is not, however, that reality itself. He points out that with Pannenberg the not-yet is not completely future as it is in Moltmann's theology. With Pannenberg it has appeared in Jesus and consequently the Christian community can affirm the reality which is already in Jesus' fate. In Pannenberg's method, he says, the future, by being included within the historical process, has been rescued from unreality. Moltmann, on the other hand, by making the tendency of the present toward that which is yet to come, the real, makes the future an abstraction (see p. 81). Langdon Gilkey makes the same kind of criticism of Moltmann's radical eschatology or future in his book, The Renewal of God-Language, p. 346.

I believe Moltmann has overcome this criticism to a large extent in his later writings. In his book Man, for example, he writes, "For Christians, however, this 'infinite' is both a promise and a demand, a present grace and a future still to be attained. Christians therefore live in a tension between faith and hope. If they were to fail to hear the demand made by God's future, faith would lead to an assimilated religious contentment with the present. If, however, they were to despise the present reality of grace now given, hope would turn into a moral system of endless accusations and unending claims." (p. 58). The same emphasis is present throughout The Crucified God, where Moltmann stresses that our participation in God is through our participation in history.

(C) The Self In Appearance: Polanyi and Mead

The idea suggested by Moltmann that personhood is not so much an immediate experience, or one of directness, but rather an experience to be found in the objective aspects of existence, finds support in other scholarship. We shall deal with it briefly for it will lend support to Pannenberg's viewpoint defended throughout this thesis.

If attention is directed to Michael Polanyi, a theory of personal knowledge will be found which is very much in line with Pannenberg.<sup>27</sup> For this reason it is important to us. In Polanyi there is presented a notion of appearance, as personal knowledge, that has about it both the aspects of transcendence and facticity. A brief examination of his thought will confirm this.

Marjorie Grene, writing about Polanyi's theory of personal knowledge or 'tacit knowledge', interprets him this way:

Unlike the traditional ideal of a wholly explicit, self-guaranteeing truth, from-to knowledge cannot be instantaneous; it is a stretch, not only of attention, but of effort, effort must be lived, and living takes time. Knowledge, therefore, is imbedded both in living process (as Piaget, too, has argued in Biologie et Connaissance, and as Suzanne Langer is arguing in her study of Mind) and in the uniquely human form of living process: in history.<sup>28</sup>

As Miss Grene points out, Polanyi sees no direct route, or immediacy,

---

<sup>27</sup>See Michael Polanyi's Personal Knowledge (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1958), for a full treatment of his theory. His series of essays in Knowing and Being, ed. Marjorie Grene (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1969), are very helpful in understanding his position. It is from the latter which I have drawn for the thesis. Miss Grene's introduction is also very helpful in pointing out the relevance of Polanyi's thought for our time.

<sup>28</sup>Knowing and Being, ed. Marjorie Grene, p. xi.

to personal knowledge. Personal knowledge is always tacit; that is, it is inferred from the facts and situation of life that surrounds us. It is described by Polanyi himself as 'from-to' knowledge. Man gathers from facts around him (subsidiary facts), which Polanyi calls the 'proximal term',<sup>29</sup> to a focal point or the 'distal term'. "In the case of perception we are attending to an object separated from the most of the clues which we integrate into its appearance...."<sup>30</sup> As Polanyi makes clear here, essence appears; there is essence in the facts and circumstances of life, so one may say that personal knowledge is appearance. This is not to deny the existence of a transcendent pole. It is to say however, that such a transcendence is understood and perceived only through the facticity of our temporal existence. "We have seen that by attending from the proximal to the distal, we cause a transformation in the appearance of both; they acquire an integrated appearance."<sup>31</sup>

This form of the act of personal knowledge embodies at the same time an ontological claim.<sup>32</sup> This is the nature of reality itself says Polanyi. All knowledge is 'appearing' knowledge. Polanyi refers to it at one point as anticipatory knowledge; he means that the content toward which we are directed never appears in an explicit form for we acquire only anticipations of it.

---

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

My definition of reality, as that which may yet inexhaustibly manifest itself, implies the presence of an indeterminate range of anticipations in any knowledge bearing on reality. But besides this indeterminacy of its prospects, tacit knowing may contain also an actual knowledge that is indeterminate, in the sense that its content cannot be explicitly stated.<sup>33</sup>

In the light of the above, meaning is something that is acquired by looking at the world, which points to, and is involved in, the transcendent reality beyond. Meaning, which is the focal point toward which the proximal is directing us, is anticipated and thus present in the facts of life. In this way, the self's search for meaning is necessarily involved with the events of life which serve the focus of meaning. Facts acquire value in Polanyi's theory of knowledge, but at the same time, they do not possess absolute value. Rather, they point beyond themselves to something that is yet to be. Meaning is destroyed, he says, when one dwells on the proximal alone. Alienation takes place by looking at a thing instead of from it.<sup>34</sup> If a pianist, for example, were to concentrate on his fingers while playing the piano, he would destroy the sense of music that is being performed. He would be paralysed by such concentration at something. Perhaps it would not be unfair to say that Brunner's treatment of temporal reality in the fashion of nineteenth century historiography, that is, as 'bare fact', is the result of looking at the facts instead of from the facts.

---

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 141. Polanyi is re-echoing Pannenberg's thought on anticipatory knowledge which is a very important concept in the latter's writings.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

If one were looking for further support of Polanyi, and thus of Pannenberg, consideration could be given to George Mead. In his book, Mind, Self and Society, Mead offers an understanding of the self in its search for meaning which implicates man in the social structures of his existence, in much the same way as Pannenberg would have the self involved in life. For Mead, the self receives its meaning, basically, from the community in which it dwells, by taking upon itself the attitudes and roles of the community. The community becomes the place of meaning and the self in its search for meaning does not arise over and beyond the community but within it. Mead speaks, at the same time, of the separateness of the 'I' from the community, that is, the critical distance the self can exercise in relation to the community.<sup>35</sup> The 'I' may receive its identification and meaning from the community, but at the same time, it can change the institutions and roles in which it dwells and bring in a novel element. Paul Pfuete expresses this mutual dependency in Mead's thought very well.

...he does reject the classical formulation of both sociological realism and nominalism. His own answer of the "social individual" suggests that self and society are laid down together; correlative aspects of the same natural experience. Selves develop only in a social context, and society exists only in and through and for individuals. Self and society are mutually interdependent and reciprocally conditioned. The universal is nothing if the particular is nothing: but the particular comes to self-awareness and effective freedom only within a complex and responsive universal. Necessity and freedom are harmonized, teleology and mechanism are reconciled....<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Mead, Mind, Self and Society, pp. 168ff. Pfuete thinks Mead does not grant the 'I' enough importance in his thought. He says Mead recognizes the existing subject over and beyond the community, but he does not treat it with any seriousness (Self, Society, Existence, pp. 253-254).

<sup>36</sup> Pfuete, Self, Society, Existence, p. 247.

Mead's problem (and here Pfuetze has helped us in his analysis of him), is that the social process appears mostly as part of the creative advance of the earth. He does not relate the generalized other, or the community from which the individual receives his meaning, to anything beyond itself. He does not give it any objective basis. The problem develops then, that one is left without a means to judge the moral value of something. Pfuetze writes, "....questions of right and wrong are not questions of ends and values to be judged by some ultimate standard; they are simply questions of the best means of solving the problem under prevailing conditions, or of getting an inhibited system to working again."<sup>37</sup> Without an objective standard (which comes from seeing no relevance in the concept of God or truth as such) then there remains no basis by which to criticise one's action, or worse still, to judge the authority and power of society over the individual. Mead fails to account for the transcendence the individual feels in the face of his community and it is doubtful whether these feelings of separateness, by which the new comes, can be accounted for in purely biological and social terms.

(D) The Individual and the Community - Pannenberg

In turning to Pannenberg, we could say that he christianises the living process of meaning implied in both Polanyi and Mead. He thinks of God in a manner that implies similar social existence. God appears in Jesus as the Future, or that which appears in Jesus does so in the mode of futurity. This, it can be shown, has the desired effect of throwing the individual back into the community

---

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 260.



for his meaning while, at the same time, making the community dependent on the individual for its renewal.

It was suggested, from our analysis of human existence, that 'meaning' is something that escapes man at every stage of his life. There is, in other words, a perpetual dissatisfaction in our living that keeps us reaching out to an end in which the final truth will be made known. If this 'end' is conceptualized, as in Marxism with its view of the total man,<sup>38</sup> as the final configuration of social existence brought on by a revolutionary act or acts, or even by a more gradual process as in evolutionary thought, then the individuals who have gone before suffer from not having entered into that meaning. Brunner, we argued, sought to escape this problem by understanding man's final meaning above history. The individual found meaning in some immediate encounter, apart from the facts of history. But this had the undesirable effect of rendering the community of historical existence non-essential.

Pannenberg has counteracted these conflicting aspects by conceiving appearance, in Jesus, as the arrival of the future. By this means, the future, the final meaning of human existence, is seen not as a stage at the end of a social process, or a stage above the social process, but as an aspect of the social process itself. Meaning, thus, is not held as a prospect for a fortunate few at the end, nor is it simply an individual happening apart from the rest of the community.

---

<sup>38</sup>Russell Norris in his book, God, Marx and the Future gives a very good critique of Marxist thought, as seen through the eyes of Roger Garaudy. One of the things he criticises is the total man concept which exists at the end of historical process. He questions how the individual can be seen to be of worth in this concept (pp. 197f.).

Rather, meaning is viewed from the standpoint of the community itself in which the individual finds himself and in which his own efforts will make a contribution.

Just as those who came in contact with the earthly Jesus, experienced in his presence an anticipation of the wholeness of existence (the end of all things), so wherever his spirit is, there the future is present in anticipated wholeness. In saying this we are stressing a very important point in Pannenberg's thinking. He never finds one's social existence unrelated to the way God is related to God in the plurality of persons of the Trinity. Just as he does not make the Son something different than the man Jesus in his temporal existence, so he does not think of the Spirit apart from its existence in the people. The Spirit of God becomes the anticipatory wholeness of life experienced by the people in their historical existence. "Because Jesus Christ, as the revelation of God, is one with the essence of God himself, the Spirit of Christ dwelling in Christians and going out from Jesus is the Spirit of God himself."<sup>39</sup> Thus, in a real and important sense one may say that the community, in the perspective of anticipated wholeness, or in the spirit of openness, is the Spirit of God Himself. Pannenberg does this without, at the same time, equating the Holy Spirit and the people absolutely for the person of the Spirit is not received from the people but vice versa. This important point is made clear in the following:

The confession that the Holy Spirit is "person" thus expresses primarily the experience that the Christian is not his own lord. Insofar as he lives out of faith in Christ, the center of his person that determines his behavior lies outside himself. The personal center of Christian action is the Holy Spirit.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup>Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, p. 174.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

Pannenberg, in this way, saves himself from Mead's predicament of not allowing for any objective reality by which to hold the power of community in check. He relates the community directly to God Himself, while distancing its reality from Him at the same time. Community is only the anticipation of God's Future, but as such is the place where the individual must place himself to find his meaning. The likeness between Polanyi's interpretation of reality as anticipation and Pannenberg's theological perspective of reality as anticipated wholeness is striking.

The person, for Pannenberg, has two aspects integrated into a single appearance. Man is a person in the roles and institutions to which he belongs, or at least one must say that person is relevant to the formation of these aspects of human existence. However, person is also a concept that refers beyond these things to that which the institution or the community structure points and of which they are anticipations. In this sense contingency and freedom, essential to personal existence, are guaranteed.

When Brunner wrote of these two poles of human existence he did so in a negative fashion. They were aspects of the person that could not be reconciled. He endeavored to transcend them for the sake of meaning. He wrote, "This process of balancing claims is, as I said at the beginning, the hopeless attempt to solve the ethical problem...."<sup>41</sup> With Pannenberg the tension existing between the individual and the community, in terms of personal existence, is seen as a natural tension, or better still, a divine tension that

---

<sup>41</sup>Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 305.

persists in the very life of God Himself.<sup>42</sup> Thus, rather than being destructive of meaning, as Brunner would have it, the tension becomes, in Pannenberg's method, part of the process of meaning itself. This is also, one might add, in marked contrast to Marxist thought in which the tension (alienation) at the center of life is regarded as human. In Marx, the idea of the separation from the Future, which makes room for the essential contribution of appearance, is absent. Man does not emerge in his essence through the tension for Marx, but by a radical elimination of it. In this sense there is also a timeless element in Marxist thought as contingency plays no vital part.<sup>43</sup>

Through his whole programme, Pannenberg is aware of the originality, and thus perhaps the abstractness, of his thought. Looking at appearance as the arrival of the Future instead of that which 'is', has hardly been considered before Pannenberg's time. Yet, in the light of the above, one cannot but agree with the conclusion he reaches with respect to the relevance of the concept and the necessity by which we must pursue its clarification. He writes:

---

<sup>42</sup>One must admit that Pannenberg is not always clear at this point. At times, he pictures the tension at the center of life as the result of sin. In other places, it is the exciting process of living in God Himself (cf. What is Man?, p. 94).

<sup>43</sup>Alienation in Marx is not a factor essential to man but a product of the capitalist system which can be removed in history. He writes, "Communism as a fully developed naturalism is humanism, and as a fully developed humanism is naturalism. It is the definitive resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man. It is the true solution of the conflict between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be this solution." (Karl Marx, Early Writings, trans. and ed. T. B. Bottomore (London, 1963), pp. 193f. and p. 155).

And yet, against this view is the truth that such a position, which sees what appears in the appearance only as a timeless universal, will inevitably underestimate or totally fail to recognize the importance for our experience of reality, of the contingently new, of the individual, and of time. Accordingly, it seems more appropriate to consider the universal as a human construction, which indeed proves itself useful by its ability to grasp a reality that is probably of quite another character, since it is conditioned by contingency and time.<sup>44</sup>

If man's life is oriented toward the future, which is a common anthropological understanding in modern thought, and the individual is to be given seriousness, or meaning, within the realm of history itself, then Pannenberg's concept of appearance as the arrival of the Future is the logical perspective of the facts. In Marxism, we can see that man's hope contains history and yet at the expense of the individual. In Brunner, we can see that the individual receives his meaning in God and yet at the expense of history and historical community. For one, the Future is seen as the conclusion of an historical process; for the other, it is seen as a reality above history. In Pannenberg, history itself is appearance and the Future is with us.

As stated, Pannenberg's theological perspective contains within it an ontology that is new to man. We are familiar with the understanding of reality that sees the future ahead of us and toward which we are moving. This understanding is involved in almost everything we undertake in our daily lives. We plan toward some goal and are accustomed to sacrificing the things of the present to reach that goal. We are also accustomed to the ontological thought of seeing the Future as a reality beyond history. In this case the Future, or

---

<sup>44</sup>Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 141.

the totality of all that is, is pictured as the Ideal by which we judge all our standards on earth. As Pannenberg expresses it, the concept of that which 'is' allows us, "...the possibility of forming general concepts and of making general structural statements that can be applied to the most diverse individuals and to changing situations."<sup>45</sup> This understanding of reality is only too familiar by those who want to preserve the status quo.

It must be admitted, however, that we are not accustomed to thinking of the future as that in which we live in the reality of our historical existence, so that historical contingency is essentially related to it, that is, contributive to its essence. Yet, as we examined Polanyi's theory of the process of knowing, he reasoned that the transcendent (or for our purposes that which is Future in relation to us), is known only in a subsidiary fashion. We are participating as knowers in that which is beyond us, the known. By interiorising the facts of life, we live in that toward which they point. This is suggesting that we live in a tension between what we are and what we seek and yet what we are is an aspect of what we seek. Polanyi, in other words, has shown us that the perspective on reality, which we have considered in Pannenberg, is not a foreign concept when one analyses the nature of knowledge itself.

As further support of this perspective, it is not an uncommon experience in life to see the meaning and value of something only from a future standpoint. When I look back over my life from the present, which is the future in relation to everything that has gone before, I can determine the significance of something much clearer.

---

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

I might say, for example, the most significant event in my life, that which changed my life, happened on a certain date and in a certain place. At the particular time of happening this observation could not have been made, but it is proper from my vantage point now to say it was so. The Future, or the totality of all that is, was present if only in appearance then. Can one not say thus with Pannenberg that what is the case proves to have been true all along, and say it without implicating one in a position of determinism? The Future was present in me not in the sense of a simple potential working itself out, like an oak tree in an acorn. Rather, it was actually present if only from a limited perspective. In the case of the acorn and the oak tree, the tree is not present; it is coming into being. The tree does not appear in the acorn as it is the product of something already determined and thus appears only at the end. In the case of my event, the future itself was present.

These are very simple suggestions which help us to erase some of the strangeness associated with Pannenberg's ontological viewpoint. If we are to grasp the insight he offers, perhaps more than anything, we must rid ourselves of the Greek conception of truth which has dominated the western mind for so long. This is a suggestion Pannenberg himself makes.<sup>46</sup>

The real test of the viewpoint, however, is that which Pannenberg set down for the concept of God Himself; does it meet the requirements of reality? When speaking of God, one speaks of an ontological viewpoint on reality at the same time, and thus the

---

<sup>46</sup>See Pannenberg, 'What is Truth?' (Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. II, pp. 1-27).

latter should have determinative significance for all reality. Appearance as the arrival of the Future meets this standard in the two essential requirements of personal existence. The community from this viewpoint becomes the appearance of man's final destiny and, of course, as the appearance of such is that to which the individual must relate in order to find his meaning. Unity is preserved in personal existence, or to put it another way, the identity essential for human life is preserved.

At the same time, because it is only appearance, it allows for contingent reality and the freedom of the individual. The balance between the rights and claims of each is not something laid down in advance, nor is it something that is hopelessly irrational. It requires continual dialogue and mutual relationship so that the most just system of balance may be found for a particular occasion. When the community thinks of itself in absolute terms, the individual is there to open it to new horizons. When the individual struggles to free himself from the community, he realizes at the same time that he is essentially related to it and thus must show respect. It is a process of living determinism and freedom in mutual action. This is the tension at the center of existence which belongs to the essence of man's life.

All of this, of course, would demand a sharp departure from Brunnerian social ethics outlines in his concept of the orders. The orders of social ethics in Brunner's scheme would be seen, in the light of the above, as open and personal. Moltmann wrote of the orders in a way that is helpful in understanding our intention here: "The state....would have to be seen as a 'process of the



formation of political intention' and no longer as a naturalistic order on the one hand, or as a decisionistic institution of power on the other. The 'process of the formation of political intention', however,....must be shaped in creative love by Christians co-operating, working and suffering together."<sup>47</sup> As this quotation indicates, creative love is not something, as with Brunner, over and beyond the judicial process, but the shaping and reshaping of justice itself. Pannenberg expresses it this way: "The activity of love will aim at actualizing an initially provisional configuration of corporate life in order subsequently to create better justice (Recht) beyond that, and thus to strengthen community."<sup>48</sup>

It is recognized by Pannenberg that in some situations justice may be more lasting than in others. Love, which seeks its expression within justice, may be equated more firmly with justice in those instances. He speaks, for example, of the concept of repetition.<sup>49</sup> By this expression, he means that the new or the future which is to come, in relating itself to the community, repeats the meaning of the latter; the change that is effected is so slight as to give the impression of repetition. But this, he says, does not contradict the notion of appearance as the arrival of the Future. "The contingently new becomes present event by taking up into itself, or by repeating, the existing situation, insofar as it is not able to transform it into a new synthesis."<sup>50</sup> At the same time, Pannenberg

---

<sup>47</sup>Moltmann, Hope and Planning, p. 125.

<sup>48</sup>Pannenberg, What is Man?, p. 101.

<sup>49</sup>See Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p. 142.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

recognizes the ceaseless confrontation of the future with the present so that no situation can claim absolute justice for all time. The path of human behavior, politically, socially and economically, is a continual reconciling process. It is a reconciliation which is not only human, but at the same time, divine.

This does not make Pannenberg's method very revolutionary in its implication, in the sense that we have come to understand revolution in modern times, that is, as a radical break with the past and the initiation of a new process.<sup>51</sup> He has profound respect for tradition in his theology, for tradition seen in its proper perspective is the presence of one's destiny itself in history. Yet tradition, from his method, can be seen as always open-ended, in search of new horizons and new interpretation. In this case, says Pannenberg, revolution becomes superfluous.<sup>52</sup>

By criticizing what has been transmitted, a man swings himself up to a new level. But he still pushes off from what has been transmitted in order to make the leap beyond it. In climbing higher, each person is indebted to the previous stage, without which he would not be where he is. No one begins at the beginning.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, in Pannenberg's mind, the extreme individuality that runs with revolutionary activity and the impersonalism which it engenders is tempered by making personal value depend on a reciprocal relationship between the community, the traditions from which one

---

<sup>51</sup>I refer here to the concept of revolution inspired by Régis Debray and Frantz Fanon in their respective books, Revolution in the Revolution, trans. Bobbye Ortiz (M. R. Press, New York, 1967), and The Wretched of the Earth, trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1967).

<sup>52</sup>Pannenberg, What is Man?, p. 136.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

has grown, and the new that continually appears on the scene.

(E) The Challenge of Pannenberg's Perspective

The promise in Pannenberg's thought for meeting the demands and requirements of human existence has been presented. Let us now conclude our study with some suggestion of the challenge of his perspective.

The church has always been puzzled as to its role and association with the political, social realities of the world. Some theologians have argued for separate spheres of operation: the church in one sphere and the world of politics in another. In Brunner, we saw the presence of this sort of perspective. The unfortunate result it produces is the bifurcation of existence into spiritual and material categories. For example, when Bishop Montifiore spoke out in criticism of the Concorde aircraft in Britain, he was told by the political sector that such matters were not his concern.<sup>54</sup> He should stay within his area of work. This is an exemplification of the division to which I have just referred.

This arrangement of life into separate systems of 'meaning' empties both, at the same time, of challenge. The political sector can escape into an area in which practicality and expediency alone are the basis of value judging. The ultimate dimension, for which the church stands, by having no association with it, renders the political situation void of moral intention. The church, on the other hand, can escape into an area in which its statements have no rational, practical application. Its credibility is thus at stake.

---

<sup>54</sup>See The Times (Times Newspapers Ltd., London, Tuesday, January 10, 1976, No. 59,598), p. 1.

Pannenberg's reasoning that ultimate meaning is to be seen, in a sense, in the event is a direct assault on the exclusiveness of both the church and politics. In Pannenberg, 'meaning' is made the same for both spheres. This means they are essentially related. This is not to say there is no differentiation to be made between them. The church, for example, must not identify itself, in any complete sense, with a political cause. That is, it must never proclaim any situation Christian in an absolute sense. Its role would be more that of creating and expressing a perspective on reality in which political causes and effort may take place. It must always make politics aware, by this perspective, of its involvement with the Good and its distance from it at the same time. Politics, on the other hand, can no longer operate with sheer expediency in mind. It must see itself as the creator and producer of 'meaning' in the world. Politics, that is, can never escape the moral, the imperative of the Good (the pull of the Future). 'Meaning' depends on its responsible expression.

The future of the Kingdom releases a dynamic in the present that again and again kindles the vision of man and gives meaning to his fervent quest for the political forms of justice and love. The new forms that are achieved will, in contrast with the ultimacy of God's Kingdom, turn out to be provisional and preliminary. They will in turn be called upon to give way to succeeding new forms. Superficial minds might think that the political quest is therefore futile. They fail to recognize that the satisfaction is not in the perfection of that with which we begin but in the glory of that toward which we tend. We possess no perfect program, but are possessed by an inspiration that will not be realized perfectly by us. It is realized provisionally in the ever-renewed emergence of our striving in devotion to history's destiny.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup>Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, pp. 80-81.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER TWO

Urgeschichte and Heilsgeschichte in Brunner's Thought

In chapter two we argued that Brunner's concept of God implied a timelessness. The depreciation of historical reality was noted as a consequence of this theological position. It may be countered that a significant change took place in Brunner's later writings, which we have not appreciated. This change, it may be argued, refutes the interpretation we have made of him thus far. It can be pointed out that Brunner, himself, referred to a departure from his earlier expressions of time and history.<sup>1</sup> In the light of this, some attempt should be made to deal with this matter if the argument of our thesis is to remain fair to the theologian throughout.

In the beginning of his writings, Brunner used the term Urgeschichte.<sup>2</sup> Although he was sceptical of the use which Barth initially made of the term,<sup>3</sup> he soon found that with some caution<sup>4</sup> the term was well suited to his purposes. The notion of 'primal history' (Urgeschichte) appears to preserve history essential to the Christian faith. The word, at the same time, indicates a removal from ordinary history and its positivistic character.

In a sense, all this is true. However, if history's relationship with faith is preserved by such a term, its essential quality

---

<sup>1</sup>See Brunner's reply to Georges Florovsky in The Theology of Emil Brunner, ed. Charles Kegley, p. 344.

<sup>2</sup>This term was first used by Franz Overbeck in Christentum und Kultur (Basel, 1919), p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Emil Brunner, Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube (Verlog von J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1923), p. 107, note 1.

<sup>4</sup>In his Philosophy of Religion, Brunner warns the reader of the ambiguity that may rest with the term (p. 123).

is not maintained. By separating God's history essentially from ordinary (profane) history, the value of time is destroyed. Under the term *Urgeschichte*, Brunner included such essentials of our faith as creation, fall and salvation. The reality of these events was put beyond the empirical, phenomenal reality of which we are a part.<sup>5</sup> These events are pictured more as archetypes which involve little of man's participation. As with Platonic thought, little of historical character remains. The dimension of the future is lost. Life takes on the pattern of conformity with the past, complicated by the fact that this particular past has no real location in 'profane' historical existence. The timelessness for which we argued is evident in Brunner at this point.

In his later writings, however, Brunner did use a different expression. As with Barth, he identified himself more with the school of *Heilsgeschichte* (Salvation History).<sup>6</sup> By this means, it is thought, he attempted to modify his position and give more attention to historical reality in discussions of the faith. We ask: Is this a significant term for this purpose? Does it mark a significant departure, for Brunner, from his earlier stance?

*Heilsgeschichte*, according to Otto Piper<sup>7</sup> was first used in

---

<sup>5</sup>See the statements made by Brunner in *Man in Revolt*, pp. 142ff. and pp. 399ff. He writes, "The Creation and the Fall both lie behind the historical visible actuality, as their pre-suppositions which are always present, and are already being expressed in the historical sphere." (p. 142).

<sup>6</sup>See Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, *Dogmatics Vol. II*, Chapter 7 and also *Revelation and Reason*, pp. 193ff. and Chapter 26.

<sup>7</sup>See an article on the subject of *Heilsgeschichte* by Otto A. Piper in *A Handbook of Christian Theology*, eds. Marvin Halverson and Arthur Cohen (Collins, London, 1960), pp. 160-163.

in Swabian pietistic circles toward the middle of the eighteenth century. Its continued use was assured by Johann Christian Konrad von Hoffmann (1810-1877), a representative of what came to be known as the Erlangen School. In recent time, however, it has come to be associated chiefly with the German theologian, Oscar Cullmann. The term for both Cullmann and Brunner was one which enabled them to picture and emphasise the forward looking, futuristic aspect of the Kingdom of God.

We can appreciate this emphasis. It is questionable, however, whether the term serves to rid Brunner of the dualism and timelessness for which we have criticised him in this thesis. It is doubtful whether Cullmann himself, in spite of the linear interpretation he lent to the term, escaped the dualism that has plagued protestant theology with its notion of supra-history.

That the expression in Brunner's writings is different with this term, cannot be denied. There is clearly an attempt to remove himself from the strict separation of God and history, or God and time, which plagued his earlier thought. In his earlier writings, for example, he could write:

Christian faith knows nothing of any history of the world in the sense of a unity. Its unity is not historical, but that which belongs at once to "Urgeschichte" or primordial history, and "Endgeschichte" or the consummation of history, i.e. history not as moved by forces within itself, but within its relation to a creative and redeeming God. This is a relation that cannot be fitted into the frame of profane history. It is not the course of history as such that is of interest, not the fact that it is controlled by an immanent system of law, whether causal or teleological. Rather what is of interest is the lightning-flash in history of what lies behind history, the effective self-assertion of a factor that



by its very nature does away with history,  
viz. the reality of divine revelation.<sup>8</sup>

In 1941 Brunner could write with a different expression:

Because the beginning, the middle, and the end are not the same revelation is history....The revelation to which the Holy Scriptures bear witness is a "history" of the dealings of God with His creatures...The religion of the Bible differs from the teaching of all other religions in the fact that it is a teaching based on a history. It is therefore not essentially doctrine but record. It is not as though this historicity of revelation were a nonessential, accidental element, something merely of interest to the historical spectator.... Faith, indeed, is concerned with the fact that we have to do with the God of history, with the God who not merely "is" and "exists" but who acts, who marches along a road with the human race.<sup>9</sup>

In the first quotation, it is not difficult to see the depreciation of historical reality that characterized his earlier writings. In the second, however, there seems to be a change and one is given the impression that God has significantly penetrated history. This impression is made even stronger by Brunner when he writes about the difference of the Religion of Zoraster from Christianity.

The difference from the Hebrew-Christian view of whole is that the historical event is not united with this eschatological one, that Ormuzd does not make himself known, like Yahweh, through his prophets, and that present history is not the history of a covenant which continues down the generations, and therefore that not even the world of nations is regarded as the object of the divine saving action. Hence the religion of Zoraster, in spite of its eschatology, has remained mythical.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 126.

<sup>9</sup>Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 193.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 405.

What are we to make of the different expressions of historical reality in the last two Brunnerian references? Obviously there is something here that should be noted. However, one must be cautious in attributing a significant departure to it. As with other theologians of his time, Brunner's early writings were highly polemical in tone. He was writing in a situation of world crises. His theology, as with some of his contemporaries, reflected the Christian battle against the Godlessness of the world. As time moved away from this critical point, Brunner's writings became less polemical. It is possible to argue that the difference in expression, noted above, is due more to this shift in time, rather than a shift in theological method and position. This can be substantiated by looking at his third volume of Dogmatics, particularly the chapter on Sanctification. Such a chapter should be encouraging for any discussion of man's participation in salvation. Indeed this is the first time that Brunner devotes any attention to the topic as such. Our anticipation is dampened, however, with the concluding words of Brunner on the subject: "...all our teaching on sanctification stands under the sign of eschatological reserve. Incompleteness is an essential mark of all earthly existence. What is complete is that which transcends history, that which we never realize in time, which we can only hope for and in faith hope for with assurance."<sup>11</sup> Brunner's depreciation of human action, in the same chapter, derives from such conviction.

Let us also remember that for Brunner God is Absolute 'Subject'.

---

<sup>11</sup> Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, Dogmatics Vol. III, p. 304.

He is beyond the subject-object tension of life; this classification is no longer relevant when speaking of God. God as Absolute 'Subject' is a term Brunner uses in his Dogmatics<sup>12</sup> and thus is a witness to the continued separation of God and history, in his writing. To speak of God as only 'Subject' and not 'Object' is to disassociate God essentially with time. At the same time, it is not possible to proclaim the strict subjectivity of God (the timelessness of God), and still talk of God's creative purpose in history. Nelson Pike has made this plain to us in the following:

In ordinary cases where the preservation relation is clearly identifiable, a temporal relation between that which is preserved and that which does the preserving appears to be an essential part of the relation. I can see no way of eliminating the temporal elements in such cases without eliminating anything that could be counted as a preservation relation.<sup>13</sup>

It would appear that no significant change has been made in Brunner's writings. It could be suggested that he has been caught up in a theological bind. He senses that a change is needed in order for history to be taken more seriously, and yet he fails to provide the conceptual tools to accomplish this change. Mere mention of the fact that there is some association or correlation of the world and the gospel is not enough. It does not satisfy the needs and demands for verification or rational presentation. Questions that cry out for clarification are how and why and to what degree is there a correlation? Heilsgeschichte is not a concept that offers Brunner the possibility of advancing far beyond his earlier position. Perhaps this is the reason for the

---

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, Dogmatics Vol. I, p. 140. Brunner writes, "God is only Subject, He is not also Object;.." (p. 140).

<sup>13</sup>Pike, God and Timelessness, p. 117.

inconsistency that is found frequently in his thought. It could be argued that Brunner's failure to depart from his former position is because Heilsgeschichte as a concept does not carry within it the seed for something essentially new. This is the thinking of Carl Braaten who remarks that Heilsgeschichte theology has failed ever since its conception to show how revelation and history are connected. "It foundered on a dualism:", he writes, "revelation being assigned to the sphere of faith, and history to the methods of historical research."<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Carl Braaten, History and Hermeneutics (New Directions in Theology Today, Vol. II (Lutterworth Press, London, 1968)), p. 27.

## SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barber, Ian, Issues in Science and Religion (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1966).
- Bentham, J., An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (W. Pickering, Lincoln's - Inn Fields, London, 1823).
- Benz, Ernst, Evolution and Christian Hope (Doubleday & Co., Inc., New York, 1968).
- Berger, P. L., The Social Construction of Reality (Allen Lane, the Penguin Press, London, 1971).
- Bettinson, Henry (ed.), Documents of the Christian Church (Oxford University Press, London, 1963).
- Borsch, Frederick H., The Son of Man in Myth and History (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1967).
- Bottomore, T. B. (ed.), Karl Marx, Early Writings, trans. T. B. Bottomore (London, 1963).
- Bowker, J., The Sense of God (Claredon Press, London, 1973).
- Braaten, Carl, History and Hermeneutics - New Directions in Theology Today, Vol. II (Lutterworth Press, London, 1968).
- Brunner, Emil, The Christian Doctrine of God Dogmatics Vol. I, trans. Olive Wyon (Lutterworth Press, London, 1949).
- The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption Dogmatics Vol. II, trans. Olive Wyon (Lutterworth Press, London, 1952).
- The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation Dogmatics Vol. III, trans. David Cairns (Lutterworth Press, London, 1962).
- The Divine Imperative, trans. Olive Wyon (Lutterworth Press, London, 1937).
- Christianity and Civilization Vol. I (Nisbet & Co., Ltd., London, 1947).
- Justice and the Social Order, trans. Mary Huttinger (Lutterworth Press, London, 1945).
- Man in Revolt, trans. Olive Wyon (Lutterworth Press, London, 1939).
- Eternal Hope, trans. Harold Knight (Lutterworth Press, London, 1954).
- The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon (Lutterworth Press, London, 1947).
- Truth as Encounter, trans. Amandus W. Loos (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1964).
- Natural Theology, trans. Peter Fraenkel (The Centenary Press, London, 1946).

Brunner, Emil, Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube (Verlog von J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1923).

Glaube und Ethik (vortrag, gehalten in der Kunstgesellschaft, Thun, Krebsler & Co., 1945).

God and Man, trans. David Cairns (SCM Press, London, 1936).

The Philosophy of Religion, trans. A. J. D. Farrer and B. L. Wolf (Ivor Nicholson and Watson Ltd., London, 1937).

Revelation and Reason, trans. Olive Wyon (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1947).

Buber, Martin, I and Thou, trans. R. G. Smith (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1937).

Bultmann, Rudolph, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1971).

Camus, Albert, The Rebel (Vintage Books, New York, 1956).

Cohen, L. Jonathan, The Diversity of Meaning (Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1962).

Collingwood, R. G., The Idea of History (Oxford University Press, London, 1946).

Debray, Régis, Revolution in the Revolution, trans. Bobbye Ortiz (M. R. Press, New York, 1967).

Dodd, C. H., The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1936).

Fanon, Frantz, The Wretched of the Earth, trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1967).

Flew, Antony (ed.), Essays in Conceptual Analysis (MacMillan, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1966).

Fromm, Eric, Man For Himself (Fawcett Publications, Inc., Greenwich, Conn., 1947).

The Revolution of Hope (Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1968).

Fuller, Reginald, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1956).

The Foundations of New Testament Christology (Lutterworth Press, London, 1965).

Galloway, Allan D., Wolfhart Pannenberg (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1973).

The Cosmic Christ (Nisbet & Co., Ltd., London, 1951).

- Gardiner, Patrick (ed.), The Philosophy of History (Oxford University Press, London, 1974).
- Gilkey, Langdon, The Renewal of God-Language (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., New York, 1969).
- Gill, Jerry (ed.), Philosophy Today No. 2 (The MacMillan Company, London, 1969).
- Greene, Marjorie (ed.), Knowing and Being (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1969).
- Grillmeier, Aloys, Christ in Christian Tradition, trans. John Bowden (A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., London, 1965).
- Hatt, Harold, Cybernetics and the Image of Man (Abingdon Press, New York, 1968).
- Hefner, Philip, Faith and the Vitalities of History (Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, 1966).
- Hume, David, Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Second Edition (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1902).
- Jewett, Paul, Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation (James Clarke & Co., Ltd., London, 1954).
- Kegley, Charles, (ed.), The Theology of Emil Brunner (The Macmillan Company, London, 1962).
- Klemke, E. D., The Epistemology of G. E. Moore (N. W. University Press, Evanston, 1969).
- Lewis, H. D., Talk of God (MacMillan and Co., Ltd., London, 1969).
- The Self and Immortality (The Macmillan Press, Ltd., London, 1973).
- Marty, Martin and Peerman Dean (eds.), New Theology No 4 (The Macmillan Co., New York, 1967).
- New Theology No. 2 (The Macmillan Co., New York, 1965).
- New Theology No. 5 (The Macmillan Co., New York, 1968).
- New Theology No. 10 (The Macmillan Co., New York, 1973).
- McIntyre, John, The Shape of Christology (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1966).
- Mead, George, Mind, Self and Society (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1934).
- Moltmann, Jürgen, Hope and Planning, trans. Margaret Clarkson (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1971).

Moltmann, Jürgen, Man, trans. John Sturdy (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1974).

The Crucified God, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1973).

Moore, G. E., Principia Ethica (Cambridge University Press, London, 1903).

Mueller, David, An Introduction to the Theology of Albrecht Ritschl (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1969).

Norris, Russell, God, Marx and the Future (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1974).

Olive, Don, Wolfhart Pannenberg (Wordsbook Pub. Waco, Texas, 1973).

Overbeck, Franz, Christentum und Kulture (Basel, 1919).

Pannenberg, Wolfhart, Basic Questions in Theology Vol. I, trans. George H. Kehm (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1970).

Basic Questions in Theology Vol. II, trans. George H. Kehm (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1971).

The Idea of God and Human Freedom, trans. R. A. Wilson (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1973).

What is Man?, trans. Duane A. Priebe (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1970).

Theology and the Kingdom of God (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1969).

The Apostles' Creed, trans. Margaret Kohl (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1972).

Jesus God and Man, trans. Lewis L. Wilkens and Duane A. Priebe (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1968).

Spirit, Faith and Church, ed. W. Pannenberg (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1970).

Revelation as History, ed. W. Pannenberg and trans. D. Granskou and E. Quinn (Sheed and Ward, London, 1969).

Parkinson, G. H. R., The Theory of Meaning (Oxford University Press, London, 1974).

Pfuetze, Paul, Self, Society, Existence (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1961).

Pike, Nelson, God and Timelessness (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1970).



- Polanyi, Michael, Personal Knowledge (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1958).
- Rad, Gerhard Von, Old Testament Theology, Vol. I, trans. D. M. Stalker (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1962).
- Robinson, James (ed.), Theology as History (Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1967).
- Robinson, N. H. G., The Groundwork of Christian Ethics (Collins, St. James Place, London, 1971).
- Faith and Duty (Victor Gollancz, Ltd., London, 1950).
- Ross, W. D., The Right and the Good (Oxford University Press, London, 1955).
- Rowley, H. H., The Relevance of Apocalyptic (Lutterworth Press, London, 1944).
- Russell, D. S., The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1964).
- Ryle, Gilbert, The Concept of Mind (Hutchinson and Co., London, 1949).
- Sabine, George, A History of Political Theory (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1937).
- Sartre, Jean Paul, L'être et le néant (Librairie Gallimand, Paris, 1943).
- Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, The Gulag Archipelago, trans. Thomas Whitney (Collins & Harvill Press, London, 1974).
- Theunissen, Michael, Der Andere (Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin, 1965).
- Til, Cornelius Van, The New Modernism (James Clarke & Co., Ltd., London, 1946).
- Tillich, Paul, The Protestant Era (Nisbet & Co., Ltd., London, 1951).
- Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1967).
- A History of Christian Thought (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1968).
- Tödt, H. E., The Son of Man in Synoptic Tradition (SCM Press, Ltd., London, 1965).
- Tupper, E. Frank, Wolfhart Pannenberg (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1973).
- Walsh, W. H., Hegelian Ethics (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1969).

- Warnock, G. J., Contemporary Moral Philosophy (MacMillan, St. Martin's Press, London, 1967).
- Warnock, Mary, Ethics Since 1900 (Oxford University Press, London, 1960).
- Whitehead, Alfred, Adventures in Ideas (University Press, Cambridge, 1933).
- Wilder, A., Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1950).

#### Articles and Periodicals

- Barrett, F. D. (ed.), 'Use Your Right Brain' (Insights and Innovations for the Management of Change, Vol. 5, No. 2, March, 1975).
- Burrington, D. E., 'The Command and the Orders in Brunner's Ethic' (Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 20, 1967).
- Galloway, Allan D., 'Fact and Value in Theological Ethics' (Religious Studies, Vol. 5, No. 2, Dec. 1969).
- Gilkey, Langdon, 'Pannenberg's Basic Questions in Theology: a Review Article' (Perspective, Vol. XIV, Spring '73).
- Jewett, Paul, 'Ebnerian Personalism and Its Influence upon Brunner's Theology' (Westminster Theological Journal, Vol. XIV, No. 2, May 1952).
- Kegley, Charles, 'Martin Buber's Ethics and the Problem of Norms' (Religious Studies, Vol. 5, No. 2, Dec. 1969).
- Murdock, W. R., 'History and Revelation in Jewish Apocalyptic' (Interpretation, Vol. XXI, 1967).
- Nielsen, Kai, 'The Intelligibility of God-Talk' (Religious Studies Vol. 6, No. 1, March 1970).
- Oppenheimer, Helen, 'Christian Flourishing' (Religious Studies Vol. 5, No. 2, Dec. 1969).
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart, 'The Nature of a Theological Statement' (Zygon - Journal of Religion and Science, Vol. 7, No. 1, March, 1972).
- 'A Theological Conversation with Wolfhart Pannenberg' (Dialog, Vol. II, Autumn, 1972).
- Peters, Ted, 'Truth in History: Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Pannenberg's Apologetic Method' (The Journal of Religion, Jan. 1975, Vol. 55, No. 1).

Piper, Otto, 'Heilsgeschichte' in A Handbook of Christian Theology, eds. Marvin Halverson and Arthur Cohen (Collins, London, 1960).

Searle, J. R., 'How to Derive 'Ought' From 'Is'' (Philosophical Review, Vol. 73, 1964).

Steiger, Lothar, 'Revelation - History and Theological Reason: A Critique of the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg' (Journal for Theology and the Church, Vol. 4, 1967).

Troeltsch, Ernst, 'Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie' (Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. II, Tübingen, 1922).

History and Theory, ed. G. H. Nadel (Mouton and Co., S. Gravenage, 1961, '62, '63, '64).

The Times (Times Newspapers Ltd., London, Tuesday, January 10, 1976, No. 59, 598).