

PANNENBERG'S HISTORICIZING EXEGESIS

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The most arresting worldwide influence in recent exegesis is doubtless the Heidelberg 'circle' led by the Christologist Wolfhart Pannenberg. Their efforts are geared to vindicate for 'genuine history' a more pivotal place in the epistemology of faith. The movement, as already described in this journal, has attracted articulate collaborators and many devoted adherents, as well as some firm opposition.¹ Hence it can hardly fail to contain much that is salutary for the disciplines it touches. Here are set forth the more explosive issues which seem to detach themselves in careful and sympathetic perusal.

The issues have already been well put by a single book in English with Pannenberg's own collaboration and rejoinder to American reactions, together with densely informative briefing by James M. Robinson.² However, even with this excellent guidance there is still further light to be found in some critical essays which appeared before or since. Specifically, no other theologian seems to have gone as thoroughly as Alan Richardson into the question of what history really means to its professional practitioners.³ Finally it is obvious that a Catholic's view of an intensely Protestant controversy will involve stimuli for ecumenical partisans of both sides.

¹ G. G. O'Collins, 'Revelation as History', HJ VII (1966), pp. 394-406, which rightly notices A. Richardson's oversight (see n.3 below). O'Collins concludes: 'In the end [Pannenberg's] attempt to account for God's self-revelation wholly as indirect self-revelation through history proves unsatisfactory'. Also in HJ, M. R. Playoust, 'Oscar Cullmann and Salvation History' (HJ XII [1971], pp. 29-43), p. 39, is relevant to our present theme (cf. below, p. 383, n.3). The most complete Catholic critique is by I. Bertin, *Histoire, révélation et foi: dialogue avec W. Pannenberg* (Brussels, 1969).

² James M. Robinson (also ed.), *Theology as History* (New York, 1967), pp. 1-99.

³ Alan Richardson, *History Sacred and Profane* (London, 1967), p. 195, which strangely omits any discussion of Pannenberg; John J. Navone, *History and Faith in the Thought of Alan Richardson* (London, 1966). For bibliography see my own 'Bibliography of the Relation between Theology and History', *History and Theory* 10 (1971) and also its *Beihefte* 1 (1960), 3 (1962), 7 (1967) and 10 (1971) on 'Philosophy of History' by J. C. Rule, M. Nowicki and L. Wurgraft.

I. THE GROUND OF FAITH IS NOT 'METAHISTORY' BUT HISTORY

Pannenberg's most basic contention is the need for (Judaeo-)Christian faith to be grounded on history itself, as against any such 'faith-transformation of the facts of history' as appears in both Bultmann and Barth. Here is the earliest statement of Pannenberg's position to be made available in English:

History is the most comprehensive horizon of Christian theology. All theological questions and answers are meaningful only in the framework of the history which God has with humanity, and through humanity with his whole creation—the history moving toward a future still hidden from the world but already revealed in Jesus Christ. This presupposition of Christian theology must be defended today within theology itself on two sides; on the one side, against Bultmann and Gogarten's existential theology which dissolves history into the historic[al]ity of existence; on the other side, against the thesis, developed by Martin Kähler in the tradition of redemptive history, that the real content of faith is suprahistorical [Barth's Incarnation as *Urgeschichte*] . . . Collingwood thinks Israel had no history and the Greeks discovered it, because he means by history 'the tracking down of history'.¹

The above statement comes flanked by four important amplifications: (a) The new Heidelberg vindication of the place of history in faith is dependent upon an article of Pannenberg's teacher Gerhard von Rad on 'The Theological Writing of History' and its incorporation in his *Old Testament Theology*.² (b) The biblical history 'moving toward a future still hidden but already revealed' is essentially *apocalyptic*.³ (c) Whatever 'history' Israel did not have and the Greeks discovered, is not the *reality* of history but the procedures by which this is discerned; 'history' thus, means *experience* rather than historiography. (d) Bultmann and Fuchs rightly make Christ the 'end-event', but do not rightly locate him in the framework of universal history.

Among historians, 'universal history' is an ambivalent or suspect term. From some of Pannenberg's utterances, which have a quality simultaneously veiled and defiant, he will be seen to mean here essentially

¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Redemptive Event and History', originally 'Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte' (*Kerygma und Dogma* 5 [1959], pp. 218–37, 259–88), tr. in part in C. Westermann (ed.), *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics* (Richmond, 1963), pp. 314–55, and now in full in Pannenberg's *Basic Questions in Theology* (London, 1970), pp. 15–80 (citation from page 15, 21).

² See below, p. 386, n.1.

³ See below, p. 390, section V.

Hegel's view that the *only* history is the totality of history anticipated in Christ.¹

The common ground which at an early stage existed between Barth and Bultmann, but was obscured by their later and more explicit disagreements, is called 'Dialectic Theology'. It has been briefly surveyed by both Pannenberg and Robinson elsewhere.² It is made the subject of a whole, lucidly informative, book by James D. Smart.³ The dialogue of Pannenberg with his critics shows everywhere suitable respect for, but distance from the Barthian position.⁴ The relevance of Bultmann is more constant and obvious, especially in the debate about Cullmann's 'salvation-history'.⁵ In fact, for all the moderns who stand in various ways under the influence of Heidegger, 'historicality' is a synonym for 'existentiality'.⁶ In pairing Bultmann with Gogarten above, Pannenberg alludes to a major recent force creating a background congenial to his own focusing of history.⁷

II. REVELATION IS THE TOTALITY OF HISTORY

The only revelation of God admitted by Pannenberg is that single revelation which is identical with the totality of history.

The more detailed programme of the Pannenberg Circle meanwhile appeared in German in 1961 and in English in 1968. Here there are important essays by Ulrich Wilckens on apocalyptic and Rolf Rendtorff on Old

¹ W. Pannenberg, 'Hermeneutic and Universal History', *Journal for Theology and the Church* 4 (1967), pp. 122-150 [= *ZThK* 60 (1963), pp. 90-121]; refuted by Günter Klein, *Theologie des Wortes Gottes und die Hypothese der Universalgeschichte* (Munich, 1964); E. Flesseman-van Leer, 'De theologie van W. Pannenberg', *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 18 (1964), pp. 391-432; Hans-Georg Geyer, 'Geschichte als theologisches Problem', *Evangelische Theologie* 22 (1962), pp. 92-104.

² W. Pannenberg, 'Dialektische Theologie', *RGG*³ (1958) 2, 168-174; James M. Robinson, 'For Theology and the Church', presentation of the new *Journal for Theology and the Church* 1 (1965), pp. 1-19.

³ James D. Smart, *The Divided Mind of Modern Theology: Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann 1908-1933* (Philadelphia, 1967); source materials in Jürgen Moltmann, *Anfänge der dialektischen Theologie* (Munich, 1962).

⁴ W. Pannenberg, 'Zur Deutung des Analogiedenkens bei Karl Barth', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 78 (1953), pp. 17-24; 'Analogie und Doxologie' in W. Joest (ed.), *Dogma und Denkstrukturen* (Festschrift E. Schlink, Göttingen, 1963), pp. 96-115; *Analogie und Offenbarung* (Heidelberg dissertation, 1955).

⁵ See below, p. 384, n.2.

⁶ See below, p. 385, n.4, and James M. Robinson, 'The Historicality of Biblical Language', in B. Anderson (ed.), *The Old Testament and Christian Faith* (New York, 1964), pp. 124-158; also 'Kerygma and History in the New Testament' in J. Hyatt (ed.), *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* (Nashville, 1965), pp. 114-50.

⁷ F. Gogarten, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit* (Stuttgart, 1958²); L. Shiner, *The Secularization of History: an Introduction to the Theology of F. Gogarten* (Nashville, 1966).

Testament hermeneutic.¹ But the above *summarize* seven uncompromisingly formulated 'Theses' in Pannenberg's own position-paper, taking into account several other key assertions not in thesis form in his preface.² We venture to present the further condensation of all these materials into six theses by Franz Hesse, a lucidly clear though frankly hostile witness:³

- (1) Revelation means strictly God's own *self*-revelation, and this can only be *one*.
- (2) God does not reveal himself directly, either through his Name or other Word, or through Law or Gospel.
- (3) God reveals himself only indirectly in historical events as a mirror of himself.
- (4) Only the *totality* and therefore the *end* of history thus reveals God.
- (5) But the end of history has had an 'advance-enactment' in Jesus.
- (6) God's indirect self-revelation can be known by whoever wants to know it.

Regarding the first enunciation, Hesse tardily but with apparent justice protests that no proof is given by Pannenberg as to why '*self*-revelation' must automatically be identified with '*total* revelation'.⁴ All he there claims is that the name of revelation should not be given to each of the Old Testament theophanies as a separate entity; these should rather be distinguished by a neutral word like 'manifestations'.

Our reaction is this: We see no reason why God cannot truly reveal himself in varying degrees at various times. Indeed, whatever is revealed to man and grasped by him can at best be only partial, whether in one stage or in many. Nor is anything further proved by the intriguing observation of Pannenberg that neither Old nor New Testament ever speaks of God's self-revealing, or uses 'reveal' with God as object; this was an innovation of Ignatius of Antioch.⁵

More stimulating is Pannenberg's claim that any particular event of history in which we might be tempted to seek God's self-revelation instead of in its totality is an idol.⁶ Relocating this insight in the perspective of 'secularization or "death" of (language about) God',⁷ we might well

¹ See below, p. 392, n.1 and p. 381, nn.1 and 2.

² W. Pannenberg (also ed.), 'Introduction' and 'Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation' in *Revelation as History* (New York, 1968), pp. 1-21, 123-58 (without the *Nachwort* in the German, *Offenbarung als Geschichte* [Göttingen, 1968³], pp. 132-48).

³ F. Hesse, 'Wolfhart Pannenberg und das Alte Testament', *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie* 7 (1965), pp. 174-99.

⁴ Hesse, p. 185, commenting on Pannenberg, *Revelation as History*, p. 127.

⁵ Pannenberg, *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶ *Revelation as History*, p. 16.

⁷ See below, p. 400.

find ourselves forced to admit that any utterance claiming to embody God's revelation of himself is so bound up with transitory culture-patterns that it must be discarded as an idol by believers from a later culture. This process must necessarily continue until the end and totality of history. This is true and worthy of being urgently proclaimed. But it does not automatically follow that God does not truly reveal himself in a culture-pattern suited to a particular earlier age; or that the revelation suited to the end-time is *per se* any more definitive than the earlier ones.

The interpretation of Old Testament theophanies is set forth at length in numerous writings of the Pannenberg circle's leading exegete, Rolf Rendtorff.¹ He maintains that the *event* was paramount, though requiring a *word* to give it meaning.² This is varyingly re-expressed in continuing reaction to Zimmerli's insistence that God's 'self-presentation' in *word* is paramount and gives the event its meaning.³ The controversy has deservedly aroused interest on the part of exegetes. But for our present purpose, no light is shed on the question of whether the Old Testament content on which our faith is based is a 'metahistory rather than just history'.

Pannenberg asserts that God's once-for-all self-revelation is 'universal' in the sense that unlike the various theophanies it is available to anyone anywhere who wants to learn.⁴ This 'universal' was taken by Hesse to include also a *temporal* totality of history on the strength of Pannenberg's words:

Extension of the divinity-revealing history to the totality of all occurrence everywhere, corresponds to the universality of Israel's God, who wills to be God not only of Israel but of all men . . . The very fact that God's self-revelation is at the end of history requires that the biblical God himself have a sort of history.⁵

¹ R. Rendtorff, 'The Concept of Revelation in Ancient Israel', in Pannenberg, *Revelation as History*, pp. 21-35; '"Offenbarung" im Alten Testament', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 85 (1960), pp. 833-38; 'Hermeneutik des Alten Testaments als Frage nach der Geschichte', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* (hereafter ZThK) 57 (1960), pp. 27-40.

² R. Rendtorff, 'Geschichte und Wort im Alten Testament', *Evangelische Theologie* 22 (1962), pp. 621-49; on p. 622 he concedes to Zimmerli that 'history is not to be separated from the word'.

³ W. Zimmerli, *Gottes Offenbarung* (Munich, 1961), mostly reprints of essays relevant to his debate with Rendtorff, but not including one considered 'too polemical' for reprinting: '"Offenbarung" im Alten Testament', *Evangelische Theologie* 22 (1962), pp. 15-21. See the reactions by A. Gamper, 'Offenbarung als Geschichte', ZKT 86 (1964), pp. 184-8 and P. Schoonenberg, 'Ereignis und Geschehen', ZKT 90 (1968), pp. 1-21.

⁴ *Revelation as History*, p. 136.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

'The eternal God has a history in time'. Hesse disposes of this assertion: 'In his manifestations, yes'.¹ This is equivalent to the pat scholastic distinction 'not entitatively but terminatively', and frankly it won't do. The static negative attribute of immobility may describe a feature of God, but in a deficient and anthropomorphic way (like all our statements) requiring equally the assertion of contrary attributes. The richness of divine being is *in part* reflected by the positive implications of immobility, but not enough to exclude recourse to attributes like vitality, dynamism, inner change, passion (Heschel), process (Whitehead), and self-fulfilment (Teilhard). However, admitting the need of recognizing in God greater dynamism and vitality, to call this a 'history' nevertheless seems ambiguous and misleading, as is the case with a recent book which finds Aquinas's real interest to be in 'history', i.e. that of the Trinity and its plan for men.²

Even in this ecumenical age, Hesse feels that of all Pannenberg's contentions, the one most offensive to orthodoxy is that anyone who wants to can know God. This seems to deny the blind leap of faith and the special divine call required by both Catholics and Calvinists, and especially by Barth. Pannenberg says that though knowledge of God is not a mere human operation, it can nevertheless be found in revelation-as-history without bringing faith into play.³ He here uses faith in a sense that should be called rather hope or expectation. But it seems quibbling to deny that in Pannenberg, just as in scholastic orthodoxy, the 'gift/leap' character of faith is compatible with 'God's giving his grace to anyone who does what he can'. Also perhaps a quibble is Hesse's question: 'If for Pannenberg no single event reveals God, then how can Christ?'⁴ Presumably Christ does this only insofar as he anticipates and *is* the totality of history.

Hesse finally asks us to consider whether 'the revealed God is the presupposition, not the goal, of divine dealings in history'.⁵ This comfortably scholastic evasion will be seen to run counter to one of the most stimulating assertions of Moltmann's influential *Theology of Hope*. Our definition and 'knowledge' of God is the moving horizon and *goal* of our experience of him, rather than an operative certificate laid down satisfactorily in advance.

Especially when the Pannenberg programme admits that 'prophecy sees

¹ Hesse (see above, p. 380, n.3), p. 188.

² M. Seckler, *Das Heil in der Geschichte: geschichtstheologisches Denken bei Thomas von Aquin* (Munich, 1964), pp. 17, 26, 191.

³ *Revelation as History*, p. 100.

⁴ Hesse, p. 180.

⁵ Hesse, p. 193; see below, p. 394, line 8.

definitive revelation as future',¹ it seems to admit that there is a preliminary but real revelation. It has also been noted that his stress on the here-and-now existential challenge of Deuteronomy (4:37; 7:7) fits his line of reasoning less well than the Yahwist's view of the Davidic kingdom as the *end* of a lengthy history of God with his people.² This question will largely come down to what is meant by 'history as apocalyptic'.

III. SALVATION-HISTORY IDENTICAL WITH HISTORY?

'*Salvation-history*' means either history itself as implied by Pannenberg or it means 'brute facts of history already transfigured by faith' in the (Barthian-)Bultmannian sense; there is no *via media* on the lines asserted by Cullmann and perhaps presumed by von Rad.

'Salvation as History' renders the German title of Oscar Cullmann's recent and far-reaching synthesis of the problems faced by Pannenberg. It is perhaps already significant that the English edition is entitled rather *Salvation in History*.³ In this volume, dedicated to Cardinal Bea's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Cullmann continues the effort of three successive editions of *Christ in Time* to defend the existence of a thing rejected by Bultmann under the name of Salvation-history.⁴

Cullmann recognizes that the 'facts' of history about which theology speaks are known to us only from documents giving simultaneously interpretative explanations. Insofar as it is the facts rather than their explanation which Cullmann takes to be normative, he may well be seen as supporting Pannenberg against Bultmann.⁵ But if we assume that what Pannenberg combats is 'metahistory' (as explained above, where his own cited term is 'suprahistorical'), then it must be said that Cullmann at no time addresses himself directly to the question posed by C. R. North, 'What is the relation of Salvation-history to Metahistory?'⁶ Perhaps he wishes to convey tacitly that 'metahistory' is an *Unding* without biblical foundation.

¹ *Revelation as History*, p. 132.

² A. Alt, 'Die Deutung der Weltgeschichte im Alten Testament', *ZThK* 56 (1959), p. 137.

³ O. Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London, 1967); original German, *Heil als Geschichte: heilsgeschichtliche Existenz im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen, 1965).

⁴ *Christ and Time* (London, 1962; original German, 1946); James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London, 1961, 1969²).

⁵ W. Pannenberg, 'Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte', *Kerygma und Dogma* 5 (1959), pp. 218-237, 259-288; F. Lieb, 'Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte in der Theologie Bultmanns', *Evangelische Theologie* 15 (1955), pp. 507-522.

⁶ C. R. North, 'History' in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York, 1962, 2,607 (-612); 'Pentateuchal Criticism' in H. H. Rowley, *The Old Testament and Modern Study* (Oxford, 1951), p. 75.

Even before Pannenberg's intervention, the phrase 'Salvation-History' was an evasion if its user did not firmly indicate which side of the 'meta-history' fence he was on.¹ This was noted by Bultmann in his rebuttal called 'Salvation-history and History', where he shows that for Cullmann salvation-history is 'in its totality *prophecy*'.² It includes miracles and historical cosmic processes. From a further stage of the debate it has been concluded that what Cullmann really means by salvation-history is a *profession of faith*, i.e. strictly what we mean by a metahistory.³

But if Cullmann were to have stated plainly that by salvation-history he means 'simply' history (even as dubiously 'simple' as in Pannenberg's apocalyptic sense), this would not have indicated how he has cut the Pannenberg-Bultmann knot. Cullmann at times seems to assert that the 'unfilled gaps' in Salvation-history are enough to distinguish it from ordinary history.⁴ Though he mentions Richardson's view that *every* history is a metahistory anyway, he only in a different context hints that something of this figures in his own solution.

Ultimately Cullmann's goal is to show that Bultmann's equating of historical event with existential meaning unduly exempts the affirmation from historical verification. 'History is not the historicity of which existentialism speaks'; rather 'I must first hear what Scripture just *says* before I can be *in meiner Existenz angeredet*, challenged to an authentic self-affirmation'.⁵

'End-time' is overhastily equated by Bultmann with any 'time of decision' whatever, says Cullmann.⁶ But this objection remains inept as long as we are not informed how Cullmann's salvation-history is distinct from ordinary history, which is perceived by the unbeliever also and yet is not

¹ K. G. Steck, 'Heilsgeschichte' in *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon* (Göttingen, 1958), vol. 2, p. 87 (-89); *Die Idee der Heilsgeschichte: Hofmann-Schlatter-Cullmann* (Zürich, 1959); Heinrich Ott, *Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte in der Theologie R. Bultmanns* (Tübingen, 1955); Josef Blank, 'Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte', *Wort und Wahrheit* 23 (1968), pp. 116-127.

² Rudolf Bultmann, 'Heilsgeschichte und Geschichte', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 73 (1948), pp. 662, 659-666; = *Exegetica*, ed. E. Dinkler (Tübingen, 1967), p. 362; 'Der Begriff der Offenbarung im Neuen Testament' in his *Glauben und Verstehen* (Tübingen, 1965³), vol. 3, p. 1-34.

³ Dietrich Braun, 'Heil als Geschichte', *Evangelische Theologie* 27 (1965), pp. 65, 57-76.

⁴ *Christ and Time*², pp. 77, 184.

⁵ *Christ and Time*², p. 68.

⁶ O. Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, p. 79; R. Bultmann, 'History and Eschatology in the New Testament', NTS 1 (1954), pp. 5-16; Johannes Körner, *Eschatologie und Geschichte: eine Untersuchung des Begriffs des Eschatologischen in der Theologie Bultmanns* (Hamburg, 1957); Luigi Bini, *L'intervento di Oscar Cullmann nella discussione Bultmanniana* (Rome, 1961) 284: 'there is no real dialogue thus no usable result for Catholics'.

revelation for him.¹ The 'end-time' was shown by Jesus himself to have dawned already in his own person. This is a tenet no less of Pannenberg than of Bultmann. C. H. Dodd's proof against Schweitzer that the definitive eschatological coming is not wholly awaited in a proximate or remote future includes explicitly an affirmation that it remains *also* 'not yet' as well as 'already'.² Hence Cullmann's claim that he and W. Kümmel have thereby modified the Dodd theory does not deserve the adherence which Hans Küng accords it so enthusiastically.³

'Historicality' is a neologism in English, necessarily coined to express Bultmann's 'quality of being in history', with a nuance distinct from either historicity or history; the connotation is the same as seems attached by Rahner's adherents to 'World-history'.⁴ We find it admittedly preoccupying that this historicality is ultimately no more than a synonym for existentiality; pre-modern treatises on 'existence' leave the door open to misunderstanding. When Cullmann says that his history is not Bultmann's historicality, there is a correct implication: the 'time-bound-ness' which is existing man's irreducible condition cannot be equated with *either* the 'historic' which is decisive and momentous, *or* the 'historical' which is merely verifiable by research.

But this again leaves intact the further question of whether 'Salvation-history' means the facts of history already worked into a framework of subjective conviction or does not. It does! Even for Cullmann it does. Otherwise he could not call it 'prophecy' and include within it both the beginning of time and the end of time as objectively matter of revelation pure and simple, subjectively matter of faith pure and simple.

Gerhard von Rad's 'brief historical credo' in Deut 26:5 and its development into his whole *Old Testament Theology* are among the most influential exegetical writings of our century. He was teacher of the Pannenberg group and is claimed by them as spearhead of their rediscovery of revelation as history. Whether his past writings really fall on the Pannenberg

¹ Günter Klein, 'Offenbarung als Geschichte? Marginalien zu einem theologischen Programm', *Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie* 51 (1962), pp. 55ff, against Pannenberg's distinction between history and 'revelation as the interpretation of history' in 'Römer 4 und die Idee der Heilsgeschichte', *Evangelische Theologie* 23 (1963), pp. 427-447.

² C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments, with an Appendix on Eschatology and History* (London, 1936), pp. 87; 93; Eugene E. Wolfzorn, 'Realized Eschatology: an Exposition of C. H. Dodd's Thesis', *ETL* 38 (1962), pp. 44-70.

³ O. Cullmann, *Salvation in History*, p. 36; 'Parusieverzögerung und Urchristentum', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 83 (1958), pp. 1-12; Werner-G. Kümmel, 'L'eschatologie conséquente d'Albert Schweitzer jugée par ses contemporains', *RHPR* 36 (1957), p. 58; Hans Küng, *The Church* (London, 1968), p. 59.

⁴ See above, p. 379, n.6 and Karl Rahner, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte*, re-edited in his *Schriften zur Theologie* 5 (Einsiedeln, 1964), p. 115.

rather than on the Bultmann side of the metahistory barrier has become subject of a lively debate.¹ The historical credo could not be things which never really happened, yet for von Rad the whole Old Testament is simultaneously history and interpretation: exaggeratedly so, since some of its parts are less tendentiously confessional than others.² If the 'real past event' is for von Rad ultimately irrelevant, then he cannot be claimed as a Pannenberg ally against metahistory.³

In the *Festschrift* which they offered to von Rad in token of their discipleship, the Pannenberg Circle gravitate towards a modified formula, 'History of the [origin and] transmission of traditions is a part of history itself'. By this formula, Salvation-history is to be understood dogmatically as the history of tradition, but becomes equated with 'a deeper [meta-historical?] sense of history itself'.⁴ Pannenberg in fact there admits that the difference between history and kerygma is less than claimed in the introduction to each volume of von Rad's *Theology*. 'Continuity in the content of *preaching*' (*à la* Kähler) is history of the kind Pannenberg vindicates against any metahistory. In the same *Festschrift* Rolf Rendtorff rejects the implication of Maag that there are [if not brute facts of history] 'pious lies' behind our Old Testament texts.

A recent re-edition of H. J. Kraus's *History of Criticism* notes that von Rad has remained eloquently silent in the debate as to whether his extant writings support Pannenberg or not.⁵ So far, there are perhaps grounds for Cullmann to claim that 'Salvation-history' as understood by himself and von Rad is a sort of neutral *via media* committed neither for nor against 'metahistory'.

¹ M. Honecker, 'Zum Verständnis der Geschichte in von Rads Theologie des Alten Testaments', *Evangelische Theologie* 22 (1963), pp. 143-168; F. Hesse, 'Kerygma oder geschichtliche Wahrheit? Kritische Fragen zu von Rads Theologie I', *ZThK* 57 (1960), pp. 17-26; 'Die Erforschung der Geschichte Israels als theologische Aufgabe', *Kerygma und Dogma* 4 (1958), p. 7; 'The Evaluation and Authority of Old Testament Texts' in C. Westermann, *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics* (Richmond, 1964²), pp. 285-313; also H. -W. Wolff, *ibid.*, pp. 160-99.

² J. A. Soggin, 'Geschichte, Historie und Heilsgeschichte im Alten Testament', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 89 (1964), p. 731.

³ C. Barth, 'Grundprobleme einer Theologie des Alten Testaments', *Evangelische Theologie* 23 (1963), p. 357.

⁴ Pannenberg, 'Kerygma und Geschichte', p. 139, and in the Schlink *Festschrift* (see above, p. 379, n.4), where he rejects the view of V. Maag, 'Historische oder ausserhistorische Begründung alttestamentlicher Theologie', *Schweizerische Theologische Umschau* 29 (1959), pp. 6-18; Pannenberg has further remarks on Kähler in *Theology as History*, p. 258.

⁵ H. -J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen, 1969²), p. 507; comparing F. Mildenerger, *Gottes Tat im Wort* (Gütersloh, 1964).

IV. COMMON GROUND WITH VATICAN I?

Amid notable differences, there is a significant similarity between the positions of Pannenberg and of Vatican I on the necessity of a natural certitude about God's revelation as preliminary to faith.

The Christian risks his trust, life, and future on the fact of God's having been revealed in the fate of Jesus. This presupposition must be as certain as possible to him . . . The proclamation of the Gospel cannot assert that the facts are in doubt and that the leap of faith must be made in order to achieve certainty . . . The proclamation must assert that the facts are reliable and that you can therefore place your life, faith, and future on them.

So speaks Pannenberg in his position paper.¹ First certitude, then faith!

Similarly Catholic seminary textbooks familiar to this century, of which a recent one may be taken as typical, say in terms more or less equivalent, 'In order to embrace by faith any revelation (or the religion founded upon it) certitude must be had in advance as to the fact that such a revelation has been made', i.e. that God exists, that he has given a revelation, and that *this* today is the revelation he then gave.² Need of this certitude is stated to be implicitly contained in the Vatican I Constitution *Dei Filius*,³ as would seem to be verified by the protests of Cardinal Dechamps which were rejected at the council. Further, in the light of the 'Anti-modernist Oath',⁴ it will scarcely be questioned that the whole structure of Catholic 'fundamental theology' courses in the period following Vatican I aimed to vindicate that council's teaching that faith is consequent to reasoned certitudes without being a simple conclusion from them.

A closer look at what Vatican I actually laid down in its chapters and canons on revelation and faith will show that any temporal or even *de jure* priority of the reasoned basis to faith itself is implied rather more mildly:

The Church teaches that God, the principle and end of all things, can be known with certitude from created things by the natural light of human reason . . . though he chose also to reveal himself in another and supernatural way.⁵

¹ W. Pannenberg, *Revelation as History*, p. 138; this is related to his 'Jesu Geschichte und unsere Geschichte', *Radius, Vierteljahresschrift* (1960), p. 18.

² M. Nicolau, *Sacrae Theologiae Summa I. Theologia Fundamentalis*² (Madrid, 1952²), p. 136; V. Dechamps, in J. -B. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* 50, 246; R. J. Cronin, *The Defense of the Faith of the Ordinary Catholic in the Writings of Cardinal Dechamps* (Paris dissertation, 1961); R. Aubert, *Le problème de l'Acte de Foi* (Louvain, 1945), p. 144.

³ Ch. 3, *De Fide*, DS 3009.

⁴ DS 3538.

⁵ Summary of DS 3004 (ch. 2, *De Revelatione*).

If anyone shall say that the one true God, our Creator and Lord, cannot be known with certitude by the natural light of human reason through the things which are made, *anathema sit*.¹

In order that the obedience of our faith should be consistent with reason, God wished to 'provide' external proofs of his revelation, divine facts clearly demonstrating his omnipotence and knowledge, thus signs generating complete certitude in a manner suited to all human intelligences.²

If anyone shall say that divine revelation cannot be rendered worthy of belief by means of external signs, and so men must be moved to faith solely by each one's internal experience or private inspiration, or that miracles can never be known with certitude as a real proof of the divine origin of the Christian religion, *anathema sit*.³

The most obvious reaction to a careful re-reading of these conciliar texts is that they are remote from interest in history of any kind, whether Pannenberg's or Bultmann's. In place of this there is an emphasis on 'the essence of man' and its capacities, and on 'the divine interventions' similarly grounded in the divine essence. These divine interventions are far from constituting a part of the normal existing cosmos. Nevertheless they are seen as a counterfoil or supplement to it, a 'supernatural order' related to man's essence rather than to his historicity. All this takes on a strangely unreal tone in the light of Pannenberg's just claims for history. On the other hand, in comparison with Vatican I it would appear that natural certitude about a historical event has *replaced* any 'leap of faith' in the Pannenbergian view.⁴

All this admitted, it will nevertheless appear that there is in both an emphasis on the *pre*-requirement of natural certitude to whatever constitutes the operative functioning of a Christian's faith. This emphasis is opposed not only to the extreme position of Barth (denying that reason can know *anything* about God apart from what God has revealed) and the anthropocentric antithesis in Bultmann (man can know nothing about God except what he knows about man). Pannenberg's view is opposed also to those views on the 'preambles of faith' which are more generally espoused by Catholics today. Not much expression, however, of such Catholic views is readily available in print, presumably because they are at least superficially hard to reconcile with the above statements of Vatican I or rather with what a fair unanimity of textbooks has made of them. Exceptionally, an article by Guy de Broglie maintained that the 'preambles of faith' are, according to St Thomas, not temporally prior to

¹ DS 3026.

² Summary of DS 3009.

³ DS 3033-4.

⁴ B. Vawter, 'History and the Word', CBQ 29 (1967), p. 521, dealing immediately with Vatican II

the act of faith, but rather its primary content.¹ 'The preamble' chiefly envisaged is God's existence, but what de Broglie says is of equal relevance to the fact of revelation in Christ. In a qualification published a year later, de Broglie admits that in some cases these 'preambles' may be attained with certitude prior to faith, as Vatican I demands, without thereby implying that this is the universal or even common experience.

Experience surely should count for something in appraising what Vatican I could or must have meant. Acceptance of the faith, for most Catholics and many other Christians, occurs in infancy or long before any proof for God's existence can be even memorized, much less ratified. For those who come to the faith in adult life, this is generally the result of admiration for the virtuous life or even the personal charm of some believer, a legitimate 'subjective internal criterion' in the language of the textbooks. Experience of those who instruct converts, for example before marriage, shows that often the candidate's mind was already made up to learn and accept *whatever* would be presented to him as a requirement for baptism. This information doubtless plays an active role, but cannot normally be considered a pre-requirement for his *faith* (acceptance by free inner judgment with the aid of grace); and it is hardly ever a cause of his either giving or withdrawing that essential faith-acceptance which induced him to visit the priest in the first place.

Even in the case of the earliest Christians and apostles, it cannot be thought for a moment that their acceptance of Jesus was based on 'proofs' of his divinity, rather than the power of his person. When Jesus performed a wonder in support of his claim to their confidence in his teaching, they did not demand that, as at Lourdes, doctors should be called in to verify juridically that this was an event surpassing all natural possibilities. They were already attached to Jesus before they even understood what his claims were, and their transformation in the Resurrection was itself the miracle surpassing what in any case is now not held to be properly a part of the 'natural historical order'.²

Thus it would be rash to assume that the dogma imposed by Vatican I as of faith has necessarily been construed, either in the printed literature or in oral teaching in the leading Catholic institutions, to mean that everyone who makes a valid act of faith has previously had natural certitude of the existence of God and his revelation. Natural *scientific* certitude is out of the question; few *ever* arrive at that, and those who set about it are pre-

¹ G. de Broglie, 'La vraie notion thomiste des "praeambula fidei"', *Greg* 34 (1953), pp. 341-89 (summarized in *Theology Digest* 7 [1959], pp. 47-52); 'Précisions complémentaires', *Greg* 36 (1955), pp. 291-2.

² See below in section VI on the Resurrection, p. 396.

cisely the ones most conscious of how problematic such an enterprise is.

The textbooks are quite reasonable in indicating the sufficiency of a 'respective' certitude, the kind proportioned to the individual's age and training, the only kind he relies on also for other important decisions of life. In this sense there is undoubted merit in the conventional interpretation of Vatican I. Whoever knows enough about God to believe in him must have acquired this information from someone upon whose knowledge and veracity he can and must normally rely. A baby is told by his mother, a child by his pastor, an adolescent by his teacher, a lover by the person to whom he is ready to give over his whole life. Still, his act of faith or inner acceptance must *confer* rather than pre-require whatever genuine unshakable certitude the subject possesses regarding God's existence and revelation, in the sense certitude has in scholarly discussion.

Pannenberg and Vatican I alike are not unaware of these factors. Yet both ultimately insist on the superiority of *objective* to subjective factors in legitimating the act of faith. We will note the difficulty of admitting that in Pannenberg, when all is said and done, these factors end up being truly objective. But it can hardly be denied that he *aims* to substitute something 'more objective' for the unfounded faith-leap of Barth or the purely personal encounter of Bultmann. Pannenberg declares in reply to Althaus: 'Nowadays people say faith must be a bold leap. I say it will be a flop unless rational conviction lies at base.'¹ The fact that such a crusade should have met so much success and resonance in our day doubtless carries some message for those who are striving to revise and make more realistic the past century's understanding of beliefs enshrined in Vatican I.

V. 'APOCALYPTIC' THE REAL HISTORY IN SCRIPTURE?

'Apocalyptic' is the future-orientated historical world-view which dominated the religious culture shared by Jesus and his disciples, but it cannot be called typically biblical, nor defined in a way that will leave it nearer to history than to 'metahistory'.

For Pannenberg and his associates, the true and biblical notion of history is seen best and only in Apocalyptic. This is explained chiefly by Dietrich

¹ P. Althaus, 'Offenbarung als Geschichte und Glaube: Bemerkungen zu Pannenberg's Begriff der Offenbarung'; Pannenberg, 'Einsicht und Glaube: Antwort an Paul Althaus', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 87 (1962), pp. 321-330; 88 (1963), p. 81. See now Pannenberg's 'Working of the Spirit in the Creation and in the People of God', and A. Dulles, 'Official Church Teaching and Historical Relativity', in E. Echlin (ed.), *Spirit, Faith, and Church* (Philadelphia, 1970), pp. 13-31 (cf. 108-123) and 51-72.

Rössler.¹ The apocalyptic view of history is embodied in a 'Seer' seeing the totality of it. He regards the past as future and thus is conscious of the difference. But he also is thus warranted to see future events, down to the 'end-time', as no less accessible to him than past events are to the ordinary historian. Actually what the Seer 'sees' is not the concrete events of history but cosmic number-schemes interpretable only from the *unity* of their context. Yet Rössler calls this a realistic attitude towards history, contrasting its theological stance with that of rabbinic orthodoxy. The Talmud is constantly appealing to figures of the past but with no awareness of their context or continuity; they are timelessly present as examples of moral action and thought for the citer's own day. Something similar had previously been the outlook of the Chronicler.

Rössler finds his point of departure in Martin Noth's rejection of the assertion that 'the conception of history hardly plays any role at all in the Hebrew spirit'.² There is in fact no word for 'history' in Hebrew even today; 'generations' really means acts of generating (*tôledôt* not *dôrôt*) and *dibrê yāmîm* 'annals' (=Chronicles). Noth admits that the 'history' within which Old Testament narrative and prophecy unfold is an elusive concept, and suggests that a beginning can more easily be made with the apocalyptic of Daniel 2 and 7, *which however owes its origins not to Judaism but to Rome*. The whole of history is seen in the light of the present, not from a vantage-point at a certain remoteness. But apocalyptic recognized 'no definite laws in the development of history . . . [neither] a constantly heightened developing of the power of evil, nor a positive advance toward an ideal goal. History takes its course in a series of changing phenomena, and God lets it happen that way'. Apart from these few citations relevant to Pannenberg's use of apocalyptic, but not obviously favourable to a Hegelian thesis of history's end-completeness, Noth's article is mostly devoted to exegesis of the 'feet of clay' parable and tracing of its historical origins.

¹ D. Rössler, *Gesetz und Geschichte: Untersuchungen zur Theologie der jüdischen Apokalyptik und der pharisäischen Orthodoxie* (Neukirchen, 1962³), pp. 54, 24, 39. He is opposed by N. Glatzer, *Anfänge des Judentums* (1966), pp. 39–41, according to A. Nissen, 'Tora und Geschichte im Spätjudentum: zu Thesen D. Rösslers', *NT* 9 (1967), p. 258; and M. Seils says in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 91 (1966), p. 15: 'It would be a blessing if the Pannenberg circle would expressly verify Rössler's ideas before drawing such momentous conclusions from them'.

² M. Noth, 'The Understanding of History in Old Testament Apocalyptic' in his *The Laws in the Pentateuch and other Studies* (Edinburgh, 1966), p. 195, in disagreement with L. Köhler, *Hebrew Man* (Nashville, 1967), p. 136. Cf. also Noth's preceding chapter, 'History and Word of God in the Old Testament' (pp. 179–93).

Basing himself on Rössler's position, Ulrich Wilckens writes as follows for the Pannenberg manifesto:

Jewish apocalyptic has preserved the heritage of the prophets, . . . [a] fundamental orientation to the eschatological future, which is conceived as the impending, unique, and all-inclusive self-revelation of Jahweh. [Though weakened], the constitutive element of all *heilsgeschichtliche* structures is retained in the apocalyptic theology, namely, the basic conception of election as the fundamental historical act of God . . . directing all theological attention to the end of this age when the elect congregation will have been rescued from the oppression by enemies and brought at last into the peace of final salvation. The goal of the elect community's history is also the goal of this age (in modern terms, the end of all history) . . . From the beginning of time, God has held in secret all the eschatological gifts of salvation for the chosen righteous ones . . . on the last day [Enoch 63, 2; Qumran, IQM1, 16]. Entrance into the splendor that surrounds God himself [will not] dissolve the distinction between God and man, for that would be to take apocalyptic eschatology into the schema of Hellenistic mystery religions, as Philo or the Christian gnostics in Corinth did . . . The mythical imagery [of apocalyptic history-sketches tries] to mark out the place of the present between the past and the future [and to this extent is distinct from] the prophets who reject such a scheme of history [from the perspective of its end-point] in favor of a cultic *heilsgeschichtliche* framework founded on the past history of Israel . . . The end event has come in God's raising of Jesus from the dead. And in that it was this Jesus, whom God had raised up as the inbreaking of the *eschaton*, it is also true that God had placed his stamp of approval on Jesus himself . . . This reasoning can be shown in the history of the transmission of the text. While Jesus had made a distinction between himself and the Son of Man, the post-Easter community very soon identified the Son of Man with the risen Jesus . . . If Jesus is resurrected, then the end events which are now inaugurated will also concern the disciples . . . One of the most appropriate ways to characterize the theology of Luke would be by the title of this book of essays, *Revelation as History* [but with some obscurity because] the *Heilsgeschichte* of Luke is that of a Hellenistic historian rather than that of an apocalyptic theologian. The question regarding the foundation of salvation in view of the acts of God is a question that was too big for the static character of the Lucan conception of *Heilsgeschichte* as a closed, well-organized system of events . . . Still, without the strong influence of the Lucan *heilsgeschichtliche* theology, the church would certainly have run the danger of losing the heritage of the apocalyptic *Vorstellungsstruktur* [framework for the representation of reality].¹

¹ U. Wilckens, 'The Understanding of Revelation Within the History of Primitive Christianity', in *Revelation as History*, ed. W. Pannenberg, pp. 57-121; cited here are pp. 62-5, 79f, 115. Cf. also Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte: Form- und traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Neukirchen, 1963) and 'Über die Bedeutung historischer Kritik in der modernen Bibelexegese', in W. Joest, *Was heisst Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift?* (Regensburg, 1966), pp. 85-133.

As for Pannenberg's own view, it is expressed for him, but more succinctly, by Hans Betz:

In the course of the history of Israel we find that more and more the fulfilment of God's promises is moved to the future, toward the end of history. This development comes to its fullest expression in apocalypticism. Not only does the decisive salvation lie in the future, but no meaning at all can any longer be found in the present events. Any continuity between the present and the future has become invisible, so that two eons stand opposed to each other. Only the beginning of the eschatological 'new eon' will also reveal the meaning of the present eon. Only then will it be revealed that the entire history of mankind has evolved in accordance with God's plan. Consequently, apocalypticism has for the first time developed the idea of a universal history.¹

From this summing-up, Betz then proceeds to detect four fatal weaknesses in Pannenberg's usage: (1) Apocalyptic is not a development out of Hebrew prophecy; even von Rad seeks its origins rather in the wisdom literature. It was largely a Hellenistic development rather than one purely within Judaism. (2) It is not really concerned with world-history; that is the 'evil aeon' for which the apocalypticist offers a *substitute*. Daniel indeed is historical rather than astrological, but far from typical. (3) The meaning of the Resurrection of Jesus did not lie directly in its authenticating his own apocalyptic expectation of the imminent end of the world. (4) Apocalyptic was a variant rather than the antithesis of the Corinthian Gnosticism against which Paul fought.

The apocalyptic fixation of history as a cosmic pattern preoccupies Moltmann. To summarize some of his reflexions, the programmatic Pannenberg volume

in many respects leaves the discussion still open; . . . [it] starts from the proof of God from the cosmos, or by showing that the question of God arises from the consideration of the question of reality as a whole, . . . [as the] 'indirect self-revelation of God in the mirror of his action in history' . . . This theology of universal history obviously intends in the first instance to extend and supersede the Greek cosmic theology . . . Only in place of the self-contained cosmos whose eternally recurring sameness makes it a theophany in its symmetry and harmony, we have an open-ended cosmos with a teleological trend towards the future. 'History' thus becomes a new summary term for 'reality in its totality' . . . The basic Old Testament insight that 'history is that which happens between promise and fulfilment'—the insight

¹ H. D. Betz, 'The Concept of Apocalyptic in the Theology of the Pannenberg Group', *Journal for Theology and the Church* 6 (1969), pp. 192–207; also his 'On the Problem of Religio-Historical Understanding of Apocalypticism', *ibid.*, pp. 134–165 (both from *ZThK*, 65 [1968], pp. 257–270; 63 [1966], pp. 391–409, with symposium papers of F. Cross, D. Freedman, R. Funk). Betz is able to cite von Rad's rewriting of the section on Apocalyptic in his 1965 fourth German edition of *Old Testament Theology*; but seems to ignore Wilckens' use of Qumran.

from which Pannenberg and Rendtorff set out—is ultimately abandoned in favour of an eschatology which is expressed in terms of universal history and which proves itself by reference to ‘reality as a whole’ in an effort to improve on Greek cosmic theology. [God is still to be known by an *epiphany* at the end, of which the present forms a provisional part.] This, however, would mean that the thought-structures of Greek cosmic theology remain in principle . . . As long as this theology of history regards ‘God’ as the object that is in question when we enquire about the unity and wholeness of reality, then its starting point is obviously different from that of the question about God and his faithfulness to his promises in history. [This] ‘theology of history’ is a necessary supplement to [Bultmann’s] ‘theology of existence’. [An attempt was made by Pannenberg and Rendtorff to surmount this dilemma] in a second aspect of the development of ‘revelation as history’, [that is], in the concept of ‘history of tradition’ . . . The theology of history with its ‘language of the facts’ does not mean the *bruta facta*, which present themselves to positivistic historicism as the end-products of abstraction from tradition, but means the divine ‘language of the facts in that context of tradition and expectation in which the events in question take place’ . . . Thus the modern distinction between ‘factuality’ and ‘significance’ is set aside in a way analogous to that of G. Ebeling’s ‘theology of the word-event’ . . . The raising of Jesus was not merely conceived solely as the first instance of the final resurrection of the dead, but as the source of the risen life of all believers . . . The apocalyptic outlook which interprets the whole of reality in terms of universal history is secondarily compared with this world-transforming outlook . . . The uncritical use of such terms as ‘historical’, ‘history’, ‘facts’, ‘tradition’, ‘reason’, etc., in a theological sense, appears to show that the methodical, practical, and speculative atheism of the modern age is here circumvented rather than taken seriously.¹

In a later chapter Moltmann remarks that the verdict on apocalyptic is ‘completely divergent’ in Pannenberg and Koch on the one hand and in von Rad on the other. Moreover, apocalyptic diverges from biblical prophecy in six points: (a) by its religious determinism of history, (b) by reducing the world to ‘evil against God’, (c) which evil is not to be overcome but replaced, (d) by an irrevocable *fatum*, (e) as seen from a standpoint within a ghetto community and (f) not from any identifiable place-time within history.

Does the apocalyptic division of world history into periods according to the plan of Yahweh not merely interpret in terms of universal history earlier, foreign schemata of a cosmological kind? . . . Numerical speculations from ancient cosmology are introduced in order to provide an order for the periods of world history corresponding to the spatial order [von Rad’s ‘mythic schemata actualized’] . . . Apocalyptic applies cosmological patterns to history, with the result that either ‘history’ comes to a standstill or else

¹ J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: on the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (London, 1967), pp. 76–83, 134, 277.

'history' becomes intelligible as a summary representation of reality in its totality.¹

To offer a way out of this blind alley, Moltmann proposes to *historicize the cosmos* rather than thus 'cosmicize' history:

Then it would not be the case that eschatology becomes cosmological in apocalyptic, and is thereby stabilized, but *vice versa* cosmology would become eschatological and the cosmos would be taken up in terms of history into the process of the *eschaton*.

In thus presumably salvaging what is undeniable in Pannenberg along with what von Rad sees differently, Moltmann lays the foundation for the further task of salvaging this in relation to what is inescapable in Bultmann.

Most of the volume containing the above-cited dialogue of American theologians is given over to the reactions of Ebeling and Fuchs to Käsemann's assertion that apocalyptic was the matrix of the primitive Judaeo-Christian theology.² He sees preserved in Mt 7:22 Jesus' own disapproval of mantic or frenzied (that is, apocalyptic) prophesying and driving out devils. The 'better path' recommended by Jesus in Mt 5 is in sober continuity with traditional Jewish goals, and a sizable group of early Christians clung to this outlook. But another group concentrated rather on the pentecostal exhilaration: only such a prophetic, divine epiphany can give life and light to the earthly words and deeds of Jesus; hence Mt 12:32, 'a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but not one against the Spirit'. Ultimately Christian apocalyptic collapses, as all theological systems do.

Ebeling moderates Käsemann's assertions chiefly by stressing that there are *various* apocalyptics 'as there is Spirit and Spirit', so that this constitutes no norm. He cannot agree that the teaching of Jesus himself was neither theology nor apocalyptic, but was transformed into both by the Easter-Pentecost experience. Ultimately how significant it is that the characteristic Christian genre is not Apocalypse but Gospel!

¹ *Theology of Hope*, p. 134.

² See p. 393, n.1. On the one side E. Käsemann, 'The Beginnings of Christian Theology', *Journal for Theology and the Church* 6 (1969), pp. 17-46 and 99-133 (original German in *ZThK* 57 [1960], pp. 162-85 and 59 [1962], pp. 257-84); R. Bultmann, 'Ist die Apokalyptik die Mutter der christlichen Theologie?' in *Apophoreta* (Festschrift E. Haenchen), *ZNW Beiheft* 30 (1964), pp. 64-69. On the other side, see G. Ebeling, 'The Ground of Christian Theology', *Journal for Theology and the Church* 6 (1969), pp. 47-68, especially 53, and E. Fuchs, *ibid.*, pp. 69-97 (original German of both in *ZThK* 58 [1961], pp. 227-44 and 245-67).

VI. 'SPECIAL' HISTORICITY OF THE RESURRECTION

Explanation of the historicity of Christ's Resurrection as the 'absolute symbol' inaugurating the End-time is timely and convincing, but such an anticipation of the totality of history in the 'Christ-event' functions as a part of 'metahistory' rather than of history itself.

We have seen how the Resurrection of Jesus is alleged to serve in God's salvation-plan chiefly as authentication of the eschatological expectations current in apocalyptic. Already, thereby, its significance belongs to a world of faith-conviction rather than to the objective historical realities on which the conviction is based. But Pannenberg's treatment of the Resurrection, which belongs within his own special field of Christology, amply expands the modern theological understanding of that event and concludes that 'what really happened' is a thing we simply cannot know, and therefore our expression of it is a non-optional, 'absolute and given', *metaphor*.¹

How does the resurrection of Jesus justify his expectation of God's reign as very near? Well, the early Christian message of the resurrection of Jesus intended to say that the expected general resuscitation of the dead at the End had already occurred in Jesus' case. Thus Jesus' expectation of the speedy realization of the eschatological reality did not simply fail. It was fulfilled, and thus confirmed, though only in his own person . . . The general human destiny has occurred in Jesus, if he *really was* resurrected from the dead. Now, precisely because the resurrection of a single man was quite unfamiliar to the apocalyptic tradition, we must suppose that a special event underlay the apostolic Easter message, an event that caused so decisive a change in the traditional expectation of the End. Evidently something had happened to the witnesses of the appearances of the Risen One for which their language had no other word than that used to characterize the eschatological expectation, i.e. resurrection from the dead. This expression is a metaphor. It suggests the idea of being awakened and rising from sleep . . . The metaphorical character of our speaking about resurrection means that we do not know what sort of reality corresponds to that word . . . So we do not really know even yet what happened to Jesus then nor what kind of reality the Risen One may have in relation to our present life.²

¹ W. Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 88f, summarized by J. Robinson in *Theology as History*, p. 39. See also Pannenberg's 'Dialogue on Christ's Resurrection', *Christianity Today*, 12 (1968), pp. 9–11, and 'Person' in RGG³ 5, pp. 230–5; G. O'Collins, 'The Christology of W. Pannenberg', *Religious Studies* 3 (1968), pp. 369–76. Pannenberg's 'Appearance as the Arrival of that which is Future', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 35 (1967), pp. 107–118, is reprinted (with three other essays and a biographical sketch) in R. J. Neuhaus, *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia, 1967), pp. 127–43.

² W. Pannenberg in *Theology as History*, pp. 114f; 'Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte', *Kerygma und Dogma* 5 (1949), p. 264, which says 'we know what happened from what usually happens', in a way both agreeing with and differing from E. Troeltsch, 'Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie' (1898; in his *Gesammelte Schriften* [Tübingen, 1922], vol. 2, p. 732).

My intention here is not to query or even to clarify Pannenberg's understanding of what Jesus' Resurrection *is*. Whatever *else* it is, whatever it was *in itself*, nevertheless its significance for Christian faith consists in its having been *an experience* within the spirit of the earliest Christians, both as individuals and as community.¹ It may be defined as the foundation of the Church, because it was the event that transformed the believers from fear and uncertainty into a firm compact action-group. Moreover this was an experience confirming their Old Testament expectation (Ps 2:7 = Act 13:33) as it had filtered to them through the engulfing apocalyptic of their own century. For many theologians today the Resurrection of Jesus is not a proof that people *can* rise again, but rather an example of that fact already held with complete assurance—and thus rather a proof that the general process which was in any case bound to happen has in fact already happened.² This view is based on St Paul by some, including some Catholics.³ And almost no Catholic aware of the terms of the recent discussion would any longer vindicate for the Resurrection a historicity falling completely within the patterns of profane verification, so that, for example, a pagan standing in the Upper Room beside Thomas would have perceived Jesus at all. Act 10:41 insists that he was seen only by foreordained believers.

The following points may help towards clarification. Granted that Pannenberg's explanation of what our use of the word 'resurrection'

¹ This is stressed by widely differing writers, for example, W. Marxsen, 'The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem' (1965), in *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, ed. C. F. D. Moule (London, 1968); R. Niebuhr, *Resurrection and Historical Reason: a Study of Theological Method* (New York, 1957); D. Fuller, *Easter Faith and History* (Grand Rapids, 1965); U. Wilckens, 'Die Perikope vom leeren Grabe Jesu in der nachmarkinischen Traditionsgeschichte' in *Festschrift F. Smend* (Berlin, 1963), pp. 30–41; 'Der Ursprung der Überlieferung' in *Dogma und Denkstrukturen*, ed. W. Joest (Göttingen, 1963), pp. 56–95 and Pannenberg, *ibid.*, pp. 96–115.

² C. Braaten, 'Toward a Theology of Hope', *Theology Today* 24 (1967), p. 217, reprinted in *New Theology* 5, ed. M. Marty (New York, 1968); 90–11; *The Future of God: the Revolutionary Dynamics of Hope* (New York, 1969), p. 19; 'The Current Controversy on Revelation: Pannenberg and his Critics', *Journal of Religion* 45 (1965), pp. 225–237, against Lothar Steiger, 'Offenbarungsgeschichte und theologische Vernunft', *ZThK* 59 (1962), p. 113, and Gerhard Sauter, *Zukunft und Verheissung: das Problem der Zukunft in der gegenwärtigen theologischen und philosophischen Diskussion* (Stuttgart, 1965), p. 266. In his 'Nachwort' in *Offenbarung als Geschichte*, Pannenberg further objects to G. Klein, *Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie* 51 (1962), pp. 65–88, and Robinson, 'Heilsgeschichte und Lichtungsgeschichte', *Evangelische Theologie* 22 (1962), p. 117.

³ Max Brändle, 'Zum urchristlichen Verständnis der Auferstehung Jesu', *Orientierung* 31 (1967), pp. 65–71; 'Musste das Grab Jesu leer sein?' *ibid.*, pp. 108–12; 'Die synoptischen Grabeserzählungen', *ibid.*, pp. 179–84 (all three summarized in *Theology Digest* 16 [1968], pp. 14–26).

means shows penetrating insight and is largely acceptable, how does this harmonize with his insistence that our understanding of the event is thereby moved from the area of 'metahistory' to that of history? Are we to say that the 'factual historicity' lies not in what happened to Jesus but in what *really happened* to his disciples? That which possesses historicity seems to have been the assurance of the disciples that the eschatological expectation of envioning Jewish apocalyptic was valid and was verified. In this case, can it truly be said that our faith is based on 'what actually happened', rather than on an already formed *interpretation* of that event in the minds of some believers? If so, such a faith-conviction is precisely what we mean by 'metahistory'.

Or should we rather say that for Pannenberg statements apparently denoting an objective reality really in fact communicate a linguistic or exegetical exigence? The Catholic J. Kremer also holds that the Resurrection was an event inexpressible in human *language*.¹ Even if this comes close to saying 'the Resurrection is a myth' this need not disturb anyone's faith if myth is legitimately defined as 'the only way in which some *reality* beyond our experience *can* be expressed in human language'. The inadequacy of language is in fact an existing problem: not only with regard to the Resurrection, but with regard to all 'statements about God', whether in the line of the Thomist *via eminentiae* or in recent inquiries of Van Buren and Braun. Indeed this particular problem of linguistic analysis is only one aspect of the more general 'hermeneutic circle' posed by H. G. Gadamer. *No* statement carries meaning except insofar as it finds some repercussion within the experience of the hearer. Pursuing this line of interpretation methodically in an effort to be faithful to what Pannenberg is really trying to say, would we end up with this: 'Statements about the Resurrection are "special" and do not convey an objective meaning directly, but only because *all* statements are "special" and more or less inadequate to bridge the gap between what the speaker *wishes to* and *can* communicate?' This in turn is not far from the solution of the whole 'theology as history' dilemma which we derived above from Richardson: There is *no* history whatever which does not already contain an admixture of human conviction; so why should the history on which our faith is based be different from any other history?

Less pivotal but still important is another issue raised by the Pannenberg thesis. Many today insist that the Risen Jesus is not past but *present* to the believing community: *der Selbe*, not *dasselbe*. Every Christian service of

¹ J. Kremer, *Das älteste Zeugnis von der Auferstehung Christi* (Stuttgart, 1966), pp. 126, 145; *Bibel und Kirche* 22 (1967), pp. 1-14. Cf. P. Seidensticker, 'Das antiochenische Glaubensbekenntnis', *Theologie und Glaube* 57 (1967), pp. 286-323.

worship is in some sense an experience of him as present.¹ Yet it is not only Pannenberg's collaborators who strongly insist that the past must be seen *as past*, and that that is what history means.² Even on the late afternoon of Good Friday, the community already had to look back to the death of Jesus as a *past* event. And two days later they had the same orientation toward the Resurrection, even though that event had 'proleptically anticipated' the still future End of Time. To do justice to Pannenberg, we must constantly recall to ourselves that what we have tried to get in focus and clarify as his separate assertions (in sections II, V and VI above), for him form a single indissoluble unity: 'God's revelation is one, in and through the totality of history, known to us by apocalyptic "prolepsis" in the Resurrection of Jesus'.

How this can be has prompted in some the approach that the whole century of the Jesus-event was a sort of 'protracted present' while it was going on, though to us it all forms a single 'Heroic Age' that is past.³ Even more boldly, and to our mind quite illuminatingly, John Knox asserts that a 'successful phenomenon' like the Church or the American Revolution really at no point *ceases* to be ongoing and *becomes* past: it would have been 'past' only if it had *failed* and been 'relegated to history'. For Knox the Church of today is related to Jesus as a part of her present remembrance: at no time has he been known to the Church otherwise than as genuinely 'remembered' by those who had known him personally or through protracted association with those who had.⁴

CONCLUSION

I am disposed to agree with Pannenberg that our faith is based on the genuine events of history, events in which God is somehow uniquely present in Jesus and reveals in him both the whole of history and the whole of what he wants us to know about his own divine nature. I agree further that our whole ongoing effort as theologians and exegetes must be to rethink ever anew what this 'history' actually means, and never allow

¹ G. Koch, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi* (Tübingen, 1959), p. 169; 'Dominus praedicans Christum idest Jesum praedicatum', *ZThK* 57 (1960), pp. 238-73; cf. *ibid.*, 56 (1959), pp. 83-109.

² Cf. U. Wilckens on Luke in *Revelation as History*, p. 94.

³ Cf. A. D. Nock, review of M. Dibelius, *Aufsätze*, in *Gnomon* 25 (1953), p. 497; E. Käsemann, 'Das Problem des historischen Jesus', *ZThK* 51 (1954), p. 137, on which see H. Küng, '“Early Catholicism” as a Problem in Controversial Theology' in his *The Living Church* (London, 1963), pp. 233-93 (= *The Council in Action* [New York, 1963], pp. 159-95).

⁴ Cf. J. Knox, *The Church and the Reality of Christ* (London, 1963), p. 65; R. Hermann, 'Der erinnerte Christus' in H. Ristow, *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus* (Berlin, 1964³), pp. 509-18.

the illuminating formulas of a past century to become idols and barriers to our rediscovery of the reality in terms more suited to the *next* century. Insofar as the 'metahistory' which is paramount for either a Bultmann or a Barth must inevitably be supplemented by continuing reflection and research, we cannot accept it as definitive. Yet we must sharply question, but also endeavour to understand, how it is that 'proleptic anticipation of the End-Time in a Resurrection known to us only as symbol' differs in fact ultimately from a kind of 'metahistory'. At present we seem to have reached a (not necessarily undesirable) impasse in the fact that what our generation so tenaciously calls 'Salvation-history' is neither *mere* history nor *not* mere history.