VIATORUM

CONTENTS (XLIX, 2007) Nr. 2

ADDRESSES OF THE CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Rodney D. Holder — rodney.holder@virgin.net
The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion
St Edmund's College, Cambridge
CB3 0BN, United Kingdom

Igor Kišš — kiss@fevth.uniba.sk
Evanjelická bohoslovecká fakulta
Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave
Bartókova 8
SK-811 02 Bratislava, Slovakia

Ondřej Macek — macekon@etf.cuni.cz
Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University
Černá 9
CZ-115 55 Praha 1, Czech Republic

Petr Macek — macek@etf.cuni.cz
Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University
Černá 9
CZ-115 55 Praha 1, Czech Republic

Jürgen Moltmann — Biesinger Strasse 25
D-72070 Tübingen, Germany

Ivana Noble — noble@etf.cuni.cz
Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University
Černá 9
CZ-115 55 Praha 1, Czech Republic

Petr Turecký — turecky.petr@seznam.cz
CZ-256 01 Soběhrdy 21

Beat Zuber — beatzuber@freesurf.ch
Berg Sion, CH-6048 Horn, Switzerland

Communio viatorum is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Flr., Chicago, IL 60606, E-mail: atla@atla.com, WWW: http://www.atla.com.

NOTES FROM THE COAST OF BOHEMIA III. OR ON THE GOSPEL OF CREATION AND RESURRECTION

In his *Theology of the Old Testament* Gerhard von Rad follows the common conviction of his days, that it was Exodus that played pivotal role in the Old Testament.[1] The story on how the Lord delivered his people from Egypt would be understood as a paradigmatic plot, expressing ingeniously the "politics of God" towards Israel. Throughout modern history the power of this story was immense, be it for the African Americans in US, or the followers of liberation theology Latin America, or for Christians in – then – the communist part of the world. However, it was in those very sixties of the last century, that a shift occurred in the Old Testament theology towards more general anthropology. Wisdom literature, the accumulated experience of Mankind, became more frequented. The story about Creation, up to those days pushed behind as a mythological relic, was rediscovered. Does this shift represent a pendulum effect within the discipline, is it just a part of a broader tendency striving to balance the vigorous launch of the Dialectical theology? Diverse as the answers may be, it is clear that among the reasons for the theological shift the changing climate – not just in society (which then would be labeled Post-Modernism) but also literally throughout the globe (which then would be labeled global warming) – has its prominent place. Due to the capacities mankind has acquired it became capable to destroy the Earth. A new kind of global responsibility – and new love to God's creation – is needed to challenge this threat.

There is, however, quite a different voice on global warming, that can be heard form an unexpected edge. Czech Republic seems to be the only state in the world whose leading figure spends a considerable amount of time denying the human responsibility for global warming. Twice in the year 2007 president Václav Klaus visited the US and repeated his warning against "unjustified alarmism of global warming activists." If it reminds You of the false prophets in the days

[1] Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testament*, München 1963[4], p. 135ff.

of Jeremiah, who "have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying: Peace, peace," then the resemblance may not be just accidental.

The good thing about Biblical canon is, that it does not confront us with an exclusive alternative Gensis *or* Exodus. As the Midrash Genesis Rabba I,10 puts it:

> For twenty-six generations the letter *alef* complained before the Holy One, blessed be He, pleading before Him: 'Sovereign of the Universe! I am the first of the letters, yet Thou didst not create Thy world with me (but with the letter *bet* in the word *be-resheet*)!' God answered: 'The world and its fullness were created for the sake of the Torah alone. Tomorrow, when I come to reveal My Torah at Sinai, I will commence with none but thee: I (*anoki*) am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' (Ex. XX, 2)

Creation, Liberation and Covenant cannot be put one against the other – at least not in the Bible. In this edition the theme of creation and its function in theology will be discussed from different points of view. An essay on the concept of Creation and its inseparable connection to Resurrection in the Bible written by Jürgen Moltmann opens the issue. Retrospective and comprehensive studies written by Prague theologians Petr Macek and Ivana Noble contextualize Moltmann within the debate of late 20th century (Macek) and introduce an Eastern Orthodox counterpart of him – the person and teaching of Dumitru Stăniloae (Noble). Rodney Holder, while winding his double expertise in both astrophysics and theology, introduces, interprets and defends the merits Wolfhard Pannenberg has for the new recognition of creation, history – and natural theology. Finally, Beat Zuber presents his daring hypothesis: if the main *cantus* of the Creation story in the Bible approves the earthliness of the Creation (repeated "good" after each day of it culminating in the "very good" on the sixth day), then the most intelligible context of this assertion – the position that the Bible argues against – is *gnosis*. According to Zuber, the era of *gnosis* of the late Greco-Roman period represents the terminus *a quo* of the Creations story. Much later dating of the text of Gensis is the consequence – a thrilling reading, indeed!

Petr Sláma, Prague

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND THE NEW EARTH

Jürgen Moltmann, Tübingen

1. Creation is resurrection

In the catholic liturgy for Easter night the reading of the first creation story in Genesis 1 is prescribed. This is a wonderful sign of a cosmic Christology: The world began with the resurrection out of the darkness of chaos to the light of a beautiful cosmos. "Already on the first day of creation the work of the new creation is flashing up: – in the midst of the old creation. With this the creation has from beginning on an eschatological character. We can perceive the creation as a great and real promise of God."[1] With the creation "in the beginning" its future in God's kingdom is already inbuilt. All the creatures are real promises of their coming completion. Creation out of chaos is like a resurrection, and the resurrection of the dead out of the realm of death is like a new creation. God who awakens the dead is the same God, who "calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom 4, 17). God who raised Jesus from the dead is the creator of the new being of all creatures. Resurrection and creation belong together, because the resurrection of the dead and the annihilation of death are not only the overcoming of sin and its evil consequences but also the completion of the original creation. They are nothing less than the negation of the negative and the perfection of the positive.

[1] Medard Kehl's introduction to Pablo Carlos Sicouly, *Schöpfung und Neuschöptung: "Neuschöptung" als theologische Kategorie im Werk Jürgen Moltmann*, Paderborn 2007, p. 14.

2. The Light of Easter

From the beginning on Christians saw in the light of Christ's Easter appearances the light of the morning of the first day of the new creation. They called the dayspring of the resurrection of Christ on Sunday the "eighth day," the day after the *Sabbath* and the "first day" of the new week. In this light of the new creation Christ appears as the firstborn of creation (Col 1:15), reconciling with God "all things, whether on earth or in heaven" (Col 1:20). This is the starting point of the cosmic Christology, because in these dimensions we understand the resurrection of Christ not only as an "eschatological act of history" ("eine eschatologische Geschichtstal Gottes"), but also as the first act of the recreation of this transient world to its lasting and true form: the eternal creation, "world without end."[2] Resurrection is not only the meaning of history but also the meaning of nature.

3. Easter narratives of the disciples and the women

To understand the cosmic aspect of Christ's resurrection from the dead more proficiently, we must pause for a moment to reconsider the New Testament Easter narratives:[3]

Jesus' disciples were frightened and fled when Jesus, in whom they had placed their entire messianic hope, died on the cross powerless and abandoned by the God he had called *abba*, "dear father" in Gethsemane. "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel," said the disciples at Emmaus (Luke 24:21). His crucifixion by the Roman power was the greatest disappointment of their lives. So they betrayed, denied and abandoned the one by whom they felt they had been betrayed and abandoned. His shameful death was the end of their messianic hope for Israel's future.

---

[2] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ. Christology in Messianic Dimension*, San Francisco 1990, chap. VI: "The cosmic Christ," pp. 274–312.

[3] Ted Peters, Robert J Russell, Michael Welker (eds.), *Resurrection: Theological and scientific assessments*, Grand Rapids 2003; Thorwald Lorenzen, *Resurrection – Discipleship – Justice*, Macon, GA 2003.

But other disciples, the women who had also left everything behind and followed Jesus, remained loyal to their dying friend "looking on from afar." They kept eye-contact with Jesus and as eye-witnesses they are called by name (Mark 15:40). For them, obviously, the observation of dying and death was not alien. They went to the grave of their friend and master when the Sabbath was over, and found the grave empty. They heard an angel saying: "He has risen, he is not here" (Mark 16:6). It was only at this point that they were deeply frightened and fled, trembling with amazement. Why? Birth and death are normal features of a finite life on earth. Jesus resurrection from the dead shattered the regular order of things.[4]

Jesus was taken away from the living by his death, and taken away from the dead by his resurrection. His death was the end of the disciples' future hope, his resurrection was the end of the women's trust in death as the end of life. The disappointment of the disciples' hope and the shock of the women who had seen where Jesus was buried were banished only by the appearances of the risen Jesus, who summons them not to be afraid but to believe in the new being that he embodies (Mark 16:14, John 20:27).

And this has consequences not only for the moral but also for the natural life of human beings. To live in the presence of the risen Christ is to experience the Spirit of resurrection giving "new life to our mortal bodies" (Rom 8:11) and inspiring us with hope for the "resurrection of the flesh." While we are waiting for this "redemption of our body" we hear the "groaning of the whole creation" together with us (Rom 8:22). The Spirit of resurrection is forming our solidarity of suffering and hope with all living things on earth. Living in the presence of the risen Christ opens our lives to cosmic dimensions.[5] For the life-giving Spirit is poured out "on all flesh" (Joel 3:1; Acts 2:2 ff), which in Hebrew means *kol basar*, all the living.

---

[4] Donald Juel, *A Matter of Surprise: Mark Interpreted*, Minneapolis 1994.

[5] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Source of Life. The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*, Minneapolis 1997.

4. Resurrection – meaning of Nature

By "nature" we understand the present condition of the distorted creation, which is replete with beautiful things but also with terrible disasters. Yet we call this nature God's creation because we trust in the faithfulness of its Creator and see how, in respect of his aims, it can be improved. What has Christ to do with nature? Already Paul – some 35 years after Christ's death – talks of Christ's role as a mediator of all creation: "Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for him; there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we exist through him" (1 Cor 8:6). If all things exist "through Christ" then not only the redeemer of history but also the wisdom of the whole original creation is revealed in him. It means then nothing less but that the first Christians saw Christ in all natural things and all natural things in Christ.[6] Consequently, the powers of nature were to be honored as little as the idols of human power, as the emperor or the capital. The sun, moon, and stars are good elements of creation, but they are not themselves gods. Under the rule of the risen Christ, people have been liberated from deifying natural forces as well as from their demonization. Orientation to the forces of nature, that are themselves in need of redemption, is pointless. Christ reconciles the humanity not only to God but also to God's good creation so that human beings may enter again into the creation-community.

In practice this cosmic Christology means that the Christian communities in the multi-religious towns of the ancient world did not present themselves as comprising just one of the many religious communities of a hitherto unknown deity, but as the community of the Creator and Redeemer of all things, and as one establishing peace and unity with nature. What they were bringing into the world was not a new religion but new life. They did not offer competition between religions, for their missionary task was to achieve the recon-

[6] Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher (eds.), *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen, Bd. I, Evangelien*, Tübingen 1968. According to the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus is saying, p. 213: "I am the light set over all things, I am the Universe, the Universe proceeded *from* me and the Universe returns to me. Split apiece of wood – and I am there. Pick up a stone – and you will find me."

ciliation of humankind and the peace of the cosmos. The Church sees itself as the beginning of the reconciled cosmos and as anticipation of the new creation. Every church and cathedral is an image of the whole cosmos, for "the most High does not live in houses made by men; as the prophet says: 'Heaven is my throne and earth my footstool'" (Acts 7:48; Isa 55:1–2).

5. Matter with Future

The early Enlightenment of the eighteenth century recommended as simple, mechanically conceived materialism, with Descartes representing the objective world in purely geometrical manner as *res extensa* and Lammettrie theorizing of *l'homme machine*. The nineteenth century, however, produced a new dialectical materialism. This approach tried to interrelate the human subjectivity and the objectivity of nature in order to comprehend both humankind in an appropriately natural – and the nature in an appropriately human – way. When young Karl Marx wrote: "Motion is the first and supreme of the innate characteristics of matter, not only as mechanical and mathematical movement, but much more so as impulse, vital spirit, and *anguish* – to use Jakob Boehme's term – of matter,"[7] there are unmistakable echoes of the Pauline image of a creation "groaning and longing" (Rom 8:19 ff). Twentieth-century philosophers such as Ernst Bloch in his *Principle Hope*, Process philosophy and Open-system-theories developed this idea of a dialectical materialism further.[8] There can be no absolute subject-object-dichotomy, the subject of recognition plays decisive role on all levels, as Quantum physics tells us. And matter is always process-matter, i. e. matter in the process of transformations. Matter is not just given reality but at the same time an open potentiality. Matter is subject to processes of ongoing transformation with a determined past and an as yet indeterminate future. All formed matter is matter with a future. But what kind of future is it?

---

[7] Karl Marx, *Die Frühschriften*, ed. Sigfried Landshut, Stuttgart 1953, p. 330.

[8] Ernst Bloch, *Das Materialismusproblem, seine Geschichte und Substanz*, Frankfurt 1972; Ernst von Weizsäcker (ed.), *Offene Systeme I. Beitrage zur Zeitstruktur von Information, Entropie und Evolution*, Stuttgart 1974.

The modern sciences interpret nature on the basis of anthropocentric interests. Nature must become subject to human research and domination. The nature of the earth will find its home in the human scientific-technical civilization that governs, uses and – hopefully – will also preserve it. Nowadays, the symbols of nature, known traditionally as *signatura rerum*, are considered and used as information for human exploitations. In this paradigm humankind stands over against nature, alienated from nature and hostile to it.[9] Theology of nature has always read the "book of nature" theocentrically and interpreted it eschatologically. All created things point to their Creator: "The heavens sing the praise of the Eternal" (Psa 19:2). They also point beyond themselves into the future of their redemption in their true form in God's coming kingdom. Human beings, too, are God's creatures. The immanence of God's Spirit in their souls is the reason for their permanent self-transcendence. "What we shall be has not yet been disclosed, but we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 Jo 3:2). The result is an anticipatory community between human culture and the nature of the earth in the prospect of a common future in the new creation. People who long for the redemption of the mortal body will join in community with all creatures that groan under the burden of transience and long for the coming glory of God. We shall therefore decipher the *signatura rerum* in the framework of an eschatological hermeneutics. This allows us to elicit the significance of nature in the light of its transcendent resurrection.

6. The resurrection of nature

The young Karl Marx had this vision of the goal of world history: "Therefore society is the complete existential unity of humankind and nature, the authentic resurrection of nature, the achieved natural-

[9] We can find an outstanding starting point for a hermeneutics of nature in the "Bedeutungslehre" of the famous biologist Jakob von Uexküll, *Streifzüge durch die Umwelten von Tieren und Menschen. Bedeutungslehre*, Hamburg 1950. According to him, in order to understand what we know, we need the step from science to hermeneutics.

ism of humankind and the achieved humanism of nature."[10] He was able to conceive of nature as redeemed from its state of alienation only in terms of its resurrection in the world of humankind. But he did not see this as the extended human domination of nature and its subjugation to human will, but as a mutual interpenetration of humankind and nature. Without a naturalization of humanity there was no humanization of nature possible. And this essential unity of humankind and nature was to appear in the "classless society," a society free from domination. Authentic "communism" was to overcome not only contradictions in human society, but also contradictions between humans and nature, and even contradictions in nature itself.[11] Otherwise the term "resurrection of nature" would be meaningless. Nevertheless, young Marx underestimated the power of evil and the destiny of death. Like Ludwig Feuerbach, he was an idealist who denied evil and ignored death. He must have known, however, that every resurrection presupposes death. Therefore the "humanism of nature" cannot be resurrection of nature. Every humanization of nature, as shown by the failed Soviet experiment and the now failing global experiment of capitalism, does not lead to the resurrection of nature, but probably rather to the end of nature. The advancing crisis of the climate is a warning sign of our times. But if the resurrection of nature in human society is inconceivable, where can such a resurrection take place, where can this corruptible and mortal world put on incorruption and immortality? Traditionally we think of realm beyond this world – in heaven or in an Elysium or in a paradise regained. But this dream is closer to Plato than to Christ and the New Testament. The resurrection of the dead takes place on this earth and lead these who are given life to "a new earth, in which righteousness will be established" (2 Pe 3:13). The kingdom of God comes "on earth as it is in heaven." Resurrection and eternal life are God's promises for his people on earth and for God's beloved earth.

[10] K. Marx, op. cit. 237.
[11] K. Marx, op. cit. 235: "This communism … is the mystery of history solved."

7. The Promise of the earth

There is a great change in spirituality and theology on the way today: We discover anew the spirituality of the body and of awakened and watchful senses; we discover again the religion of the earth, that is the sabbath the earth shall celebrate for its Creator; we discover that our heaven lies on the Earth, when righteousness shall dwell on "a new earth" (2 Pe 3:13). Inhabitants of heaven are angels, we are children of the earth, "earthlings" (*Adams* made up from *adamah*) from the beginning on. "The Christ's heaven lies on the earth, not in heaven, for Christ has come into flesh, and in flesh he will erect the heaven of God," said Christoph Blumhardt, the contemporary of Friedrich Nietzsche, the spiritual father of Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, of Leonhard Ragaz's religious socialism, of some present day Pentecostal theologians and – in a way, as a "theologian of hope" (Barth) – the predecessor of myself in Württemberg.[12] For him the kingdom of God "lives with the earth." In simple terms, he goes on: "I have no God in heaven, the angels have him there. I will pray down here, this is where I have to have God," and "finally God will be God whom we may behold on earth." Why do you want to go to Heaven? The resurrection of the dead will happen on earth.

Young Dietrich Bonhoeffer took this up: "Only the one who loves God and the earth in one breath, can hope for the kingdom of God."[13] Christ doesn't lead people in the afterworld of religious escapism, flight from the world, but he gives them back to the Earth as its faithful people. Who loves God, loves God as Lord of the Earth; and who loves the Earth, loves it as God's Earth. Because – and this is the final reason – "God's kingdom is the realm of resurrection on the Earth."

I would like to add: Far from leading human beings away from the Earth to Heaven, Christian hope leads them to the kingdom of God which comes on the Earth. Human beings have come from earth and

[12] Leonhard Ragaz, *Der Kampf um das Reich Gottes in Blumhardt, Vater und Sohn – und weiter*, Zürich-München 1922, chap. IV, 1: "Das Reich Gottes für die Erde," pp. 44–62.

[13] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dein Reich komme. Das Gebet der Gemeinde um Gottes Reich auf Erden*, Hamburg 1958, p. 12.

belong to earth and do so both in time and eternity. If heavens open for them, it is heaven on earth. On Earth Christ was born, on Earth stands the cross of Christ, and it is on Earth that we may expect the deliverance of evil. It is this transitory life which will be transformed into eternal life, it is this earthly life which will be raised to eternal life. The "life of the world to come," as the Nicene creed says, is the life at the new earth. I believe in the "resurrection of the flesh," not only of the human body but also the life of the whole groaning creation (Rom 8:19 ff.). Why? God the Creator remains faithful to God's creation even as the God redeemer. God "does not forsake the works of his hands." God does not give anything up as lost, he does not destroy anything God has made, for God is God.

Summary: *In this meditation the inseparable unity between the concept of Creation and that of Ressurection is being advocated. Creation has an echatological meaning and cannot be therefore perceived as an entity of lower dignity in comparison with spiritual matters. In a similar vein, Resurrection doesn't mean but final rehabilitation of just this created, natural and earthly World. This being so, there is no legitimate way for religious escapism, abandoning and disregarding this World.*

Keywords: Creation – Resurrection – Nature – Religious engagement – Easter Liturgy – Earthly character of humans.

THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION IN THE MESSIANIC THEOLOGY OF JÜRGEN MOLTMANN

Petr Macek, Prague

Jürgen Moltmann is probably the best-known German-speaking theologian of our time, perhaps the most significant living theologian of the Reformed tradition of Protestantism, and definitely one of the most important academic theologians in the world.[1] Already his early writing brought him world-wide recognition and fame and it is surely an appropriate evaluation that in his later work "he has become the contemporary theologian who has perhaps most successfully transcended the dominant (theological and nontheological) paradigm of reality as human history, recognized in this a reflex of the modern ideology of domination, and attempted to enter theologically into the

[1] Important studies of Moltmann's theology in English include: Richard Bauckham (ed.), *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jurgen Moltmann*, Edinburgh 1999; Richard Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making*, Basingstoke 1987; Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jurgen Moltmann*, Edinburgh 1995; A. J. Conyers, *God, Hope, and History: Jurgen Moltmann and the Christian Concept of History*, Macon 1988; Cellia Deane-Drummond, *Towards a Green Theology Through Analysis of the Ecological Motif in Jürgen Moltmann's Doctrine of Creation*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Manchester 1992; Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, Oxford 1988; Langdon Brown Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind: A Christian Interpretation of History*, New York 1976 (pp. 226–38); Thorwald Lorenzen, "Jürgen Moltmann," in: Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price (eds.), *A New Handbook of Christian Theologians,* Nashville 1996, pp. 304–316; M. Douglas Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*, Philadelphia 1974; Christopher Morse, *The Logic of Promise in Moltmann's Theology*, Philadelphia 1979; Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz, *The Kingdom and the Power: The Theology of Jurgen Moltmann*, 2001; John J. O'Donnell, *Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope*, Oxford 1983; Arne Rasmusson, *The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas*, Lund 1994; Nigel G. Wright, *Disavowing Constantine: Mission, Church and the Social Order in the Theologies of John H. Yoder and Jurgen Moltmann*, Carlisle 2000. Studies in English are also included in Hermann Deuser, et al. (eds.), *Gottes Zukunft – Zukunft der Welt. Festschrift für Jürgen Moltmann zum 60. Geburtstag*, Munich 1986.

reciprocity of human history and the rest of nature as the history of God's creation."[2]

Moltmann's Career and Work

Jürgen Moltmann was born in Hamburg, Germany, on April 8, 1926. His original upbringing was rather secular. He was introduced to poetry and philosophy of German idealism and was, for the time being, far from Christianity (he wanted to study mathematics and atomic physics – his idol was Albert Einstein). He became a Christian only after World War II, but the war itself was formative for him in many ways and his experiences during the war were actually the first source of his thinking about God. (In this his fate was similar to that of his father who also returned to the church due to his experiences of World War I.) Drafted into the military service in the German army in 1943 when he was 17, Moltmann served in the city of his birth as air force auxiliary (together with the whole class at the school he attended), and then in 1944 he went to the front, serving for six months in the infantry, before he was captured in Belgium in February 1945. There he became a prisoner of war and stayed in prison for three and a half years in 1945–48 moving from camp to camp. In his Belgium camp he saw how other prisoners collapsed, gave up all hope, got sick and died. Tormented by memories of the war, he lost all his confidence in German culture, especially after he learnt about the concentration camps. He survived only thanks to the witness of some of his comrades, who were Christians (though he did not know that at that time), and primarily thanks to his own conversion. Already in the Belgium camp he was given a small copy of the New Testament and Psalms by an American army chaplain and though he began reading it largely out of boredom, he was surprised to find that the words of Scripture opened his eyes to God. He recognized that God is with those who are of the broken heart and this experience led Moltmann to becoming interested in theology. It was in Scotland at the end of 1946 when he shared this idea in a letter to his father. Later in England in a camp

[2] Bauckham, *The Theology of Jurgen Moltmann*, 26f.

operated by the YMCA he met some imprisoned teachers and students of theology, read his first theological book (Reinhold Niebuhr's *Nature and Destiny of Man*) and learned some Hebrew. The experiences of the life of a prisoner – the suffering and the hope which reinforce each other – left a lasting mark on him. That and his disappointment with the development of both the German state and the German church after the war – their preoccupation with the idea of "restoration" of the old conditions – moved him into becoming a "political theologian."

After returning to Germany in 1948, Moltmann began to study theology at Göttingen University. Most of his first teachers came from the tradition of the Confessing Church. He was strongly influenced by the theology of Karl Barth and initially became a latter-day adherent of dialectical theology. Later, however, he saw some need to move beyond Barth and the s*olus Christus* of 'Barmen orthodoxy,' and sought to give more positive answers to the political possibilities and cultural challenges of the post-war period. Thus, while remaining indebted to Barth, he became highly critical of his neglect of the historical nature of reality. The other first influences were his teachers (Otto Weber, Ernst Wolf, Hans-Joachim Iwand, Gerhard von Rad, or Ernst Käsemann), who were, for the most part, followers of Barth and/or were previously involved with the Confessing Church. A strong influence was Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his *Letters and Papers from Prison*. He became one of the first German theologians to seriously study the work of Bonhoeffer. It was he (together with Ernst Wolf) who instigated his concern for social ethics and the church's involvement in society. Through Iwand he gained interest in Hegel's dialectics which contributed to his developing the dialectics of the cross and resurrection in his theology. From von Rad and Käsemann he gained his solid ground in biblical theology. His 'Doktorvater' Otto Weber helped him to gain the eschatological perspective of the church's universal mission toward the coming kingdom of God. Other influences (primarily in connection with his work on *hope*) included the Blumhardts (Johann and Christoph), and above all the Jewish Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch.

In 1952 Moltmann received his doctorate in theology from Göttingen University and after marrying Elisabeth Wendel, a fellow

theology student, he served as pastor of the Reformed Church of Bremen-Wasserhorst for the following five years. Then in 1958, at the insistence of Weber, he chose an academic career and became a theology professor at Kirchliche Hochschule in Wuppertal, an institution operated by the Confessing Church. There he came for the first time into contact with Wolfhart Pannenberg, with whom he was later often compared. In 1963 he joined the theological faculty of Bonn University. After a short attachment with Bonn University and a year of study and work in Duke University in North Carolina, Moltmann was offered the prestigious position of professor of systematic theology at Tübingen University, where he taught from 1967 until his retirement in 1994. There he built his theology in dialogue with the theology of Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, but also with Wolfhart Pannenberg, Eberhard Jüngel, Karl Rahner and Johannes Baptist Metz. While being and remaining a Reformed theologian, he was widely open to other traditions and movements: Roman-Catholic, Orthodox, liberation, feminist, 'free church' theology, etc. In fact, he was never limited to the Christian spectrum. Both Marxism and Jewish philosophy caught his attention already in the 60s. He became involved in the Marxist-Christian dialogue, was fascinated by the eschatological vision of Ernst Bloch and learned to appreciate the work of the 'Frankfurt School' of social criticism. At the same time he studied the work of Franz Rosenzweig, Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber and Abraham Heschel and entered into public dialogue with Pinchas Lapide. Later he became critically open to the dialogue between theology and science.

Yet, the Christian traditions remained the main source of his inspiration. From the Orthodox tradition he accepted important insights concerning pneumatology, cosmic Christ and worship[3], from the nonconformists of the Reformation insights for his ecclesiology and political theology. In his dialogue with the Lutherans he emphasized the togetherness of justification and justice, and influenced by the 'peace

[3] Both Moltmann and Stăniloae contributed significantly to the Faith and Order Commission discussions of the World Council of Churches on the new understanding of the *filioque* problem of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381.

churches' he pointed to the dangers of 'Zwei Reiche Lehre,' to the problems of infant baptism, and to the need for a missionary-oriented church.[4] He followed both Barth and Bonhoeffer in making a direct connection between doctrine and ethics, called the churches of all traditions not to bypass the needy of the world and make a contribution toward developing a Christian approach to human rights and the rights of nature. He insisted however that theology must remain clear about its own identity and turn to its own authentic resources when relating critically and therapeutically to the modern situation.

Moltmann's writing is many-volumed but his major work can be divided into two distinct series. The first one was the trilogy: *Theology of Hope*,[5] *The Crucified God*,[6] and the *Church in the Power of the Spirit*.[7] These books were programmatic in style and content: in each of them the aim was to look at theology as a whole from one particular perspective. *Theology of Hope* was not a study of the subject of eschatology, but rather a study of the eschatological nature of Christian theology as such. The book was conceived as a theological parallel to Bloch's *Prinzip Hoffnung*, in which he saw an inheritance of Jewish Messianism. *The Crucified God* was a kind of Christology, but mainly a 'theology of the cross,' which pointed out that the crucified Christ is the criterion of Christian theology and posited that God died on the Cross, raising thus the question of the impassibility of God. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* explored the ecclesiological and pneumatological implications of previous conclusions,

[4] *The Way of Jesus Christ* was influenced by dialogue with American Mennonites following Moltmann's visit to two Mennonite seminaries in 1982. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *Following Jesus Christ in the World Today*, Elkhart/Winnipeg 1983; Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, 1985

[5] *Theologie der Hoffnung: Untersuchungen zur Begründung und zu den Konsequenzen einer christlichen Eschatologie*, München 1964 (*Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch, London 1967).

[6] *Der Gekreuzigte Gott: Das Kreuz Christi als Grund und Kritik christlicher Theologie*, München 1972 (*The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden, London and New York 1974).

[7] *Kirche in der Kraft der Geistes: Ein Beitrag zur messianischen Ekklesiologie*, München 1975 (*The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margaret Kohl, London 1977).

namely the significance of it for the church in its own life and in the world.

All this was a preparatory study for the second series, which already resembled traditional Christian Dogmatics (Systematic Theology). The series included: *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*,[8] *God in Creation*,[9] *The Way of Jesus Christ*,[10] *The Spirit of Life*,[11] and *The Coming of God*.[12] Unlike his early trilogy, Moltmann's aim here was to present a series of systematic contribution to theology by considering the context and correlations of important concepts and doctrines of Christian theology in a particular systematic sequence. While in the first series the controlling idea was the dialectics of the cross and the resurrection (the "absence" and the "presence" of God and the resolution of the dialectic in the work of the Spirit), a particular form of trinitarian thought became the overarching principle in the second series. We may notice here a development from the dialectic of history toward a holistic consideration of nature.

While Moltmann's theology became strongly trinitarian already in *The Crucified God*, the doctrine dominates mainly his later work, where the mutual relationship of the three Persons, the social Trinity, is the context for understanding God's reciprocal relationship with the world. The dialectic of crucifixion and resurrection, interpreted in this framework, goes so far as taking the whole of creation and history within the divine experience. The other methodological principles at work are the orientation to praxis and to doxology. Theology must be more than theory, but praxis – without the enjoyment of God and participation in his pleasure in his creation – is distorted into

[8] *Trinität und Reich Gottes: Zur Gotteslehre*, München 1980 (*The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. M. Kohl, London and New York 1981).

[9] *Gott in der Schöpfung: Ökologische Schöpfungslehre*, München 1985 (*God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, trans. M. Kohl, London and New York 1985).

[10] *Der Weg Jesu Christi: Christologie in messianischen Dimensionen*, München 1989 (*The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimension*, trans. M. Kohl, London and Philadelphia 1989).

[11] *Der Geist des Lebens: Eine ganzheitliche Pneumatologie*, München 1992, The *Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. M. Kohl, London and Minneapolis 1992).

[12] *Das Kommen Gottes: Christliche Eschatologie*, Gütersloh 1995 (*The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. M. Kohl, London and Minneapolis 1996).

activism. Reality is now characterized by mutual, non-hierarchical relationships – within the Trinity, between the Trinity and the world and within the world. Another characteristic of this later work is its structural openness to dialogue with other traditions and other academic disciplines.

In his doctrine of God, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God,* Moltmann attempted to overcome the perennial conflict between theo- and anthropological perspectives of biblical exegesis with the aid of 'trinitarian hermeneutics.' He tried to free this doctrine from the confines of traditional metaphysics and to develop a fully social doctrine of God as Trinity. He insists that there is no fixed order in the Trinity and consequently opposes any 'monotheistic' or 'monarchical' view of divinity which would reduce the real subjectivity of the three persons in their relations to each other. Moltmann explains that the unity of God as the unity of persons in relationship by adhering to the Cappadocian doctrine of *perichoresis*. In addition, he emphasizes the relative independence of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in her community with the Father and the Son.

Moltmann's doctrine of creation, *God in Creation*, which is the subject of this study, and which included also his anthropology, was followed by his more developed christology, *The Way of Jesus Christ*. Here Moltmann elaborates an eschatological, soteriological, Spirit-christology, one that is inclusive of both nature and history. Being critical of both the classic cosmological and modern anthropological models, he tries to think of Christ not statically as one person in two natures or as a historical personality, but rather dynamically, in terms of the forward movement of God's history with the world. In speaking of the 'messianic person' of Jesus, Moltmann does not follow the traditional Reformed doctrine of Christ's threefold office, but rather looks at his person in the relationships of his messianic ministry in the story of his life.

In his pneumatology, *The Spirit of Life*, Moltmann devotes his main attention to developing a holistic doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit within a trinitarian framework. Among the two paths of access to Christian pneumatology – one being the theological conception of God the Holy Spirit, the other the personal, shared experience of the Spirit – Moltmann seeks to begin with the

second path. The human experience of God in the experience of the Spirit ("an awareness of God in, with, and beneath the experience of life, which gives us assurance of God's fellowship, friendship, and love") is for him the foundation of Christian theology. Moltmann argues that on the basis of the experience of the Spirit theology should be able to reflect two 'primary movements': the experience of God in all things and the experience of all things in God.

Finally, in his eschatology, *The Coming of God*, Moltmann tries to integrate the traditionally diverging perspectives: individual and universal eschatology, the eschatology of history and the eschatology of nature. This theme is developed through four areas: personal eschatology ('eternal life'), historical eschatology ('the kingdom of God'), cosmic eschatology ('new heaven' and 'new earth'), and divine eschatology ('God's glory'). For Moltmann eschatology is not concerned with apocalyptic visions of the 'end' ('the last things' or 'the end of all things' but rather with 'the new beginning.'

This fifth volume closes Moltmann's 'systematic contributions' to theology. The future sixth volume will be focused on the *method* of theology.[13]

Moltmann on Creation

Although some of the material contained in *God in Creation* had been used earlier, its essential content is based on Moltmann's Gifford

[13] Moltmann's other books in English include: *The Open Church: Invitation to a Messianic Lifestyle*, London and Philadelphia 1978; *The Future of Creation*, London 1979; *Experiences of God*, London and Philadelphia 1980; *Theology Today: Two contributions towards making theology present*, London and Philadelphia 1988; *Creating a Just Future: The Politics of Peace and the Ethics of Creation in a Threatened World*, London and Philadelphia 1989; *The History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, London and Minneapolis 1991; *Jesus Christ for Today's World*, London and Minneapolis 1994; *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*, London and Minneapolis 1997; *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology*, London and Minneapolis 1999; *Experiences in Theology*, London and Minneapolis 2000, *Science and Wisdom*, London and Minneapolis 2003. For bibliography of Moltmann works see Dieter Ising, et al. (eds.), *Bibliographie Jürgen Moltmann*, München 1987. Cf. also Bauckham, *The Theology of Jurgen Moltmann*, pp. 249–74.

lectures presented in the University of Edinburgh in 1984/1985. In the Preface to the paperback edition of 1993[14] Moltmann states some reasons for his dealing with the issue. They included criticism which had placed him in the line of theologians hostile towards 'nature and the body' and the need for an eschatology of nature, which he felt during discussions with supporters of Teilhard de Chardin's theology of evolution. Such eschatology should propose a description of the future God has prepared for the world. However, Moltmann also reminds us that while some symbols integrating the hope in history with the hope concerning nature were missing in his previous work, the thought itself was not. So, the current work is in no way "naturalizing" his theology of hope, as some might think. Rather, it should be viewed as an attempt to "eschatologize" nature – making it a true symbol of God's inclusive *new creation*.

In Moltmann's view true Christian doctrine of creation should not identify creation with its origin. Creation should rather be viewed and interpreted as a coherent continuing and integrative *process* including redemption and the eschatological kingdom, a kind of transcendental act depicting the development toward the goal. So he is offering us an integrative theocentric and soteriological vision of the cosmos from before creation to its consummation, in which creation is historicized, yet the ultimate meaning of it is to be found in the 'new creation.'

Like all the other books in the systematic series this volume is a compendium of diverse questions and answers. Moltmann creatively reworks his familiar and influential eschatological and trinitarian positions and integrates them with his new emphasis. The German subtitle depicts 'ecology' as the main perspective, while the English one depicts 'the Spirit,' but it seems that other integrative perspectives could serve to indicate the inclusive character of the work as well. One could for example use any of the aspects offered by Richard Bauckham's summary of the doctrine and speak with good reason not merely about 'ecological' doctrine, but also about 'trinitarian,' 'messianic,' or 'sabbatical'doctrine of creation. The book offers significant and well-balanced theological insight regarding our need to

[14] J. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 1993, xi–xii.

understand God's immanence in the natural world and our need to respect the order and the processes of the biosphere. Divided into twelve chapters and an 'appendix,' it deals with particular issues of the God-world relationship, and in uncovering the problems of the traditional approaches, it proposes a new but theologically consistent look at them.

God in creation and the ecological crisis

In the introductory chapter ("God in Creation") Moltmann prepares his readers for the content of his presentation by discussing what he calls the "guiding ideas for an ecological doctrine of creation." Among these belongs the recognition that knowledge of nature is participatory not analytical and that a Christian doctrine of creation evolves in the light of Jesus the Messiah, with whom the messianic time began and through whom it is defined. Messianic and soteriological doctrine understands creation as existing for its future, seeing the present age as "preparation." A special stress is reserved for the peace of the *sabbath* as the completion of creation. One of the most distinctive principles of the doctrine is the role assigned to the Spirit within a decidedly trinitarian view of the process. To deal with the Spirit is to deal with the way of God's presence in the world and the *in* of 'God in Creation' indicates that God is present in creation as its animating energy. The triune God does not merely stand over against his creation but enters it and penetrating all things brings about a communion of all things. The Spirit's world-sustaining operations and his messianic presence must be seen as converging. The Father is creation's creating origin, the Son its shaping origin, the Spirit its life-giving origin. God exists in interpenetration, in the mutuality and reciprocity of love without superiority and subordination. "All relationships analogous to God reflect the primal, reciprocal indwelling and mutual interpenetration of the trinitarian perichoresis" (17).

Chapter II ("In the Ecological Crisis") is a fresh analysis of the current ecological crisis, starting with an appeal that we stop speaking of *nature* and speak of God's *creation* instead. The crisis originates in the ambitions of Renaissance and medieval (nominalist)

teaching concerning humanity's dominance over nature, generally legitimated by monotheism and biblical anthropocentrism. The scale of "the crisis of domination" is to be measured in terms of the breakdown of the values and convictions of the entire society, with all its systems and part-systems, including a "growing instability and crises of personal life" (24). Theology is still bound by the dualism of the modern age: "The history of human beings in their relation to nature is not seen as a part of natural history; on the contrary nature is interpreted as part of human history" (31). The anthropocentric world view, according to which heaven and earth were made for the sake of human beings, is not biblical. "The *belief* in creation only arrives at true understanding of creation when it recollects the alternative forms of *meditative* knowledge" (32), when we do not appropriate things but rather recognize their independence and participate in their life.

The sciences have shown us how to understand creation as *nature*; theology must show how nature is to be understood as God's *creation*. After introducing thinkers who had spoken of the alienation of the nature and of the need of its liberation, Moltmann explains, that "if human society is to find a home in the natural environment, the human soul must correspondingly find a home in the bodily existence of the human person" (49).

Theology of creation has to take note of the far-reaching danger to nature and the threat of the collapse of essential systems of life on this planet. However, the true ecological perspective is intended to move beyond the contemporary environmental crisis to a deeper understanding of creation as the place for mutual dwelling of God and his creatures. The adjective 'ecological' points to the Greek *oikos* which means 'house,' 'household' or 'dwelling.' In the ecological view creation represents God's 'house' and 'dwelling.'[15]

Creation known and understood

In Chapter III ("The Knowledge of Creation") the claim is made that the Christian doctrine of creation requires us to interpret the Genesis creation narratives in the light of the Gospel of Christ. True knowl-

[15] cf. Muller-Fahrenholz, *The Kingdom and the Power*, p. 154.

edge is participatory and shared knowledge, which issues in loving union with others, "within the community of God's creation." The aim of our investigation is not what nature can contribute to our knowledge of God, as it is in the traditional understanding of "natural theology," but what the concept of God contributes to our knowledge of nature (53).

Israel's special experience of God which emerged from God's revelation of himself as the Lord, formed and interpreted its general experience of the world. World as God's creation is the universal horizon of Israel's special experience of God in history. Israel did not merely develop a *protological* understanding of creation; due to their soteriological understanding of it the Israelites also arrived at an *eschatological* view. One cannot disconnect the Israelite belief in creation from Israel's own particular experience of salvation and assign it to a specifically Christian experience. Also one cannot reduce belief in creation to a certain view about the origin of the world without damaging it fundamentally (55). Biblical traditions distinguish *creatio originalis*, *creatio continua* and *creatio nova*. The doctrine of creation must therefore include creation in the beginning, creation in history, and the creation of the End-time. "If we keep in view the goal of creation's history, we can discern in the created world the real promises of the kingdom of glory" (56). History is not a framework for creation; on the contrary: creation is the framework of history. The ultimate meaning of all history is to be found in the new, "consummated creation."

Moltmann believes that the distinction between 'natural theology' and 'revealed theology' is misleading. There is only one single theology but it exists in varying circumstances and temporal conditions – determined by the mode of divine presence. In this Barth has to be corrected or supplemented.[16] The world seen as *theatrum gloriae Dei* (Calvin and Barth) means a "similarity in unmistakable dissimilarity": the difference between the Creator himself and his creation. "The analogy of this metaphor only comes into being 'in the Crea-

[16] On the problem of "natural theology" see also Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology*, pp. 64–83. On the need to go beyond Barth see especially chap. 5 of Thomas Forsyth Torrance, *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*, Edinburgh 1990, pp. 136–59.

tor's condescending descent into his creation, and in the approach of the kingdom of heaven to the world of everyday experience which we find demonstrated in the parables of the incarnate Son of God'" (61).

If all systems of life have a temporal structure, then they are all – each in its own way – open to the future and point to it. "It is theologically necessary to view created things as real promises of the kingdom: not merely of the historical promises of the world, but of its natural promises as well" (63). As long as nature and human history represent promises of future glory, all knowledge of God and the world is parabolic, figurative knowledge. The New Testament testimony about creation is to be found in the *kerygma of resurrection* and *in the experience of the Holy Spirit* – the energy of the new creation (65). The raising of the crucified Jesus is the beginning of the End-time (like it was for Paul). That is why faith in the resurrection is the Christian form of belief in creation. "It is belief in creation under the conditions of this life, which is subject to death" (66).

The appropriate and not to be abandoned elements in the communicative knowledge of creation are gratitude and praise. Viewing the world as creation is not just an intellectual matter. It implies a particular attitude towards the world and a way of behaving in it which touches the existence of the perceiving person and draws him into a wider communion. "The human being does not merely live in the world like other living things. He does not merely dominate the world and use it. He is also able to discern the world in the full awareness of God's creation, to understand it as a sacrament of God's hidden presence, and to apprehend it as a communication of God's fellowship" (70).

God the Creator

In Chapter IV ("God the Creator") Moltmann reminds us that the Bible distinguishes between 'creating' (*b-r-a'*) and 'making' ('*a-s-h*). Before God creates he determines that he will be the world's Creator. The Reformed doctrine excluded the idea of an arbitrary God: God himself resolves to reveal his own glory. In that glory his own eternal life and nature are manifested. By the creation of a world different

from himself God makes the first step towards realizing this eternal resolution to reveal the glory that is the essence of his nature. Creation's goal and end is the eschatological revelation of God's nature in glory. The question is "whether the concept of freedom of choice can really be applied to God's eternal and essential liberty," for without the substantial notion of freedom, freedom of choice is an empty concept. "But if we start from the Creator, the self-communication of his goodness in love to his creation is not a matter of his free will" (82). God "is entirely free when he is entirely himself and he is entirely himself in his creative activity." With this viewpoint one can reconcile the doctrine of decrees with the doctrine of emanation, which although condemned by the church, contains elements of truth that are indispensable for a full understanding of God's creation. "Where the doctrine of decrees sees the creations of the divine will, the doctrine of emanation sees the overflow of the divine nature" (83). If the resolve to create is "an essential resolve" on God's part, we can say that God discloses himself in the decision he makes. Yet, both doctrines lead us indeed only to the threshold of an all-embracing trinitarian doctrine of creation. The eternal divine loving life issues "in the creative process in its overflowing rapture from its trinitarian perfection and completeness, and comes to itself in the eternal rest of the sabbath" (84).

God's self-distinction from the world indicates that creation is neither divine nor demonic, neither eternal, nor meaningless. *Creatio ex nihilo* means there are no pre-conditions to what God creates, and there is no primordial matter which God must use in order to create. Divine creativity cannot be compared with human activity. The beginning has no presuppositions at all because 'nothing' has no substance of its own: The world was created neither out of pre-existent matter, nor out of the divine 'Being' itself. God creates the world out of freedom, out of love. Creation is not a demonstration of a boundless power. There is no ontological link between the word of creation and created things, no *analogia entis*.

Creatio ex nihilo means there are no pre-conditions to what God creates. Moltmann is convinced that the only way of conceiving an *extra Deum*, which can be reconciled with God's divinity without contradiction, is the assumption of a self-limitation by God preceding his creation. This is the idea which was developed first by Isaac

Luria in his doctrine of *zimzum*.[17] According to this kabbalistic doctrine, which can be interpreted as the first act of divine self-humiliation, "God does not create merely by calling something into existence, or by setting something afoot," but "by letting-be, by making room, and by withdrawing into himself." Creation *ex nihilo* means that God is first creating a *nihil*, a nothingness, literally godforsaken space and so necessarily hell and absolute death. In this way God makes space and time for "a finitude," for being which is other than himself, yet within himself and surrounded by himself (86ff). The movement from God's initial self-limitation to his eschatological "delimitation" in respect of his creation can best be grasped if we compare the process of *original* creation with the processes of *continuous* creation and *new* creation. The initial creation is without any prior conditions, while creation in history is the laborious creation of redemption, the painful labor of God overcoming disaster through participation in suffering. The eschatological creation of the kingdom of glory proceeds from the vanquishing of sin and death at the cross. Creation *ex nihilo* in the beginning is the preparation and promise of the redeeming *annihilatio nihili*, from which proceeds the eternal being of creation. By entering into the God-forsakenness of sin and death, God overcomes it and makes it part of his eternal life. The resurrection and the kingdom of glory are the fulfillment of the promise. "In the light of the cross of Christ, *creatio ex nihilo* means forgiveness of sins through Christ's suffering, justification of the godless through Christ's death, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal life through the lordship of the Lamb" (91).

According to Moltmann, the protest against the senseless murder of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, with which no one can come to terms, can only retain its power if it is borne up by a hope for the victims of that senseless murder. "The protest against the annihilating Nothingness must not lead to the suppression and forgetfulness of the annihilated" and the "hope for the annihilated must not permit us to come to terms with their annihilation" (92). Eschatology is nothing other than

[17] Moltmann is introduced this teaching already in his *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 109n. He got the idea from Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York 1954, 24ff. (Cf. also Gershom Scholem, "Schöpfung aus Nichts und Selbstverschränkung Gottes," in *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1956, 87–119.)

faith in the Creator with its eyes turned towards the future. Anyone who believes in the God who created being out of nothing, also believes in the God who gives life to the dead. "His faith makes him prepared to withstand annihilation, even when, humanly speaking, there is nothing left to hope for. His hope in God commits him to faithfulness to the earth" (93).

The specifically Christian doctrine of creation – the trinitarian doctrine – is determined by the revelation of Christ: "Because Jesus was revealed as the Son of the eternal Father, the Wisdom and the creative Word which are identified with the Son also take on a personal and hypostatic character which they lack in the Old Testament testimonies" (95). The presence and the efficacy of the Spirit is the eschatological goal of creation and reconciliation. "The experience of the eschatological reality of the Spirit leads to the conclusion that this is the same Spirit in whose power the Father, through the Son, has created the world, and preserves it against annihilating Nothingness" (96). Each subject of the Trinity possesses his own unique personality, so that no single, univocal concept of persons is applicable to the Father, the Son and the Spirit. As indicated already in previous writings Moltmann can be included among defenders of 'panentheism.' In his view, "God, having created the world, also dwells in it, and conversely the world which he has created exists in him. This is a concept which can really only be thought and described in trinitartian terms" (98).

The notion of the 'cosmic Christ' is the basis both of the eschatological redemption of the whole creation and of the protological creation as well. Pneumatological understanding becomes indispensable for the sake of creation's preservation and the rediscovery of its divine mystery in the immanence of God. Moltmann also expands the role of the Spirit as Creator, the 'cosmic Spirit.' The Word's becoming flesh is accompanied by "indwelling" of the Spirit and the Son's emptying himself is followed by a kenosis of the Spirit. The self-limitating, self-humiliating and self-surrendering Spirit of life is the principle of creativity on all levels of matter and life and creates possibilities, interactions, harmony, cooperation and community. Without a perception of the Creator Spirit in the world there cannot be a peaceful community of creation in which human beings and nature share. "So what believers experience and perceive in the Holy

Spirit reveals the structure of the Spirit of creation, the human spirit, and the Spirit in the whole non-human creation" (p. 101). If the cosmic Spirit is the Spirit of God, the universe cannot be viewed as a closed system. It has to be understood as a system that is open – open for God and for his future.

The Time and the Space of Creation – Heaven and Earth

Moltmann's chapter V ("The Time of Creation") is an illuminating survey of the reflection on the relation of time and history from the early cultures to the present, focusing on the Christian thought of Augustine and Karl Barth. In the biblical traditions time is never empty. We have to talk about the events if we want to understand time. Israel was familiar first of all with the 'kairological' understanding of time. She experienced her God in unique historical happenings, like Exodus, and from summaries of saving events she developed her conception of history as a succession. The connection between the promise that has gone forth and the divine faithfulness that has been experienced pointed to the future and it was the future that had precedence in the different modes of time. This was the prophetic experience: If there is a future at all for the nation in the history of God, this future cannot be just a prolongation of tradition, of the past. The eschatological is defined by the promise of something qualitatively new.

The premise of the Messianic understanding of the New Testament is the apocalyptic doctrine of time with the teaching of the two 'aeons' and of the Christ event as the decisive turn of the age. The difference from the apocalyptic is that with Christ the totally new in quality has already begun. The Messianic time is a time of "well-founded hope" (122). It is "no longer an unendurable burden," it is "a matter of course, and of joy" (123). The Christian faith does not replace the archaic, cyclical interpretation of time but it introduces its own messianic understanding of it by distinguishing between the quality of past and future.[18]

[18] See also Moltmann's advanced discussion of the issue in his articles "What is Time and How Do We Experience It?" and "The Origin and Completion of Time in the Primordial and in the Eschatological Moment," in: Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, pp. 85–97 and 98–110.

Theological problems presented by space are analogous to those about time of creation. In chapter VI ("The Space of Creation") Moltmann asks what mediates between the absolute space of God and the relative space of his creation and considers the *ecological* concept of space (which corresponds in its own way to the *kairological* concept of time). If we follow the doctrine of the *Shekinah* and the Christian doctrine of the incarnation, we have to speak of the marvel that the infinite God himself should dwell in his finite creation, making it his own environment. Yet, there are no inherent contradictions here – these are two kinds of indwelling: God's indwelling in the world is divine in kind, the world's indwelling in God is worldly in kind. By virtue of their creation in the image of God, in which they are unique, human beings are open to the world, beyond their own particular environment. Because human beings are at once God's creation and his image, they are also both related to their environment and open to the world.[19] With creation, a space for the created world comes into being which is neither the uncreated omnipresence of God, nor the relative space of objects. "So the space of creation precedes both creation and the space fashioned within creation, yet without being identical with the uncreated, eternal omnipresence of God" (156).[20]

These ideas bring Moltmann directly to the question of the "duality of heaven and earth," which he is dealing with in chapter VI ("Heaven and Earth"). 'The earth' means the whole visible and temporal world, while 'the heavens' mean the kingdom of God's creative potentialities. The two do not contrast but complement each other. The world without heaven would be a closed system, a world without qualitative transcendence. The Kingdom of God's creative potentialities is non-transient but in comparison with God himself it is finite.

[19] In discussing the problem of 'absolute space' Moltmann is listing Giordano Bruno among the pantheists entertaining ideas which "would mean the end of the biblical faith in creation" (154). However, in his essay 'From a Closed World to the Infinite Universe,' in: *Science and Wisdom,* pp. 158–171, he is defending him as a panentheist.

[20] Cf. also Moltmann's discussion of the matter in the essay "God and Space" in: *Science and Wisdom*, pp. 111–126. It is a pity, however, that Moltmann does not try to compare his views to the challenging proposals of Thomas F. Torrance. (See Thomas Forsyth Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, Edinburgh 1969; *Space, Time and Resurrection*, Edinburgh 1976.)

Heaven is the world God created first, so that from there he might form the earth, encompass it, and finally redeem it. Not all the potentialities are good; if we talk about demonic or satanic forces we talk about perversions in this sphere, and "deliverance from evil" also means the restoration of the good in earthly potentialities. In the all-embracing peace of Christ heaven and earth arrive at their open communication with one another, and the movement of God in the raising of Christ and in his ascension into heaven sets the whole universe on the move towards the coming kingdom of glory. The heaven must not be pushed out of the doctrine of creation by becoming deified. Once identified with God, heaven falls and God falls necessarily with it (175). This was the result of modern criticism of heaven (initiated by Feuerbach and developed by Marx). Ernst Bloch rehabilitated heaven at the expense of losing its transcendence. "Without God's creative potentialities for the world, worldly potentialities remain determined by presently existing reality" (180f).

While heaven represents the relative 'beyond' of the world, the earth is the relative this-worldliness of heaven. In heaven creation has its relative transcendence and in the earth creation has its relative immanence. But we must uphold the duality and clearly distinguish between heaven and the kingdom of God. Heaven is now the place of God's presence – not yet the arena of his glory. Only the 'kingdom of glory' comprises both heaven and earth. If the soul goes to heaven after death, it is not already "redeemed" there. It waits in its own way for the redemption, when both these spheres of creation will enter into unhindered and boundlessly fruitful communication with one another. However, even in the kingdom of glory the world remains God's creation and will not become God himself.

Creation and Evolution

Chapter VIII ("The Evolution of Creation") is a balanced account and welcomed clarification of issues which have been the subject of controversy for over a century. Today we understand that evolution is the way in which *creation continua* takes place, and it is a process which finds its completion through the unbounded fullness of God's indwelling in the world. However, first of all we have to talk theo-

logically about the human being as a creature in the fellowship of creation. Before we interpret this being as *imago Dei*, we must see him as *imago mundi* – as "a microcosm in which all previous creatures are to be found again" (186). As 'God's image,' human beings are God's representatives in his creation; they are his counterpart, in whom he desires to see himself as in a mirror. As "God's last creation before the sabbath," the human being is the embodiment of all other creatures. "The complex system 'human being' contains within itself all simpler systems in the evolution of life, because it is out of these that the human being has been built up and has proceeded. In this sense they are present in him, just as he is dependent on them" (189f).

The stories of creation belong within a hermeneutical process of revision and innovation, as the result of new experiences. They themselves, as testimonies to the history of God with the world, direct their readers to new experiences of the world in this divine history. They offer themselves for productive new interpretation and further development. It is necessary to relate them to new insights about nature and new theories concerning the interpretation of these insights. The openness for ever-new syntheses is rooted in the openness for the future which we find in the testimonies themselves (192f). The dilemma "evolution *or* creation" is thus a false confrontation overshadowing genuine problems. Both concepts have to be de-ideologized and kept strictly for the sectors to which they were intended to apply.

The Christian doctrine of creation cannot be narrowed to mere *creation originalis*. "The act of creation gathers into a single divine moment the whole of existence, even though this existence is in itself extended in time, and differentiated in its protean forms. Consequently there is in principle no contradiction between creation and evolution. The concepts belong on different levels. They are talking about different sides of the same reality… Today, the direct continuation of the evolution that led to the origin of the human species on earth lies in the hands of human beings themselves. They can either destroy this stage of evolution, or they can organize themselves into a higher form of common living than before, and thus advance evolution further" (196).

Moltmann foresees the possibility of a synthesis between scientific theories of evolution and theories of history developed in the humanities. "The 'hermeneutical circle' offers a wealth of models for the chance-selection-necessity process from which natural evolutions emerge, so that it is possible to see the evolution of matter and the evolution of life as simple hermeneutical processes" (198). Once we grasp the history of creation as an interplay between God's transcendence in relation to the world and his immanence in that world, the world can be comprehended as an open, participatory and anticipatory system. A new interpretation of the Christian doctrine of creation must distinguish clearly between creation in the beginning, continuous creation, and the consummation of creation in the kingdom of glory. God accompanies creation in its irreversible movement through the fellowship of his creative Spirit. Even creation in the beginning is thus an "open system," which has neither its foundation, nor its goal, nor its stability within itself, but is eccentric in its design and it is aligned in the direction of the future.

In this context Moltmann is developing his previous denials that redemption is merely *restituio in integrum*. The goal of this history of creation is not a return to the paradisal primordial condition (contra Bultmann, for example), but rather (as in the Orthodox view) a forward-moving creative fulfillment of the Kingdom "which takes in the whole of creation."[21] "The initial creation is without preconditions, the precondition of historical creation is creation in the beginning. In the same way we have to distinguish between initial contingency and the contingency of events in the processes of open systems" (208). It is not merely creation continua. It is at the same time *creatio nova* (or *creatio anticipativa*). A detailed doctrine of the *creation continua* must see God's historical activity under both aspects: the preservation of the world God has created, and the preparation of its completion and perfecting. God also creates quite specific chances for liberation from isolation, and quite specific chances for the evolution of the various open life systems. "For the more an open life system is able to suffer, the more it is able to learn" (210). Because it is a

[21] Moltmann is referring to Paul Evdokimov's article "Nature" in *The Scottish Journal of Theology* 18 (1965), pp. 1–22.

fundamentally suffering and enduring creation, the activity of God in history is also "silent and secret."

The "accompanying activity of God" in the history of the world has the form of a whole series of relationships: God is acting in, through, with and out of the activity of his creatures. Created beings act out of the divine potencies and into a divine environment; the activity of created beings is made possible by divine patience. Though we do not have to expect the accompanying activity of God to take the form of supernatural interventions and spectacular disruptions, experiences of 'signs and wonders' are not to be excluded.

"Creation contains neither spirit-less matter nor non-material spirit; there is only *informed* matter. But the different kinds of information which determine the systems of life and matter must all be given name 'spirit'" (212). "The dwelling of the unbounded fullness of God's eternal life means the openness *par excellence* of all life systems and hence also their eternal livingness, not their finite petrification" (213). "We can no longer think of the Being of God as merely the highest reality for all realized possibilities. We have then to conceive of his Being as the transcendent 'making-possible' of all possible realities" (214).

Human beings and the ideal of embodiment

In chapter IX ("God's Image in Creation: Human Beings") we find Moltmann discussing issues from perennial controversies. His new emphases make him to use the social concept of the Trinity to interpret 'God's image' in terms of mutual personal fellowship of human beings. The creation of humans is the final work of creation. One should notice that human beings come into being not through God's creative 'word' but out of his special resolve. Inherent in this resolve is God's "contraction to this single possibility" and his first self-humiliation: God is drawn into the history of these creatures (217). Understood Christ logically *imago Dei* means that the human being has been created in the direction of the image of God which is Christ. Christology is the fulfillment of anthropology, and anthropology becomes the preparation for Christology. God's particular relationship with that 'image' gives human nature its definition: Human being

"becomes an indirect revelation of God's divine Being in earthly form" (220). Now, the image of God and his glory is the human *community*, not only the human individual set apart from nature (221). The form of life which corresponds to God is a socially open companionship between people. The Trinitarian concept of *perichoresis*, which is a community concept, is better than the assumption of a 'duality' in God, as a model for the bisexual image of God on earth (223f). Moltmann agrees (with Stăniloae) that "the Trinitarian concept of community is able to overcome not merely the ego-solitariness of the narcissist, but also the egoism of the couple – man and wife" (223f).[22] The concept of "human lordship over the animals has to be distinguished from human subjection of the earth for the purposes of nourishment and distinguished more clearly than is the case in the traditional doctrine of the *dominium terrae*" (224). Only as *whole* human beings, only as *equal* human beings, and only *in the community* of human beings can men and women "exercise divinely legitimated rule" (225).

The human being's likeness to God must be viewed as a historical process with an "eschatological termination," not as a static condition. "*Being* human means *becoming* human in this process… Under the conditions of history and in the circumstances of sin and death, the sovereignty of the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus is the only true *dominium terrae*. It is to 'the Lamb' that rule over the world belongs" (227).

The messianic calling of human beings to be "conformed" to Jesus the Messiah sets them into the eschatological history of the 'new creation,' in which they pass "from calling to justification, from justification to sanctification, from sanctification to glorification" (228).

Thanks to the gracious abiding presence of God the dignity of human beings is "unforfeitable, irrelinquishable and indestructible" (233). In this context Moltmann is spelling a kind of universal salvation: If sin is a perverted relationship to God, then it is not only human beings who must be redeemed from sin; "the energies of sin themselves" have to be "put right" (234).

---

[22] Moltmann makes a reference to Dimitru Stăniloae's article "Der dreieinige Gott und die Einheit der Menschheit" in *Evangelische Theologie* 41, 1981, pp. 439ff.

In the process of his redemption and perfecting, the human being becomes God's image "in body and soul." The biblical creation narrative knows nothing about a primacy of the soul. It declares that the whole human being is the image of God on earth. Under the guidance of the life-giving Spirit, body and soul form already here and now a perichoretic community of mutual influence (240). The true human community has the same designation. "In their various communities, human beings are to be understood not merely as the image of God's rule over creation, but also as the image of his inward nature" (241). This is the valuable insight of Orthodox theologians who (unlike Augustine or Thomas who proceeded from the unity of the Trinity) started from the essential fellowship of the Trinity and found the imago Dei in the primal human community. The theology of the open Trinity is the basis for a manifestly social doctrine of human likeness to God.[23] Created as God's image, human beings are "not merely restored from their sins;" they are also gathered into the open Trinity, into the Son's eternal fellowship with the Father, for the Son is the "first-born among many brothers and sisters" (242).

If "embodiment is the end of God's works," it should be the supreme aim of the human being as well. Using the dictum of Friedrich Oetinger[24] as the title of Chapter X, Moltmann rebukes all theories of the self and of the body-soul relationship which fall short of this resolution and stick to the idea of the primacy or the dominance of the soul. The notion of "the immortality of the soul" can hardly be reconciled with the biblical belief in creation (p. 250).[25] Even Barth in his description of the correspondence between the human beings and God is drawing on ancient philosophical concepts.

Biblical anthropology is not conceived in definitions but in narratives. They "establish what the person is by presenting him in the relationships in which he lives" (257). Moltmann argues for the perichoretic relationship of God and the world and talks about *Gestalt*, the total configuration of the self, which emerges both in the multiplicity of its relationships to other selves and to the environment

[23] Cf. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 94ff.
[24] Cf. *God in Creation*, 351.p.1.
[25] On the problem of "the immortality of the soul" see Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, pp. 58–77.

and in the inward structure of 'soul and body.' Human beings are also perichoresis, body and soul in community and harmony. Understanding the two in mutual interpenetration and differentiated unity brings true individuality and sociality (258f). We learn of the human soul being pervaded by the creative Spirit to become a spirit-soul.

The human being becomes a spirit-Gestalt and can only exist in exchange with other living beings in nature and society. 'Spirit' in this view designates the forms of organization and community of all open systems of matter and life. "Theologically this Spirit must be called the Spirit of God and the presence of God in the creature he has made" (263).

Moltmann indicates that the Spirit of creation, preservation and development is not, according to biblical usage, the Holy Spirit of redemption and sanctification. The Holy Spirit does not supersede this Spirit but transforms it. In so doing the Holy Spirit operates upon the unconscious body language of human beings not just upon their intentional and willed actions. It is the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of God in believers and in the fellowship of love. "God the Spirit is 'the common deity' who binds human beings into higher life with one another and, in this common sphere, makes of them again particular individuals," giving each separate person his own Gestalt and the right to his own unique individuality. "The social character of the human being and his individuation are not antitheses. They are merely the two sides of the differentiating life process which we call spirit" (267).

In the Old Testament the Spirit was conceived "as the divine energy of life, the creative Spirit of life." In the New Testament the Spirit was usually described "as the power of the resurrection." This "life-giving Spirit of resurrection" is experienced here and now, in our finite conditions, as "unconditioned love," as "an eternal life before death" (270). This experience is reflected in the spirit of affirmation, leading into the joys of life and into the pains of death. Moltmann is agreeing (this time with Hegel) that the life of the Spirit "is not one that shuns death and keeps clear of destruction. It endures its death and in death maintains it being" (270).

Sickness does not diminish this experience. Health does not increase it. "Only what can stand up to both health *and* sickness, and

ultimately to living *and* dying, can count as a valid definition of what it means to be human" (273). It is the same unique experience, whether we call it "the strength to be a human person," or "love," or "the Spirit as the affirmation of life."

The Feast of Creation

"The goal and completion of every Jewish and every Christian doctrine of creation must be the doctrine of the sabbath, for on the sabbath and through the sabbath God 'completed' his creation" (276). In his last chapter ("The Sabbath: The Feast of Creation") Moltmann's point is that the sabbath opens creation towards its true future. It is the occasion on which the redemption of the world is celebrated proleptically. It is "the presence of eternity in time and a foretaste of the world to come" (276). The Sabbath is thus not to be viewed as "the day of rest" following six working days. The Sabbath is rather the 'feast of creation' (Rosenzweig), for "the whole work of creation was performed *for the sake of the Sabbath*" (p. 277). In it creation's meaning and destination are manifested (p. 278).

In the direct presence of resting God all created beings find their dwelling and foundation. This makes the peace of the Sabbath the prefiguration of redemption, which the Epistle to the Hebrews calls "entering God's rest" (282). Through this feast "Israel experienced and diffused the blessing of the whole creation through the reposing presence of God, which gives enduring being to all things. That is why Israel's Sabbath has cosmic dimensions and gives Israel a special place in creation" (283). "When the Sabbath is celebrated, it is celebrated for all created being. The primary orientation towards time, which is grounded in the sanctification of the Sabbath, seems breathtaking to peoples whose cultures are aligned to holy places and divine precincts" (284). While the seventh-day week is certainly known elsewhere, the Sabbath is not defined by any natural cycle, but by the creation story (285).

The human beings who rest on the Sabbath day, "and in their rest are wholly present," are God's image (p. 285). By sanctifying the Sabbath they show they are "entirely free from the striving for happiness and for the will of performance and achievement." The peace of

Sabbath can thus be viewed as a kind of Jewish 'doctrine of justification' (286).

Redemption has to be understood as both 'the eternal Sabbath' and 'the new creation.' The weekly Sabbath corresponds to the Sabbath year and the Sabbath year corresponds to the Year of Jubilee, the liberation of the oppressed. Together the three – "Sabbath day, Sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee point in time beyond the time of history, out into the messianic time, to the 'Sabbath without end'" (290). Jesus' liberty towards the law, witnessed in the New Testament, must be interpreted as the liberty of the messianic era which was promised by the prophets and which Israel expected. The Sabbath commandment itself is pointing to this very freedom. "Jesus preached no Gentile Christian freedom from the Sabbath; what he proclaimed was the messianic fulfillment of the Israelite 'dream of completion'" (292).

The Christian feast-day does not, according to Moltmann, go back to the Jewish Sabbath and "cannot be interpreted either as the Christian Sabbath or as the Christian way of observing the fourth commandment" (293). Correctly understood, the Christian Sunday "neither abolishes Israel's Sabbath, nor supplants it; and there should be no attempt to replace the one by the other." Any attempt "to transfer the Sabbath commandment to the Christian Sunday is wrong, both historically and theologically. The Christian feast-day must rather be seen as the 'messianic extension of Israel's Sabbath'" (294). Hence, when the early church called the day of the Christian celebration of the resurrection 'the eighth day,' the counting of the days themselves was wrong, but through this designation the church "pointed the Christian Sunday towards the sabbath of Israel, and laid before Israel the prospect of the day of the new creation" (295). Unfortunately, separation from Judaism turned the day of the Christian feast of the resurrection into 'Sunday,' and so "paganized it" (p. 296).

Moltmann is therefore pleading for the renewal of the link between the Christians' Lord's Day and Israel's Sabbath. "It would be a useful practical step in this direction if the eve of Sunday were allowed to flow into a Sabbath stillness," to embrace the peace of the sabbath, the week's work coming to rest in God's presence. "This worship should spread the messianic hope which renews life." Sun-

day would again become "the authentic Christian feast of the resurrection" if we would "succeed in celebrating a Christian Sabbath the evening before" as the expression of the divine completion of creation. "The ecological day of rest should be a day without pollution of the environment – a day when we leave our cars at home, so that nature too can celebrate its Sabbath" (296).

In a lengthy *Appendix* of his doctrine Moltmann considers various "Symbols of the World" (Great World Mother, Mother Earth, Feast of Heaven and Earth, World as Dance, Great Theatre of the World, Play, Work, and Machine) and compares them in the "messianic light." "The monotheism of the transcendent God and the mechanization of the world put an end to all ideas about God's immanence" and began to segregate the divine from the world of human beings (318). He points out that in the messianic images and eschatological symbols of the Bible we find "the symbol of the child." This is probably a symbolic way of expressing a human situation "before sexual differentiation." Images used for the fellowship of Jesus, the 'child' of God, are no longer images of fatherhood and motherhood, but images of brotherhood, sisterhood and friendship (319). We should therefore seek to replace the modern mechanistic and one-sidedly patriarchal world view (320).

Conclusion and Evaluation

By connecting ideas from many areas of human and theological interest and setting them in the context of the Triune God, which is undoubtedly his strength, Jürgen Moltmann seeks to offer us a comprehensive vision of the ways of God with the world. His vision stresses the need for both a genuine transcendence for the creation in God and a genuine immanence of God in creation. Moltmann's particular version of *panentheism*, namely the view that God, having created the world, dwells in it and conversely the world which he has created exists in him, received much attention,[26] especially when he

[26] Gregory R. Peterson includes Moltmann among prominent theologians who argue for a panentheistic view. ("Wither Panentheism" in *Zygon* 36, 2001, 395.) Philip

expressed his position creatively by using and exploring the kabbalistic notion of *zimzum* as a form of the traditional idea of divine *kenosis.*[27] Critics appreciated that the shift of emphases from the transcendence to the immanence enables Moltmann to speak about the activity of God as Spirit (though some were puzzled by his making a distinction between the creative immanent Spirit and the Holy Spirit and by the idea of the kenosis of the Spirit)[28] and acclaimed his pressing for a "cosmic eschatology" and his conceiving creation as an "open system."

It is clear that one of Moltmann's most original contributions is his discussion of "heaven and earth" in Chapter VII, especially his argument for preserving the duality of the two, not in any form of dualism, but as two sides of one 'system' (the world). It was appreciated especially by theologians who were supporting the idea of a dialogue between theology and the natural sciences.[29] Moltmann himself is moving in this direction. His *God in Creation* treats the prob-

---

Clayton who offers a number of arguments in favor of a panentheistic position in his *God and Contemporary Sciences*, appeals for support to the writings of Moltmann. (Cf. P. Clayton, *op. cit.*, Grand Rapids 1997. See particularly the chapter "Rethinking the Relation of God and World: Panentheism and the contribution of philosophy," pp. 82–124). Because Moltmann is an original theologian thinker, there can be some questions about exactly how panentheistic his thinking actually is (cf. Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science and Understanding*, London 2000, pp. 93n.), but he certainly admits to have adopted the idea in his approach. Already in the opening chapter of his doctrine of God, Moltmann states that "by taking up panentheistic ideas from the Jewish and the Christian traditions, we shall try to think ecologically about God, man and the world in their relationships and indwellings" (*The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 19).

[27] Cf. also his article "God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World," in: Polkinghorne (ed.), *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, Grand Rapids and Cambridge 2001, pp. 137–151. (Extended version of it appeared as "God's Self-Restriction and the History of the Universe," in: Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, 54–67.)

[28] Cf. J. MacIntyre in his review of Moltmann's book in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 41, no 2 (1988), pp. 267–273.

[29] In commenting on his approach John Polkinghorne says: "we can give scientific encouragement to what he is driving at. One might venture the thought that earth is process read downwards the material, heaven is process read upwards towards the mental. As I have suggested before, we mind/matter amphibians participate in a noetic world as well as in a physical world. The everlasting truths of mathematics are part of that noetic heaven. Moltmann suggests that God's potentialities and potencies are also to be found there, but that it is not the *home* of his being." (John C. Polkinghorne, *The Faith of a Physicist*, Minneapolis 1994, pp. 80n.)

lems of relating a Christian understanding of creation to scientific theories of evolution only briefly (in Chapter VIII), but this part is rather significant and his dealing with the "evolution of creation" is a good proposal of such a dialogue. Moltmann is making sure that inputs from natural sciences do not determine the structure of theological work and must be integrated by the theological concern, but he expresses his awareness that theology must relate to scientific theories and that particular findings of natural sciences have to be integrated into the general picture, regardless how provisional such a synthesis would be.[30]

His approach was mostly welcomed as promising. Critics pointed out that the trinitarian model of divine transcendence and immanence overcomes the traditional opposition between creation and evolution. However, some found it too general and at some points misleading.[31] For some reviewers Moltmann's vision was too optimistic, neglecting ambiguities in evolution, and they wondered whether he does not overemphasize the openness of nature – failing to do justice to the relative "closedness" of the ecosystem, or thinking that change in itself is an "intrinsic good."[32] Others accused him of venturing into

[30] See, Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 183, 191. Moltmann continues this course in his later publications, primarily in his *Science and Wisdom* (though some of the chapters are older than his volume on creation). See also his essay, "Reflections on Chaos and God's Interaction with the World from a Trinitarian Perspective," his contribution for the series of bi-annual research conferences on theology and science sponsored by the Center for Theology and Science, Berkeley, California, and the Vatican Observatory. Moltmann here describes several models of the God-world relation based on philosophical and scientific theories and compares them with the central theological models of creation and incarnation. In this context he again presents his ideas about God's creative self-limitation, immanence and *perichoresis* with all things, and on eschatology as the new creation of all things. (Cf. R. J. Russell, et al. (eds.), *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, Vatican City State/Berkeley 2001, 205–210.)

[31] In his review of Moltmann's book John Polkinhorne was amazed that Moltmann was treating 'space' without even mentioning general relativity. (Cf. *Expository Times* 97 no. 9, Je (1986), p. 285. Unfounded seems to be Moltmann's claim that the complex system 'human being' contains all simpler systems in the evolution of life "within itself," that it is "out of these that the human being has been built up." (*God in Creation*, 189f; cf. Jan Moravec, "Theologie a přírodní vědy," in: *Logos a svět, Sborník k sedmdesátinám Ladislava Hejdánka a Jakuba. S. Trojana*, Praha 1997, 161–188.)

[32] Cf. W. C. French, "Returning to Creation: Moltmann's Eschatology Naturalized" *Journal of Religion* 68 no. 1 Ja (1988), 83; B. J. Walsh, "Theology of Hope and the Doctrine of Creation," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 59 Ja (1987), 63.

too much speculation at the expense of biblical grounding in comparison with his earlier work, and/or of "confusing tradition with revelation."[33] Some were surprised to find in an "ecological doctrine" little positive program of action, no guidelines for an adequate environmental ethic, and only calls for liturgical reform in the place of concrete guidance to the church or society.[34] Still others found the God-world relationships too one-sided, the interplay between God and the world presupposed in "perichoresis" not really worked out or appreciated. They noticed little acknowledgement of the spontaneous and creative contribution of creation itself,[35] in comparison with Moltmann's earlier views, where this relationship had more reciprocal character, where the world was putting its impress on God as well, where God experienced the creation and this experience contributed novel enrichment to God.[36]

The main theological criticism was pertaining Moltmann's view of the relationship of "original creation" and "new creation." Does not Moltmann's *creatio nova*, interpreted as a *novum ex nihilo*, rather than "restoration," presuppose total and active *annihilatio mundi* and not only *annihilatio nihili*, as he had suggested? Or, to put it differently, does not the necessity of "new creation" undercut the goodness of *creatio originalis* and does it not in this sense fail to account for the biblical distinction between 'creation' and 'fall'? What is the relation between the eschatological *novum* and the possibilities inherent in the past and present actuality, if the old creation would be "discarded"[37] and the new one totally stripped of all those limitations once called "very good"? And how could this vision of *eschaton* be a basis for *ethics*? Would not all Christian "striving for justice" be *annihilated* as well?[38] According to some critics the problem is in

---

[33] Cf. Ronald Cole-Turner in *Zygon* 22 no 1 Mr (1987), 122, or G. S. Hendry in *Theology Today* 43 no 4 Ja (1987), 577.

[34] Paul S. Fiddes in Journal of Theological Studies 38, no 1 Ap 1987, p. 262; cf. French, *op. cit*. p. 84.

[35] Fiddes, *op. cit*., 263; R. Cole-Turner, *ibid*.

[36] Cf. *The Trinity and the Kingdom* 98f.

[37] *God in Creation*, 63.

[38] Cf. Steven Bouma-Prediger, "Creation as the Home of God: The Doctrine of Creation in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann," in *Calvin Theological Journal* 32 (1997), 89f. ; B. J. Walsh, *op. cit*, 60ff.; Douglas J. Schuurman, "Creation, Eschaton,

Moltmann's solution of the need to explicate creatio *ex nihilo* for all the stages of creation, and they see it closely connected with his understanding of *sin,* that had been questioned before. Sin in Moltmann's view is essentially the state of being "closed off" and fixed on the present. The fundamental tension within the gospel is thus a temporal one (between past and present on the one hand and God's future on the other), and eschaton is not seen as the "ultimate victory of light over darkness." Moltmann does not share the concept of justification as restoration of the true being of man distorted by sin. In his view, the destructiveness of death is not the result of sin. The event of justification is part of a universal transfiguration of the passing world. Redemption becomes healing from mortality and suffering through divine participation on the cross. But does not sin arise also in the way we deal with an "open future"? Cannot openness of a future be menace as well as possibility?[39]

It seems that for Moltmann creation is necessarily "faulted" because sin as death and transience is ontologically constitutive of creation itself. The *passio Dei* of the cross is identical with inner-trinitarian *passio Dei*. "Creation is saved and justified in eternity by the sacrifice of the Son which is her sustaining foundation."[40] The whole creation – negated by the eschaton – is in itself part of the "love affair" within the Trinity, which includes Christ's death, for the death of the Son is essential to the Trinity's inner dynamics. This means that it includes evil. But if the Christ event is not accidental, but somehow necessary because of the inner life of the Trinity and the ontological fallenness of creation, "is not grace lost to the Christian faith and is redemption not a free act of grace"?[41]

This is connected with another older charge, namely, that Moltmann's God is not free from history and that in opposing patriarchal notions of domination he fails to do justice to the complex nature of "power," defining it in opposition to love as if it were "intrinsically

---

and Ethics: An Analysis of Theology and Ethics in Jürgen Moltmann," *Calvin Theological Journal* 22 Ap (1987), 42–67.

[39] S. Bouma-Prediger, *op. cit.,* 86ff.; B. J. Walsh, *ibid.* Cf. also Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, 258; Wright, *Disavowing Constantine*, 149.

[40] Cf. *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 168.

[41] B. J. Walsh, *op. cit*., 73.

evil," obscuring thus the fact that God can exercise power in the name of love.[42]

There are other questions: If the self-limitation of God and the creation of a primordial *nihil* is a necessary condition for the world to exist, and if redemption is the refilling of that space, how can the fundamental *distinction* between God and creation be preserved in the eschatological redemption of all things?

Some of the charges might be refuted by further development of Moltmann's vision,[43] but most of them just indicate different understandings of reality and its mystery (and perhaps a little different reading of the biblical witness) from the one Moltmann made gradually his own, not without the influence of the Orthodox tradition. The idea that nature has its own historical destiny of redemption and liberation in its messianic fulfillment is one of those Moltmann owes to the impact of this heritage on his recent thought, particularly through the author of the only systematical statement of it available in German, the late Dimitru Stăniloae of Rumania.[44]

---

[42] N. G. Wright, *op. cit*. 150. Moltmann does not share the conviction of Oscar Cullmann, John H. Yoder, Walter Wink and others, that the 'principalities and powers' mentioned in a set of New Testament texts might refer to unspecified structures or systems of power, which were originally 'good creations' but had fallen and are now coming under the lordship of Christ. Over against the vision of Ephesians 1:2, according to which the exalted Christ subjugates these powers, Moltmann prefers 1 Cor. 15:24–26, according to which God in the end will destroy "all rulers, principalities and powers." In giving reason for this choice in a debate with the American Mennonites, Moltmann says: "I do not expect a Christian state in the Kingdom of God." (*Dialogue Sequel to Jürgen Moltmann's Following Jesus Christ in the World Today,* Winnipeg 1984*,* p. 58) It is a rather odd interpretation of Christ's rule by someone who himself makes references to the eschatological lordship of "the Lamb" (cf. *God in Creation*, 91.227). Not only Anselm (cf. N. G, Wright, *op. cit*., 149), but also Gustav Aulén's *Christus Victor* seems to be set aside in favor of Abelard in Moltmann's account of the meaning of the cross.

[43] It seems that Moltmann is able to preserve the distinction between God and the redeemed creation in eschaton by adopting the Orthodox teaching about different 'aeons.' See note 44.

[44] Dimitru Stăniloae, *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* I–III, Zürich-Einsiedeln-Köln 1985–1995. In his preface to the German translation of the first volume Moltmann praises Stăniloae as "the most influential and creative Orthodox theologian today," who deserves to be called a "panorthodox" theologian for his contributions in bridging the church in the East with the one in the West. He highly estimates his participation in ecumenical conferences, especially his help in the debate concerning 'filioque' and compares his significance to that of Barth and Rahner in the western traditions. Interpreting Stă-

In his own doctrine of creation, Moltmann is not making any particular reference to Stăniloae's systematical work but such references occur with growing frequency in the following volumes of his "messianic theology." Many of these have direct linkage with the development of his own thought, including his view of creation.[45] One such case is Moltmann's introducing the Orthodox teaching on *Aeon* – as the "relative eternity" of the new creation – to be distinguished from the "absolute eternity" of God.[46] He also appeals to Stăniloae for support of the idea that in the resurrection of Christ we understand the goal for which the world was created,[47] or for the idea that if God's eternity is "above times," God must be correspondingly thought of as "above space" as well.[48] In discussing "the end of space" Moltmann makes another such appeal.[49]

---

niloae's position as "theology of Love," he characterizes him as a "through and through trinitarian theologian," whose "ontological optimisms" expressed in a "Cosmic hope of final transfiguration of the world" has – just like in the case of Barth – its firm ground in Christology. This is why, according to Moltmann, his approach should be welcomed and appreciated also in the West, with its current recovery of the doctrine of the Trinity and of its connection with the doctrine of creation.

[45] When interpreting salvation in terms of "deification of the whole cosmos," Moltmann says he understands it in the sense of Orthodox theology, quoting Stăniloae's dictum (from *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* I, pp. 291ff): "The world, as the work of God's love, is destined to be deified" and "the whole nature is destined for glory" (*The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 348.n.14, 373.n.54; cf. *The Spirit of Life*, 343.n26; *The Coming of God*, 352.n.81, 376n.35, 376n.37). Moltmann later extends this concept by another quotation (from *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* I, 369): "The divine Spirit, which in all its fullness is poured out from Christ on those who believe in him …does not fill only their bodies with new life, making them transparent for what is heavenly, but transform nature and the cosmos too" (*The Coming of God*, 273). Moltmann is in this context defending the concept of emanation as the manner of deification of created beings (*The Coming of God*, 272, 376.n.35 – with reference to *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* I, 359).

[46] Cf. *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 330 and 381n.27 (with reference to *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* I, pp. 303ff); cf. *The Coming of God*, 282 and 378.n.62.

[47] *The Spirit of Life*, 338.n.27 (Cf. *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* I, 51.)

[48] *The Coming of God*, 297. (Cf. *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* I, 182f.)

[49] "God called space into being thanks to a potentiality inherent in his inner-trinitarian life: he created it as a means of community between himself and us, and a means of community between human beings with one another, following the archetypal image of the community present in the Trinity, to which we too are to attain." (*The Coming of God*, 299, in reference to *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* I, 189. Cf. also, *Science and Wisdom*, 207.n.5).

The recognition of this sort of theological convergence was in this case mutual. In his contribution to Moltmann's festschrift Stăniloae praised the way Moltmann de-

This "Byzantine" turn in Moltmann's doctrinal work and obviously also personal theological development does not indicate any limitation or reduction in the richness and breadth of his thought and reflection. Rather it is a significant ecumenical event and should be noticed and recognized as such.[50]

Summary: *After a brief biographical note, the author introduces the main work of Jürgen Moltmann as sorted into two series. While in the first series the controlling idea was the dialectics of the cross and the resurrection, a particular form of Trinitarian thought became the overarching principle in the second series. It is within the second series that Moltmann's notion of Creation comes repeatedly under scrutiny. The core of the treatise concentrates on the way Moltmann deals with traditional Jewish and Christian items of creation theology and relates them to the present ecological concerns. Noticed and addressed is Moltmann's recent discovery of Romanian Eastern-Orthodox theologian Dimitru Stăniloae.*[51]

Keywords: Jürgen Moltmann – Dumitru Stăniloae – Hope – Creation – Holy Trinity.

---

scribed "the love of God towards us as shown on the Cross" in his *The Crucified God* in a telling statement: "According to Moltmann's new explanation, the suffering love of the Son and of the Father for us, which acts upon us from the Cross of the Son, is the only power that can transform us and, thereby, save us. The Father and the Son are united in this love that suffers for humans. Moltmann's explanation envisions the Cross as present in the bosom of the Trinity." ("Devotion and Theology in the Orthodox Church," in: Deuser, *Gottes Zukunft*, 107). In the same article Stăniloae makes a reference to *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* when he describes the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing human beings for "the celestial kingdom.": "In this kingdom, God is not a domineering Sovereign but rather our Father and our Son. Here, there are no subordinates and commanders. There is only the love between the Father and the sons. All people are sons of the Father and brothers of the divine Son and, consequently, brothers among themselves as well. This kingdom draws people towards itself as the ultimate end of human life" (*op. cit*., 108). In his *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* III Stăniloae makes an appreciative reference to *Theology of Hope* (pp. 302f).

[50] Moltmann seems to be significantly less 'outgoing' in the area of inter-religious dialogue.

[51] This article has been written as an outcome of the research project "The Hermeneutics of Christian Tradition, in particular the Czech and Protestant one, in Culture History of Europe" (MSM 00216 20802).

DOCTRINE OF CREATION WITHIN THE THEOLOGICAL PROJECT OF DUMITRU STĂNILOAE

Ivana Noble, Prague

This article owes its genesis to a passing comment from Jürgen Moltmann, that his theology of creation is largely influenced by Dumitru Stăniloae.[1] It is a part of a wider study, comparing two theologies of creation, Stăniloae's and Moltmann's.[2] Although there are an increasing number of works on Stăniloae and Moltmann, they deal with[3] the Trinity, pneumatology or ecclesiology as main themes. The task of this as well as the previous article by Petr Macek, is to concentrate on the theology of creation.

Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993), a Romanian Orthodox priest and dogmatic theologian, is being increasingly recognised as one of the most influential Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century. He

[1] Moltmann mentioned this during a debate with teachers of the Protestant Theological Faculty in Prague, in February 13th 2004, during his visit of the Centre of Biblical Studies. Moltmann also wrote the "Geleitwort" to the German edition of Staniloae's seminal work, *Orthodoxe Dogmatik*, Cologne, 1985, 9–13; and even earlier, he cooperated with Staniloae in putting together the collective work *Toleranz: zur Verleihung d. Dr.-Leopold-Lucas-Preises [an] Ben-Chorin, Sambursky, Scharf, Bethge, Staniloae, Popper, Rahner*, which he edited together with Dieter Stuhlmacher, Tübingen 1982.

[2] The articles came out of a shared seminar with Petr Macek, "Doctrine of Creation in Staniloae and Moltmann" at the Protestant faculty in the winter term 2006/7.

[3] See e. g. Eugen Matei, *The practice of community in social trinitarianism: A theological evaluation with reference to Dumitru Staniloae and Jürgen Moltmann,* doctoral thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary 2004; Daniel Munteanu *Der tröstende Geist der Liebe: zu einer ökumenischen Lehre vom Heiligen Geist über die trinitarischen Theologien Jürgen Moltmanns und Dumitru Staniloaes*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2003; Antonios Steve Kireopoulos, *The dialogue with Orthodox theology in the ecclesiology of Jürgen Moltmann: Trinitarian theology and pneumatology as the twin pillars of ecclesiology*, doctoral thesis, Fordham University, 2003; Wojciech Mrozek, *We believe in God, the father, the almighty: a study of Jürgen Moltmann's thought on the first article of faith in an ecumenical debate with the theological reflection of Dumitru Stăniloae and Karl Rahner*, doctoral thesis, Pontificia universitas Gregoriana. Facultas theologiae, 1999.

taught dogmatic theology first in Sibiu and was later a professor at the Bucharest Theological Institute. His masterpiece, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1978), also gained him a reputation outside of Orthodox circles. He wrote commentaries on the works of the Fathers of the Church, such as Gregory of Nyssa, Maxim the Confessor, Athanasius the Great, as well as rediscovering Gregory Palamas for contemporary readers, and editing the Romanian translation of the *Philokalia*.

As Dumitru Stăniloae is still relatively unknown to the western theological audience, this article includes a fuller introduction to his life in as far as it helped shape his theology. After that I will undertake a more detailed examination of his doctrine of creation. This is divided into four parts, covering his cosmology, anthropology, angelology and teaching on providence. I conclude with short remarks on how Stăniloae's theology contributed to the revival of Orthodoxy and in which sense his interpretation of the doctrine of creation can be of inspiration to a non-Orthodox reader.

Stăniloae's Journey through Life

Dumitru Stăniloae was born on 16 November 1903 in Vlădeni, in Transylvania, the youngest of five children of Irimie and Rebeca. His parents were devout Orthodox, and their lived church spirituality had a lasting influence on him, as well as the rural setting, where streams, hills and forests made him sense belonging to nature very vividly, and later influenced his theological vision of the cosmic unity of all creation in Christ. His mother was the niece of a priest, his grandfather was a chanter in church, and thus had a Bible at home, which Stăniloae first read in its entirety at the age of ten. His family was aware and proud of his religious interests, and from early years his mother in particular encouraged him to think of becoming a priest.

His first studies of theology, from 1922–1927, took place at Cernăuți Seminary in Northern Bukovina. Here he encountered quite a different type of approach to his early ecclesial experience, a westernised academic theology that he so often criticised in his later years. Having completed his studies at Cernăuți, he spent a large part of the

following two years abroad, in Athens, Munich, Berlin and Paris, where he transcribed unpublished texts of St Gregory Palamas from manuscripts, learned languages and prepared his doctoral thesis for Cernăuți University.[4]

In 1929 Stăniloae was offered a fellowship in Byzantology and Dogmatics in the Metropolitan Centre in Sibiu. For his teaching he translated Christos Androutsos' *Greek Dogmatics* (1907), but using it as a teaching aid deepened his dissatisfaction with forcing Orthodox dogmatic theology into the strait-jacket of westernised scholastic manuals, thus losing its vital link with liturgy, spirituality and the practical life of the church. This type of theology contrasted both with the insight into Western values mediated by existentialism and dialectical theology that he had gained during his travels,[5] and to his earlier experiential knowledge of Orthodoxy, that was later to be complemented by his interest in monastic spirituality.

In 1930 he married Maria Mihu, the following year he was ordained deacon, and a year later priest. Alongside his priestly service he also edited a newspaper *Telegraful Român* (*Romanian Telegraph*). In 1936 he became rector of the Theological Academy in Sibiu, a post he held until 1946. Stăniloae also continued his research on St Gregory Palamas which in 1938 bore fruit with his first major work[6], *The Life and Teaching of St. Gregory Palamas.* This book significantly contributed to the revival of the Palamite tradition, and offered its particular theological and spiritual principles, beginning with the

[4] His thesis was called *The Life and Work of Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem and his Relations with the Romanian Lands*. "The selection of Dositheos [1641–1707] as his dissertation topic illustrates Fr. Dumitru's sense of the position of Romania as a meeting-place between the Greek and Slav worlds, and his awareness of its crucial role as a cultural centre during the *Turcocratia*, when it acted as guardian of the Byzantine heritage, as 'Byzance après Byzance,' to use the expression of the celebrated Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga." Kallistos Ware, "Foreword," in: Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Experience of God: The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology I: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God,* Brookline, MA 1998, p. xi.

[5] These included Buber, Ebner, Heidegger, Jaspers, Lavelle and Marcel, as well as Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann. See Emil Bartos, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology: An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae*, Carlisle 1999, p. 4.

[6] Among his other early works we find, *Catholicism after the War* (Sibiu, 1932), *Orthodoxy and Romanianism* (Sibiu, 1939), and *The Position of Mr. Lucian Blaga on Christianity and Orthodoxism*, Sibiu 1942.

distinction between the essence and energies of God.[7] The second major work from this early Sibiu period is *Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Man.* This was published war in 1943, during the World War II. For the Orthodox theology of his time, Stăniloae unusually rehabilitates Christology from below. He claims that only in the incarnation can we discover our authentic humanity.

During the war Stăniloae participated in the group Burning Bush that renewed the Romanian Hesychast tradition, especially the Prayer of the Heart.[8] The group inspired Stăniloae to start to publish the second translation of the *Philokalia* into Romanian. The end of the war brought even more difficult times. In 1945 his second child died,[9] in 1946 he had to resign as rector of the Theological Academy in Sibiu and a year later even as a professor. He was transferred to the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, where he was first given the chair of Ascetics and Mystics, and after its abolition, although his publications were censored, he still taught dogmatics and led the works of doctoral students till 1958, when he was arrested.

He was to spend five years in prison, mostly at Aiud, during the second phase of the so-called "re-education" experiment. Re-education was a euphemism for stripping people of their identity, including that of a victim, as they were tortured and forced to torture other prisoners, and thus became co-responsible for the perpetrated violence.[10] Stăniloae's earlier experience from the Burning Bush movement, as well as his knowledge of the spiritual tradition of the Church

[7] See Ware, "Foreword," p. xii.

[8] The group consisted of monks, priests, as well as lay intellectuals, and was active between 1945–58, when its members were arrested and accused of "conspiracy against the communist state." Both of its founders, Archimandrite Ivan Kulygin and Hieromonk Daniil Theudorescu died during their inprisonment, Theudorescu in Auid, the same prison, where Stăniloae was held. See Alexandru Popescu, "Short History of Hesychasm in Romania," in: *Petre Țuțea: Between Sacrifice and Suicide*, Aldershot 2004, pp. 279–285.

[9] Dumitru Stăniloae had three children: one of them, Dumitru, died shortly after birth in 1931. In 1945 his twin-sister Mioara also died.

[10] There were two waves of the so-called "re-education experiment" in Romania, one in 1949–52, the other in 1960–1964. During that time hundreds of thousands of people were tortured both physically and mentally, with a similar aim as in the Soviet Gulag. See Radu Mărculescu, *Patimiri și Iluminari din Captivatea Sovietica*, Bucharest 2000, in: Popescu, *Petre Țuțea*, p. 63.

Fathers proved very useful there, as it gave him inner resources to oppose this destruction of human identity. Although Stăniloae did not write much about these experiences directly, we can sense their impact in his later interpretations of the doctrines of creation and deification.[11]

In 1963 Stăniloae was freed from prison. As Romania needed to pretend internationally that it was a country that respected human rights and religious freedom, Stăniloae, already known outside the country, was first let to work as a functionary at the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and in the same year to teach theology at the Bucharest Institute, and two years later was encouraged to publish by the same people who had censored his works before. His main works, however, would not be written till the end of 1970s. From 1968 Stăniloae was allowed to travel to conferences to Freiburg and Heidelberg, to teach in Oxford, even to be a part of Romanian Orthodox Church delegation to the Vatican. In 1973 he retired, remaining only as a consultant professor in doctoral studies, and dedicated his energy to completing the editorial work on *Philokalia,* to writing and to travelling.[12] There are a large number of works from his post-retirement period, of which the most significant is the completion of the Romanian *Philokalia*[13]*,* his three volumes of *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* published first in Romanian in 1978,[14] and his

[11] One of the few exception is a dialogue with Olivier Clément recorded in the Preface to the French translation of Stăniloae's *Dogmatic Theology* entitled *Le génie de l'Orthodoxie,* Paris 1985, p. 12, which is quoted by Ware: "'An experience like any other,' he said later with a smile to Olivier Clément, 'only somewhat difficult for my family.' And he added that this was the only time in his life when he was able to practice and to 'retain' in a semipermanent manner the invocation of the Name Jesus." Ware, "Foreword," p. xiii.

[12] From 1976 Stăniloae started receiving different doctorates *honoris causa* and international prizes or appreciations for his work, first abroad, and after the fall of communism also in his own country. In 1982 at the age of 79 he lectured in New York, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, and Washington.

[13] After having translated and published first four volumes during his time as a member of the Burning Bush group, he continued with the editing and with writing introductions to other six volumes between 1976 and 1981.

[14] German and French translations came out in 1985, the first volume of the English translation in 1994. The German title *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* [Orthodox Dogmatic Theology] is closest to the original. The French and the English translations struggled

two volumes of *Orthodox Moral Theology* and *Orthodox Spirituality,* both from 1981.[15] He remained active as a theologian but also as a priest and a spiritual father to an advanced age. Dumitru Stăniloae died on 5th October 1993, just short of his ninetieth birthday. In his life but also through his written heritage he managed to contribute decisively to the transformation of Romanian Orthodox post-war theology, but his influence is much wider, both in the Orthodox world and ecumenically. Although he is generally less well-known than theologians such as John Meyndorff or Alexander Schmemann, his theological mind is comparable, and due to the nature of his life experience, at times perhaps reaches even deeper.

---

with the main title of the book. In the French translation the word "dogmatic" is removed from the main title; *Le génie de l'Orthodoxie* [Genius of Orthodoxy] opts for advertising the specificity and the value of Orthodox contribution to theology and to spirituality. In the English translation the main title *The Experience of God* highlights the universal ground from which Stăniloae's theology grows, and only in the subtitle we find: *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology.* Kallistos Ware, the author of the "Foreword" explains the change of the main title as follows: "There is a danger that it [the word dogmatic] might be taken to signify obligatory teaching, imposed from above by external authority. This, however, is not at all what the author means by dogmatic theology. He is never content in his work with a bald and exterior appeal to the Church's *magisterium,* but he seeks always to indicate the inner coherence of dogmatic truth and the significance of each dogma for the personal life of a Christian. It is the theologian's task to make manifest the link between dogma and personal spirituality, to show how every dogma responds to a deep need and longing in the human heart, and how it has practical consequences for society. Dogmas, he is convinced, do not enslave but liberate; theology is essentially freedom. Freedom, whether human or divine, is one of Fr. Dumitru's recurrent *leitmotifs*: God has made us partners and fellow-workers, who co-operate with him in full liberty; without freedom there can be no love and no inter-personal communion." Ware, "Foreword," xiv.

[15] Other works from this long active period are: *Uniatism in Transylvania, an attempt to dismember the Romanian people*, Bucharest 1973; *Dieu est Amour*, Geneve 1980; *Theology and the Church*, New York 1980; *Praying, freedom, holiness*, Athens 1980; *Priere de Jesus et experience de Saint Esprit*, Paris 1981; *St. Gregory of Nyssa – Writings*, Bucharest 1982 (translation), *Spirituality a communion in Orthodox lithurgy*, Craiova 1986; *God's eternal face*, Craiova 1987; *St. Athanasius the Great – Writings*, Bucharest, 1987 (translation); *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology Studies: Christology of St. Maximus the Confessor, Man and God, St. Symeon The New Theologian, Hymns of God's love*, Craiova 1991; *St. Cyril of Alexandria – Writings*, Bucharest 1991 (translation).

Stăniloae's Doctrine of Creation

Stăniloae's doctrine of creation is elaborated in most detail in the second part of his *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: The World: Creation and Deification,* which is the second volume of the English translation (in Romanian the second part of the first volume).[16] There is a tension in the vocabulary which Stăniloae employs for his doctrine of creation. On the one hand, there is the old westernised neoscholastic terminology which he was taught theology at the Cernăuți Seminary. On the other hand, a new language arises from his journey towards the roots of Orthodox theology, and from his own experience of a spiritual life that had the strength to sustain people even in the hardest times of persecution.[17]

Referring to the insights of the Greek Fathers, especially Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, and Gregory Palamas, he expands on the aspects of the theology of creation that have been overshadowed by too one-sided emphases on a pessimistic doctrine of the world and especially pessimistic anthropologies, understandable as reflections of different enslavements by 20th century ideologies, yet insufficient in their outcome.

In Stăniloae's doctrine of creation, cosmology is interwoven with anthropology, with angeology and with the divine providence. Thus, trying not to violate his own structure, I make use of the following sequence of sub-headings: (i) Priority of the Gift (ii) The Image of God: From Christological to Trinitarian Foundations; (iii) The Invisible World; (iv) Responsiveness of Divine Providence: Fall and Salvation.

1. Priority of the Gift

The world, for Stăniloae, is not a place of the enemy, not even the modern world deceived by the idea of progress and harmed by its

[16] *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* is divided as follows: (i) Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God; (ii) The World: Creation and Deification; (iii) The Person of Jesus Christ; (iv) Communion in the Holy Spirit; (v) The Sanctifying Mysteries; (vi) Eschatology and the Fulfilment of Creation. While the Romanian original came in three volumes, the English edition is intended to come in six volumes, but so far only the first two have been published.

[17] See Popescu, "Short History of Hesychasm in Romania," 279–285.

ideologies. It is a gift of God destined for God's glory.[18] Stăniloae elaborates on why it is given to us, what this gift consists of, and why we can hope that it will not be destroyed by the forces of evil, but progress on the path towards deification, as willed by God.

According to Stăniloae the world was created out of divine goodness, not out of necessity. Love has been the primary motivation of God.[19] And Stăniloae says further that according to our faith, "the world is enlightened in its ontological relation with God, but it is not detached from God either in its existence or in its meaning. The meaning of the world is bound up with the meaning of God."[20] This meaning is dialogical, i.e. it signifies an exchange of gifts out of love in which divine glory becomes manifested.[21]

But what is this gift of the world? What does it consists of? Stăniloae means by the world both cosmic nature and humanity.[22] According to him, it is impossible to separate the two. Both are designed for divine glory. But each can contribute something specific, something unique that, to use Stăniloae's Aristotelian vocabulary, belongs to their essence as a potentiality that can be actualised. He states, "nature can be the medium through which the believer receives divine grace or the beneficent uncreated energies,"[23] but it can also be a medium of human driving towards evil. "Physical nature and human nature provide a space that always lies open to the exercise of human freedom."[24] And this takes us to the human contribution. People as personal reality are not only capable of exercising freedom, but also of being and becoming "witnesses" of divine glory and goodness, they are capable of the reciprocity of love, and thus of growing into communion with God and with each other. The world, therefore, has an "anthropocentric character," as "only in human subjects does the

[18] See Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Experience of God: The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology II: The World: Creation and Deification*, Brookline, MA 2005, p. 3.
[19] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 18, 87, 89.
[20] Stăniloae, *The World,* 33.
[21] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 37.
[22] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 1–2.
[23] Stăniloae, *The World,* 3; here Stăniloae shifts to a Palamite distinction between divine essence that is hidden from us and divine energies that we encounter in God's revelation.
[24] Stăniloae, *The World,* 35.

world discover and fulfill its meaning. For only human beings are conscious of a meaning to their existence and to physical and biological nature, and only they are able to go beyond the repetition of the laws of nature, as those who have the capacity to raise themselves to pursue and realize other meanings through nature."[25]

Stăniloae criticized a Kantian understanding of people and nature as "ends in themselves."[26] Against it he stated that we were created as something out of nothing, with a beginning and an end, and a responsibility to the Creator, responsibility in terms of a requirement of response to God's gifts by returning the gift to God with our "own valuable stamp on the gifts received and thereby …[making] of them human gifts as well."[27] Stăniloae criticized western personalism, which besides its positive contribution to the rehabilitation of human experience and relationality, saw relationships as basically dual "I-Thou" and excluded nature from them.[28] He criticised the Levinasian reinterpretation of personalism stressing the rights and the claim of the other. Stăniloae finds here the lack of reciprocity, vital for his faith in creation out of love realised in the mutual exchange of gifts.[29]

According to him, people will not progress in their spiritual growth towards deification if separated from nature. Nature must come into all our relationships, it is a gift to us and we are bound to it reciprocally. We cannot become God's partners without nature. In the work

---

[25] Stăniloae, *The World,* 20.

[26] Stăniloae uses this Kantian concept, yet again, without reference. See *The World,* 9; compare to Immanuel Kant: "man, and, in general, every rational being exists as an end in himself." *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals,* New York 1959, p. 424.

[27] Stăniloae *The World,* 25.

[28] "We do not deny that the 'I-Thou' relation constitutes a locus for the experience of God. Nor do we contest the fact that the human person cannot experience himself fully except in relation with another human person or that this experience is most marked in loving relationship with the other. But over and above this we add: the human being cannot exist apart from his relationship with nature. The three together make an inseparable whole: *I-Thou-Nature.* …the human being can experience God both in himself and in relation to nature." Stăniloae, *The World,* 198.

[29] Due to the minimal amount of footnotes, we do not find in Stăniloae's work either references to Martin Buber or to Emmanuel Lévinas, whose positions he is paraphrasing. For a polemics against the lack of reciprocity, see e.g. *The World, 25,* 37, 212. Compare to Emanuel Lévinas: "In this sense, I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it. Reciprocity is *his* affair." *Ethics and Infinity,* Pittsburgh, 1985, 98.

of maintaining and transforming nature, Stăniloae said, we, people, grow spiritually. Work creates solidarity among us.[30] In care for nature and for each other we learn how to reach beyond ourselves, how to give. Thus a dialogue of the exchange of the gifts begins, we begin to experience the joy and the gratitude of being overwhelmed by the Spirit, of journeying towards deification, the destination God wills for us.[31] And, as he always notes, cosmic nature journeys with us.

As Moltmann pointed out, this faith in foundational goodness and this vision of cosmic transformation have been targets of criticism in Stăniloae's theology of creation. He has been accused of an ungrounded "ontological optimism." According to Moltmann, however, such accusations do not take into account the christological [and we could say also trinitarian] foundations of his position.[32] And in my view, there is one more reason why speaking about ungrounded "ontological optimism" is out of place. Having been for five years in of one of the hardest Romanian prisons, one intended to destroy political opponents of the regime,[33] he could hardly be accused of having a naively optimistic picture of the world and of human nature. Instead, he also had an experience of inner resources and their transfiguring power that helped people oppose the destruction of humanity. And he tried to articulate this experience in his theology of creation too, as he started with the gift of the world that is given to us out of divine goodness and love, and in which, even after the fall, God responds to any new evil ways by liberating, protecting and strengthening the good.

2. The Image of God: From Christological to Trinitarian Foundations

In his earlier work, *Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Man* (1943) Stăniloae gives christological foundations to his vision of a transfigured humanity and a transfigured world: The Word of God became flesh not only so that we could become deified, but also so that we

[30] See Stăniloae *The World,* 3, 5, 7.
[31] See Stăniloae *The World,* 21–22.25, 87.
[32] See Moltmann "Geleitwort," 12.
[33] See n. 12–17.

could become human.[34] In his later doctrine of creation this vision is given trinitarian foundations. He repeats and strengthens the earlier emphasis, that to mirror the glory of God, we must become human beings fully alive.[35] He speaks about "humanisation" not only as a gift of salvation, but also as a task of deification, of full spiritual growth toward the fullness of life in God.[36] The concept of the image of God plays a central role in his account of this process.

Stăniloae develops his notion of the image of God gradually, and we can trace in it a tension between the two types of terminology, western and Byzantine, especially Palamite. As we will see, by employing different theological tools Stăniloae actually says different things.[37]

First we are told that the soul is the image of God, the soul that transcends the materiality of the body and cannot be reduced to it.[38] But as people cannot be separated from nature, neither can the soul be separated from the body.[39] The body plays a mediating role in a

---

[34] Kallistos Ware stated that this is how Stăniloae extended Athanasius; see Ware, *Foreword*, xii. Compare to Athanasius, *De incarn.* 54; or "The Son of God became man so as to deify us in Himself" *Ad Adelph*. 4; or: "The Word became flesh in order both to offer this sacrifice and that we, participating in His Spirit, might be deified." *De decret.* 14. Athanasius's preferred term for deification is a verb θεοποιἐω from where the substantive θεοποίησις is derrived. This is the dominant concept used by the Church Fathers throughout the fourth century. Towards the end of the patristic age, it tends to be replaced by the verb θεὸω and the substantive θἐωσις introduced to Christian theology by Gregory of Nazianzus, it is taken up by Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, John Damascene and from there it passes into the Byzantine tradition. See Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford, 2004, 167, 338, 341.

[35] Compare to Irenaeus: "Gloria Dei vivens homo." *Adv. Haer.* IV, 20, 7.

[36] See Stăniloae *The World,* 206.

[37] Stăniloae acknowledges one difference between East and West, concerning direct knowledge of God, which the East affirms, while the West insists on deductive knowledge by way of analogy. See *The World*, 77, esp. n. 39, where he quotes Myrrha Lot-Borodine, "L'anthropologie théocentrique de l'Orient Chrétien comme base de son expérience spirituelle," *Irénikon* 16 (1939), 6–21. Not only is this view inexact, as it ignores the Western mystical tradition, represented among others by Bonaventure, but it also does not seem to be the main difference here.

[38] Stăniloae takes the distinction body – soul from Genesis 2:7; see *The World,* 67, 72.

[39] The body is not an external object, says Stăniloae; the Logos brought a human soul into existence simultaneously with the body. See Stăniloae *The World,* 59, 73. Compare to Olivier Clément, according to whom the human body "simultaneously reveals and hides his/her person, thus there is a tragically split relationship of identity

similar way to the cosmic nature, but does the body participate in the image of God? Where Stăniloae employs the western concept of the soul as human identity, akin to God in that it is endowed with cognitive reason and freedom, he cannot move to saying that the body participates in the image of God.[40] Such a soul permeates and transcends the material body.[41]

Then he moves to hesychasm, and in particular to Gregory Palamas, and discovers a stronger mutuality between the soul and the body. He speaks about "'the heart' – where the mind (νοῦς) must gather itself in order to experience there the grace of God," the heart as "the innermost organ of the body …as the centre of the encounter between body and soul and as the governing organ (ἥγεμόνικον ὄργανον)."[42] Stăniloae comments: "This means that it is not pure intelligence that governs man or encounters God, but the entire man in whom understanding and feeling make up a single whole."[43] For this entire human being he borrows another Palamite concept, namely the "living soul," and with the help of it expresses the notion of the divine image holistically and relationally.

For Gregory Palamas, God inbreathed the "living soul" in people and that is not only "the intellective soul," but includes body, mind and spirit.[44] With this insight Stăniloae moves back to his notion of the image of God, and says that the character of the image "is not applied to either soul or body separately, but to both, since together they have been created in the image of God."[45]

---

and difference between the person and the body," and I am afraid that "*my person* is not visible through my body," and that through the weakness, vulnerability and mortality of the body the mystery of the person would be threatened. Olivier Clément, *Tělo pro smrt a pro slávu: Malé uvedení do teopoetiky těla.* [*Corps de mort et de gloire: Petite introduction à une théopoetique du corps*, Paris 1995] Velehrad, 2004, 10, 14.

[40] Stăniloae *The World,* 82.

[41] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 67.

[42] Stăniloae, *The World,* 79.

[43] Stăniloae, *The World,* 79.

[44] The concept of the "living soul," Stăniloae says, is taken from 1 Cor 15:45; he then refers to Gregory Palamas, *The Procession of the Holy Spirit* 2.9, see *The World,* 86, n.51.

[45] Stăniloae, *The World,* 91–92; he quotes here Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church,* Cambridge – London, 1968, 116.

Then Stăniloae argues for the image's relational character. He says that it has two aspects – its gift and visibility of the gift, which is theologically expressed in terms of likeness. After the fall "the image has remained, but we have lost its stability, which is identical with the likeness."[46] In the image, however, there are resources for the likeness to be renewed, as the image is relational.[47] By means of that continuous relationship with God the likeness, once the image has been raised by Christ's incarnation to its fully actual stage,[48] can be renewed, as we progress towards deification. Thus, the image is both "gift" and "task."[49]

The holistic and relational character of the image comes from our participation in the Holy Trinity.[50]As was said, it includes all aspects of being human, but it is also interpersonal, not individual.[51] Human nature or any single part of it cannot possess the image, it demands communion with others and the "wholesome diversity of love,"[52] in which the image is made actual, in which humankind is transfigured,

---

[46] Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 37, in Stăniloae, *The World,* 97.

[47] Stăniloae says that "it is in this conscious and willed relationship of our being with … [God] that the image of God in man resides." Stăniloae, *The World,* 85. And later he adds that human "kinship and relationship with God were implanted within him [the human being]" Stăniloae, *The World,* 89.

[48] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 106.

[49] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 90. He quotes B. Vyscheslavezev, "Das Ebenbild Gottes im. Wessen des Manschen," in *Kirche, Staat und Mensch,* pp. 316–348, here 321–322.

[50] Stăniloae, *The World,* 87. Stăniloae also quotes Cyprian Kern, commenting on Gregory Palamas: "This likeness of God is not simply the image of one person of the Holy Trinity, but of the whole life-creating Trinity. The human person as image thus reflects in himself, in his spiritual structure and life, the inner Trinitarian life of the divinity. This was the teaching of St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Cyril of Alexandria, the Blessed Theodoret, Basil of Seleucia, Athanasius of Sinai, St. John of Damascus, and St. Photius the Patriarch." Cyprian Kern, *Anthropologia Sv. Gregorii Palami,* Paris, 1959, 355; in Stăniloae, *The World,* 100.

[51] "It is in communion with our fellow human beings, however, that the mystery of the interpersonal divine presence is most clearly revealed. For it is only from the love between the divine Persons that the force of our own interpersonal love radiates. Interpersonal communion is an image of the Trinitarian communion and a participation in it." Stăniloae, *The World,* 99; he goes on to quote St. Gregory of Nyssa, who observed that "the image is not a part of our nature, nor is the grace in any one of the things found in that nature, but its power extends equally to all the race." *The Making of Man* 16.17, PG 44.185C; in *The World,* 90.

[52] Stăniloae, *The World,* 101; here he quotes Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction,* Crestwood NY, 1978, 67.

and the world as a whole is transfigured, as the communion of love includes also the cosmic nature.[53] But Stăniloae keeps the anthropocentric emphasis, and Christological/Pneumatological orientation: "It is only through the agency of the human person that the cosmos, which by origin is a 'Logosphere,' can become a 'Christosphere' and a 'Pneumatosphere.'"[54]

3. The Invisible World

Now we come to Stăniloae's angelology, which for a non-Orthodox reader brought up on critical rationalist theology is one of the hardest parts to understand. Yet Stăniloae dedicated two chapters to angeology, and they cover more than a quarter of his treatise on creation.[55] Stăniloae presupposes an existence of "created but incorporeal spirits" – among others, angels.[56] He quotes Scriptures here more than elsewhere, perhaps to remind us not to ignore the parts of biblical revelation alien to the modern mind. First, he refers to the Lord's answer to Job, disclosing what is anterior to the creation of the world and of people: "When the stars were made, all my angels praised me loudly" (Job 38:7).[57] Most of the fathers, he argues, took from the Scriptures that angels were created before us and before the sensible world. They were of the opinion that angels transcend our time, but being creatures, they are not co-eternal with God. They mediate between eternity (*aion*) and time, but they do not know the future.[58]

---

[53] See Stăniloae *The World,* 107.

[54] Stăniloae *The World,* 118.

[55] See "The World Unseen: Angels and Human Life," and "The World Unseen: Enemies of the Good," in Stăniloae, *The World,* 119–174.

[56] Stăniloae says that there is a great variety of bodiless powers, and in support quotes John Chrysostom commenting on St Paul: "There are angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers. However, they are not the only virtues who dwell in the heavens. There are tribes and nations without limit or number, and which no words can set them before your minds as St. Paul says (Eph 1:21), [for] there are names in heaven that are going to be known but are unknown now." John Chrysostom, *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, 4.11–12, PG 48.72 1; in Stăniloae, *The World,* 126.

[57] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 121; the alternative reading is: "when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy" NRSV translation.

[58] See Stăniloae *The World,* 147. Stăniloae says that they belong to a kind of "supratemporal aeon" (120), and referring to Dionysius he proposes: "Perhaps prior to the

Being spirits, they can know spiritual reality directly.[59] They communicate with God and with us, they know "the human capacity to make the divine majesty transparent," they have "a clarity of thought" and an "*amor intellectualis"* that are difficult for human beings to imagine."[60]

Stăniloae also here emphasizes the mutuality of the exchange of gifts that is going on in the communication.[61] Angels, like people, are created for their own happiness as well as for service, and these two aims are inseparable. Angels are sent to help and strengthen people in knowledge, in spiritual and ethical growth, so that people raise up both themselves and the world into "the aeon, that is into a time overwhelmed by eternity";[62] but angels too can gain from people, the "incarnate spirits,"[63] who can communicate to them sense experiences of God that only embodied creatures can have.[64] None of the creatures are created for themselves. They are created for God and for each other. But yet again, as with cosmic nature, people have a special position even here. Stăniloae, quoting Gregory Palamas, says: "The manifold and numberless multitude of the angels was created for the sake of man."[65] Why? Because people would inherit salvation.[66]

Stăniloae's emphasis on the anthropocentric character of creation grows from his understanding of the incarnation: When the Son of

Fall, the human being had both aeonic existence and temporal existence before him." See *The World,* 121; Dionysius, *The Divine Names* 10.3, PG 3.937C-940A.

[59] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 120.

[60] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 146, 148.

[61] "Yet, since God is one, creation also must be a unity, and the spirits who have knowledge – whether these are with or without bodies – must be able to grasp this unity in their mutual solidarity." Stăniloae, *The World,* 120.

[62] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 123. Compare to Heb 1:14: "Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" Stăniloae shows that this quotation is commented upon by Gregory Palamas. *The World,* 127.

[63] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 120.

[64] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 123. Stăniloae sees these types of experiences as God's revelation through "the aestethics of the spirit". He says further: "If beauty consists in the manifestation of the spirit through matter, the irradiation of the living spirit through the living body is the greatest beauty. …This fact does not demand artistic talent as much as ethical effort. The saint may be said to have realized in himself the true beauty of the human being: decency, balance, captivating spiritual light." *The World*, 129.

[65] Gregory Palamas, *Homilies* 36, PG 151.449D; in Stăniloae, *The World,* 127.

[66] See Gregory Palamas, *Homilies* 3, PG 151.33C; in Stăniloae, *The World,* 127.

God became man, he transfigured humanity; the divinity has revealed in the flesh what can neither be experienced nor understood by angels. Through divine *kenosis,* a new and greater love became manifested.[67] But even after Christ's incarnation the mutual relationships between people and angels continue, each communicating what is theirs to the other.[68] In an eternal perichoretic motion in the direction of the divine persons of the Holy Trinity, and "especially toward the Son of God, seated as man on the divine throne," they help each other "to ascend toward a more and more acute seeing" and "ever clearer visions."[69]

But angels, like people, also have their dark side due to their fall. Stăniloae, referring to the church fathers, explains the myth of the fall of angels, who under the leadership of Satan revolted against God and were flung down from heaven.[70] They were not evil from the beginning, he insists, nor are they evil in their nature, but by free choice they so radically alienated themselves from the good,[71] that they no longer retain any remnant of good in themselves, and evil has become their "second nature."[72] But it is insufficient to explain the

[67] Staniloae refers to the New Testament distinction of the two laws. The old law, he reads in Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2; Acts 7:53, was given through angels, it was based on direct intuition. "But when the Son of God becomes incarnate, the divinity reveals itself through the experience and transfiguration of things human in a manner that can neither be experienced nor understood by angels. For this reason St. Paul said that it is from the Church that the angels discover 'manifold wisdom of God' (Eph 3:10) revealed to men by Christ." Staniloae, *The World,* 123–124.

[68] Stăniloae develops this mutuality epistemologically: Angels have a "simple intuition" of "divine spirituality"; what they communicate, and people "lay hold of in symbols." People can have both direct intuitive knowledge of God that comes in visions, and mediated knowledge of God, where the visions are explained through symbols. There they can understand the materiality of symbols that requires sensible experiences, but are helped by angels to penetrate what is beyond the senses. Both ways of knowing are important, but after the incarnation, the symbolic way takes the lead. See Stăniloae *The World,* 124, 135–139.

[69] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 125, 155, 154. Here Stăniloae quotes Gregory Palamas, *Triads in Defence of the Holy Hesychasts* 2.3.31.

[70] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 158. Compare to the biblical texts, where this myth is also presupposed: Job 1:6; Zach 3:1–2; L 10:18; 11,18; Rev 20: 2.

[71] "Thus the devil is evil because he has chosen freely, but his nature itself is not opposed to the good." Basil the Great, *God is not the Author of Evil* 8, PG 31.345D-348D; in Stăniloae, *The World,* 158. And further: "Precisely because evil does not belong to the essence of reality (*ens*) or to the essence of a part of reality (which would, in fact, compromise irremediably the whole of reality, for one part of reality cannot be separated from another), evil plainly cannot have existed from all eternity and possesses within itself a certain weakness." *The World,* 160.

arrival of evil, of "non-existence" (μή ὄν),[73] just through one act of freedom; their free choice is a continuous act, one, moreover, that progresses to "making use of the powers of human nature, but in a way that is opposed to that same nature."[74] Thus the fallen angels became demons, the enemies of the good, enemies of life, enemies of people and enemies of God. After their fall they have infiltrated the atmosphere,[75] they tempt people away from the good, in extreme cases, they even possess people, so that "the existence of those deceived by demons becomes the same: an existence in death, a violent existence of inconsistent nightmare, moving among impotent and tormented shadows fettered to the surface of reality, and spreading over others this torment of banality and impotence."[76]

This is possible because human nature has also been weakened by the fall, although to a lesser degree.[77] People can be healed by grace flowing from the incarnation. But, according to Stăniloae, it seems that the fallen angels cannot. He does not advocate *apokatastasis.* He questions if there is anything at all left from their originally good nature and free consciousness, anything that could be liberated.[78] He says that they put themselves at such a spiritual distance from God

[72] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 166.

[73] Stăniloae says: "Evil thus means a 'minus' in existence, a minus that increases continually. With this aspect in view, the holy fathers said that evil is a non-existence (μὴ ὄν), or an existence without consistence. It is not total lack of existence, but a diminishment, …a deprivation of what truly constitutes the support of existence (τὸ ὄν)." Stăniloae, *The World,* 161–162.

[74] Stăniloae, *The World,* 161.

[75] "St. Paul the Apostle declares that these spirits are scattered throughout the atmosphere, which is to say everywhere around us…they extend darkness over this life …and thus render the world opaque to us (Eph 6:12). They bind us to the surface of created things …by presenting this surface as if it were the ultimate reality, all while refusing to let us penetrate through to the inner meaning of things. Our Saviour names the devil 'the ruler of the world' (Jn 12:3, 14:30; 16:11), and the world he means is the world regarded in itself, in its opaque surface. This decaying but still attractive surface Satan can give as a gift, and he promised it even to Christ (Mt 4:9)" Stăniloae, *The World,* 170–171.

[76] Stăniloae, *The World,* 169.

[77] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 164.

[78] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 166. Compare to his insistence that: "In fact, no conscious being can withdraw completely from the force of the good. Thus God makes use both of the evil and the good forces as he leads history toward higher stages and ultimately toward salvation and deification, for providence implies synergy between God and the conscious creature." *The World,* 207.

that even the very existence of God became for them almost something questionable, God's glory hidden. Yet God would make a positive use of them and their weakness, by eternally manifesting their delusion: their thirst for being like God without developing a relationship to the source of their existence.[79]

There is, also, the question as to whether, if "pure spirits" are capable of alienating themselves from God so completely, "incarnate spirits" are similarly vulnerable. Human will and thus also human freedom are weakened by the fall to the degree that evil can get hold of them, that demons can infiltrate them so deeply that the demonic "I" comes close to uniting with the human "I," so that it is hard to distinguish what is whose.[80] But Stăniloae's theology of incarnation stands against human beings being "irremediably dominated by evil." Christ destroyed this domination; he restored the power of the human will, and became the source of the power of purification.[81]

4. Responsiveness of Divine Providence: Fall and Salvation

As we have seen already, Stăniloae not only avoids linking evil with the essence of reality,[82] but he also refuses to take the fall as the interpretive key for understanding the world. The world is willed by God, loved by God, and as such participates in God's goodness. "God is in relation with the entire movement of the world,"[83] and that involves all the stages of the world after it has been weakened by the fall.

---

[79] Stăniloae says: "And the possibility is given them of maintaining this striving eternally, of believing that one day they will reach this pinnacle. …And this delusion finds its explanation and growth in the fact that God has hidden his glory from them because they put themselves at such a spiritual distance from him, inasmuch as for them God's very existence has almost become something questionable." Stăniloae *The World,* 166.

[80] Stăniloae *The World,* 171.

[81] See Stăniloae *The World,* 173–174.

[82] See Stăniloae *The World,* 158.

[83] Stăniloae *The World,* 12.

Not only through angelic but also through human freedom evil has been introduced to the world. Stăniloae shares an Irenaean developmental understanding of the human person,[84] reinterpreted with the help of Basil's account of the fall: Adam got "outside paradise, outside that happy way of life, not evil from necessity, but by the lack of wisdom (ἀβουλία). Thus he sinned because of a wicked choice and died because of sin."[85] Through disobedience he detached himself from a positive dialogue with God: "Reckoning on becoming his own lord, he became his own slave," not knowing that the "human person is free only if he is free also from himself for the sake of others in love, and if he is free for God who is the source of freedom because he is the source of love."[86] Adam was commanded not to eat "from the tree of consciousness before he was guided by the freedom of the spirit," in fact, Stăniloae says, "God …commanded him to be strong, to remain free, and to grow in spirit, that is in freedom."[87] Stăniloae assumes rather than elaborates the biblical foundations here, and he goes straight to the patristic interpretation which he combines with the historical experience:

> "From the patristic interpretation we see that on account of the Fall, the human person was left with the knowledge of evil in himself overwhelmed by it. He [the human person] continued to be opposed to evil but could not succeed in bringing his struggle to a victorious conclusion."[88]

The estrangement from God, the loss of paradise and mortality were not punishments of God, but consequences of the weakening of the spirit that gave way to disobedience, pride and all selfish appe-

[84] According to Irenaeus Adam and Eve were created as children that were to grow towards maturity, responsibility and perfection. For this purpose they were given time as a gift. (see *Adv. haer.* III.22; IV.38)

[85] Basil the Great, *God is Not the Author of Evil* 7, PG 31.344C-345A; in Stăniloae *The World,* 178. Stăniloae interprets Basil's concept of ἀβουλία ασ "imprudence and partly lack of will, or laziness of will." *The World,* 178.

[86] Stăniloae *The World,* 179.

[87] Stăniloae *The World,* 178.

[88] Stăniloae, *The World,* 183.

tites.[89] God responds to the fall by driving people "away from the tree of life," and by "withdrawing this tree from the possibility that they might see it."[90] These are two separate acts, according to Stăniloae: "The world becomes untransparent and brings forth death and corruption not because of the human deed alone, but also because of the act of God who withdraws some of his energies from the world."[91] But this is not the only response by God, as even after the fall God does not stop loving people and loving the world he has created. The corruptibility and death that are the consequences of the alienation from the source of life are not meant to last forever. God in his providence will change their role and will make them "means of healing evil" in Christ.[92]

Here Stăniloae introduces his dynamic understanding of divine providence. For him providence does not mean that God perfectly knows and guides the course of the world, but that God responds to each new path on which the world and its inhabitants embark. The course of the world is open. It moves "toward ever new phases,"[93] Stăniloae says. This involves both progress in evil and progress in good: "Inasmuch as evil is not a factor that operates always in the same fashion in order to keep the world steadily within that weakened state that was introduced within it, so neither is the providence that preserves the world merely a constant countervailing action that keeps the world going with all its enduring erosion."[94] Evil changes, bringing always new tricks, new ways to attach itself parasitically to

[89] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 183; yet Stăniloae also insists: "We note that in the Orthodox view, the world after the Fall did not take on a totally and fatally opaque image, nor was human knowledge wholly restricted to a knowledge that conformed to an opaque, untransparent image of the world. Humans can penetrate this opacity in part by means of another kind of knowledge, and indeed, they often manage to do this, but they cannot wholly overcome this opacity of knowledge that conforms to it. These remain dominant structures." *The World,* 185.

[90] Stăniloae, *The World,* 189.

[91] Stăniloae, *The World,* 189. The quotation continues: "The fact that the tree of life is said to have remained somewhere from which humans have been removed may mean that in itself the world remained potentially a tree of life and potentially transparent, but that men had fallen away from knowing it in this way." *The World,* 190.

[92] Stăniloae, *The World,* 202.

[93] Stăniloae, *The World,* 206.

[94] Stăniloae, *The World,* 203.

the good[95] – but God in his providence responds to that in always new ways to liberate, strengthen and protect the good, to preserve the world and move it towards communion with God.[96]

As Orthodox theology does not subscribe to the western teaching of original hereditary sin,[97] Stăniloae feels free to play with the concept of originality. "Through the multiplication of human beings as factors of good and evil, always original but endowed with memory of the past,[98] God is leading the world toward ever new phases."[99] Stăniloae speaks about "further creative work of God"[100] in every generation, in every new life that is brought into existence, and through which God leads the world toward perfection, i.e. toward communion with him. Such perfection is not static either. Referring

[95] For Stăniloae evil does not have a substance of its own, thus it always has to attach itself as a parasite to something good and the good can be liberated: "In fact, no conscious being can withdraw completely from the force of the good. Thus God makes use both of the evil and the good forces as he leads history toward higher stages and ultimately toward salvation and deification, for providence implies synergy between God and the conscious creature." Stăniloae *The World,* 207.

[96] "Providence, too, however, is always new in the ways it adapts to preserve and protect the world, making use of both its own forces and the good deeds of humans, whether these latter are supporting the good invariably or only intermittently." Stăniloae *The World,* 206.

[97] In Latin theology we find the first interpretations of Adam's sin as original and hereditary in Ambrose: "Adam existed and in him all existed; Adam perished and in him all perished" *Expos. ev. Luc.* 7, 234; and even more strongly: "In Adam I fell, in Adam I was cast out of Paradise, in Adam I died. How should God restore me, unless He finds in me Adam, justified in Christ, exactly as in that first Adam I was subject to guilt (*culpae obnoxium*) and destined to death?" *De excess. Satur.* 2,6; a consistent doctrine on original sin, then, comes from Augustine, and stresses that every human being inherits the original sin that comes from a parent to a child by the carnal excitement (*concupiscentia*) present in the physical act of generation including those who are baptised. On this he founds the necessity of the infant baptism; see *Op. imperf. c. Iul.* 2,42; 5,64; 6,27; 6,14.

[98] Ware states that in this world Christian tradition does not protect us from the newness or the strangeness of the world, but remains a source for growth and regeneration. Tradition as "pneumatic anamnesis" takes us to the present and call us to be bold and prophetic in the present world. In this light we can sometimes see that what was in previous generation considered as progress, worned out and became an anachronism. See Ware, "Foreword," xvii; compare also to Alexander Schmemann, *Russian Theology: 1920–1972*, *Russian Theology: 1920–1972: An Introductory Survey*. St. Vladimir's Theological Quartely, Vol. 16, No. 4, 1972, s. 172–194; http://www.schmemann.org/byhim/russiantheology/html, p. 3, out of 28.

[99] Stăniloae *The World,* 206.

[100] Stăniloae *The World,* 207.

to Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of St Paul,[101] Stăniloae accepts the notion of *epektasis* as "a stability that is simultaneously motion and without which the human being no longer remains within continuous newness but as a consequence, falls."[102]

For Stăniloae the doctrine of creation cannot be separated from the doctrine of salvation and of deification. But at the same time, it is important not to lose sight of God being related to the entire movement of the world. When divine providence moves the world toward dynamic perfection, it responds to every new danger threatening the world with destruction, it leads human beings and through them the cosmic nature, to ever higher levels "toward himself and toward salvation."[103]

Conclusion

Stăniloae's theology of creation reflected a need to move Orthodox theology from out of its western academic bondage, a need he felt since his student days in Cernăuți Seminary. Dogmatic theology, he saw, had to be rooted in spirituality,[104] it had to be liberating and help in spiritual growth, as he said at the end of the volume *The World: Creation and Deification:* "With its dogmas that open out on the infinite and its services that purify the passions and nourish prayer, the spirituality of the Christian East constitutes the best method for those who seek to achieve true freedom in God and to progress in the

[101] This Pauline concept taken from Phil 3:13, where Paul speaks about "straining forward to what lies ahead" is further developed by Gregory of Nyssa, who refers to the constant striving and straining of humankind on the never-ending journey towards God, which does not end even after resurrection, but, rather, enters into a new phase; see *In Cant.* 8; *De hom. opif.* 28; *De an. et res.* PG 46, 109b-121a.

[102] Stăniloae, *The World,* 209. Stăniloae refers here to Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* 2.235 [233], 239.

[103] Stăniloae, *The World,* 208.

[104] It is interesting that Stăniloae emphasizes the liturgical roots of theology less than other Orthodox theologians, like Meyndorff or Schmemann. In my view it is because of his roots in hesychast spirituality, and his prison experience, where he had to live for years without liturgy, but from the strength of the invocation of the Name Jesus. See Ware, "Foreword," xiii.

knowledge and communion of God and neighbor through experience."[105]

This desire for revival is also a necessary key for understanding the passages where Stăniloae praises the Orthodox way as the very best, as above, or where he complains about the emptiness of western academic theology. We have to keep in mind that he speaks about the type of theology he learned first at the Orthodox Seminary in Cernăuți, and that was generally taught in the 19th century and also at the beginning of the 20th century in Orthodox seminaries – in Latin! – with "Orthodox" theological curricula that more or less copied both Catholic and Protestant schools. Their transposition of Orthodoxy to the western categories of thought alienated theology from spirituality, from liturgy, and from a lived experience of the church; and in that whole generations of the Orthodox clergy from their own roots.[106] The Romanian Orthodox church was perhaps even more vulnerable to this practice, as it was Latin by language and culture and the westernisation therefore felt more "natural." But for Stăniloae there was also a possibility for Romanian Orthodoxy to accept the role of a bridge the other way round, to communicate different theological and spiritual roots to Western Christians and to share with them a common concern of how to drink from Christian roots in the modern secular world.[107] This assertion, however, should not stop a non-Orthodox reader from appreciating the liberating potential, the relational and the holistic character of Stăniloae's theology of creation. It can indeed help us progress in knowledge as we listen to him speak, from his to our experience, of purifying the passions, of being nour-

[105] Stăniloae, *The World,* 215.

[106] This emphasis united Stăniloae with the neo-patristic schools both in St Sergei in Paris and St Vladimir in New York, where mainly Russian emigrées worked against the westernisation of Orthodoxy, which they saw as having its roots already in the 13th century, when with the invasion of Mongolians, growing dependence on the West began and at the same time, political, ecclesial and spiritual alienation from Byzantium. The absence of a stable Orthodox tradition with its own centres of theological learning only served to increase this dependence. See Schmemann, *Russian Theology,* 2–3.

[107] Moltmann appreciated this aspect of Stăniloae's contribution. See "Geleitwort," 9–10.

ished in prayer, of growing towards true freedom and communion with God, neighbour and the whole of "cosmic nature."[108]

It has to be noted that Stăniloae's approach to Scripture is strange for a reader brought up on western critical theology. First, there are many passages where he does not work directly with the Scriptures, but only via patristic interpretation. Secondly, when he deals with the actual texts, as in his angelology or his account of the fall of Adam (Eve does not get much of a mention), he does not analyse them as etiological myths, but, like the fathers, approaches their meaning directly: Adam is Adam, the first man, paradise is the first mode of human existence in history; at most he employs typological or allegorical methods of interpretation. This is a challenge to a historical critical mind, but, perhaps, also a reminder that in distancing ourselves from the immediacy of the Scriptural narratives, we have lost something important: the immediacy of the living faith and the wisdom of the tradition that cultivated it.[109]

On his painful way to rediscovering Orthodox roots, Stăniloae demonstrates the need for a theology that is rooted in a lived Trinitarian faith. This has at its beginning God as an open communion of love, inviting into that communion all that is created. He shows that a theology without this source is insufficient for the cultivation of the spiritual and moral life of the church or for decent human relationships, within and without the community. That lived Trinitarian faith constantly returns to the Glory of God and to the image of God which, by the power of the Spirit, we see and share in Jesus Christ.

[108] See Stăniloae, *The World,* 215, 3.

[109] Compare to Paul Ricoeur's plea that we as "children of criticism" need to go "beyond criticism by means of criticism, by a criticism, which is no longer reductive but restorative," takes us to a "second *naïvité*," where the immediacy of belief is included together with the critical thinking, and both challenged by their mutual relationship. *Symbolism of Evil,* Boston, 1967, 350–356.

Summary: *This article provides a biographical and theological portrait of the Romanian Orthodox theologian, philosopher and prisoner of the communist regime Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993). Despite his intellectual achievements it was only in late sixties that Stăniloae found reception among western theologians. In his understanding of creation Stăniloae emphasizes that it is God's gift. No theology or philsophy can therefore bypass the creation as a positive element on one's spiritual journey. Emerging from a consequent Trinitarian thinking, Stăniloae sees no contrast between Hesychast concepts of individual deification and the task of profound humanisation.*[110]

Keywords: Dumitru Stăniloae – Church in Romania – Eastern-orthodox theology – Philokalia – creation – Holy Trinity – Hesychasm – deification.

[110] This article has been written as an outcome of the research project "The Hermeneutics of Christian Tradition, in particular the Czech and Protestant one, in Culture History of Europe" (MSM 00216 20802).

CREATION AND THE SCIENCES IN THE THEOLOGY OF WOLFHART PANNENBERG

Rodney D. Holder, Cambridge

Introduction

Karl Barth, acknowledged as possibly the greatest theologian since the Reformation, famously repudiated natural theology as the denial of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Moreover, he felt no need to engage in any kind of dialogue with the natural sciences, writing his volume on the doctrine of creation without any such reference. For Barth, the object of theology must be studied in the way appropriate to it, namely through God's self-revelation to us in Jesus Christ.

If one wishes to commend the Christian faith to non-believers, it seems to me that Barth's approach will not do. It opens up the charge of obscurantism and leaves the, albeit hopelessly one-sided and unscientific, arguments of Richard Dawkins[1] and his friends, commanding the field. Christians are after all bidden to give a reason for the hope that is within them (1 Peter 3:15). A theologian who brings a necessary corrective to the debate within theology is Wolfhart Pannenberg. In contrast to Barth, Pannenberg regards dialogue with the sciences as essential, and all truth claims of Christianity dependent on linking the doctrine of creation to the findings of modern science. For example, he writes:

> Only if we can understand the world as the creation of the biblical God and God himself as its Creator can we raise a truth claim for belief in the sole deity of God. Furthermore, only on

[1] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, London 2007.

> this same assumption can we set forth the history of Jesus Christ as the reconciliation of the world by the one true God, only then do the proclamation and mission of the Christian church take place in obedience to this one true God, and only then can the Christian hope of the future have a sure basis in him… Theology must make this claim in dialogue with the sciences… A failure to claim that the world that the sciences describe is God's world is a conceptual failure to confess the deity of the God of the Bible.[2]

And again:

> If the God of the Bible is the creator of the universe, then it is not possible to understand fully or even appropriately the processes of nature without any reference to that God.[3]

Moreover, for Pannenberg, Christianity makes truth claims based on publicly checkable evidence, even if there is a provisionality in those truth claims until the *eschaton*.[4] Supremely it is the resurrection of Jesus which brings that eschatological reality into the present, thereby making sense of the whole of cosmic history.

In this paper I present some of Pannenberg's key arguments. I begin with a brief biographical sketch, before considering his early ground-breaking work on history, his engagement with the philosophy of science and aims to establish theology in the public arena as a science in its own right, following this with his more direct engagement with the sciences and work on the doctrine of creation.

---

[2] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology II*, Edinburgh 1994, pp. 59–60. Soon after the magisterial three-volume-work called *Systematische Theologie* started to appear in 1988–1993, the English version followed translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley in 1991–1997. Hereafter abbreviated as ST I–III.

[3] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Toward a Theology of Nature: Essays on Science and Faith*, Louisville 1993, p. 16. Hereafter abbreviated as TTN.

[4] E.g. Pannenberg, *ST I*, pp. 213–214.

Biographical sketch and outline of Pannenberg's work[5]

Wolfhart Pannenberg was born in Stettin, now part of Poland, in 1928. His family moved several times during his childhood, settling in Pomerania after their house in Berlin was destroyed. Here the young Wolfhart had a life-changing numinous experience in January 1945. Although called up at age 16, he was saved him from fighting and dying with others of his unit on the Eastern front through his having contracted scabies. Instead he was taken prisoner by the British and released in the summer of 1945.[6]

After the war Pannenberg studied theology in Berlin, Göttingen, and, following a term under Barth in Basel, from autumn 1950 in Heidelberg. He received his doctorate from the University of Heidelberg in1954; his *Habilitationsschrift* in the following year procured him a teaching post there as *Privatdozent*. Subsequent posts included a professorship at the Kirchliche Hochschule in Wuppertal, where Jürgen Moltmann was a colleague, the chair in systematic theology at Mainz, and finally the similar chair at Munich (1967–1993).

Pannenberg broke on to the theological scene in a major way with *Revelation as History* (1961 in German; Eng. trans. 1986; hereafter abbreviated RaH),[7] which he edited and to which he contributed. This small volume from the so-called 'Heidelberg Circle' came as a theological bombshell, perhaps not with the same impact as Barth's *Epistle to the Romans* nearly half a century before, but nevertheless presenting a serious challenge to the Protestant theology of the time. Pannenberg's view marked a significant departure from Barth's 'positivism of revelation,' as Bonhoeffer had characterized it. Faith is rooted in a history which has to be interpreted as exhibiting revela-

[5] Useful summary articles are to be found in Stanley Grenz, "Pannenberg, Wolfhart" in: Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason, and Hugh Pyper (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, Oxford 2000, pp. 509–510; and Alister E. McGrath, "Pannenberg, Wolfhart," in: Alister E. McGrath (ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, Oxford 1993, pp. 420–422.

[6] Autobiographical essay in Carl E. Braaten, and Philip Clayton, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response*, Minneapolis 1988.

[7] Wolfhart Pannenberg, Rolf Rendtorff, Trutz Rendtorff, and Ulrich Wilckens, *Offenbarung als Geschichte*, Heidelberg 1961; the English trans. by D. Granskou, *Revelation as History*, New York and London 1968.

tion. Many of the themes for Pannenberg's later work are set out in this early volume. In *Jesus – God and Man*[8] he defends the historicity of the resurrection. The resurrection is central for Christology, validating the pre-Easter claims, and it means that the end of the world has broken into the present.

Pannenberg's concern with historical rationality is developed further in *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*[9] and *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*.[10] In contrast to Troeltsch, whose 'principle of analogy' led him to rule out the resurrection as historical, on the grounds that it would be unique, Pannenberg denies that historical events have to be like other historical events. The 'principle of analogy' can function as no more than a working tool.

For Pannenberg, Christian theology must argue with atheism on the grounds of a shared rationality. Theological truth claims are made on the basis of universal and publicly accessible evidence. History, which resembles the natural sciences in some, though not all, respects, can only be understood through Jesus Christ. He has revealed the end of history proleptically through his resurrection. The apocalyptic world view of the New Testament is thus essential to understanding it (cf Bonhoeffer's criticism of Bultmann on this point[11]).

The resurrection of Jesus tells us who he is, confirming his divine nature. This is an objective 'Christology from below,' in contrast to that of Schleiermacher, which, it can be argued, merely reflected subjective human experience or feelings of redemption back onto Christ.

In *Systematic Theology* Pannenberg again argues for the truth of the Christian faith. Only the pursuit of truth in theology can justify the place of the subject in the university. Indeed only if it is true can Christianity occupy any place in the public sphere, and can it be worthwhile adhering to it. A privatised belief that is 'true for me' but

[8] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*, London 2002 (new edition; German original 1964, Eng. trans. 1968), abbrev. JGM.

[9] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, London 1976 (German original 1973), abbrev. TPS.

[10] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, Philadelphia 1985 (German original 1983).

[11] Dietrich Bonhoeffer (ed. Eberhard Bethge), *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, London 1971, pp. 328–329.

not for others is ultimately not even true for me. These are important statements, not only with regard to the relationship between science and theology but in the 'post-modern' context of the late twentieth and early twenty first century.

A useful collection of Pannenberg's essays, particularly relevant to creation and the relationship of theology to the natural sciences, is *Toward a Theology of Nature* (1993, abbrev. TTN).

Revelation as History

As noted above, *Revelation as History* broke new ground and its themes remained important for Pannenberg's whole approach to theology, as seen both in *Jesus – God and Man* and *Systematic Theology*; and indeed in his engagement with the natural sciences in *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*. Given that our main theme in this paper is creation, and connected with that natural theology and the importance for theology of the natural sciences, we cannot do justice to Pannenberg's treatment of history. However, since it is important for everything else – and not least because Pannenberg sees God's creative activity as not confined to the beginning but continuing in history – we do give a summary.

Instead of the authoritarian approach of Barth, and in a different way of Bultmann, Pannenberg prefers the 'open rationality of the Enlightenment,' but 'combined with a concern for the substance of the Christian tradition' (RaH, p. ix). That is reflected in this book and throughout his ouevre. The book was a direct challenge to dialectical theology, although Pannenberg later acknowledges (ST I, pp. 227–228) that the book did not do justice to the full variety of the Biblical data on revelation.

In common with Barth, Pannenberg starts with revelation as meaning God's self-disclosure in Christ. However, evaluating the scriptural material, both Old and New Testaments, Pannenberg concludes that, whilst God does indeed reveal himself in history, he does so in an indirect way. That is to say, the content of God's revelation is not his essence. God's acts in history may be interpreted as originating in him, which is quite different from saying they *are* him.

The problem with indirect revelation, Pannenberg argues, is that there are then as many revelations as divine acts in nature and history. How can we then speak of revelation as self-revelation of God? Two possibilities present themselves: either total reality as cosmos is God's indirect communication, which leads back to natural theology; or the totality of reality in history is God's self-communication, which then leads to the questions, 'how can a specific event within it, such as the fate of Jesus, have absolute meaning as revelation?' and, 'could there not be progress beyond Jesus Christ?' (RaH, pp. 17–18). Elsewhere he argues that revelation is confirmed by experience – dreams coming true, prophecies fulfilled etc (ST I, p. 191).

It seems to me that there is a tension in Pannenberg's thought here. History is undoubtedly primary and God's revelation in history remains central for him. And yet God is also the 'all-determining reality' so that it is essential to engage with the natural sciences. This is most obviously done by exploring how the doctrine of creation relates to what science has to say. We shall see shortly how Pannenberg goes about that latter task.

With his Biblical scholar colleagues, Pannenberg considers the importance of the move from Old Testament prophetic thought to apocalyptic. In apocalyptic God's vindication comes in the eschatological future. This is when the decisive revelation of God occurs, namely at the end of history. Interestingly in *Systematic Theology* (ST I, pp. 208–209) Pannenberg notes that the one major exception to the apocalyptic schema of a present disclosure and then a future universal disclosure is the revelation of the power and deity of God in creation which Paul refers to in Rom 1:19. We return to that important passage later.

Most significantly for Pannenberg, it is the fate of Jesus which anticipates the end of all events, and only at the end will revelation be fully understood, and be given its full meaning, retrospectively as it were. Nevertheless the historical revelation is open to anyone with eyes to see: it has a 'universal character.' He says: 'Nothing must mute the fact that all truth lies right before the eyes, and that its appropriation is a natural consequence of the facts.' Indeed the truth of God 'can prove itself to us *only* [my italics] in the course of a history' (ST I, p. 171). This last statement is a sign of the tension I

referred to earlier between history and the natural sciences for Pannenberg.

All this does not mean that unaided reason can give the knowledge of this truth: the *events* provide the data and a reasonable person ought normatively to believe as a consequence. Otherwise, Pannenberg says, 'the Christian truth is made into a truth for the in group, and the church becomes a gnostic community.' Contra Richard Dawkins, who defines faith as 'belief without evidence or in the teeth of the evidence,' for the Christian theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'a person does not come to faith blindly, but by means of an event that can be appropriated as something that can be considered reliable. True faith is not a state of blissful gullibility.' This reliability and reasonableness of the facts given in Christian proclamation leads quite reasonably to your being able to 'place your faith, life, and future on them.'

Pannenberg notes that the Greeks also saw God reflected in the totality of events, but in the unchangeable structures of order in the cosmos; history gives a superior and more complete view of the same God, he says, because it also includes the contingency of real events. Since the end of history has been proleptically revealed in Christ, that means there can be no fundamentally new self-revelation in history, though of course God continues to act in history.

This again is a very important point which relates to what Pannenberg says elsewhere. As we shall see, there is in his thought a place for metaphysics and philosophical theology, with the traditional arguments for the existence of God etc. playing a role. However, this is relatively minor and certainly secondary to the place of history. From the point of view of natural theology, however, it seems to me that the public availability of evidence for events in history, which Pannenberg affirms, even if our understanding is provisional, is itself a kind of natural theology. Indeed Pannenberg might well agree that the boundaries between natural and revealed theology are broken down in his thought. Historical evidence might also be regarded as contributing to a kind of 'ramified' natural theology which seeks to provide grounds for belief in the particulars of the Christian faith, rather than simply belief in a more abstract 'Absolute.' One argument against Richard Swinburne's approach to the justification of Christian belief,

which I myself favour, has been that probabilities diminish as they are multiplied together to evaluate the credibility of the finer details of the faith. This would be redressed by the adducing of more evidence of an historical kind. This would also apply to the alternative developments of Pannenberg's 'scientific theology' which we shall see have been offered by Philip Hefner and Nancey Murphy.[12]

Pannenberg's Critique of Barth

In *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* Pannenberg takes up Bonhoeffer's accusation against Barth of positivism of revelation.[13]

For Barth the starting point of theology is God's self-revelation, and what makes it a science in its own right is treating its object in the manner appropriate to it. This self-revelation of God cannot be 'justified' and the appropriate response to God's word is to obey it and preach it.

Barth first gave this definition of scientific theology in his *Christliche Dogmatik* of 1927. Martin Kähler had already made the point that a particular subject requires its own scientific procedure in 1883, but Kähler insisted that this must be 'within the general method of universal epistemological laws' (Pannenberg, TPS, p. 268). It was this last point which Barth denied.

Heinrich Scholz in 1931 (Pannenberg, TPS, p. 269) asked how an evangelical theology can be a science, given that he could not find any criterion to judge whether an idea is appropriate to its subject. Pannenberg agrees that no judgement can be made independent of formal criteria of scientific validity. He criticises Torrance (in *Theological Science*[14]) who takes Barth's line without recognising Scholz's disagreement. Torrance in fact sees different natural sciences having different methodologies with some aspects common to

[12] See on this William Hasker, "Is Christianity probable? Swinburne's apologetic programme," in *Rel. Stud.* 38/3 (2002), pp. 253–264; and the reply, Richard Swinburne, "Response to my commentators," in *Rel. Stud.* 38/3 (2002), pp. 301–315.

[13] Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, pp. 265–276. See also Bonhoeffer, *Letters*, 280, 286, and 329.

[14] Thomas Forsyth Torrance, *Theological Science*, Edinburgh 1969.

all, though he does seem to agree with Barth about the givenness (positivity) of God in his word.

Scholz laid down formal postulates which included the requirement of lack of contradiction of propositions and that the claim to truth should be subject to testing, though he wants a wider sense of this than the verification principle of the logical positivists. Barth asserts that even the principle of lack of contradiction can only be asserted with reservation in theology and rejects the notion of testing for theology. As Scholz says, theology cannot then be a science but only 'a personal confession of faith exempt from all earthly questioning' (Pannenberg, TPS, p. 271).

Here it seems Barth is on weak ground. He asserts contra Scholz that theology is investigating a 'definite object' by a 'self-consistent path.' Yet it is clear that if the principle of non-contradiction is denied then all statements are allowed and the search for truth becomes meaningless. And if there is no means of testing God's call to obedience as actually being from God, then how can the theologian justify himself or anybody else following the path? As Pannenberg asserts, Barth's rejection of reducing the subject-matter of theology to human religious consciousness leads in the end, however unintentionally, to its being just that! His 'venture of faith' rests on 'no more than irrational subjectivity.' We do need the methods of rational enquiry to judge whether what we are receiving is genuinely God's revelation and command. Wentzel van Huyssteen, in also commenting on the Scholtz-Barth dispute, comes to a similar conclusion to Pannenberg: 'Methodologically, then, Barth ultimately fell prey to precisely that psychological subjectivism from which he had sought to escape.'[15]

Later, in his contributions to Barth's *Festschrift* of 1936 Scholz insists again that theological statements cannot breach the laws of logic and still say anything meaningful. 'It is always dangerous for a thinking being to renounce logical argument,' he says (Pannenberg, TPS, p. 275). That certainly goes for the law of non-contradiction and it is also the case that there must be some way of determining at

[15] Wentzel Van Huyssteen, *Theology and the Justification of Faith: Constructing Theories in Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids 1989, pp. 17–19, quotation is on p. 19.

least in principle the conditions under which a statement is true for it to have meaning, though again not being restricted to sense experience as in logical positivism.

Concluding this section of *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, Pannenberg remarks,'If we consider Scholz's arguments carefully, we must agree that even theological statements cannot be exempt from logic. But if we admit this, we admit a great deal including that a view of theology based on the positive nature of revelation is untenable.' In *Systematic Theology* volume I (p. 44) he likens Barth's approach to that of Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher based dogmatics on faith as self-evident; Barth based it on the Word of God as self-evident. Barth acknowledged that this meant taking a risk, implying that he is still basing dogmatics on faith! – even if that is faith as risk rather than faith as experience.

Is Theology a Science?

This is the major theme of Pannenberg's *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*.[16] Pannenberg is concerned that theology is only eligible for a place in the university if it is a science. This is in contrast to Schleiermacher who thought it enough for theology to be essential for the education of clergy. This is inadequate – theology must be there for what it is, for its pursuit of truth, and it cannot be immune to criticism (TPS, p. 255; also ST I, p. 5).

Today in Britain Richard Dawkins does not believe that theology warrants a place in university education precisely for the reason that it is not a science, so Pannenberg's theme is directly relevant. Dawkins, and other atheistic scientists such as Lewis Wolpert, might concede its study as an historical phenomenon, though presumably alchemy and astrology would also warrant a place for the same reasons. Interestingly this was essentially the approach of Ernst Troeltsch, which again Pannenberg rightly deems inadequate (TPS, p. 256ff).

[16] A helpful review of this topic is Van Huyssteen, *Theology and the Justification of Faith*, ch. 6, "Theology as the Science of God: Wolfhart Pannenberg," pp. 71–100.

Thus the question of the truth of theological claims and of their scientific rationality is essential for anyone who believes that theology is worthy of university study. Otherwise it should be relegated to the seminary.[17] As we have seen, some theologians (notably Barth) play into the hands of the opponents of theology because they make theology immune from rational criticism.

Before the great philosopher of science Karl Popper came on the scene positivism had asserted that arguments should proceed from the basis of what is known via sense perception. Logical positivism added the criterion that propositions be testable and formulated the principle of verification and this made statements about God meaningless. Barth played into the hands of the logical positivists by saying that one cannot verify religious experience to a third party. Bonhoeffer's charge against Barth was that taking God's revelation in Christ as the basis for all subsequent theological argument itself constituted a form of positivism – 'positivism of revelation' – and would presumably suffer from the same weaknesses as other forms of positivism.

Popper argued that scientific laws are meaningless on the basis of logical positivism because you cannot verify a generalization of infinitely many instances by only observing a finite number. Instead he proposed that hypotheses should be open to falsification. This means that any hypothesis can never attain certainty since there is always the possibility of falsification. Where Popper was mistaken was in arguing that a theory should be abandoned rather than modified if a falsifying observation is made. Science sometimes works that way, but not always. Indeed Thomas Kuhn argues that, contra Popper, the normal way is precisely by accommodating anomalies, e. g. the perturbation of Uranus's orbit could be accommodated by invoking a new planet (Neptune) rather than a new law.

Whilst metaphysical propositions cannot be falsified, they remain important for Popper as 'helping to organize the world.' However, Popper's pupil W. W. Bartley took the view that Protestantism represented a 'retreat to commitment,' as exemplified by Barth. Faith be-

[17] There are perhaps other reasons for considering it to be more at home in the seminary, e. g. the central role of worship and prayer for the practice of theology and the formation of a theologian (Barth would agree with this point).

comes irrational fanaticism and plays into the hands of an atheistic psychology of religion which traces the irrational need to believe back to its secular roots (ST I, pp. 47–48). This latter is the kind of exercise secularists such as Dawkins and Dennett[18] have been engaged in more recently, however unsuccessful or open to criticism their approaches may be.

In superceding positivism, Popper's falsificationism does not suffer from taking irrational starting points but presupposes no ultimate certainties. However, Popper is not the last word because falsificationism (critical rationalism) has its problems. We have seen the problem that falsified theories *can* be modified. There is also the problem of Popper's basic propositions, which are observation reports (singular 'there is' statements). However, these basic propositions are only accepted on the basis of other basic propositions and ultimately by a group's decision or agreement, and are thus to be regarded as 'conventions.' Carnap, I think rightly, replaced falsification with the notion of confirmation. It is still true that confidence in a law of nature can never be final, though it does grow as the number of observations mounts. I would argue that the modern form of confirmation theory, as pioneered by Richard Swinburne, is a valid way not only of evaluating scientific hypotheses, but metaphysical ones too.[19] Here it is the ability of different theories to explain the evidence at hand which is important, and that is something Pannenberg affirms as a criterion for their scientific status (a point we return to shortly).[20] Van Huyssteen's basic criticism of his position is that, even so, the subjective commitment of the religious believer is never eliminated by Pannenberg, although van Husyssteen seems to think that that is in any case not a barrier to finding an ultimate basis for scientific rationality since scientists themselves exercise their own commitments.[21]

---

[18] Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell – Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, London 2006

[19] Richard Swinburne, *An Introduction to Confirmation Theory*, London 1973; Richard Swinburne, *Epistemic Justification*, Oxford 2001; and Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, Oxford 20042.

[20] Van Huyssteen, *Theology and the Justification of Faith*, 88, also reads Pannenberg as arguing that it is primarily in "integrating and giving meaning to available data" that both scientific and theological hypotheses are tested.

[21] Van Huyssteen, *Theology and the Justification of Faith*, 94.

For Pannenberg it is important to know whether history and metaphysics can be conceived as sciences. Clearly history does not conform to the falsification criterion since an exception to a regularity would not break a law. History concerns unique and unrepeatable events. However, so do the sciences of cosmology and biology; hence this factor clearly does not make history unscientific. However, the ability to explain evidence is common to historical, metaphysical and scientific hypotheses. An hypothesis which unifies and interprets the data is to be sought in history just as in science. Moreover, metaphysics is also included here too, for philosophical assertions can be tested for their 'coherence (freedom from contradiction), the efficiency of their interpretative components (the avoidance of unnecessary postulates), and the degree of simplicity and subtlety they achieve in their interpretations of reality' (TPS, p. 69). The uniqueness of philosophical assertions lies in their being concerned with the whole of reality; they are, however, scientific in the ways suggested.

Later in *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* (TPS, pp. 326–345) Pannenberg returns to the question of whether theology is a science in the sense in which Scholz maintained in criticising Barth. He says that it is coherent in being able to give an account of how the all-determining reality of God gives meaning and unity to the whole of reality other than it. Again, a philosopher who would agree is Richard Swinburne who has argued for the coherence of theism and for its explanatory power.[22] Philip Hefner sees Pannenberg as providing a 'scientific research programme' in the terminology of Imre Lakatos.[23] The 'hard core' of this research programme would be God as the all-determining reality bestowing meaning to the as yet incomplete totality of reality, completion coming eschatologically. 'Auxiliary hypotheses' relate both to the Biblical/theological tradition (these would be open to various forms of falsification), and to scientific descriptions of reality which at least 'leave open' (Hefner's phrase) the conjecture

[22] Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, Revised Edition, Oxford 1993; and Swinburne, *The Existence of God.*

[23] Philip Hefner, "The Role of Science in Pannenberg's Theological Thinking," in: Braaten, and Clayton, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, pp. 266–286, especially pp. 281ff; also Philip Hefner, "The Role of Science in Pannenberg's Theological Thinking, in: Carol Rausch Albright and Joel Haugen, *Beginning with the End: God, Science, and Wolfhart Pannenberg*, Chicago and La Salle 1997, pp. 109 ff.

that they manifest the effects of God's all-determining reality. I would broadly agree with Hefner, although, again, my preference would be for 'confirm' in the sense of confirmation theory rather than the weaker 'leave open'; indeed, although I cannot develop the arguments here it will be apparent that my overall preference is for confirmation theory, as expressed through Bayesian probability theory.[24]

As we have seen, history is of central importance for Pannenberg. Only God can give meaning to the whole of history and that meaning is anticipated in the resurrection of Christ. Nancey Murphy sees Pannenberg here as failing to counter Hume's alternative view of history as without transcendent reference and so without the consequent unity of meaning.[25] Moreover Hume does not of course accept the resurrection. He utilises the logic of the Port-Royalists whereby the probability of an event is weighted in accord with the frequency of its past occurrence (the effect being not dissimilar that of Troeltsch's principle of analogy). Murphy thinks Pannenberg does not defeat Hume because their two systems are incommensurable. However, like Hefner, Murphy sees Pannenberg as providing the starting point for a Lakatosian research programme (see later).[26] Murphy argues that this is a sound move since Lakatos represents the modern form of probable reasoning in the line of Hume, though I would argue, as noted above, that it is Bayesian confirmation theory. One point to note is that the latter utilises 'epistemic probabilities' rather than the frequency interpretation.

Pannenberg further argues, correctly in my view, that religious statements are to be understood as making assertions about states of affairs. They are therefore open to testing, though this must be understood, as for Scholz, as going beyond the strictures of logical positivism. This testing must, again rightly in my view, be other than by reliance on authoritative dogmatic statements. Indeed traditional assertions such as Scripture being the word of God are themselves not

[24] See, for example, in addition to Swinburne's books, Colin Howson, and Peter Urbach *Scientific Reasoning: The Bayesian Approach*, Chicago and La Salle, 1993.

[25] Nancey Murphy, *Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning*, Ithaca, NY and London 1990, pp. 19–50.

[26] Murphy, *Theology in the Age*, 174–211; and Nancey Murphy, "A Lakatosian Reconstruction of Pannenberg's Program: Responses to Sponheim, van Huyssteen, and Eaves," in: Albright and Haugen, *Beginning with the End*, 409–426.

sources of proof of theological statements but candidates for verification (or, again preferably in my view, confirmation in the sense of Carnap and his successors today such as Swinburne). The factual status of the state of affairs is indeed more important than coherence (TPS, p. 331).

Now it is clear that statements about God – and for Pannenberg theology is 'the science of God' – cannot be verified directly. God is not under our control; he is not an object like others to be examined in the same way. Thus statements about God must be tested on the basis of their implications. This applies in the sciences and in history.

We have seen that the verification criterion does not work for hypothetical scientific laws (which are generalizations). Nor is falsification necessarily applicable since, as Kuhn showed, there arises the option of accommodating an anomaly to the present paradigm as an alternative to paradigm shift.

As Pannenberg says, 'The fundamental contribution of general statements within general theories is their ability to "explain the evidence at hand".' This is true equally of theological as scientific theories. Pannenberg concludes that 'we may speak of a theory as "proved" when it is able to explain the facts at hand.' The term 'proved' here, like 'verified,' is too strong for my liking. Rather, he should use the term 'confirmed' in the sense of 'increasing the probability' as do Carnap, Swinburne and others. Van Huyssteen reads this aspect of Pannenberg's thought as shaped by Kuhn's paradigm theory. As I have said, I prefer to see it as tending towards the more objective approach of confirmation theory, though Pannenberg does not actually pursue this (or a Lakatosian approach) in any detailed way. Surprisingly, for example, he does not make the connection at this point between all he says about the resurrection elsewhere and the evidence for it 'confirming' a theological hypothesis. Of course that is essentially what Pannenberg is indeed doing in other places, most notably in *Jesus – God and Man*.[27]

Predictability is important in the natural sciences but clearly less so in historical and theological science, although there can be discov-

[27] Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*; see especially the careful treatment of 1 Corinthians 15, pp. 83ff.

eries which contradict hypotheses. And in the natural sciences it must be remembered that predictability is not all, since laws are abstractions and concrete instances are contingent and unique (we return to the vital issue of contingency in Pannenberg's thought later). Even so, Pannenberg has said that he is prepared to venture into this territory, as noted by Murphy (see below).

In history there is documentary evidence and archaeological evidence, for example, which may permit conclusions to be drawn about events being investigated. Theology goes beyond the establishing of historical facts to the appearance of the all-determining reality which reveals itself in them and in present experience. Theological statements resemble those of philosophy in dealing with the whole of reality and must be evaluated in a similar way. Whilst verification (confirmation) is possible, it is questionable, as in science but perhaps more so, as to whether a final conclusion can ever be reached. Given that the process is still open and continuing, that must only happen in the eschatological future – again we meet this characteristic emphasis of Pannenberg, though here he cites John Hick and I. M. Crombie in support (TPS, p. 343). He also cites Ebeling to the effect that God verifies himself by verifying us, i.e. by bringing our lives into his truth, taking this to mean that theological explanations give a more convincing interpretation than alternatives of the reality which includes all human experience, not least religious experience. In *Systematic Theology* volume I (p. 23) he notes that, whilst verification is important, affective and practical verification must supplement the theoretical.

I would argue that theological explanations are world views. Science is not a world view unless scientism – the idea that science can answer all questions (Dawkins, Atkins) – be adopted. With Alister McGrath I would agree that world views cannot be proved (e. g. predictability is a greater problem than for science), though I would argue that they can be confirmed in the sense of Bayesian probability theory.

Pannenberg gives helpful criteria whereby theological hypotheses may be deemed non-substantiated (TPS, pp. 344–345): (i) they do not express implications of biblical traditions; (ii) they do not connect to reality as a whole as understood by present philosophical

enquiry; (iii) they are not integrated with the appropriate area of experience; (iv) their explanatory force is not greater than that of alternative hypotheses. Hefner sees these criteria as conforming to the Lakatosian structure of scientific research programmes.[28] Hefner suggests some helpful directions for this programme, though I was somewhat surprised that he thought Pannenberg protects the Biblical traditions from falsification. As we have already seen, Pannenberg does think that the place of Scripture should be a problem for dogmatics rather than a 'given.'

As noted above Nancey Murphy also sees Pannenberg's approach as expressible in terms of a Lakatosian research programme. Both Hefner and Murphy see this as a hybrid theological-scientific research programme whose 'hard core' (in Lakatosian terminology) is God as the all-determining reality and whose auxiliary hypotheses draw from physics and anthropology as well as theology. The success of such a programme, according to Murphy, will be measured by its ability to 'predict and corroborate novel facts.' She notes that, at a symposium in Chicago in 1988, Pannenberg accepted her reconstruction of his programme and suggested several predictions for corroboration. These included anthropology finding a more constructive place for religion, and physics developing a new form of field theory that will include the irreversibility of time. We return to field theory below but note here the boldness of theology making essentially scientific predictions. Is Pannenberg offering a hostage to fortune or is he right that theology really ought to make a difference to science? This is a controversial question that deserves a good deal more analysis than we have space for here.

The Knowledge of God and the Truth of Christian Claims

For Pannenberg, history is primary. Christian doctrine 'rests on the historical revelation of God in the historical figure of Jesus Christ and on the precise evaluation, by historical interpretation alone, of the

[28] Hefner, "The Role of Science in Pannenberg's" 1988, 284–286; Hefner, "The Role of Science in Pannenberg's" 1997, pp. 111–113.

testimony that early Christian proclamation gives to this figure' (ST I, x). Nevertheless all knowledge of God is provided only by God (ST I, pp. 72, 189) and comes through the working of the Spirit and the question how that knowledge is obtained and who has it to what degree is not decided merely by stating this.

Pannenberg is insistent that truth cannot be relative (ST I, p. 51): '*My* truth cannot be mine alone. If I cannot in principle declare it to be truth for all – though perhaps hardly anyone else sees this – then it pitilessly ceases to be truth for me also.' This is an important statement for those seduced by the current form of relativism in the shape of postmodernism.

For Pannenberg doctrinal statements are 'hypotheses' (ST I, p. 56, *TPS*, pp. 332–345). They are 'propositions which are not self-evident and which do not follow with logical necessity from self-evident propositions.' Thus the crucifixion and resurrection are hypotheses, to be evaluated on normal historical criteria, though clearly the latter is more complex because resurrections are not common; it must be presupposed that such a thing can happen, not ruled out *a priori* as Troeltsch did through his 'principle of analogy.'

A critic of Pannenberg here is Tom Wright who argues that Pannenberg gives too much away by conceding that the ultimate verification of the resurrection will come at the eschaton.[29] That means of course that there will ultimately be an analogy. The rise of the early church is sufficient counter-example, says Wright, since it too is a unique phenomenon and on Troeltsch's principle one could say nothing about it. Whilst Wright has a point, it seems to me that Pannenberg is essentially correct because he denies absoluteness to Troeltsch's principle anyway, and the resurrection must remain only probable rather than certain until the eschaton.

History concerns the whole breadth of doctrine, however, not simply that recorded in Scripture (ST I, p. 59), even though that concerning God's self-revelation in Christ is fundamental: 'In the sequence of creation, sin, reconciliation, and consummation, Christian teaching is viewed and structured in terms of a history which aims at the

[29] Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, London 2003, p. 17.

salvation of humanity and the renewal of creation.' The deity of God is manifested in this history.

Pannenberg argues (contra Barth) that dogmatics cannot begin with the reality of God (p. 61). The reality of God has to be presented initially 'only as a human notion, word, or concept.'

Pannenberg notes (ST I, p. 70) that philosophical theology speaks of the one God as the origin of the unity of the cosmos. Today, Swinburne has argued against Hume's positing the possibility of many gods precisely on the grounds of the uniformity of natural law across space and time. Pannenberg says that Christians can speak into what philosophical theology says by identifying the Creator with the God manifested in Jesus Christ. In doing so they are in continuity with what the Israelites did in the Old Testament (e. g. Is 40:12–13 and Is 45:18–21). The concept 'God,' as Ian Ramsey said, makes possible an ultimate explanation of the world as a whole. I have argued elsewhere that alternative hypotheses, such as multiverses, do not provide an ultimate explanation for the existence and special nature of our universe; only God does so.[30]

Natural Knowledge of God and Natural Theology

The idea of a natural knowledge of God has been there from the beginning and is enshrined in Romans 1:19–20. Up to the twentieth century nobody disputed that there existed a provisional knowledge of God which needed to be filled out with historical knowledge of Christ. Even Barth recognised that we are guilty before God because we know him by his revelation in creation (CD I/2, pp. 306–307). However, for Barth that knowledge comes in and with the revelation in Christ and is ascribed and imputed to us from without (see especially CD II/1, p. 121). It is not preceded by knowledge of the same God into which is proclaimed the wrath of God, because that is in-

[30] Rodney D. Holder, (2007), 'Can a Multiverse Theory Provide the Ultimate Explanation?,' revised paper from Symposium 'Multiverses and String Theory' held at Stanford University 19-21 March 2005, published in *Beyond*, the on-line journal of the Center for Fundamental Concepts in Science, Arizona State University, http://beyond.asu.edu/papers/holder.pdf

compatible with Barth's understanding of the revelation in Christ as the one revelation of God.

Pannenberg thinks that Barth's view is defective: 'Might it not be a feature of this revelation that it presupposes the fact that the world and humanity belong to, and know, the God who is proclaimed by the gospel, even though a wholly new light is shed on this fact by the revelation in Christ?' (ST I, p. 75). Jesus came to *his own* and his own received him not – they were his own people, however. And Rom 1:20 talks about knowledge of God's deity from the creation of the world, i.e. long before the historical revelation in Christ.

This natural knowledge of God is not at all the same thing as natural theology, however. Natural theology is to do with a 'special human possibility' of developing a philosophical doctrine of God by argument (ST I, p. 76).

The Proofs of God and Philosophical Criticism of Natural Theology

Pannenberg claims that the ontological proof, rejected by Aquinas, has been to the fore in modern philosophical theology rather than proofs from the world, though the modern example of Richard Swinburne would be a counter to this. Descartes used the identity of God's essence and existence to reframe the ontological proof. Discussion of the tenability of his proof was found to need a cosmological argument.

The cosmological argument from the contingency of the world to a cause of its existence which needs no other but is of itself, its essence identical to its existence, led to the idea of a necessary being and was the key to the proof. This was satisfactory until Kant claimed that it was illegitimate to extend the boundaries of causation beyond the sensory world. In a footnote (ST I, p. 86) Pannenberg notes that in *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant accepts the inference of an independent origin from the contingency of things, but not inferences of absolute perfection and unity.

Pannenberg notes some problems with the argument from causes. One is the problem of infinite regress. A second is that a cause of something does not need to continue in existence, as seen from hu-

man generation. That is countered by the need for a sustaining principle for the process. However, Newton showed that not even a sustaining principle is needed because things have a tendency to stay as they are. The mechanistic universe defeats both first cause and first mover arguments.

Pannenberg (ST I, p. 90) says that Kant destroyed the arguments of speculative reason for a necessary being but still required an ideal of necessity to give unity of knowledge (*Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 359). In *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant argued that the absolute necessity of moral laws rightly requires the postulate of a supreme being, and thereby he completes the move begun by Descartes from a cosmological to an anthropological basis for thought of God.

This might seem to leave the traditional arguments in a somewhat ambivalent position, as far as Pannenberg is concerned. However, he says that the philosophical proofs make talk of God intelligible and can establish criteria for it, and they witness to the need for humans to rise above their finite existence to the thought of the infinite (ST I, pp. 94–95, 106–107), even if the debate is not decisively closed. Indeed, I would argue, the debate is very much alive. As I have said, Richard Swinburne is a proponent of the cosmological and teleological arguments (Pannenberg himself notes the move to consider purpose and contingency in the universe, and we return to that topic below), and other arguments as well; William Lane Craig is another philosopher who defends the traditional arguments. As Pannenberg rightly says, philosophical theology still has a critical function regarding Christian theology's talk about God (ST I, p. 95).

Theological Criticism of Natural Theology

Natural theology has been strongly attacked from within theology itself, most notably of course by Barth but by others as well. Even Schleiermacher (in *Speeches on Religion*, 1799, pp. 108 ff) regarded natural religion as an anaemic common denominator abstracted from the positive religions and therefore incapable of forming the basis of a religious fellowship. However, asks Pannenberg, was not Schleiermacher's appeal to the feeling of absolute dependence a form of 'natural theology'? And similarly Ritschl, whilst rejecting metaphysi-

cal bases for the concept of God, was he not doing natural theology in concentrating on morality?

'Against the synergistic idea of a natural and a revealed knowledge of God that harmoniously complement one another,' writes Pannenberg (ST I, p. 102), Barth charged that 'the distinction between a theology of the Word of God and a theology based on anthropology' was being erased: 'Natural theology was an expression of human self-justification.' Pannenberg goes on: 'Barth never made any material revision, although in his doctrines of creation and reconciliation he abandoned the tone of sharp encounter and claimed the "lights" of creation for a christologically based universalism.' (ST I, pp. 102–103). In contrast, for Pannenberg himself, the natural theology of the Baroque age and Enlightenment did at least support the Christian claim that the world and humans are dependent on God for their existence: 'Barth has little to offer in this regard but rhetoric.' (ST I, p. 106)

Pannenberg says (ST I, p. 127) that Barth is right that 'the deity of God stands or falls with the primacy of his reality and his revelation over religion' (note that Barth's target until 1929 was 'religion' rather than 'natural theology'). The problem is that we cannot approach this directly because, if we do, we are then merely asserting. We need the mediation of reason. The reasons for the domination of the concept of religion must be taken into account, which Pannenberg sees as (1) the decay of the doctrine of Biblical inspiration through Enlightenment critiques; and (2) the reduction of natural theology to anthropology. So how do we get back to the primacy of revelation over religion without just asserting it? That is the crux of the matter, as Pannenberg sees it. The older theologians (he mentions Buddeus and Dorner, but includes even Schleiermacher), were seeking to validate the truth claims of Christianity given the conditions of their own times. That is the task in today's very different climate too.

Regarding religious experience, Pannenberg says (ST I, p. 157) that its being a constitutive feature of human nature is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the truth of religious claims, if God is taken to be the creator of the world. More than that (ST I, p. 158), God is not an illusion associated with narcissistic wishful thinking if the world is created and controlled by God. Hence, the question of

truth is answered in our experience of the world (ST I, p. 159), 'as the world shows itself to be determined by God.' This is not the cosmological proof, however. The concept of God is the starting point for the appeal to experience of the world and that experience either confirms the truth claim involved in the concept of God or disconfirms it (note the language of confirmation here, though not, I am sure, in the technical sense of confirmation theory). In the latter case God would be merely a human concept (see also *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, pp. 300, 301ff.) Interestingly there are also modern studies of the evidential value of religious experience,[31] and it is also one of the factors in Swinburne's building up of a cumulative case for the existence of God.

Ultimately the truth of the Christian religion is not proved from metaphysics or the philosophy of religion. These can give only a general limited concept of the 'Absolute,' which Christianity in its debate with other religions must endow with concrete meaning as the Christian God by giving the best account. Metaphysics and philosophy of religion can have a regulative function in this debate but of themselves can come to no final judgment 'because of the openness of worldly experience' (ST I, p. 176). The Absolute *per se* is insufficient, since it is impersonal, compared with the God of religion (ST I, pp. 176–177).

Following a long section reiterating his views on revelation as history, which we have covered earlier, in the end (ST I, p. 257) Pannenberg says that 'verification of the truth claims of Christian revelation will take place in the form of a systematic reconstruction of Christian doctrine, beginning with the understanding of God which is contained in the event of his revelation to which the scriptures bear witness and which was the express theme in the theological discussions that led to the formation of the doctrine of the Trinity.' In volume I of *Systematic Theology* Pannenberg goes on to a discussion of the trinitarian God, which again features in his doctrine of creation to which we now turn.

---

[31] E.g. Caroline Franks Davis, *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience*, Oxford 1989; and William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*, Ithaca, NY and London 1991.

The Doctrine of Creation in Pannenberg

In beginning his presentation of the doctrine of creation in volume 2 of *Systematic Theology*, Pannenberg reiterates the point that Christian doctrine makes claims to truth which are open to possible confirmation at the bars of human experience and reason. The champions of secularism today (perhaps Richard Dawkins most notably at the present time) would have us believe that such matters have long since been decided by clever people in the negative, so we need to provide good reasons for belief (ST II, p. xiii).

Pannenberg begins (ST II, p. 1) with the classical Christian affirmation that the world owes its existence to a free act of God. The world is distinct from God. It is essential to the Christian understanding that creation does not 'emanate by necessity from the divine essence or belong by necessity to the deity of God.' The divine act of creation concerns 'the free origin of a reality distinct from God' (ST II, pp. 9, 20).

Very importantly, and we devote a section to this topic below, the world is contingent. It might not have existed. It did not need to exist for, if it did not, 'nothing would have been lacking in the deity of God.' It is also contingent in the sense that, given its existence, it could have been different from what it is.

The Nature of Creation

Pannenberg notes that in Deutero-Isaiah the prophet appeals to the idea of God as Creator to motivate the expectation that God will do something new in history. The question this raises for Pannenberg is whether creation is thus to be seen as something occurring at the beginning only or whether it epitomises God's creative action in world history: 'Tension between these two aspects marks the biblical testimonies to God as Creator.' (ST II, p. 12). Perhaps this delineates the tension in Pannenberg's own thought too, which I noted earlier, between the primacy of history and the need for theology to engage with the natural sciences. I would hope this also justifies this paper on creation also devoting so much space to history and the natural sciences! As Wentzel van Huyssteen remarks, for Pannenberg theology

is 'fully and most profoundly concerned with God's revelation in Jesus Christ.' Nevertheless, because the concept of creation implies the universality of the concept of God, *all* knowledge and every aspect of reality can only be understood in relation to God's revelation.[32] We have seen how, for Pannenberg, history and theology must be shown to be sciences in their own right, and the natural sciences then inevitably end up as secondary to the main thrust of his thought, even though he engages seriously with them.

The 'P' account in Genesis 1 testified to God's unrestricted power in creation by 'focussing on the divine Word of command as the only basis of the existence of creatures.' Furthermore the 'effortless nature of the simple command' illustrates the unrestricted nature of God's power compared with Babylonian or Ugaritic-Canaanite myths of battles with chaos or the sea respectively (ST II, p. 13).

Even so, creation by word is not unique to the Biblical account, occurring as it does for example in the third millennium B.C. Egyptian Memphis theology. In the latter the royal God Ptah thought in his heart and commanded by his tongue the existence of all the elements of the universe, including all other gods.[33] No, the decisively distinct feature of creation by Word in the Hebrew account is 'the unlimited freedom of the act of creation, like that of the historical action of the God of Israel.' Again we have the important linkage between history and creation in Pannenberg's thought.

This idea of unrestrictedly free creation by God later found expression in the formula 'creation out of nothing' (this is first found in 2 Macc 7:28; cf Rom 4:17; Heb 11:3). Pannenberg notes that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* was established decisively by Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus.

Pannenberg criticises Barth again, this time for ascribing a reality to 'nothing' under the name 'nothingness' and seeing it as resistant to God (CD III/3, pp. 289–368). 'Genesis 1 makes no reference to any resistance to God's creative activity,' he responds. Pannenberg is surely right that this is what the later doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* was meaning to affirm.

[32] Van Huyssteen, *Theology and the Justification of Faith*, 75.

[33] James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton 1969[3], pp. 4ff.

Also erroneous is the dualistic thinking of the process thought of Whitehead.[34] Whitehead's God works by 'persuasion' and not by mighty creative action (ST II, p. 15). This is a seductive view because the Biblical God is also patient and kind, seeking out his creatures in love. But they always owe everything to his 'almighty creative action.' For the Biblical God his patience is not a sign of his weakness but 'an expression of the love of the Creator, who willed that his creatures should be free and independent' (ST II, p. 16).

Process theologians argue that the God of classical theism cannot be the God of love because he would have the power to prevent evils. Their more restricted God can be loving because he lacks the power to prevent evils. But then, Pannenberg argues, it would not make sense, as for the Israelites, who traced evil back to God, and for whom Satan was a servant of God, to put their trust in God to provide a way out of suffering. To Pannenberg, the creation is an expression of divine love through its freedom of origin.

The Trinitarian Origin of the Act of Creation

For Pannenberg, it is important that creation is an act of the triune God and relates distinctively to each of the persons of the Trinity.

Creation relates first to the Father as origin. Secondly it relates to the Son whose self-distinction from the Father is the ontic basis of the distinction between creature and Creator and the independent existence of all creaturely reality (ST II, p. 23).

Pannenberg balks at the notion of the Son's mediation of creation being through the ideas held in the Son's mind which the divine will effects. There are problems with that, such as the seeming necessity of the creation which is not the classical, nor Pannenberg's, view as we have seen.[35] Pannenberg prefers Hegel's thesis that 'in the Trinity

[34] As Pannenberg notes, Whitehead is also criticised by William Temple. See William Temple, *Nature, Man and God*, London 1935, especially pp. 257–260. Temple argues that Whitehead's wholly immanent God lacks explanatory power.

[35] Keith Ward sees the universe as an expression of ideas in the mind of God, yet avoids the universe therefore being necessary. God knows all possibilities necessarily but which possibilities are instantiated is a matter of contingency. God wills to bring about the good but goods are incommensurate and not all goods can be simultaneously realised. Hence a choice has to be made. See Keith Ward, *Religion and Creation*, Oxford 1996.

the Son is the principle of otherness, the starting point for the emergence of the finite as that which is absolutely other than the deity' (ST II, p. 28).

Hegel linked this notion to a 'logically necessary self-development of the Absolute in producing a world of the finite.' For Hegel this meant absolute subject moving out of unity with itself. However, Pannenberg argues that if one takes seriously the mutuality of the relations of the trinitarian persons, then no such necessity arises. Self-distinction is a condition of the fellowship of the persons in unity and the unity needs nothing outside itself: 'Nevertheless, in the event of the incarnation, in the relation of Jesus of Nazareth to his heavenly Father, the Son moved out of the unity of the Godhead.' (ST II, p. 29).

This was part of the Son's humility in accepting creatureliness. However, he remains united to the Father through the Spirit. The Spirit is also involved in creation as a whole (Gen 1:2), and then secondly as the life-giving principle of creatures – animals, plants and humans (Gen 2:7; Ps 104:29ff; ST II, pp. 76ff). The Spirit is responsible for the fellowship of the creatures with God and their participation in his life. Equally the new life of the resurrection is the work of the Spirit (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:44ff). The Spirit is also the principle of movement, and Pannenberg notes the Biblical models of wind and breath. Later we consider his appropriation of the scientific term 'field' which he sees as relating the idea of the Spirit to modern understanding.

God's Creation, Preservation and Rule of the World

Preservation is correlative with creation and is not unchanging conservation but 'continued creation, a constantly new creative fashioning that goes beyond what was given existence originally.' We have already seen how the discovery of inertia has affected the credibility of the notion of preservation and will return to this again shortly.

Pannenberg notes that in Scripture God is very active, for example he feeds the animals (ST II, p. 35). He cites Augustine (ST II, p. 36) (*De Gen. ad litt.* 4.12.22ff) that God is preserving on the seventh day, i.e. he is ruling and governing by his power, and if he were not then what is created would sink back into nothingness.

Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*, p. 513, Book VI, ch. XVI (Gnostic Exposition of the Decalogue, *The Fourth Commandment*)) argued that time came into being with creatures: 'And how could creation take place in time, seeing time was born along with things which exist.'

Augustine (*Civ. Dei* 11.6) is better noted for saying the same thing: 'the world was not created *in* time but *with* time.' Pannenberg (ST II, p. 39) sees the merit of Augustine's view as two-fold: (i) it avoids the appearance that the world's origin rests on an arbitrary resolve of God – it is a free act, not capricious or based on a whim; (ii) it opposes any restriction of divine action to the beginning of the world – the eternity of the act of creation is a presupposition for God's 'preserving activity as continued or in continuous creation.'

Pannenberg further agrees with Augustine that miracles are not violations of the natural order, since we have limited knowledge of this. He says (ST II, p. 46): 'Since it is not self-evident that anything should take place, not merely the emergence but above all the continuation of creaturely forms and states is at every moment miraculous.' Later (ST II, p. 73) he says, 'The idea that God can bring forth what is new and unusual only by breaking the laws of nature has been overruled by the insight that for all their regularity the laws of nature do not have the character of closed (or, better, isolated) systems.' He recognises (ST II, p. 45) that his view is in contrast to David Hume's definition of a miracle as a violation of the laws of nature.

Pannenberg (ST II, pp. 49–50) compares Descartes, who thought that God didn't intervene after the initial creation, with Newton, who thought that absolute space, and gravitation which acted without touch, demonstrated the ongoing activity of God. However, as we have seen, the principle of inertia represents a problem for the idea of God's activity and there is consequently a need to take account of more modern developments in physics such as fields and quantum physics. We return to this important topic in Pannenberg's thought in a separate section below.

Pannenberg (ST II, footnote 125, p. 50) believes that the engagement of science and religion in philosophical reflection on theory construction affects the process of scientific theory appraisal. This is somewhat stronger than Ernan McMullin's view that theology should

not interfere but help in constructing a broader view.[36] We have seen the boldness of Pannenberg in making certain predictions of a scientific nature in discussion with Murphy which seem to go further even than his remark here.

Persisting implies more than inertia, says Pannenberg, because it involves change (ST II, p. 51). Thus it is identity in change which is important (of course the argument to a prime mover can be re-expressed in terms of a first changer). Self-awareness also brings awareness of contingency and thence the need for preservation from outside of oneself.

World Government and the Kingdom of God: The Goal of Creation

The preservation of creatures rests on God's faithfulness. That is the basis for the identity and continuation of creatures. Contingency, the creatively new at each moment, is posited in the concept of preservation (ST II, p. 53).

The notions of world government by God and of God's having the good of all creatures in mind, can seem problematic in the light of suffering (ST II, p. 54). Faith can affirm God's sovereignty in these respects only in expectation of a renewed creation – this is 'the goal of all creaturely reality (Rom 8:19ff)' (ST II, p. 55). This seems to be Pannenberg's answer to the theodicy question, which arises also in the context of his critique of process theology, as we have seen.

Pannenberg states (ST II, p. 58): 'World government [providence] relates to integrating into God's purposes for the world the actual results of the independent conduct of creatures, namely their failures and the evil that these failures cause. The central theme of the divine world government is God's supremacy over the misuse of creaturely independence.'… (ST II, p. 59). God's skill is shown in his ability to bring good out of evil and the final vindication is eschatological. This reminds me of a helpful analogy due to J. R. Lucas concerning Per-

[36] Ernan McMullin, in: Arthur Robert Peacocke, *The Sciences and Theology in the Twentieth Century*, Notre Dame, IN 1981. Pannenberg is at pp. 3–16.

sian rugmaking.[37] In a family the father weaves from one end of the rug and the children from the other. The children make many mistakes but the father is so skilful that he can weave the whole into a beautiful pattern.

At this point (ST II, p. 59) Pannenberg asserts what we saw at the beginning, namely that theology must make sense of the world as God's creation prior to making known his reconciling work in Christ and consummating work in the new creation. Only if we begin this way with creation can we make the truth claims of Christian faith have a secure basis. And this must be done in dialogue with the sciences. Again we see this seeming tension in Pannenberg's thought between the primacy of the historical, including above all his affirmations about the resurrection, and the importance of creation and the sciences – though we have now also seen that his doctrine of creation embraces preservation and continuing dynamic activity rather than simply being confined to 'creation at the beginning.'

Referring to the Big Bang, Pannenberg also now sees the role of the Logos, in conformity with what he has said earlier, working as the generative principle of diversity. As the expansion of the universe progresses, new forms and structures develop according to physical laws. The order of the world, seen in its laws, is an expression of the wisdom of God, which is identified with the Logos. The Logos is, however, also the principle of the concrete particularity and unity of the way in which this universe has contingently unfolded, and that is seen especially in the incarnation and will be perfected in the eschatological future. Again we return to the issue of contingency below.

Pannenberg addresses a question raised much earlier in this paper: 'Are humans really the goal of creation?' (ST II, p. 74). He affirms that they are in view of the incarnation. And he sees this as in conflict with earlier science, e. g. Copernicus, but in conformity with modern science. Modern cosmology has shown what the conditions must be for life to evolve through the 'anthropic principle.' The constants of physics need to be what they are, the age of the universe needs to be what it is – a host of parameters need to be 'just right' – for humans to evolve in the cosmos. I myself believe that these contingencies

[37] John Randolph Lucas, *Freedom and Grace: Essays*, London 1976, p. 39.

provide powerful evidence for the universe's being designed by God and have so argued in *God, the Multiverse, and Everything*.[38] It seems that Pannenberg is also impressed by these anthropic fine-tunings and sees them as confirming that humans are the goal of creation. They are of course the conditions for anything interesting at all to happen, and in particular for 'intelligent life' to evolve. Thus Paul Davies, with some justification, prefers the term 'bio-friendly' or 'biophilic' to describe the laws.[39] Pannenberg is not worried about the existence of extraterrestrial intelligent life forms, who might need redemption, since there are already precedents for such in Christian tradition, namely the angels. Their existence would not challenge the credibility of the incarnation of the Logos in traditional Christian teaching. But Pannenberg agrees that the discovery of the remarkable fine-tunings signal a reversal of the trend since Copernicus to remove humans from the centre of the universe

Contingency

In modern times 'God has been expelled from physics step by step,' says Pannenberg (TTN, p. 73). The role of God has thus been reduced to the deistic one of creating the world in the beginning, but then leaving it to its own devices. There is some truth in this and even anthropic arguments, which seem positive for theology, could leave one with a deistic view of God.

Pannenberg notes again (TTN, p. 74, and p. 113, footnote 3) Barth's making theological discourse about creation immune from criticism by the natural sciences. This makes theology irrelevant not only for the sciences but for the present world view of humanity which is rightly informed by the sciences. Theology has to think of God as the creator of the world described by science and to connect to the scientific view. But then the problem arises that science itself seems to be

[38] Rodney D. Holder, *God, the Multiverse, and Everything: Modern Cosmology and the Argument from Design*, Aldershot and Burlington, 2004

[39] Paul Davies, *The Goldilocks Enigma: Why is the Universe Just Right for Life?*, London 2006

able to do away with God, certainly an all-determinative God who interferes in natural processes.

Pannenberg commends Karl Heim as a pioneer theologian who saw the need for theology to relate to science. However, a problem with Heim is that he did not really find the common ground on which to seek a consonance. Instead he used scientific terms, most notably that of 'dimension,' in a metaphorical way to represent different orders of reality, so that theological claims come to supplement scientific ones. The trouble is, as Pannenberg notes, that the scientist is not compelled to accept these extra claims.[40] Rather, it is the common ground which must be the key to the relationship. And that is where contingency comes in.

Contingency is central to the Biblical understanding of God, since 'new and unforeseen events take place constantly that are experienced as the work of almighty God' (TTN, p. 76). This understanding is essential for prayer to be meaningful. This is of course an historical understanding of contingency, and it implies the lack of determination of the present by the past (TTN, p. 116, footnote 11). This is not the same as quantum indeterminacy, Pannenberg says, though it bears similarities to it. For example, there might be statistical patterns in historical events, rather than strict determinacy.

The Biblical view also recognises regularity but as dependent on the contingent will of God, and thus not in the sense in which natural laws have come to be regarded as immutable and admitting of no exceptions. The only contingency in classical physics is that at the beginning. In quantum physics there is in contrast ontological indeterminacy, and outcomes of measurements can only be described in probability terms. Another feature of physics is its revisability – our current laws are only approximations and need to be revised when new observations are made. Both these points are taken up by John Polkinghorne, though given the latter point he finds it more profitable to build his metaphysical position on the unpredictability of chaotic systems (even though these would be classically deterministic) rather than quantum indeterminacies (see later).[41]

[40] Pannenberg, *Toward a Theology of Nature*, 75–76.

[41] E.g. John Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science*, New Haven, CT, and London 1998, pp. 51ff.

Pannenberg repudiates the 'God of the gaps,' the idea of finding gaps in the scientific account of natural processes. He would thus identify with theologians such as Bonhoeffer[42] and Christian scientists such as Coulson[43] in this respect. In the modern debate he would separate himself from the 'Intelligent Design' movement. This is welcome both theologically and scientifically. Science has a habit of filling gaps as new discoveries are made, forcing God ever more out of the picture, as Pannenberg recognises. Scientific answers should be sought for scientific questions and there is no reason to think science not capable of finding answers to present unknowns. And theologically Pannenberg recognises that God must be the creator of the whole world process.

But contingency is manifest in many natural processes – quantum physics, macroscopic turbulent motion, mutations driving evolution: 'the total process of natural events presents itself again as a mesh of contingency and regularities' (TTN, p. 78).

Interestingly Pannenberg draws on Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker as did Bonhoeffer in his prison letters. From the 1954 edition of *Zum Weltbild der Physik* he gleans the insight of 'the inexhaustibility of reality' to individual enquiry (TTN, p. 79). A final 'theory of everything' in modern parlance is probably unattainable and science will continue to be characterized by the interplay between contingency and regularity.

The contingency of occurrences is in accord with the Biblical view, but what about the regularities? Pannenberg argues that only if the laws of nature too are contingent will the Biblical view be confirmed. He does not, however, want to pursue that question scientifically, but from the point of view of reflection on the whole of reality, for which the God hypothesis might make most sense – though in the scientific discussion the anthropic fine-tunings are predicated on the contingency of the laws.

Pannenberg notes that there is contingency at the beginning even of the sequence of regularities, but wants to go further. The key to the Biblical understanding is that all reality is history, i.e. historical ac-

[42] Bonhoeffer, *Letters*, *op. cit.*, pp. 311–312.

[43] Charles A. Coulson, *Science and Christian Belief*, London and Glasgow 1958, pp. 31ff.

tions of God. History is experienced as 'a series of ever-new occurrences, which despite many similarities are unforeseen.' It is God's faithfulness which gives meaning and connection between contingent events, as God is faithful to his promises – even though these get transformed over time, are fulfilled in unexpected ways, or, ultimately, in the future. Pannenberg speculates as to whether it is even possible for there to be any unity in history apart from theology. And in science it is God's faithfulness which is expressed in the uniformity of natural laws (ST II, p. 72).

Here Pannenberg brings in his characteristic insights from eschatology. New events throw light on earlier ones, and the whole will be given meaning in the ultimate future. Creation must then be seen from its end. However, that future is not determined; creation is not directed entelechially towards it. That would contradict the idea of contingency. The theory of evolution fits this perspective nicely, involving chance as it does.

Pannenberg goes on to ask whether nature can be included in the total reality as history. Again drawing on Weizsäcker, he notes the importance of irreversibility and unrepeatability in nature. The apparent repeatability – the recurring seasons, revolving stars etc – vanishes over larger timescales. And here we have a tension with the notion of laws of nature, which are predicated upon repeatability, though an exception is the second law of thermodynamics.

Again drawing on Weizsäcker (TTN, p. 90), and this is actually quite old material now in this context (NB Pannenberg's original article came out in 1970; the book of collected essays dates from 1993), considering the advances made by cosmologists, Pannenberg discusses the Big Bang theory. This seemingly required an 'absolute miracle' at the beginning, even though there is a regular naturalness about its subsequent evolution and further contingency in the way density variations here and there give rise to galaxies as the universe expands. He also makes the point, which seems to recur much more recently in Paul Davies, that the laws of physics do not exist in an ideal Platonic realm, but only exist once the universe itself exists and has embarked on its expansion.[44] Pannenberg notes (TTN, pp. 108–108) that laws

[44] Davies, *The Goldilocks Enigma*, 266ff.

are of the form 'If A then B.' There will be a first A, on the Big Bang model at any rate, and he speculates that subsequent 'A to B' causal links occur following the first B's 'latching' onto the first A. This is similar to gestalt psychology's account of perception. Natural law is thus not eternal but dependent on time. Moreover, our existence is dependent on a host of seemingly fortuitous events, not least from the origin of life through the evolutionary process via innumerable mutations, which were exceptions to the general rule of being unhelpful in making creatures fit to survive and flourish. In *Systematic Theology* (ST II, p. 71) Pannenberg argues that we would be talking about a 'God of the gaps' if we confined contingency to particular branches of physics, e. g. quantum theory, since history teaches that gaps tend to get filled. Whilst Polkinghorne, for example, sees the indeterminacy of quantum theory as ontological and not epistemological, Pannenberg makes the point that the *whole* of nature is contingent and therefore we are not simply dealing with gaps.

Against Bondi and the steady-state theory, Pannenberg takes issue with the assumption of uniformity (in fact Bondi calls this the 'perfect cosmological principle' in his book *Cosmology*[45]) by extrapolation from present experience. This is because present experience includes the second law of thermodynamics and does *not* give constancy in time. And postulating the new origination of matter goes against the law of conservation of mass, which is experimentally confirmed, and which we have no other reason to doubt – even if the hypothesis puts mass creation below the measurable threshold.

Pannenberg also considers oscillating models of expansion and contraction, which, he says, are propounded, even though they have no empirical evidence, in order to retain an unlimited past and future for the universe. Indeed it would appear that there is quite a bit of ideological motivation at work in some of these theories. Oscillating theories are entirely speculative but do not need the creation of new matter. Pannenberg asks, 'Should a theological interest in the finiteness and irreversible historicity of the world also become involved?' (TTN, p. 95). Pannenberg argues that the present day prejudice is against theological motivations, so the Big Bang really only does

[45] Herman Bondi, *Cosmology*, Cambridge 1961.

survive because of the empirical evidence. A similar debate today surrounds the more recent 'God or multiverse' debate.[46] As we have already seen, Pannenberg would be the bold theologian putting his head above the parapet in siding with certain scientific theories on theological grounds, just as atheistic grounds have motivated other theories in the recent past.

Pannenberg says, 'When natural science, in seeking laws and especially the origin of the present world with its forms and laws, comes upon contingent conditions and events, it opens up nature in such a way that the Christian can discover the expression of the creative act of God.' (TTN, p. 98) In contrast other possible models of the universe are not in accord with the Biblical view of creation by God, e. g.'a world order that has not come into existence but is eternally without change, perhaps in the sense of the ancient cosmos conceived in accordance with the model of the revolution of the stars, is opposed to the idea of creation.' Similarly 'the deistic conception, according to which God indeed has brought forth the world but then withdrawn from it, produces a similar negative result, because the perfection of the divine action has effected the existence of a perfect world machine that runs completely by itself' (TTN, p. 99).

Bonhoeffer thought that an infinite world, as conceived by Nicholas of Cusa, is self-subsisting and therefore God is no longer necessary. Interestingly, some modern cosmologists and physicists such as Martin Rees[47] and Leonard Susskind,[48] see a multiverse (the way an infinite universe is now conceived) as a substitute for God. Peter Bussey argues that it is being used causally as a God-substitute.[49]

Pannenberg, who like Bonhoeffer has read Weizsäcker on the subject, regards an infinite world as 'a marginal possibility for the Christian theology of creation' (TTN, p. 100). For such a world could still be subject to change, and theological eschatology could apply. When he was writing Pannenberg thought the evidence firmly in favour of a

[46] Holder, *God, the Multiverse, and Everything*.

[47] Martin Rees, *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces that Shape the Universe*, London 1999, p. 150.

[48] Leonard Susskind, *The Cosmic Landscape: String Theory and the Illusion of Intelligent Design*, New York 2006.

[49] Peter Bussey, 'Physical Infinities: a Substitute for God,' *Science and Christian Belief* 18 (2), 2006, pp. 133–150.

finite age for the universe, and that is still very likely on the scientific evidence, though the very tiniest fraction of a second from the origin takes us into territory where we do not know what laws of physics to apply and there must therefore remain some uncertainty as to whether an actual singularity is attained. Whilst Polkinghorne is sceptical about multiverses, he does not see an infinitely old universe as presenting problems: what is important for the Christian doctrine is the ontological, not the temporal beginning of the universe.[50] We have seen that Pannenberg agrees that God's creative activity is not confined to the beginning. Perhaps another bold step, if one were to pursue Pannenberg's programme in the Lakatosian fashion advocated by Hefner and Murphy, would be to make a prediction that multiverse theories would in the end prove a fruitless diversion in physics.

Pannenberg considers inertia in *Toward a Theology of Nature* (TTN, p. 109) as well as in *Systematic Theology* (vol. II) where we have already encountered it. The problem posed by the discovery that bodies continue in their own condition unless acted on from outside was that this removed the need for God's sustaining the process. Interestingly, Murphy notes that some historians have seen the concept of inertia in Newton's 'hard core' as reflecting his Calvinist theology.[51] Nevertheless, I am inclined to agree with Pannenberg that inertia poses a problem and that the newer realisation of the contingency of all natural occurrences essentially solves it. The uniformity given by inertia can then be seen as an expression of the faithfulness of God (unlike for Descartes where it was a sign of his unchangeability). This faithfulness, as seen by the Israelites in his maintenance of their election in history, is in fact the ground for the development of any uniformity in laws of nature at all. It explains why contingent events have the tendency to 'latch' (see above) into regularly repeated forms of process.

Pannenberg notes (TTN, pp. 111–112) that it is only with humans that history becomes meaningful, as theologically events are connected and unified, and only with humans that extra-human nature

[50] John Polkinghorne, *Science and Christian Belief: Theological Reflections of a Bottom-up Thinker*, London 1994, p. 73.
[51] Murphy, *Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning*, p. 199.

takes on meaning and the unity of its contingent processes through natural law is understood.

Finally, he concludes that the incompatibility of knowledge of nature with the idea of God is groundless, although clearly 'faith in God has to be gained in other areas of life than that of scientific knowledge.' However, 'the significance of the idea of God for a connected understanding of nature is just as clear' as this. The connection between the contingency of occurrences and of persevering form, whether of material figures or of regular forms of process, can be interpreted on the basis of the contingency of divine action in the sense of the experience of the Israelite-Christian experience of God because God remains one and the same in the contingent sequence of all occurrences.' This production of a connection 'has the stamp of a personal power, not of a mere structure of laws. In this way – and perhaps only in this way – does the unity of occurrences with the preservation of their contingency become understandable.'

In commenting on Pannenberg's engagement with the natural sciences, and in particular his analysis of contingency, Philip Hefner remarks that Pannenberg intends that theology add something to the story which science tells. This is in accord with Pannenberg's view that theology is itself a science, as we have discussed earlier. In the case of contingency this something extra is the knowledge that 'the contingency of events is rooted in a source of that contingency, namely, the action of God.'[52] Hefner argues that Pannenberg's discussion of field theory, to which we now turn, has a similar intention. As we have seen, Murphy also thinks Pannenberg's theology open to such 'additions,' though of a more particular kind, and we have seen other possibilities for Pannenberg along the way, such as the rejection of multiverses.

[52] Hefner, "The Role of Science in Pannenberg's" 1988, 273; Hefner, "The Role of Science in Pannenberg's" 1997, p. 102.

Field Theory

One of the concepts Pannenberg borrows very boldly from the natural sciences for his theology is that of 'field.' It is probably the most controversial aspect of his theology from the point of view of scientists, or indeed theologians trained in science.

Forces were originally conceived as acting through material bodies, essentially having contact with each other. Newton's gravitational force acted at a distance and Newton saw this as a form of God's activity analogous to the action of the soul on the body. This brought criticism from physicists of later generations, who wanted forces to be associated with bodies, an anti-theological turn for Pannenberg since God is not a body (ST II, p. 80). However, the field concept (as developed from Faraday onwards) allows for the non-material to act at a distance since fields permeate the whole of space; indeed for Faraday the field became primary and bodies were particular concentrations of field lines. This is better for theology both from the non-material aspect and because it was anti-reductionist, the whole now acting on the parts. Pannenberg links the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit to this concept of field and, theologically, God grounds the whole of creation. Here, Hefner remarks, Pannenberg's addition to scientific knowledge is the insight that the 'largest field of all, which embraces all of reality, is God.'[53]

A problem with the older view of Aristotle, which was taken into mediaeval theology, was that movement required a cause; hence the argument to a Prime Mover. With Newton's laws it was seen that movement required no cause. Modern field theories give a different take, however.

Sidestepping potential criticism, Pannenberg says, 'The principle differences between the ways of describing reality in physics and in theology prohibit us from offering a direct theological interpretation of the field theories of physics.' (ST II, p. 83). Differences in use of the concept in the two disciplines are to be expected (ST II, p. 84).

[53] Hefner, "The Role of Science in Pannenberg's" 1988, 273; Hefner, "The Role of Science in Pannenberg's" 1997, pp. 102–103.

Pannenberg is thus well aware of possible equivocal uses of language (TTN, p. 39). He also makes another point here *against* making too close an identity between the Spirit's activity and fields, namely that scientific models are only approximations (TTN, p. 40, ST II, p. 83), conceived from the point of view of the regularities of natural law. These caveats should be borne in mind when we consider the criticism of Pannenberg's position by Polkinghorne, who, as we have seen, would agree that the laws are approximations.

The role of the Spirit in creation is different from that of the Son. The Son's self-distinction from the Father gives rise to the distinction between creatures. The Spirit 'relates to the link and movement which connects the creatures to one another and to God.' In the Trinity the Spirit mediates the fellowship of the Father and the Son, and similarly in creation the Spirit is the dynamic in creaturely relations, though in the latter having to overcome the rifts and collisions between creatures.

I am not sure that Pannenberg's positing the metaphysical use by the Stoics of the divine *pneuma* as direct predecessor of the modern field concept helps his case, however. That is a bit like the ancient element 'quintessence' equating in some sense to the modern concept of a generalized 'dark energy,' when in reality the name has simply been appropriated for something which has a very specialized meaning, even while remaining mysterious.

A significant critic of Pannenberg's position here is John Polkinghorne,[54] who finds Pannenberg's discussion of fields 'baffling.'[55] If the language were simply metaphorical, denoting 'extended relationality' that would be acceptable, but it would still be regrettable to use a term with a precise meaning in physics. This strikes me as rather like Pannenberg's criticism of Heim (see above) being applied to himself. However, Polkinghorne's criticisms would of course be blunted if we took account of Pannenberg's own qualifications of his use of the field concept as cited earlier. Charles Gutenson suggests that Pannenberg would help if he made it clear that he uses fields as a

[54] John Polkinghorne, "Wolfhart Pannenberg's engagement with the natural sciences," in *Zygon* 34,1999, pp. 151–158.
[55] Polkinghorne, "Wolfhart Pannenberg's engagement," p. 153.

model or conceptual tool,[56] though it seems to me that he comes quite close to that.

The important thing about fields in physics is that they are not 'spiritual,' says Polkinghorne. Physical fields such as Maxwell's electromagnetic field carry energy and momentum which are 'inertial properties that function in the same way for the field as they do for particles of matter.' So Pannenberg's claim that the Stoic concept of *pneuma* as 'subtle matter' has been theologically improved by the modern more spiritual concept, since no ether is required, does not make sense in terms of physics (TTN, pp. 39–40).

For Polkinghorne, rightly I think, the activity of the Spirit is better discerned in chaotic systems, where unpredictability is inherent, and complexity theory, wherein one sees the spontaneous generation of order out of disorder. Polkinghorne postulates (boldly in his turn) a kind of pattern-forming causality, which he terms 'active information,' supplementing the usual energetic causality of physics.[57] Complex systems also exhibit irreversibility, an important theme for Pannenberg, for whom another major theme, as we have just seen, is the contingency of the world and its history.

Pannenberg is also right to see whole-part interaction, which is again a feature of complex systems, and also of quantum systems, as important. The notion of emergence, and the associated concept of downward causation, is an important theme in the modern science-religion dialogue.[58] This relates well to what Pannenberg says elsewhere about the inadequacy of reductionism (see above and TPS, pp. 129ff). It also relates to his discussion of biological evolution where he sees organisms (supremely humans) as transcending their bodily constitution through interaction with their environment (TTN, pp. 133ff). As Hefner notes, Pannenberg also associates these latter empirical phenomena with the creative activity of the Spirit.[59]

---

[56] Charles E. Gutenson, *Reconsidering the Doctrine of God*, New York and London 2005, p. 197.

[57] Polkinghorne, *Belief in God*, 51ff.

[58] See, for example, Philip Clayton, *Mind and Emergence: from Quantum to Consciousness*, Oxford 2004

[59] Hefner, "The Role of Science in Pannenberg's" 1988, 275ff; Hefner, "The Role of Science in Pannenberg's" 1997, 104ff.

However, when discussing fields Pannenberg seems tied to classical concepts. As Polkinghorne points out, classical fields are local in the sense that values at different points of space can be varied independently. It is quantum fields which are truly integrated into a whole and these unite particle and wave pictures of reality and display contingent behaviour.

Regarding contingency, Polkinghorne points out that even on the mechanical picture of nature, where Pannenberg finds the persistence of a state not in need of God and therefore problematic, the laws themselves are contingent (I think Pannenberg would agree with that, from what I have said above). Contingency in the sense of openness to the future, however, is more characteristic of modern physics, both quantum theory and classical chaos theory (as discussed above).

Conclusion

Pannenberg is one of very few theologians of major stature to have engaged rigorously with the natural sciences. This is reflected in his doctrine of creation, even though God's revelation in history remains his first and most important concern. There is thus a tension in his thought between these concerns to see God as the all-determining reality and therefore the God of creation and the natural sciences, and the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ in history.

It is possible to see this tension being resolved through Pannenberg's arguments that history and theology are themselves sciences, and thus open to the same criteria for evaluation as other sciences, and that God's creative activity is continuing in history. Pannenberg is thus critical of Barth who makes theology immune from criticism. He believes that natural theology and the traditional arguments for God's existence still have a role to play, and that theological claims should be evaluated on the basis of their ability to unify and explain the evidence at hand.

Regarding history, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the key. This event is open to rational scrutiny which confirms its occurrence. It will, however, remain probable rather than certain until the end of

history, which the resurrection anticipates. Then the unity and meaning of all of reality will be fully realised.

Pannenberg presents an orthodox doctrine of creation as owing to the totally free decision of God to make a reality distinct from himself. This creation is, moreover, an act of the triune God. The self-distinction of the Son from the Father is the basis of the distinction between creature and Creator, and the Spirit gives life to the creatures and is responsible for their participation in the life of God.

God's preservation of the world is important as is his ongoing creative activity – creation does not occur just at the beginning. Preserving or sustaining has been problematic since Newton's work on inertia, but is more easily accommodated by modern physics with its emphasis on contingency. Indeed Pannenberg sees contingency, now very much a part of the scientific picture, as totally consonant with the Biblical picture of God's activity. The correlative of contingency is regularity, in which Pannenberg sees God's faithfulness reflected. Pannenberg sees the Big Bang theory and the contingency of anthropic fine-tuning as more favouring the theological interpretation of creation being God's activity than alternatives such as the steady state or an infinite universe (and therefore the presently popular multiverse).

Pannenberg proposes a model of the activity of the Holy Spirit based on the physics of field theory. This enables him to think of God acting throughout space. Polkinghorne agrees with Pannenberg's aim – to utilise physical concepts to speak of divine action – though Polkinghorne sees chaotic systems with their inherent unpredictability as more suitable loci for this.

I believe Pannenberg has very much to offer the modern science-religion debate. In arguing for the scientific nature of theology and for theological claims to be evaluated by similar criteria to those for the natural sciences, he implies that we can utilise appropriate tools from the philosophy of science. As we have seen Hefner and Murphy have proposed a Lakatosian methodology; I would prefer Bayesian confirmation theory. Either way we can use the evidence to hand, such as that for the resurrection from history and the anthropic fine-tuning data from science, in applying such methodologies. Particularly interesting to see will be whether Pannenberg's approach to

theology as a science really does provide 'additions' to the other sciences. That is his boldest and, I believe, most controversial move.

Summary: *In expounding the Christian doctrine of creation, Wolfhart Pannenberg directly challenges Karl Barth's attitude to natural theology and lack of engagement with the natural sciences. Indeed Pannenberg sees dialogue with the sciences as essential for the establishing of all Christian truth claims since this must be done on the basis of a shared rationality and publicly accessible evidence. In this article I examine Pannenberg's advocacy of theology as a science in its own right. I explore his attitude to natural theology, his exposition of the doctrine of creation, and some key aspects of his thought such as contingency, where he sees consonance between the Biblical and scientific views, and, more controversially, the concept of 'field.' I also briefly consider some suggestions for furthering his programme of providing rational support for theological claims.*

Keywords: theology and natural science – natural science and theology – Pannnenberg, W. – Moltmann, J. – history, the nature of.

BIBEL UND GNOSIS ODER EIN VORSCHLAG, DEN GAUL VOM KOPF HER AUFZUZÄUMEN

Beat Zuber, Horn

1. Vorrede

Was ich hier vorlege, ist der Versuch einer schriftlichen Fassung meines mündlichen Beitrags zum Thema „Gnosis und Schöpfungstheologie", den ich am *XV. Colloquium Biblicum*[1] an einer Abendveranstaltung gehalten habe. Ich habe das offene Klima in Prag immer ganz besonders geschätzt, das es ermöglicht, manchmal einfach freihändig querfeldein zu denken ohne dass man Gefahr läuft, gleich an irgend einer Aussage festgenagelt und aufgehängt zu werden. – So wünsche ich dem, was ich hier ials Entwurf vorlege, ein ähnlich förderliches Klima.

2. Was ist Gnosis

Grob gesagt kann man den Ausgangspunkt der Gnosis als eine geistige Strömung zusammenfassen, deren Charakteristikum in einer betonten Dichotomie von Oben gegen Unten, Himmel gegen Erde, Licht gegen Dunkel, Geist gegen Materie, Seele gegen Leib („Fleisch"),

Heilig gegen Profan… besteht – an sich eine leicht zugängliche Beschreibung menschlicher Existenz. Charakeristisch ist nun aber, dass die beiden Elemente der Dichotomie qualifiziert werden in Gut (= Oben etc.) und Bös (= unten etc.). Praktisch wird man davon ausgehen können, dass die verschiedenen gnostischen Systeme mehr oder weniger durchdachte und mehr oder weniger komplizierte Ver-

[1] *Colloquium Biblicum* ist ein internationales Symposium der biblischen Theologen, das im Rahmen des Vorschungsvorhabens „Hermeneutik der christlichen, besonders tschechischen protestantischen Tradition in der Kulturgeschichte Europa" (MSM 00216 20802) am 11–14. April 2007 stattgefunden hat.

suche sind, diese beiden Elemente wieder miteinander in Beziehung zu setzen (Erlösung). Wie weit es dabei bei theoretischen Vorschlägen blieb, wie weit wie beim Manichäismus tatsächliche Erlösungs-Religionen von globalem Rang daraus geworden sind, ist eine andere Frage und interessiert hier nicht weiter.

3. Zeitlicher Ansatz der Gnosis

Das Lexikon der Antike datiert die Gnosis in die Spät-Antike, also wohl etwa ins 2. und 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr. Aus dieser Zeit stammen jedenfalls die heute greifbaren Zeugnisse von Gnosis, zuerst in der Apologetik der Kirchenväter, neuerdings die Schriften von Nag Hammadi.

Sich darauf festzulegen, dass die Gnosis nun auch aus dieser Zeit stammt, wäre ein Fehlschluss. Das Zeugnis der Kirchenväter zeigt lediglich, dass die christliche Hochreligion in dieser Zeit im Zugzwang war, sich dezidiert von der Gnosis abzugrenzen.

4. Gnosis als Begleiterscheinung der hellenistisch-römischen Kulturrevolution.

Meine Vorstellung (und mein Vorschlag) ist nun, dass es sich bei dem, was sich in der Folge unter dem Begriff der Gnosis zusammenfassen lässt, um ein religions-soziologisches Phänomen handeln könnte, das sich am besten in Analogie zum Leben des einzelnen Menschen sehen lässt. Zuerst hängt für das kleine Menschlein einmal alles zusammen. Mama ist die Welt, die alles bietet, was man zum Leben braucht: Wärme, Zuneigung, Nahrung usw. Und Papa ist der liebe Gott: meist unsichtbar, und wenn sichtbar, dann nicht immer leicht verständlich, aber immerhin der, der alles weiss und alles kann. Und diese beiden sind durch ein geheimnisvolles, aber offenbar sehr starkes Band miteinander verbunden. Das alles bricht beim Heranwachsen sukzessive auseinander, um den Menschen in der Pubertät dann in die Lebensaufgabe zu entlassen, das, was da auseinandergebrochen ist, mühsam und behelfsmässig wieder zusammenzukitten.

Konkret für die Gnosis: Die gewachsenen sozialen Strukturen der

Sippe und Dorf- oder Stammesgemeinschaft entsprechen der Kindheit, wo alles seinen traditionell gesicherten Platz hat: heilige Zeiten, heilige Orte, heilige Traditionen, Sitten und Gebräuche, heilige Personen, Steine, Bäume usw. Dass die Verbindung von griechischem Denken, orientalischer Phantasie und römischer Effizienz – genannt Hellenismus – fast schlagartig einen kulturellen Aufschwung (Revolution) gebracht haben muss, lässt sich im Orient an den Überbleibseln dieser Epoche fast auf Schritt und Tritt noch beobachten. Ich denke, dass mit dieser Globalisierung von Denken, Können und Tun, die in biblischen Landen wohl etwa mit der herodianischen[2] Zeit ihren ersten Höhepunkt gefunden haben dürfte, fast zwangsweise die gewachsenen religiösen Strukturen zerbrochen sind.

5. Bibel und Gnosis

Mit diesem Zerbrechen einer naiv-kindlichen Einheit von Himmel und Erde, von heiligem und profanem Bereich ist aber die Herausforderung an den menschlichen Geist gegeben, das, was da auseinandergebrochen ist, auf irgendeine Weise wieder zusammenzufügen. Die Lösungs-Vorschläge sind notgedrungen Legion und dürften die ganze Spannbreite von restaurativen Vorschlägen bis hin zur Flucht in die Welt- und Selbstzerstörung umfassen. Als offenbar starke Strömung herausgebildet hat sich die unter dem Begriff Gnosis subsumierte Vorstellung, dass Oben gut und Unten bös ist und die Erlösung erreicht wird, wenn die oberen Elemente (Himmel, Gott, Geist…) sich aus aller Vermischung mit den unteren Elementen (Erde, Materie, Fleisch…) auf irgendeine, meist recht komplizierte Weise wieder getrennt haben.

In diesem Kontext sehe ich nun die biblische Theologie. Wenn es hier zB. in der Schöpfungstheologie ganz dezidiert darum geht, Himmel und Erde miteinander zu verbinden,[3] so heißt das doch, dass

[2] Ich spreche von dem, was wohl zurecht an imposanten Hinterlassenschaften Herodes dem Grossen zugeschrieben wird, wobei es offenbleiben muss, ob damit eine einzelne Person oder eine Dynastie gemeint ist.

[3] Mein Computer spuckt mir auf Anfrage 166 Stelle aus, wo im hebr. AT ארץ und שמים im gleichen Vers vorkommen.

gerade diese Verbindung in Frage gestellt worden ist. Und da kann es uns wie Schuppen von den Augen fallen, wenn wir uns einmal von der obligaten Vorstellung gelöst haben, eine Beziehung Bibel/Gnosis sei nur als Einbahn denkbar: man könne allenfalls biblische Einflüsse auf die Gnosis sehen, aber ganz bestimmt nicht umgekehrt.[4] Zum Beispiel lesen wir den ersten Vers des AT in wohl allen Übersetzungen: „Im Anfang erschuf Elohim (Gott) Himmel und Erde". Rückübersetzt hieße das: בראשית ברא אלהים שמים וארץ. Es steht aber betont: בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ, „Im Anfang erschuf Elohim *diesen* Himmel und *diese* Erde" – und zwar Gott schuf und nicht irgend ein Pfuscher oder Demiurg! Und wenn in der Folge gleich siebenmal betont wird, das was Gott da geschaffen habe, sei gut, gut, gut… sehr gut, so heißt das doch, dass es Leute (Gnostiker) gegeben hat, die diese Schöpfung Gottes eben für schlecht hielten und gegen die man sich vehement abgrenzen musste. Es dürfte sich lohnen, die biblische Schöpfungstheologie einmal unter diesem Gesichtspunkt einer Reaktion auf die gnostische Dichotomie zu lesen.

Auch in der biblischen Literatur fehlt es nicht an restaurativen Elementen, über heilige Orte und Zeiten, Sitten und Gebräuche bis hin zur innerbiblisch keineswegs unbestrittenen Zions- und Tempel-Theologie mit dem Wohnen Gottes in dieser Welt und zwar ganz konkret an einem bestimmten Ort und in einem bestimmten Haus. Was aber die biblische Botschaft vor allen anderen Entwürfen auszeichnet, ist der originelle Bundes-Gedanke. Bund heißt: Getrenntes wird in einem theologischen Vorgang unlöslich (wieder) miteinander verbunden. Da gibt es Gen 9 den Noach-Bund mit allem Fleisch (ΣΑΡΞ), den Abrahams-Bund mit seinem Bundeszeichen am Fleisch, den Sinai-Bund[5] mit dem Gesetz als dem innerweltlich sakramental-berührbar gewordenen Willen Gottes[6] bis hin zum NT mit dem

[4] vgl. die Diekussionsbeiträge bei Karl-Wolfgang Tröger (Hrg.), *Altes Testament – Frühjudentum – Gnosis*, Gütersloh 1980.

[5] z B. Ex 19,16–20: Wenn Gott auf dem Gipfel des Sinai seine Schöpfung berührt, dann funkt es!

[6] Wenn Paulus in den ersten Briefen des NT (z B. Röm 8,4–14) sichtlich Mühe hat, sich gegen die gnostische Feindschaft von Geist und Fleisch abzugrenzen, so sehe ich darin die Tragik des Konvertiten, der in seinem Eifern für seinen neuen Glauben nicht sehen will, dass rabbinische Gesetzesfrömmigkeit genau die gleiche antignostische Stoßrichtung hat wie christlicher Glaube, dass man eigentlich besser zusammenspannen sollte, statt sich zu befehden.

Menschensohn, der in seinem Fleisch Himmel und Erde miteinander versöhnt (Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΣΑΡΞ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ).

6. Datierung der alttestamentlichen Literatur

Mit etwas chronologischem Mut lässt sich eine Interaktion zwischen Gnosis und NT noch annehmen. Immerhin wird die Gnosis hier namentlich genannt,[7] und Kol 3,9 wird gleich auch eine neue Gnosis angekündigt. Aber Altes Testament und Gnosis, da ist eine Beziehung doch nur in dem besagten Einbahn-Verkehr möglich, meint man.

Wenn die Forschung inzwischen auch daran ist, von der hochromantischen Vorstellung von malerisch über frühe Jahrhunderte verteilten literarischen Schichten abzukommen, so ist nach gängiger Auffassung für den Abschluss der Entstehung des AT mit der Datierung der Septuaginta durch den Aristeas-Brief[8] immer noch ein *terminus post quem* non gesetzt, der mindesten hundert Jahre in vorchristliche Zeit weist, ist das AT also immer noch um Jahrhunderte von der Gnosis getrennt, eine Beziehung also – wenn überhaupt – nur im Einbahnbetrieb möglich! Und da meine ich nun, wäre es an der Zeit, das chronologische Herunterbuchstabieren[9] vom Moses am

[7] 1. Tim 6,20: ῾Ω Τιμόθεε,τὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον ἐκτρεπόμενος τὰς βεβήλους κενοφωνίας καὶ ἀντιθέσεις τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως.

[8] Zum einen berichtet dieser nach einem Euergetes (und welcher Ptolemäer wollte nicht einer sein?) datierte Brief lediglich von der Übersetzung eines jüdischen Gesetzes ins Griechische, wobei nicht klar ist, um welche von den erhaltenen jüdischen Gesetzessammlungen es sich konkret handelt, geschweige denn, dass davon die Rede wäre, dass damit auch nicht-Gesetzesliteratur mitgemeint sein könnte. Zum andern enthält dieser Brief für jeden, der mit der Topografie Jerusalems einigermassen vertraut ist, eine versteckte interne Datierung. Er spricht nämlich von einer Quelle auf dem Tempelplatz, die es geologisch nie gegeben haben kann. Wovon er berichtet, das ist die von Pontius Pilatus auf den Tempelplatz weitergeführte herodianische Wasserversorgung. Dass Aristeas diese als natürliche Quelle bezeichnet, zeigt, dass seit dem Skandal, den diese Tätigkeit des Pilatus ausgelöst und die zu seiner Absetzung geführt hat, schon geraume Zeit vergangen sein muss. Realistisch dürfte eine Datierung zwischen den beiden Aufständen sein. Und wenn er detailliert den Kult am herodianischen Tempel beschreibt, so wird man sich vor Augen halten müssen, dass in der Antike Kulthandlungen (leider!) als bekannt vorausgesetzt und außer zwecks Polemik erst beschrieben werden, wenn sie dem Vergessen anheimfallen und/oder neu eingerichtet werden sollen.

[9] Es müsste endlich denunziert werden, dass unser ganzes chronologisches Gerüst für die „biblische Zeit“ immer noch auf der Chronik des Eusebius fundiert und dass

Sinai über die „Königszeit“ bis Exil und „nachexilische Zeit“[10] zu verlassen und – wie es einer seriösen Forschung eigentlich angemessen wäre – vom Gesicherten uns vorsichtig rückwärts ins Ungesicherte vorzutasten. Wenn wir beim Reden über die Bibel unsere Bibel meinen, dann liegt die Nase des Gauls bei der Kanonisierung dieser unserer Bibel durch die Reformatoren bzw. durch das Konzil von Trient. Für die gesicherte Existenz der hebräischen Bibel[11] können wir bis jetzt dokumentarisch bis ins Mittelalter zurückgehen, für die einer griechischen Bibel bis in die christlich-byzantinische Zeit. Mit den sensationellen Qumran-Funden sind wir am dokumentarischen Schwanz des Gauls angelangt, und da steht es uns frei, von der vorgeschlagenen Datierung dieser Funde noch weiter in eine dunkle Vergangenheit zurück zu spekulieren. Vorausgesetzt, diese Funde belegen zweifelsfrei die Existenz einer jüdischen Bibel für die postulierte Zeit. Und da bin ich bei aller gebührenden Achtung vor archäologischen Autoritätsbeweisen der Meinung, dass die Forschung da ihre Hausaufgaben längst noch nicht gemacht hat.

7. Die Beweislast der Qumran-Funde[12]

Von den 23 287 Versen der hebräischen Bibel sind unter den Qumran-Funden 6468, also fast 30 % ganz oder meist fragmentarisch als belegt identifiziert worden. Noch besser sieht das Verhältnis aus,

---

dieser in seinem Vorwort geschrieben hat, man möge ja nicht meinen, das sei nun so; er habe lediglich eine mögliche Ordnung in die verschiedenen, sich oft widersprechenden Chronologien bringen wollen.

[10] Als ob es so etwas nach der endgültigen Zerschlagung nationaler Ambitionen durch Hadrian und damit dem Beginn des Exils für „Juda“ bis zur Gründung des modernen Staates Israel je gegeben hätte!

[11] wobei die Frage offen bleibt, wie weit diese hebräische Bibel als Schöpfung karäischer Kreise in Anlehnung an die christlich-griechische Bibel gedeutet werden könnte. Auffällig ist jedenfalls die marginale Rolle, die die Biblia Hebraica – abgesehen von der kultischen Stellung des Pentateuch – noch in der heutigen rabbischen Praxis spielt. Ich habe einmal in einer Jeschiwa eine hebräische Bibel gesucht. Es gab sie nicht.

[12] Eine kritische Aufarbeitung des gegenwärtigen Stands der Forschung bei Gerd Hagenow, „Hirbet Qumran oder die höhere Kunst archäologischer Interpretation,“ in: *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Instituts für Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes* 6, S. 92–108. Dank an Dr. Jutta Häser und Nadia Shugair in Jerusalem!

wenn wir die Kapitel betrachten, aus denen mindestens ein Vers wenigstens fragmentarisch belegt ist: Von den 928 Kapiteln der hebräischen Bibel sind es 548, das heißt fast 55 %. Und wenn wir die mindestens bruchstückhaft[13] in Qumran belegten Bücher betrachten, dann wird das Resultat noch erdrückender: Außer den Büchern Ester und Nehemja sind sämtliche Bücher des hebräischen AT in Qumran gefunden worden.

Daraus zu schließen, „in Qumran" sei unsere Bibel schon vorhanden gewesen, halte ich nun allerdings für einen Trugschluss. Was mit diesen Funden dokumentarisch belegt ist, ist lediglich die erstaunliche Tatsache, dass in diesen Höhlen überraschend viele biblische Texte gefunden wurden, und das im Kontext mit einem Mehrfachen an nicht-biblischen Texten. Und was kaum gebührend beachtet wurde: Diese für uns zu biblischen gewordenen Texte heben sich vom übrigen „profanen" Material in keinster Weise ab in dem Sinne, dass diese rein phänomenologisch und ohne unsere vorgefasse Meinung als Teile einer „Bibel" oder einer „Heiligen Schrift" identifiziert werden könnten. Was gefunden wurde, sind die fragmentarischen Überbleibsel einer breiten und vielfältigen antik-hebräischen Literatur, und das ist viel.

Spätestens hier stellt sich nun aber die Frage nach dem „Sitz im Leben" dieser Literatur. Père de Vaux hat sie von seinem eigenen „Sitz im Leben" her als Bibliothek[14] einer mönchischen Gemeinschaft interpretiert. Letztere ist dann bald zu einer „Qumran-Gemeinde" von „Essenern" mutiert, an der Deutung der Textfunde als Bibliothek dieser Gemeinde ist mW. aber kaum ernsthaft gezweifelt worden. Dabei hätte doch auffallen müssen, dass in *Hirbet Qumran* nicht nur der nötige Wohnraum für diese „Gemeinde" nicht gefunden wurde, sondern dass es doch schlichtweg nicht denkbar ist, dass diese „Gemeinde" ihre Bibliothek über eine Strecke von 12 km in Höhlen verteilt hat – ein als „Bibliothek" identifizierbarer Raum, aus dem bei heranrückender Gefahr die Schriften in Sicherheit gebracht werden konnten, wurde jedenfalls nicht identifiziert.

[13] Als Buch praktisch zu 100 % belegt ist einzig das Buch Jesaja.

[14] Dass da auch „profane" Literatur zu finden ist, spricht keineswegs dagegen. Auch in der berühmten Bibliothek der Ecole Biblique findet sich für den, der sucht, neben der biblisch-theologischen Ausstattung eine ganze zerfledderte Sammlung Asterix sowie ein paar Dutzend Laufmeter englische und französische Krimis aus dem Nachlass von Père de Vaux.

Angesichts des Mangels an gesicherten Datierungsmöglichkeiten dieser Schriften[15] sind eigentlich sämtliche Optionen noch offen. Rückt man einmal von der Vorstellung einer geschlossenen Bibliothek ab, so drängt sich unwillkürlich auf, hier an Fluchtkapital[16] aus dem nahen Jerusalem zu denken. Dafür spricht auch die inhaltliche Breite und teilweise innere Widersprüchlichkeit[17] dieser Texte. Zum einen ist Qumran von Jerusalem aus in einer bequemen Tagereise erreichbar,[18] zum andern wird man sich von der Vorstellung befreien müssen, die heutige Grenze des Staates Israel sei auch in der Antike schon eine Grenze gewesen.[19] Ich halte es für durchaus denkbar, dass zwischen West- und Ostjordanland in der Antike ein reger Verkehr

[15] Von einem Rekurs auf die bestellten und gelieferten Resultate der C14 Methode mögen man besser absehen. Diese Methode geht davon aus, dass a) der Anteil dieses radioaktiven Isotops weltgeschichtlich stets und überall gleich war und b) dessen Anteil in organischen Stoffen nach deren Absterben nur noch durch die Halbwertszeit verändert wurde – zwei Prämissen, die sich inzwischen als irrig herausgestellt haben, vgl. Christian Blöss u. Hans-Ulrich Niemitz, *C-14 Crash. Das Ende der Illusion, mit Radiokarbonmethode und Dendrochronologie datieren zu können*, Gräfelfing 1997.

[16] Man sollte nicht übersehen, dass die Inflation an schriftlichen Erzeugnissen ein modernes Phänomen ist. In der Antike war schon das Schreibmaterial eine Kostbarkeit, ein Schriftstück oder gar ein lierarisches Werk ein empfindlicher, aber leicht transportabler Schatz, den man bei Gefahr zuerst in Sicherheit brachte.

[17] Eine Klostergemeinschaft, die gleich drei widersprüchliche Klosterregeln im gleichen Handbuch vereint, ist schlichtweg nicht denkbar.

[18] Ich bin diesen Weg dutzendemale allein und mit Gruppen gegangen. Wenn man um 9 Uhr in Jerusalem aufbricht, erreicht man durch das Kidron-Tal hinunter und am Hyrkanion (das bestimmt nicht allein wegen seiner landschaftlichen Reize hier steht) vorbei am frühen Nachmittag die Karawanserei (archäologisch als landwirtschaftliche Einrichtung der Qumran-Gemeinde identifiziert) in der Bukaia. Von hier aus kann man in einer guten Stunde Qumran oder direkt Ain Feshka erreichen. Man kann auch hier übernachten und in einer bequemen

Tagereise nach Ain Gedi weitergehen. Unterwegs fehlt es nicht an Spuren, dass dieser Weg in der Antike viel begangen und stellenweise sogar ausgebaut wurde.

[19] Das Jahr, das ich als Mönch und Einsiedler auf dem Berg Nebo in Transjordanien verbringen durfte, hat mir die Augen dafür geöffnte, dass „Israel“ bzw. „Palästina“ sich in der Antike keineswegs auf das Westjordanland beschränkt hat, sondern dass der Kulturraum des „Fruchbaren Halbmonds“ sich weit bis an die Grenzen der arabischen Wüste erstreckt hat. Nicht nur, dass die fruchtbare Ebene von Madaba im Westjordanland vergeblich eine Entsprechung sucht. Bei meinen Wanderungen durch die Wadis am Westabhang des moabitischen Höhenrückens bin ich auf antike Siedlungsspuren gestoßen, die an Zahl und Qualität kaum hinter denen nachstehen, die sich am Westabhang des judäischen Berglandes finden und die eigentlich nur einerseits durch den hellenistisch-römischen Kulturaufschwung, andererseits durch die Bevölkerungsexplosion infolge der *Pax Romana* an diesen exponierten, in der Folge längst verlassenen Stellen erklärbar sind.

stattfand, *Hirbet Qumran* also wohl eher grundsätzlich[20] als Durchgangsstation erklärbar ist und weniger als einsame Siedlung in der Wüste. Dafür sprechen auch die dort auffällig ausgebauten Bade-Anlagen. Vor allem vornehme Reisende, die hüben oder drüben ihre Verwandten oder ihre Güter besuchen wollten, werden am Abend eines anstrengenden Reisetages ein kühlendes Tauchbad[21] geschätzt haben.

Damit stellt sich aber neu die Frage, wann denn diese Schriften eine Tagereise von Jerusalem entfernt in den Höhlen am Ufer des Toten Meeres deponiert worden sind.

Wenn auch der „Geschichtsschreibung" eines Flavius Josephus mit entschieden mehr Skepsis[22] begegnet werde sollte als ihm als leider weitgehend einziger Geschichtsquelle immer noch zugeschrieben wird, so war er doch Augenzeuge der ersten Zerstörung Jerusalems im Jahr 70 nChr. Und da berichtet er, dass die Bewohner Jerusalems – und vor allem die vornehmen unter ihnen – ihre Schätze (und damit, falls vorhanden, bestimmt auch ihre Bücher) zum Tempel brachten, um sie unter den Schutz des Nationalgottes zu stellen. Und alles ist in Flammen aufgegangen. Das zweite Mal, am Ende des Bar-Kochba-Aufstandes, haben sie diesen Fehler bestimmt nicht mehr gemacht. Da bot sich die bewährte Flucht in die Wüste Juda und nach Transjordanien an, und die führte bestimmt nicht über die von Vespasian gebaute Römerstraße entlang dem *Wadi Qilt*, sondern

[20] Ich sage bewusst „grundsätzlich". Dass hier z. B. bei der Zerstörung Jerusalem auch gleichsam ein Auffanglager für Flüchtlinge sein konnte (Grabfelder), ist sicher nicht ausgeschlossen. Ich denke, man sollte sich vor allem im Orient immer vor einseitig-funktionalen Lösungen hüten. Es gibt hier eine Überlebens Kultur, die sich nie davor scheut, irgendwelche Einrichtungen auch zweckentfremdet zu nutzen.

[21] Mir fällt auf, wie schwer sich die Forschung mit den *Miqwen* tut, z. B. neuerding S. Hoss, „Die Mikwen der späthellenistischen bis byzantinischen Zeit in Palästina," in: *ZDPV* 123, 49–79. In Jerusalem habe ich im Sommer gern eine Badewanne vollaufen lassen und die gelegentlich zwecks eines Tauchbades frequentiert. Das Erlebnis, das man dabei hat, macht es durchaus verständlich, dass dieser Brauch sekundär (und wohl mittelalterlich in einem anderen Kulturraum) religiös überhöht und halachisch reglementiert worden ist.

[22] Gemessen an dem, was er selbst über die Regeln antiker Geschichtsschreibung schreibt, stelle ich den Quellenwert seiner Angaben über Personen und Ereignisse, die zeitlich mehr als eine Generation vor ihm lagen (und das betrifft vor allem die herodianische Zeit!) etwa auf die Ebene des Quellenwerts der Werke von Karl May für die amerikanische Geschichte: anschaulich und gut eingefühlt und geschrieben, aber sonst eher der Gattung eines historischen Romans zugehörig.

über die alten Schleichwege nach Qumran und Ain Feshka. Aber angenommen, Hadrians Truppen kontrollierten die Schifffahrt auf dem Toten Meer (und drüben, in Moab, waren sie ja sowieso schon), so blieb den Flüchtlingen früher oder später wohl nicht viel anderes übrig, als ihre zwar kostbaren, aber sperrigen Bücher zu verstecken und sich in die Gefangenschaft zu begeben. Und dass gleich auch ein Töpfer aus Jericho hier sein Geschäft gewittert und in Hirbet Qumran eine Werkstatt für Qumran-Töpfe zur Konservierung von Buchrollen eingerichtet hat, kann bei einiger Kenntnis orientalischer Gepflogenheiten auch nicht mehr verwundern.

8. Fazit

Nach meiner Meinung handelt es sich bei den Funden von Qumran[23] um die fragmentarischen Reste der in Jerusalem (und Umgebung) zwischen den beiden Aufständen produzierten Literatur. Sie zeigen uns, dass dazu auch biblische Literatur gehört, dass biblische Themen (und Schriften) im Schrifttum des in dieser Zeit geistig und national aufstrebenden Klimas[24] in Judäa und der Diaspora durchaus *en vogue* waren. Dass aus dem ganzen Fundus[25] schließlich ein national-religiöses Werk kanonisiert werden konnte, passt sich gut ein in die Zeit nach der großen Katastrofe, in der Judäa entvölkert und Jerusalem als römische Kolonie Aelia Capitolina neu gegründet und besiedelt wurde.[26] (Und eigentlich handelt es sich ja um zwei hebräische Werke. Das eine ist die Mischna der Rabbinen, die Niederlegung der „mündlichen Torah", die nur bedingt von unserer „Bibel" infiziert ist und deren Fortleben in den beiden Talmudim bis heute

[23] Ich subsumiere darunter auch die Funde von *Murabba't* u. a., die schon einvernehmlich dem Bar-Kochba-Aufstand angegliedert wurden.

[24] Auch der Bar-Kochba-Aufstand, der dem Kaiser Hadrian einiges Kopfzerbrechen verursacht hat, ist bestimmt nicht aus dem blauen Himmel gefallen.

[25] der, wie die Funde zeigen, ja nicht aus Einzelexemplaren oder gar Autographen bestand, sondern in Kopien durchaus auch außerhalb Qumrans überlebt haben konnte!

[26] Der Mutterboden für nationale Mythen sind Zeiten, in denen die Nation in Gefahr ist, ausgelöscht zu werden, wie ich schön am Fach „Schweizergeschichte" während des letzten Weltkriegs erleben konnte. Ist die Gefahr vorbei, pflegen diese Mythen eher wieder demontiert zu werden.

gesichert ist. Das andere ist die karäische schriftliche Tradition, die spätestens im Mittelalter zu unserer Biblia Hebraica vereinigt wurde.)

Grundsätzlich meine ich, wir müssten von der romantischen Vorstellung wegkommen, unsere biblischen Texte gäben Einsicht in Zeiten und Umstände, über die zu berichten sie vorgeben. Gerade wenn es um (nationale oder religiöse) Programmschriften geht wie zB. bei der Utopia eines Thomas Morus, ist es ein bewährter Trick, Personen und Handlung in entfernte Orte und Zeiten zu verlegen.[27] Die Zeitgenossen, die das lasen, wussten dann genau, wer und was gemeint war; und diejenigen, die es direkt anging, konnten immer noch die Fiktion aufrechterhalten, es gehe sie nichts an. Aber uns, den Spätgeborenen, ist dieses Wissen eben abhanden gekommen. Unsere biblischen Schriften lassen uns zwar einen großen Schritt in die Vergangenheit tun. Aber eben nicht in die von einer romantischen Historikergeneration anvisierte Zeit, über die diese zu berichten vorgeben.[28] Endstation unseres Schrittes in die Vergangenheit sind die Gehirnwindungen der jeweiligen Verfasser. Und die sitzen bestimmt nicht irgendwo im 9. bis 5. Jahrhundert vChr, wo man zwar Scherben bekratzt, aber bestimmt keine Literaturwerke geschaffen hat. Historische Forschung müßte m.E. darin bestehen, durch ihre Augen ihre Zeit zu sehen und zu interpretieren. Und da meine ich schon, dass diese Zeit – und ich sehe da konkret die Zeit zwischen den beiden

[27] So lese ich zB. die Berichte über die sog. „Königszeit", angefangen von David (= Dod = Liebling) und Salomo (auch in Rom war damals von einem Friedensfürsten die Rede!) als eine Aufarbeitung („Fürstenspiegel") der Herodes-Dynastie („Könige von Juda und Israel", aber nicht für alle *koscher*). Dabei könnte ich mir durchaus vorstellen, dass der Flavius Josephus mit seiner Schilderung der biblischen Geschichte einige Vorarbeit geleistet hat, dann aber als zu wenig fromm zugunsten anderer Entwürfe abgelehnt wurde. Mehrere Entwürfe gab und gibt es jedenfalls. Ich halte es für durchaus möglich, dass wir die biblische Väter-, Exodus, Richter-, Königs- und Makkabäerzeit nicht als auf einer chronologischen Zeitschiene aufzureihende Zeitepochen, sondern als je eigenständige und erst sekundär auf eine Reihe gebrachte Entwürfe zum Problem der Religions- und Staatsverfassung des (eschatologischen) Israel interpretieren sollten.

[28] Die Idee von Julius Wellhausen, versuchsweise einmal die biblischen Texte als Historiographie im Sinn der Aufklärung zu behandeln und kritisch zu untersuchen, wie sie darauf reagieren, halte ich für einen spannenden und durchaus legitimen wissenschaftlichen Ansatz. Steril wurde die historisch-kritische Methode erst, als sie von den Epigonen zum Dogma erhoben wurde.

Aufständen und das darauffolgende Exil (womit AT und NT und Gnosis in ihrer Entstehung nun einmal definitiv zu Zeitgenossen werden!) – mindestens religiös sehr belastet war vom Zerbrechen gewachsener Strukturen, was die Gnosis auf ihre Weise systematisiert hat. Dass hebräische Literatur sich nicht damit auseinandergesetzt haben sollte, ist mir schlicht nicht denkbar.

Summary: *In this article the cultural phenomenon of Gnosis, widely spread in Mediterraneum, is interpreted as a reaction to the Hellenistic globalisation of the whole region in late Antiquity. The suggestion is being made to understand the Creation story in Gen 1 as a deliberate polemics with Gnosis and its disdain for body and matter. If true, however, this suggestion would radically change the chronology of Biblical texts. Finally, the argument of Qumran library, often reffered to as the proof for Bible's antiquity, is being challenged.*

Keywords: Gnosis – Dualism – Genesis, the book of – Qumran – Bible, origins of – Hellenism.

Wie mit dem Teufel zu pflügen ist

Jan Heller, *Jak orat s čertem: Kázání* (Wie mit dem Teufel zu pflügen ist: Predigten), Kalich Verlag, Prag 2005, 204 Seiten, ISBN 80-7017-017-4.

Am Vorabend des achtzigsten Geburtstags von Professor Jan Heller stellte Pfarrer Mikuláš Vymětal auf Anregung von Mitgliedern der evangelischen Gemeinde in Prag-Horní Počernice eine Predigtsammlung dieses Prager Alttestamentlers vor.

Jan Heller wurde am 22. April 1925 in Plzeň (Pilsen) geboren. Evangelische Theologie studierte er in Prag (1945–1948) und in Basel (1947–1948). Dann war er kurze Zeit Geistlicher der Evangelischen Kirche der Böhmischen Brüder. Seit 1950 bis 2004 lehrte er die klassischen Sprachen, Hebräisch, Religionswissenschaft und Altes Testament an der Evangelischen Theologischen Fakultät in Prag. 1966–1967 wirkte er als Dozent der Theologischen Fakultät der Humboldt Universität in Berlin. An der Neige seiner akademischen Karriere war er kurze Zeit auch Pädagoge an der Katholischen Fakultät der Karlsuniversität in Prag.

Von der Tradition der tschechischen Reformation stammt Hellers Betonung her, dass Gott zu dem Menschen durch die Heilige Schrift spricht und redet (Schrift wird zu Gottes Wort). So wird Hellers Theologie eher biblisch als kirchlich-dogmatisch. Hellers Lehrer, zu dem er sich recht laut bekennt, war der Gründer der modernen protestantischen alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft in Prag, Slavomil C. Daněk (1885–1946), von dem er u. a. die Betonung des Traditionsprozesses übernommen und weiter entfaltet hat. (Ganz einfach ausgedrückt: Das Alte Testament bringt die Botschaft Gottes als Gottes Anrede an den Menschen, nicht als Geschichte des Volkes Israels.) Auch den heutigen Zuhörer in diesen (Traditions-) Prozess der Botschaft hineinzuziehen, in die Begegnung (Geschichte) Gottes mit dem Menschen und des Menschen mit Gott, der zu dem Menschen hinabsteigt, war und bleibt der Inhalt Hellers Wirkung als eines Lehrers und Predigers.

Im tschechischen Protestantismus erscheinen in den letzten Jahren viel mehr Postillen als andere eigentliche theologische Arbeiten. Vielleicht ist es deswegen so, weil hier traditionell Predigten für das wichtigste und eigentlich bedeutendste, theologisch richtigste Genre gehalten werden. (Doch andere Begründungen sind nicht ausgeschlossen.)

Die Postille umfasst 26 Predigten über Texte aus dem Alten und 20 Predigten über Texte aus dem Neuen Testament, gehalten in den Jahren 1952–2005, die Mikuláš Vymětal aus „Hellers Predigtschachtel" ausgewählt hat. Die Anordnung der Sammlung hält sich an die Reihenfolge der biblischen Bücher, aus denen die Texte zur Grundlage der Predigt gewählt wurden. (Von Genesis bis Offenbahrung.)

Vor jeder Predigt ist ein Hinweis auf die erste Gottesdienstlesung angeführt, die zweite Lesung (der Predigttext) ist ganz ausgedruckt und zwar in der Kralitzer und in der tschechischen ökumenischen Übersetzung, an der Heller mitwirkte. Auf die Predigt folgt ein Gebet. Jede Predigt hat der Autor mit einer Überschrift versehen. Angeführt wird auch das Jahr, aus welchem die entsprechende Predigt stammt. (Der Leser bekommt einen Querschnitt fast des ganzen Lebens Hellers als Prediger in die Hand, er kann vergleichen, er kann es berücksichtigen. Letztlich haben aber doch die neueren bei der Predigtauswahl das Übergewicht.) In einigen Fällen ist auch die Gelegenheit angegeben, bei der die Predigt gehalten wurde (Feiertage des Kirchenjahres, staatliche Feiertage, besondere Tage). Nur schade, dass nicht auch einige von Hellers Kasualienpredigten vertreten sind. Das Buch enthält ein Bibelstellenregister.

Die Predigten lesen sich gut, vielleicht besser, als man sie hätte hören können. Heller verleugnet keineswegs sein Fach. Er arbeitet viel mit der Konkordanz (ich würde sagen: er hat sie im Kopf), er verweist auf ältere und zeitgenössische Ausleger und setzt sich nicht selten kritisch mit ihnen auseinander. Oft stößt er gerade von der Auslegungsgeschichte des Textes aus zu dem Versuch eines eigenen Verständnisses vor. Ein anderes Mal sind es „unsere" verdrehten Vorstellungen, die ihn herausfordern. Der Übergang zur Predigt beginnt nicht selten mit Verben wie „denken wir darüber nach", „sehen wir uns an", „konzentrieren wir uns auf" usw. (Diese Ausdrücke hätte ich wahrscheinlich in der Abschrift etwas reduziert). Als Predigtgrundlage sind in der Regel nur ein, zwei Verse ausgewählt. Heller geht dann von Wort zu Wort, analysiert hebräische und griechische Formen, berücksichtigt die Übersetzungen (hauptsächlich ins Lateinische, wie er uns das gelehrt und wie er es auch selbst von seinem Lehrer Daněk übernommen hat) und deren „Auslegungen". Er erklärt Begriffe, Zusammenhänge, Nuancen, Tatsachen. (Er führt das „se-

mantische Saubermachen“ durch.) Lebendig fasst er die durch die Exegese offen gelegte Handlung und den konkreten Text herum zusammen. Das Ende der alttestamentlichen Predigten gipfelt nicht nur einmal, doch nie gewaltsam, in einen nicht mechanischen neutestamentlich-messianischen Schluss.

Gerade die deutlich bemerkbare Christologie (besser: das christlogische Finale oder das christlogische Ende) verbindet die einzelnen Predigten am stärksten und wird zum wichtigsten „theologischen Thema“ Hellers. Er zeigt beständig das größte Geschenk Gottes in seinem Menschwerden, im Tod und Auferstehung Jesus Christi auf und gerade in diesem Geschenk graduieren ungewaltsam seine Predigten.

Die Sprache ist glatt und schön, möglichst sachlich nüchtern. Hier und da ein Zitat aus der großen „nicht biblischen“ Literatur. (Interessant ist der Gedanke in Vymětals Vorwort, dass die Erwähnung Luthers im Verlauf der Jahre hinter den ökumenischen Gestalten der kirchlichen Literatur zurücktritt.) Beachtenswert sind Hellers Zusammenfassungen am Ende der Predigt, die besonders bei den neueren so wirken, als ob der Prediger dem Gedächtnis der Zuhörer immer weniger vertraut. Interesse erweckt vielleicht, wie wenig Heller auf den ersten Blick auf persönliche Dinge eingeht oder auf die Epoche, in der die Predigt gehalten wurde.

Für einen systematischen Theologen können die „biblizistischen“ Versuche Hellers, Begriffe aus der Dogmatik zu erklären, etwa suspekt sein. Heller freilich erklärt, was heute schwer verständlich ist. Er beseitigt überflüssige Hindernisse, den Wörtern gibt er eine neu entdeckte (auch nicht langweilige) Bedeutung, die dem biblischen Zeugnis als ganzem, dem göttlichen Anspruch an den Menschen und der menschlichen Antwort gerecht wird. Heller achtet sorgfältig auf den Zuhörer (Leser), begleitet ihn, stärkt, festigt und pflegt dessen Glauben. Fast jede Predigt ist mit irgendeinem „großen Thema“ verbunden, wieder und wieder beweist Heller die Zusammengehörigkeit beider biblischen Testamente. Oft erscheint ein Hinweis darauf, dass manche Themen nicht nur mechanisch im Neuen Testament zu sehen sind, sondern dass sie sich ein wenig auch im Alten Testament entdecken lassen.

Die Predigtausgabe Jan Hellers ergänzt sein wissenschaftliches Werk – eins ohne das andere wäre nicht vollkommen.

Ondřej Macek, Prag

Ein Weg durch die Felsen mit Jan Heller

Jan Heller, *Stezka ve skalách: postila (Ein Weg durch die Felsen: Postille)*, Kalich Verlag, Prag 2006, 291 Seiten, ISBN 80-7017-043-3.

Kurz nach der ersten Predigtsammlung von Jan Heller (und ermutigt durch deren durchaus positive Aufnahme) hat Pfarrer Mikuláš Vymětal eine zweite Sammlung des homiletischen Ertrags des Prager Alttestamentlers zusammengestellt. In seinen Predigten wagt es Jan Heller die Welt auf eine Art zu beschreiben, wie viele Prediger sich nicht zu reden erlauben. Auch wenn Pavel Filipi die Leser in der Einleitung des Buchs auf einen rationalen Zugang zur Bibel vorbereitet, werden die biblischen Gestalten in Hellers Texten auf eine Weise lebendig, die über das hinausgeht, was man gewöhnlich als rational bezeichnet.

In seinem lebenslangen Durchdenken der biblischen Botschaft erinnert Jan Heller an die rabbinischen Denker der jüdisch-chassidischen Geschichte. Als ich vor kurzem durch ein Buch der Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman blätterte, wurde mir klar, dass es sich vom formalen Gesichtspunkt her um ein ganz anderes Genre handelt. Rabbi Nachman, der selbst ausgelegt werden müsste, schreibt Gleichnisse, öffnet mit Hilfe von Märchen die geheimsten Tore jüdischer Mystik. Jan Heller hingegen benutzt zeitgenössische exegetische Methoden, er kennt die ganze Auslegungsgeschichte biblischer Texte; wenn er schreibt, dann weiß er, was er schreibt, warum er schreibt, wo er mit seinem Denken steht. Er arbeitet mit der Bibel wie ein Wissenschaftler. Doch in seinem grundsätzlichen Zugang unterscheidet sich Heller von einem Naturwissenschaftler im modernen Sinn des Wortes. Ein Wissenschaftler arbeitet mit einer bestimmten Methode, ordnet, sammelt, reflektiert. Seine Arbeit ist genau abgegrenzt von seinem Privatleben. Ein wirklich Weiser dagegen sehnt sich nach wahrer Erkenntnis, in der sein persönliches Leben einbezogen ist: die Sehnsucht nach Erkenntnis, die Sehnsucht nach Erfüllung, die Sehnsucht nach Einheit. Es geht um die Umgangsweise mit dem Text, die sich eher der Dichtkunst, dem künstlerischen Schaffen, manchmal vielleicht der Tollheit nähert. Ein solcher Typ des Wissenschaftlers ist Jan Heller. Nur solch ein Mensch kann sich erlauben, so vertraut über Gott, Christus, Satan, Gut und Böse zu reden. Nicht aus Stolz,

sondern aus einem Mut, der aus der Demut eines Menschen erwächst, der sich nach Erkenntnis sehnt.

Einige Predigten verhüllen wirklich nicht das wissenschaftliche Potential des Schreibers. So ähnelt z. B. das „Zeichen der Jungrau" eher einer Vorlesung als einer Predigt. Der Leser bekommt eine sachkundige Erklärung vieler alttestamentlicher Motive und Symbole. Der Autor deckt hier seine lebenslange Fachkenntnis und Erfahrung auf und bietet dem Leser die Möglichkeit, sich mit ihm auf den abenteuerlichen Weg der Bibelauslegung zu begeben. Von daher öffnet sich uns die existentielle Situation Jan Hellers. Und auf dieser Ebene wieder leuchtet das „mystische" Interesse des Autors hervor. Bei der Deutung des Namens „Immanuel" versäumt er nicht zu bemerken, *dass Gott durch diesen Namen gleichsam sagt: „Ich bin mit euch bis ans Ende der Welt"* (Mat 28,20). Und ein Stück weiter erklärt Jan Heller die Worte „Rahm" und „Honig", als wären wir schon in der Welt des Rabbi Nachman. Die Dinge werden lebendig. Sie werden zu Hinweisen für eine tiefgründige Erklärung der Situation des Menschen auf der Erde (siehe z. B. Milch: uraltes Symbol des Lebens, stammend von der Mutter, nicht aus dem Boden und deshalb nicht vom Fluch über die Erde betroffen). Die Auslegung ist so umfassend, daß im Ergebnis der Leser fast verschlungen wird von einem ganz neuen Weltbild. Diese neue Welt zwingt den Leser, über sein eigenes Leben nachzudenken, darüber, ob der Ort, wo er steht, wirklich der einzig mögliche ist. In diesem Sinn erinnert mich Jan Heller an die jüdisch-chassidische Mystik. Das Maß der Verlebendigung der biblischen Vorstellungen ist gefährlich hoch. Der Leser riskiert, dass er verschlungen wird, hineingezogen, verwandelt. Und eben hier beginnt die wissenschaftliche Abhandlung Angebot eines neuen Weges zu werde – hört auf, Vorlesung zu sein, und die Predigt wird geboren.

Dem Leser, der Jan Heller zum ersten Mal begegnet, ist das Buch ein Zeugnis, wie der mit lebenslang wissenschaftlichen Interesse verbundene Glaube Früchte tragen kann, nicht in trockenen Lehrsätzen, sondern in poetischen Beschreibungen des Lebens.

Die qualifizierte Wissenschaft wird zu ungewöhnlich starker Poesie, fähig einzuladen auf den Weg. Das ist letztendlich wahrscheinlich das bedeutendste Ergebnis eines solchen Arbeitstyps: er gibt

den anderen Hoffnung. Jan Heller ist einer der wenigen Menschen, die es verstehen, anderen wahre Hoffnung zu geben, Glaubenshoffnung.

Petr Turecký, Soběhrdy

Synagogue and Ecclesia

Sidonia Horňanová: ***SYNAGOGUES. Continuity between the SYNAGOGUE and ECCLESIA.*** Issued by Comenius University, Bratislava 2006. 104 pages including 20 pages of pictures. ISBN 80–223–2123–0.

There are really well-written books on theology. These deal with very interesting issues, which are not so well known. Such books are written for professionals, however, they are easily understandable also for the general public. Also the book written by Ms. Sidónia Horňanová, PhD, an assistant professor of the Faculty of Evangelical Theology, belongs among such books. The author focuses in her work mainly on Jewry and the non-Biblical Jewish literature. Her book deals with certain segments of relationships between Jewry and Christianity, determined by the concepts of SYNAGOGUE and ECCLESIA. The author has found an area, which was not quite well explored and explained? up to now. We can say that synagogue and church have influenced each other throughout their history. "Basically, the first believers in Christ were Jews and proselytes with Jewish religious traditions. They did not abandon their synagogue congregations immediately. Therefore it is obvious that we can find much contact points between the Jewish Synagogue and Christian Temple as far as the worship and architecture concerns" (page 5).

This work is divided in seven parts: 1. Synagogue Concept; 2. Sources on Synagogues; 3. Origin of Synagogues; 4. Function of Synagogues; 5. Worship in the Synagogue; 6. Architecture of Synagogues. 7. The Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia. Each part ends with a conclusion stating the author's point of view on the related issue. The goal of this work is to demonstrate the historical continuity between the Jewish Synagogue and the Christian Church, to show the common heritage and common basic points of Jewry and Christianity. This should be a contribution to inter-religious dialogue between Jews and Christians.

Based on Psalm 74, mentioning all God's congregations in the country, the author presumes that the synagogues existed in Palestine during the pre-Maccabean period already. It seems that it was mainly

the prophet Ezekiel (Eze 11:16), who had an important role during the establishment of synagogues in Babylon.

Further, the author deals with mentions of synagogues in New Testament. She shows the role of the synagogue in the life of Jesus. Even the beginning of Jesus' speech is connected with the synagogue in Nazareth, his hometown. Also the apostle Paul started his mission in the Damascus synagogue (Act 9:19–20). The author opines that the prophecies of Jesus in the Gospels on the persecution of Christians in synagogues are not authentic; they are presumed to be amended since they reflect the experience of the persecuted church (page 16).

The next part deals with the most ancient archeologic findings of synagogues in Egypt, Babylon, Syria and Palestine as well. The most ancient proven synagogue is that close to Alexandria, Egypt dated in 3rd century B.C. In Palestine, there are archeologically proven four synagogues built before the year 70 A. D. (page 25), however, some sources state the establishment of synagogues on Israeli territory during the most ancient Biblical times, even earlier than the Solomon's temple (page 26).

In the next part, the author shows the different functions of the synagogue as community houses, oratory, school and holy place with preserved Torah rolls.

However, the synagogue was not a substitution for temple. It worked as a supplement of temple for Jews outside Jerusalem (page 35).

The part dealing with worship in the synagogue and the influence thereof on Christian worship is very interesting (pages 39 to 59). The influence is so great, that, according to P. Johnson, "except the christology, there is nothing in the early Church, what should not be already included in the Judaism" (page 59). The worship in the synagogue had its exactly defined order, was chanted and its focus was in the reading of the Scripture and prayers. Not only the Christian worship order and forms, but also the internal structure of the Christian temple is based on the synagogues, even on the Jerusalem temple and tabernacle. As far as its architecture concerns, the Christian temple is a kind of symbiosis between basilica and synagogue. Mainly this part of the book is strongly recommended for the reader's attention.

The next part of the work deals with issues of the synagogue architecture and their influence on the architecture of Christian temples (pages 60 to 72). However, later this influence became mutual; author proves this with specific data.

The last part of the book is dedicated to the history of Jewish religious communities in Slovakia (pages 73 to 77). This is proven also in the parts with photos, where those of some synagogues taken in Slovakia during the pre-Holocaust period are included.

In this part, the author also publishes the photos of outdoor and indoor parts of the important synagogues in Slovakia from the oldest time, photos of the *Krystallnacht* in Germany and the related events in Slovakia. It is right there, where we can see how intense was the Jewish worship activity before the Holocaust.

The only thing we may do is appreciate the author for this book, which will be well enjoyed by many of those interested in theology, either professionals or laity. I recommend it strongly.

Igor Kišš, Bratislava