

XXII. Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914)

A. Background

1. Degree in chemistry.
2. Worked as scientist for U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey for thirty years, but much concerned about problems of philosophy and mathematics through that period.
3. In 1887, retired to Milford, PA, to work on philosophy.
4. Lectured in philosophy at various universities, but was unable to find a permanent job in that field.

B. Vs. Descartes

1. vs. universal doubt: start only with *real* doubts.
 - a. These are what you really want to resolve.
 - b. If you doubt only methodologically, you may be too hasty to reinstate those beliefs that you really didn't doubt.
2. vs. resting ultimate certainty in the individual consciousness.
 - a. Dangers in epistemological individualism.
 - b. Reason as part of a community.
3. vs. resting all knowledge on a single thread of inference. Better to use many mutually reinforcing arguments, like threads of a cable.
4. Descartes supposed some things inexplicable apart from God. But you never have the right to assume this.
5. (In "Fixation of Belief"): vs trying to base cognition on absolutely certain propositions. Rather, simply base your thinking on propositions free of *actual* doubt, recognizing that they in turn may have to be revised eventually.

C. The Fixation of Belief

1. Examines the psychology of belief formation (existential perspective). How do I move from a state of doubt to a state of belief?
2. Beliefs are objectively true or false, but whether we believe something depends on how it guides our actions. A belief is "that which a man is prepared to act upon."
 - a. Doubt is an uneasy state of mind; belief is a corresponding calm, satisfaction ("cognitive rest").
 - b. Struggle to move from doubt to belief: *inquiry*.
3. Methods of fixation.
 - a. Tenacity: hold to your present beliefs against all challenge.
 - b. Authority: accept the beliefs imposed (often despotically) by society, state, or church.
 - c. A Priori: Believe what you're inclined to believe (quasi-aesthetic).
 - (i) Plato: distances of celestial spheres proportional to different lengths of strings that produce chords.
 - (ii) Hegelian metaphysics: every natural tendency of thought is logical, though likely to be abolished by

countertendencies. Hegel thinks this happens in a regular pattern, so that in time the truth will appear.

- (iii) But these not reliable, because they do not reason from the facts.

d. Science

- (i) "This is the only one of the four methods which presents any distinction of a right and a wrong way."
- (ii) Only thus can you achieve coincidence of your opinions with facts.
- (iii) Other methods have some value (tongue-in-cheek): for achieving comfort, ruling the masses, producing strong character. But we must be willing to pay the price to be scientific.

D. Scientific Method

1. "Critical commonsensism:" inquiry guided by common-sense certainties (which are fallible). Good to doubt these occasionally
2. Reasoning
 - a. Abduction or retrodution: formulating a relevant hypothesis.
 - b. Deduction: determining testible consequences that would follow if the hypothesis were true.
 - c. Induction: Actually testing the hypothesis by its practical effects.

E. "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (especially in formulating hypotheses)

1. Descartes' "clariity" and "distinctness" must be supplemented by practical consequences.
2. Two ideas differ insofar as they entail different practical consequences.

F. "Pragmatism"

1. The "pragmatic maxim:" "In order to ascertain the meaning of an intellectual conception we should consider what practical consequences might conceivably result from the truth of that conception; and the sum of these consequences will constitute the entire meaning of the conception."
2. William James and John Dewey went beyond Pierce's "pragmatic theory of meaning" to a "pragmatic theory of truth:" the truth is what works.
3. Pierce repudiated the pragmatic theory of truth. To him, the truth was objective, independent of our thoughts or aspirations. He redefined his own position as *pragmatism*, "a term ugly enough to keep it from kidnapers."

G. Phenomenology: Only three categories necessary to describe all the phenomena of experience.

1. Firstness: qualities (color, shape, etc.)
2. Secondness: "brute" facticity.
3. Thirdness: laws of nature.
4. Compare the universals and particulars of the Greeks, and Frame's three perspectives.

H. Comments

1. Insights
 - a. Focus on the psychology of fixating beliefs.
 - b. Focus on real, rather than theoretical doubts.
 - c. Useful critique of Cartesian foundationalism, similar to some modern thinkers.
 - d. Focus on knowledge as the enterprise of a *community*.
 - e. The pragmatic view of meaning: similar to Wittgenstein and Frame. Peirce rightly argues that this does not imply a pragmatic view of truth. He presupposes the existence of objective truth.
2. Methods of belief fixation: many caricatures, oversimplifications.
 - a. If “tenacity,” “authority,” and “a priori” forms of reasoning are held without any evidence at all, of course Peirce’s critique fits them. But usually these are found with some measure of evidence. These almost never exist apart from the others.
 - b. His account of scientific reasoning ignores the ways in which presuppositions necessarily, and rightly, influence the character of experiments, conclusions, and even observations (see Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*).
 - c. So he leaves no room for divine revelation.

XXIII. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), “Phenomenology”

- A. Aim: “to provide ‘fundamental’ descriptions, free from distortion by theoretical presuppositions and prejudices, of ‘things themselves,’ of ‘phenomena.’” (Cooper)
 1. “Phenomenon”: “anything with which the subject is confronted, without any suggestions that the phenomenon is, as Kant supposed, a mere appearance of a basic reality” (Thilly-Wood).
 2. For Husserl, the phenomenon is what is *given* to consciousness.
 - a. The mental act itself (thinking, doubting, imagining) that (as Descartes said) cannot itself be doubted.
 - b. The “objects” of the mental acts, since every thought is a thought *of* something (Brentano’s “intentionality”).
 3. Note here that, opposite to Kant, Husserl identifies the phenomenon with the thing-in-itself. It is that with which we are most directly confronted, therefore the unquestionably real.
 4. Phenomena are not psychological ideas (like the “ideas” of Berkeley or the “impressions” of Hume), but “rather the ideal meanings and universal relations with which the ego is confronted in its experience” (Thilly-Wood).
- B. Method
 1. To understand the phenomena and focus on them in their purity, it is necessary to “bracket” or “abstain” [the *epoche*, the cessation]

from suppositions about the relations of the phenomena to a world outside them.

2. So phenomenology resists any discussions of whether phenomena represent or reflect a reality outside themselves (the “transcendent”).
 3. So we must get beyond the “natural attitude” toward the contents of the mind (which leads to contradictions and other problems), to the “philosophical attitude.”
 - a. The natural attitude includes that of the natural sciences.
 - b. So phenomenology cannot be reduced to them.
 4. In philosophical attitude, we can discern the “essences” of the phenomena.
 5. This approach yields objective knowledge.
- C. Comment
1. Rather obscure.
 2. Like Kant, an attempt to find absolute objectivity in “phenomena” (rationalism), while maintaining an absolute ignorance of what may lie behind them (irrationalism). Unlike Kant, the phenomenologist identifies the phenomenon as ultimate reality. But by what right?

XXIV. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

A. Background

1. Often called a phenomenologist, following Husserl, with whom he studied. He succeeded Husserl at Freiburg in 1928.
2. Also called “existentialist,” as Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, et al.
3. Great influence on Rudolf Bultmann, his colleague for some years at Marburg.
4. Joined Nazi party in 1933 when he became rector of Freiburg University. He stepped down as rector the following year, but may have collaborated with the Nazis until the end of the war.

B. *Being and Time*

1. Vs.
 - a. Subject/object distinction as fundamental (the self as a mind trying to represent objects in a world outside itself).
 - b. The idea that our everyday beliefs require a philosophical foundation (foundationalism).
2. Phenomenology of pre-theoretical existence.
 - a. (Note parallel with Dooyeweerd’s sharp distinction between pre-theoretical and theoretical thought.)
 - b. Human existence is “being there” (*Dasein*), being in the world. It is unintelligible apart from its environment.
 - c. Objects are not brute things somehow put to use; the use is part of their very nature. (A hammer is “in order to” pound nails, etc.)
 - d. The world is constituted by language, which embodies a communal pre-understanding of being.

- e. So no uninterpreted (brute) facts.
 - f. No need for philosophical account until there is a breakdown of human life, when we see ourselves as mere spectators, things as brute objects.
3. Human existence (*existenz*)
- a. Essentially characterized by finitude, limits, especially temporal (Being and *Time*).
 - b. The ultimate limit is death, absolute nothingness. Human life is being-toward-death. (Sartre: human life incorporates nonbeing.)
 - i. So anxiety characterizes human life.
 - ii. We risk death in everything we do; but we must risk.
 - iii. In risk, we achieve transcendence (secularization of Kierkegaard)
 - (A) Transcendence of the world: not subject over object, but direct participation.
 - (B) Transcendence in relationships with others: *rapport*. (Direct involvement, not just communication.)
 - (C) Transcendence over time: beyond present, momentary existence by risking death (care for the future).
 - iv. Sartre: Man has no nature, because there is no God to design him.
 - (A) So his existence (concrete life) precedes his essence ("existentialism").
 - (B) So we are radically free: free to be anything.
 - (C) But we often act as if we were defined by the world ("bad faith").
 - (D) We should rather live *authentically*, affirming and displaying our freedom, our nonbeing.
 - (E) JF: why?
 - 1. Rationalism: we must live authentically.
 - 2. Irrationalism: no meaning in the world.
- C. The Later Heidegger
- 1. *Dasein* and the world are manifestations of something greater: being itself.
 - 2. Don't try to master the world; let it master you. Let it be.
 - 3. Influence on theology:
 - a. a model of revelation
 - b. a "new hermeneutic" (Ebeling, Fuchs, Robinson)
 - (i) *All* is interpretation, being speaking through me.
 - (ii) "We don't interpret the Word; the Word interprets us."
- D. Comments
- 1. Attempt to see subject and object as inseparable.
 - a. JF: these aren't inseparable, but knowledge of them is.
 - b. Good to point out that all facts are interpreted.

- c. No place for God, however, in the phenomenology. But he is our chief environment, the one who conditions everything including ourselves.
- 2. Pre-theoretical/theoretical distinction
 - a. True that ordinary life and beliefs generally do not require philosophical foundations (cf. Plantinga).
 - b. JF: this distinction not sharp, however; a continuum.
 - c. Abstract consideration of the subject over against the object does not in itself falsify our understanding of reality.
- 3. How is transcendence of death possible, if there is no God and death brings absolute nothingness? Is a little, very temporary “transcendence” worth the trouble?
- 4. Rationalism/irrationalism: affirming only chaos, but presuming to lay down norms.
- 5. Passivity of later Heidegger:
 - a. How do we distinguish truth from error?
 - b. How can we reach conclusions, without intensive efforts to understand? But then how are we to be passive, to “let being be?”

XXV. Karl Barth (1886-1968)

- A. Importance: Probably the most influential, and certainly one of the most brilliant, theologians of the twentieth century.
- B. Background
 - 1. Studied with Hermann and others. Part of the Ritschlian and Christian Socialist movements.
 - 2. Never earned a doctorate!
 - 3. During World War I, found the Ritschlian theology to be of no pastoral value. Turned to the Scriptures and the reformers.
 - 4. Influenced then also by Kierkegaard, the Blumhardts, M. Kahler, St. Anselm.
- C. Direction
 - 1. Critique of “neo-Protestantism” (Schleiermacher -Ritschl-Hermann)
 - a) Subjectivistic, psychologistic.
 - b) Confuses God's voice with man's.
 - c) Reduces theology to anthropology.
 - d) Treats sin lightly.
 - e) Identifies Christianity with culture.
 - f) He treats Schleiermacher, however, with great respect and admiration. Gives short shrift to Ritschl.
 - 2. Appreciative of orthodoxy (“The conservative drift”)
 - a) Read Kuyper, Bavinck, Berkouwer, quotes with approval at points.
 - b) Says that if one must choose between the 17th century doctrine of inspiration and the 19th century neo-Protestant subjectivism,

the former would be preferable. He is, of course, critical of the former as well as the latter.

- c) Makes use of nearly all the traditional doctrines, terms, distinctions of 17th century orthodoxy. His *Church Dogmatics* is a comprehensive work with a highly conservative “sound.”
 - d) Thus, his thought has been called “neo-orthodox,” both by his friends, and his foes. Many evangelicals have seen him as essentially evangelical, with a few inconsistent deviations as on the inerrancy of Scripture.
3. Many, however, have held that Barth is far from orthodox, and in fact a very dangerous thinker, from an orthodox standpoint.
- a) The early Berkouwer, other Dutch thinkers in the '30's, '40's. Berkouwer later became more sympathetic to Barth.
 - b) Van Til in two major books, many articles.
 - c) R. R. Niebuhr, Langdon Gilkey, K. Bockmuhl, Alan Richardson, Paul Tillich.
 - d) It is this latter group, especially Van Til, which in my judgment has understood Barth most profoundly, though some difficulties of interpretation remain. Van Til's analysis seems to be vindicated more and more as Barth's place in the history of liberal theology becomes more and more plain. Barth himself makes plain his position: He thinks it “paganism” to accept “direct revelation in history;” and “direct revelation” he take to be the hallmark of traditional orthodoxy, both Catholic and Protestant.

D. Fundamental Structure of Barth's Thought

1. Start with God, revelation, rather than human feeling or experience.
2. Recognize the freedom of God, his wholly-otherness from us, his transcendence over all rational categories.
3. But note also his love, his wholly-revealedness, his radical immanence in his revelation. He is what he reveals himself to be -- wholly other.
4. Since he is what he reveals himself to be, revelation shows us what reality is like at the most profound level. Thus Barth translates the revealed material into a kind of ontology.
5. *Historie/Geschichte* (cf. Lessing): Barth and other theologians have taken two German words translated *history* and have given them technical uses for their own theological purposes.
 - a. *Historie*
 - i. Events that occur in calendar time.
 - ii. Open to the analysis of secular historians, scientists.
 - iii. Events apart from their significance, especially for faith.
 - b. *Geschichte*
 - i. The *significant* events, especially significant for faith.
 - ii. Understood by faith, not critical history or science.
 - iii. Events that illumine history and thus stand apart from it.

- iv. Importance equally applicable to all times and places, so in one sense beyond calendar time.
 - v. The moment in which God is present, arousing faith.
 - vi. The event of salvation = the person of God in Christ.
 - vii. Events that make a demand on me, call for commitment.
 - viii. Immune from historical or scientific attack.
- c. Equations
- i. Since Christ is not something other than his work, the event of redemption, he *is* *Geschichte*.
 - ii. *Geschichte* is also *revelation*, which is not different from salvation.
 - iii. The various events of salvation: incarnation, atonement, resurrection, second coming, are all *Geschichte*.
 - iv. Creation and covenant are correlative, so they are also *Geschichte*.
 - v. Our real being is in Christ; so we are also *Geschichte*.
 - vi. In *Geschichte*, God and man are one, and salvation takes place as an event within God's *geschichtlich* being. (Sin as the "nothingness" (*Nichtige*) within God, which he overcomes by his grace.)
6. Comments
- a. God is not wholly-hidden from us, but revealed in his creation.
 - b. Nor is he wholly revealed; even in Christ we don't know God exhaustively.
 - c. Definitions of *Historie* and *Geschichte* arbitrary.
 - i. Assumes contrary to Scripture that the events significant for faith cannot occur in calendar time.
 - ii. In fact, no event is accessible to "secular historians," if secular means unbelieving.
 - iii. But the events Scripture narrates really took place, so they are a legitimate field of historical interest.
 - iv. To equate all biblical truths with *Geschichte* has pantheistic overtones.
 - v. The equations (contrary to Barth's intention) reduce the gospel story to eternal truths.
 - d. No biblical reason to identify the being of God, or that of Christ, with any "event."
 - e. The *Historie/Geschichte* scheme reflects the phenomenal/noumenal scheme of Kant, and hence the rationalist/irrationalist dialectic. See below.
 - f. Barth's Gospel: "you are already in Christ; so act like it."
 - i. Appropriate, directed to people who have believed, but Barth wants to say this to unbelievers. He tells us not to "take unbelief seriously."
 - ii. Not the biblical message.

E. God: Barth himself begins his dogmatics with the *Doctrine of the Word of God*, moving to the *Doctrine of God* in the second volume. There are good reasons for this order, but I find it pedagogically more helpful to reverse it. Barth's distinctive view of the "Word" arises out of his distinctive doctrine of God.

1. Wholly Other, Hidden, Free (transcendence)

- a) These terms are roughly equivalent for Barth. The freedom of God is such that he escapes all conceptualizations or identifications. Thus he is "other," "hidden," (cf. Kierkegaard's *incognito*).
- b) God's being is his freedom. Freedom is fundamental to his nature.
- c) Barth's earliest writings seek to maintain what Kierkegaard called "the infinite qualitative distinction between time and eternity."
- d) God is not the highest in any series, but the one by whom all members of all series are measured.
- e) God does not even need his own being; he is free to become something other than himself, to turn into his opposite, to become finite and temporal. Hence:

2. Wholly Revealed, Gracious, Loving (immanence)

- a) Barth defines God as the one who "loves in freedom." His freedom is his hiddenness (above). His love is his revelation, which is equivalent to salvation, as we shall see.
- b) The earlier writings of Barth emphasize the hiddenness, the later writings God's immanence -- nearness, commitment, identification.
- c) God is what he is in his revelation.
- d) Thus he is wholly revealed in Christ.
 - (1) Vs. the thought of "God-in-himself" apart from Christ.
 - (2) Vs. any "secret decree"
 - (3) God can be, do only what Christ is, does.
- e) Therefore God is the event of his revelation to us.
- f) Since Christ became incarnate, and since God "is" what he is in Christ, God is by nature incarnate. By nature, God exists with and for man. He has a "substitutionary nature."
- g) Thus God is not changeless, impassable. By nature, he experiences suffering, change, duration, estrangement, peril, grace, justification.
- h) Since Christ came to save, and God is his revelation in Christ, then God is by nature saving grace and love. Grace, therefore, will always prevail over sin and wrath. (Berkouwer speaks of the "Triumph of Grace" as a major theme in Barth.)
 - (1) Wrath is a form of grace.
 - (2) Judgment and curse fall only upon God himself in Christ, being overwhelmed there by grace. Same for reprobation and election.

3. How do we reconcile God's hiddenness with his revelation?
 - a) God's freedom is his freedom to be other than himself and thus to become incarnate, temporal.
 - (1) His unchangability is the continuity of his freedom.
 - (2) His eternity is his freedom for us in Christ.
 - (3) Thus Barth defines freedom in terms of commitment and *vice-versa*. But does this move not simply confuse the concepts at issue? Apparently there are limits on God's freedom and his revelation; but they are not defined. Yet Barth treats both principles as if they were absolutes, with no limitations. -- JF
 - b) Indirectness of God's identity with his revelation
 - (1) Any historical event may be revelatory, but it may not be simply equated with revelation. At best it "participates in" revelation.
 - (2) In revelation, God always remains hidden; he takes a form which is inadequate to reveal him, so that if both reveals and conceals. Thus he remains free in his revelation.
 - (3) JF: But don't these qualifications compromise the very strong statements Barth makes about the identity of God with his revelation (2, above) 7
 - (a) Barth might reply that the "identity" in question is only between God and Christ, not between God and any medium of revelation. But if this is the case, then how can God be said to be identical with his revelation to us? We are not Christ.
 - (b) Or is God identical to his revelation to us as we participate in Christ? Then revelation becomes a transaction entirely within the divine being. Pantheism looms.
4. Therefore, God's revelation, and hence his being, are an event.
 - a) Since God is wholly hidden, his revelation cannot be "preserved" or "possessed" or "manipulated" It can never be "static."
 - (1) Thus it exists only from time to time (cf. Kierkegaard's "moment").
 - (2) We never have it at our disposal; we have it only in recollection, expectation.
 - b) Since God is wholly revealed (identical to his revelation), his being is the event of revelation (salvation).
 - (1) Therefore Barth avoids distinctions between the person and the work of Christ, or between the essence and the works of God. He does occasionally, however, commend these distinctions for guarding the "freedom" of God. (But is any such distinction compatible with the identity of God with his deeds?) (Is "indirectness" an answer or an evasion?)

- (2) The concepts here are exceedingly difficult. Is God a process rather than a person? Does he exist only “from time to time?” Or (since Barth virtually equates revelation with reality) is God the whole of reality (pantheism)? Or is he an event only “indirectly?” And what would that mean?

5. Participation

- a) Since God is his revelation in Christ, and Christ is incarnate, God himself has a human nature.
- b) Christ did not take upon himself an already existent human nature, a human nature that could be understood “apart from” him. Rather, human nature exists through Christ, in him. This has always been the case.
- c) In Christ, there is an “indirect identity” between God and man. “Indirect” indicates that God is somehow free from this identity, but most of Barth's rhetoric affirms this identity.
- d) Man participates in revelation by faith (see F, below).
- e) Thus God affirms the world in affirming himself -- its culture, Goethe, Mozart, etc. In his later writings, Barth emphasizes this motif, whereas in his earlier writings he stresses God's transcendence above culture and his radical questioning of it. Thus is perhaps an important step in the later development of “secular theology.”

6. Knowing God

- a) Only God knows God (the transcendence pole).
 - (1) We cannot “possess” God or have him “at our disposal.”
 - (2) Thus we can know him only in Christ, by faith.
 - (3) But faith is a form of “participation” (above). Barth doesn't quite say this, but he gives the distinct impression that when we know God by faith, it is really God knowing God. Thus the immanence pole enters too. And pantheism looms.
- b) Vs. “analogy of being.”
 - (1) In traditional Roman Catholic theology, God is known by an “analogy of being.” Creation resembles God in certain ways, and from those resemblances, man can discover much about God's existence and nature. Barth opposes this concept.
 - (2) Barth insists that we cannot know God except by revelation and through faith (so he speaks of “the analogy of faith”).
 - (3) The analogy of being, he says, divides creation and redemption, since it seeks to know God as creator through “natural” means, redemption through revelation. Such division is illegitimate (anti-abstractionism). iv The analogy of being also seeks to know God apart from his saving acts (cf. 4, above).

7. Comments

- a) Barth's thought is a conspicuous example of the transcendence/immanence dialectic described earlier - and of the problems created by this dialectic.
- b) Barth uses the transcendence/immanence dialectic to play a kind of shell game with his readers:
 - (1) He uses his doctrine of transcendence to attack any view of immanence he doesn't like: old liberal subjectivism, the Roman Catholic analogy of being, the orthodox Protestant view of Scripture. But he does not notice that the same argument could be used against his own view of immanence: if God is wholly free, then must he not be free also from his revelation in Christ?
 - (2) Similarly, he uses his immanence view to attack views of transcendence he doesn't like: mysticism, the older Protestant views of biblical inspiration and the decrees of God ("hidden, sacred" decrees). But couldn't the same argument be used against his own view of transcendence? How can God be wholly free if he is necessarily gracious in Christ, if he is identical to his revelation?
 - (3) And why couldn't let's say, an orthodox Protestant, use Barth's arguments to establish his own positions:
 - (a) Since God is "wholly hidden," no one knows what his decrees are.
 - (b) Since God is what he has revealed himself to be in Christ, then Scripture is infallible.
 - (4) Since these arguments can be used, then, in any number of inconsistent ways, they are evidently incoherent and/or inconsistent with one another. "Indirectness" (above, 3b) is no help, for it is unclear also. It merely puts a vague qualifier on the "wholly revealed" side which Barth can use as he wishes. If taken seriously, it destroys the "wholly revealed" concept entirely; if not, it simply indicates that Barth lacks the courage of his dialectical convictions.
- c) Is God "wholly other?"
 - (1) He is in every aspect of his being different from his creatures, for he is their creator and sustainer, the one upon whom they depend, without being dependent on them.
 - (2) Therefore he is incomprehensible. We cannot know him exhaustively, or know him as he knows himself (see my *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*).
 - (3) He is not, however, beyond all conceptual thought so that human language inevitably misleads when applied to him. He has spoken to us in Scripture. Beyond that, he has created, structured and sustained human language as a vehicle for divine-human communication. To say otherwise is to fly in the face of the whole biblical teaching concerning the

word of God. Scripture never regards the transcendence of God as threatening the certain truth of his communication. Quite the contrary: it is because God is transcendent that we dare not trust our own wisdom, that we must accept God's word as supreme authority.

- (4) Nor does God have a “nominalistic” freedom to change into his opposite, to renounce his own deity. He does not change, though all else does. Jesus did not renounce his divine attributes in the incarnation.
- d) Is God “wholly revealed?”
- (1) He is what he reveals himself to be; he promises that his words will never lead us astray.
 - (2) Still, he does keep secrets (Deut. 29:29). Some things are secret and some things are revealed. There is not in Scripture a dialectic in which everything is hidden and everything is revealed.
 - (3) Of course, since everything is related to everything else, even the revealed knowledge has implications, ramifications which are beyond our knowledge. But we do not need to know all of those ramifications to know God truly.
 - (4) Thus, there is a “God-in-himself” beyond his revelation to us (though not beyond Christ himself). But Scripture assures us that what we don't know of God is no threat.
 - (5) Therefore there is no necessity for saying that God is the event of his revelation.
 - (a) Such talk is not warranted by the biblical concept of immanence. God's acts, of course, are divine acts and therefore divine. In the same sort of way, his speech is divine (John 1:1, etc.). But his acts in history do not exhaust his being. He is more than what he does for us. Else his existence would be dependent upon us: he would exist only in his dealings with us. In a sense, that is where Barth ends up.
 - (b) Such talk compromises the personal nature of God. A person is more than an “act” or “event.” Barth, of course intends no reductionism. He does not want to reduce the person of God to a “mere event,” but rather wants to exalt the event so that we identify it as God's person. But his proposal is still a confusing linguistic contortion, and there is no theological necessity for it.
 - (6) Barth's doctrine of participation is unscriptural and has unavoidable pantheistic implications.
 - (a) Human nature can be understood “apart from” Christ in some senses. (The anti-abstractionist jargon, again, introduces confusion). Scripture does not teach that man is created “in Christ.” Of course it is true to say that man

is not understood truly apart from the biblical revelation of which Christ is center.

- (b) To say that God and man are only “indirectly” identical in Christ is no help. It just introduces more confusion.
- (c) Pantheism also looms in the doctrine of Barth that we know God by participating in him by faith.
- e) Much of the persuasive power of Barth's formulations is due to his anti-abstractionist rhetoric, rhetoric which pervades his theology more than any other (except possibly Berkouwer's). Barth wants to see everything “in relation to” Christ, revelation, faith, etc.
 - (1) “Wholly other:” God, revelation are absolutely concrete (he calls revelation a concretissimum) and thus not describable in language, which is always somehow abstract.
 - (2) “Wholly revealed:” God may never be understood “in abstraction from” his revelation in Christ.
 - (3) We can see, then, that the anti-abstractionist rhetoric, vague as always, can be used to reinforce two contradictory ideas.

F. Revelation

Of necessity, we have already said a great deal about revelation since, in Barth's view, God cannot be understood “apart from” his revelation. We should, however, note the specific formulations of this doctrine in the *Church Dogmatics*.

1. Revelation and its Forms

- a) Revelation is never identical with any form in which it is found: Scripture and history are forms of revelation, but are not in themselves revelation (transcendence principle).
- b) Therefore every form of revelation conceals as well as reveals. It presents revelation in a “puzzling” form, an inappropriate form, in which is not God's word.
- c) Else, we would be able to “possess” or “control” the word of God, to “have it at our disposal.” God would not be “free” from it.
- d) Still, these inadequate forms do convey God's word.
- e) Barth, therefore, teaches a kind of identity between the word and its forms; but insists (vaguely!) that this identity is “indirect” rather than “direct.”

2. Revelation and Response

- a) Barth, following Schleiermacher (!) and Kierkegaard, defines revelation to include the hearer's response to faith. (We noted earlier that Scripture sometimes uses “revelation” in this way, but not always.) There is no revelation until it has been appropriated in faith.
- b) Hence another reason, in addition to the transcendence principle, why there can be no objective revelation in history or scripture. Nothing is revelation simply in itself. It becomes revelation when God uses it to awaken faith.

3. Revelation and Propositions
 - a) Since revelation can never be identical with any piece of language (above, #1), and since any piece of language can be received in unbelief (above, #2), revelation cannot be the conveyance of information (propositions) through language.
 - b) Barth tends to regard revelation, and the word, as being a kind of power that saves and creates faith.
 - c) He does, however, acknowledge that reflection upon revelation yields information and should be rationally understood. Reason, of course, must be governed by faith (Anselm).
4. Revelation and Time
 - a) Since Barth identifies the moment of revelation with the awakening of faith, he regards, revelation as being essentially in the present, not the past or future.
 - b) Since revelation reflects God's transcendence, however, it cannot be "possessed" or "controlled." Thus it cannot be preserved, written down, etc.
 - c) Thus, revelation in the present is a fleeting thing: it comes and goes; there is no permanence to it.
 - d) Thus in a sense it does not exist, not even in the present. What we have in the present, says Barth, is "recollection and expectation"—memory of a past revelation, hope of a future one.
5. The Three Modes of Revelation
 - a) Christ
 - (1) Fundamentally, revelation is nothing less than Jesus Christ himself, God himself.
 - (2) Arguments
 - (a) Biblical statements about the identity of God with his word (cf. my *Doctrine of the Word of God*).
 - (b) Vs. "Abstraction" between revelation and Christ.
 - (c) God is wholly revealed and therefore identical with his revelation (E, 2-5, 7). Indirectly, anyway.
 - b) Scripture
 - (1) Not "directly identical" to the word of God. (see #1, above).
 - (a) Vs. traditional doctrine of verbal inspiration:
 - (i) Allows us to "possess," "control" the word
 - (ii) Removes any possibility of offense
 - (iii) Seeking security apart from faith
 - (iv) Contrary, then, to justification by faith: seeks fellowship with God apart from Christ.
 - (b) Biblical writers point away from themselves to Christ; therefore they claim no extraordinary knowledge or inerrancy.
 - (c) No "mechanical" inspiration.
 - (2) Scripture is witness, the first and primary witness to Christ. We trust it because of its content.

- (3) Scripture is instrument - God's means of bringing about new revelation (see 2, above) in the present.
 - (a) When God chooses, we hear in Scripture the word of God.
 - (b) When that happens, Scripture “becomes” the word of God. (In orthodoxy, Scripture “is” the Word; in older liberalism, Scripture “contains” the Word. In Barth and other neo-orthodox thinkers, “becomes” is the watchword.) (cf. 4, above)
 - (c) We may, however, even say that Scripture “is” the word of God, if by that we mean to express faith that this event will continue to take place, that God continues to use a human word to speak his own word. Herein Barth finds the truth in the orthodox doctrine of verbal inspiration, which he otherwise rejects (i, above).
- (4) Inspiration
 - (a) God does control the writing of Scripture, though he does not preserve that writing from error.
 - (b) Inspiration means that in Scripture God has “taken into service” a fallible human word.
- (5) Infallibility
 - (a) The authors of Scripture can err and have erred, not only in “secular” matters, but in religious matters as well.
 - (b) Do not try to distinguish in Scripture between form and content, spirit and letter, divine and human. All of Scripture is fallible, and all is God's witness and instrument.
 - (c) God can reveal himself even through false propositions.
 - (d) To seek infallible revelation is “self-will and disobedience.” It seeks a human basis of security and thus renounces justification by faith.
 - (e) Historical criticism of Scripture is free, although its conclusions cannot affect the ability of Scripture to convey the word of God.
 - (f) Since Scripture is witness and instrument, everything it says ought to be heard with respect.
- c) Preaching
 - (1) Cf. the Second Helvetic Confession: “The Preaching of the word of God is the word of God.”
 - (2) Preaching, too, is not identical with revelation except in those moments when God chooses to use it as a vehicle of his word.
 - (3) Thus, preaching, like Scripture, is witness and instrument of revelation.
 - (4) It is, however, subordinate to Scripture as Scripture is subordinate to Christ.

6. The Trinity

- a) Remarkably, Barth discusses the trinity under the *Doctrine of the Word of God*. He derives the doctrine from the concept of revelation: the three persons are the Revealer, the Revelation (Christ as word), and the Revealedness (the Holy Spirit as identical with the “moment” when faith is aroused).
- b) The persons are seen as “modes of subsistence” rather than as “centers of self-consciousness.” He denies that he is a modalist, but his definition of the persons in terms of revelation raises questions.
- c) The basic thrust: to avoid conceiving of God the Father as “hidden” while only the Son and Spirit are “free for man.” All three are identical with the saving revelation in Christ, and, of course, all are also “hidden.”
- d) Evaluation of this, then, hinges on the acceptability of the “wholly other/wholly revealed” concepts which I discussed earlier.

7. Comments

- a) Are the forms of revelation adequate?
 - (1) They are not adequate to reveal God exhaustively.
 - (2) They are adequate to reveal God truly, since he has appointed them to do so.
- b) Revelation and response: See my “analytical model” on the subject/object dialectic.
- c) Revelation and propositions: Barth's position here may be a necessary implicate of his own theology, but it is quite unscriptural. James Barr, Langdon Gilkey, Wolfhart Pannenberg and others have made nonsense out of the claim that God in Scripture never reveals information. Of course he does!
- d) Revelation as present event:
 - (1) If we accept Barth's general equation between revelation and illumination, then much of what he says is right. Illumination does occur in the present, “from time to time.” Still, I would want to insist that even illumination can be more constant than Barth's view warrants. It is something every believer has, not merely something he recollects and expects.
 - (2) Of those other forms of revelation mentioned in Scripture (natural revelation, prophecy, written revelation), Barth's polemics against “preserving” or “possessing” God's word are simply unbiblical. Revelation in Scripture is covenantal. It is recorded in a public document to be preserved, possessed by God's people, passed down to future generations.
 - (3) If revelation really is only held in “recollection and expectation,” then it never exists.
- e) Revelation as identical with Christ: see F, 7, d.
- f) “Possessing, controlling, manipulating” God's word.

- (1) Much of Barth's argument, here and elsewhere, depends on a kind of instinctive Christian aversion to such notions.
 - (2) It is certainly true that we are not ultimately in control of God's word, any more than we are ultimately in control of anything else. Same for "possessing."
 - (3) It is also true that many religious people act as if they are the ultimate controllers, possessors of the word. They treat it without humility, without awe, without awareness of the limitations of their reasoning powers. That attitude is often a temptation of the orthodox, and reading Barth can help make you sensitive to that temptation.
 - (4) However, it is by no means clear that adherence to the orthodox view of Scripture necessitates such attitudes.
 - (a) Belief that in Scripture one is dealing with the very word of God ought to, and often does, increase humility and awe.
 - (b) It is not often the liberals and neo-orthodox (Barthians!) who treat the word with a high-handed disregard of its relation to God? That kind of spiritual sin can hardly be averted by a Barthian (or other) theology of the word.
 - (5) Having said all this, however, we must point out that in one sense we do "possess" the word, and we have the right to exercise some "control," perform some manipulations upon it. Although "the earth is the Lord's," God has given possessions to his people - both material and spiritual. We are to treat these possessions as faithful stewards. The word of God, written down, is such a possession (Deut. 29:29 in context). It is to be preserved, read, proclaimed, translated, analyzed, to the edification of God's people. If Barth calls such behavior sin (and he does) he has no biblical basis for doing so.
- g) Does the traditional doctrine of inspiration violate justification by faith? Is it a means of seeking security outside of Christ?
- (1) Orthodoxy does not hold that salvation comes through holding a certain view of Scripture. It comes through Christ alone.
 - (2) Some people may be seeking such security through their orthodox beliefs. That is to be deplored. The same for someone who seeks security through adherence to Barthian theology (which, in view of Barthianism's universalist implications, is not at all unthinkable).
 - (3) In one sense, it is Barth's doctrine which violates justification by faith. Justification by faith is justification by a divine promise. (Romans 4). In Barth's thought, no such promise is possible

- h) Do the biblical writers point away from themselves to Christ? Yes, but they also claim inerrancy! "Pointing to Christ" never means that we ignore ourselves or the world. Barth knows that perfectly well.
- i) Scripture is "witness and instrument" but not only that! See *Doctrine of the Word* for a more biblical use of the term "witness." God in Deuteronomy witnesses in Scripture against Israel. Scripture is his witness, not theirs.
- j) Barth's concept of inspiration does no justice to the biblical accounts of prophetic and biblical inspiration (e.g. Jer. 1, Deut. 18). His account of II Tim. 3:16 in terms of "recollection and expectation" is ludicrous.

G. History

1. Historie and Geschichte: see earlier.
2. Myth and Saga
 - a) Myth: story with a moral which didn't really happen.
 - b) Saga: story beyond the reach of historical science - unverifiable; but may have happened. Penetrates to truth at a deep level.
 - c) Barth says there is no myth in the Bible, but some parts like the early chapters of Genesis are saga.
3. Direct Revelation in History
 - a) See E, F for direct/indirect distinction.
 - b) In Barth's early commentary on Romans, he said that revelation never enters history, but touches it as a tangent touches a circle. Later he spoke more positively, working out the implications of his immanence principle.
 - c) Still, he always insisted that "Revelation is not a predicate or quality of history" and that "Though revelation is historical, history is not revelational." Revelation in history is indirect, ambiguous, revealing in hiddenness, etc.
 - d) In terms of the distinction under #1, revelatory events are *Geschichte*. Are they also *Historie*? That is a difficult question:
4. The History of Redemption
 - a) Creation: not in *Historie*, for that would "separate" creation from redemption in Christ. (cf. H below)
 - b) Fall
 - (1) No *historisch* Adam; else Adam would have an "independent significance" over against Christ.
 - (2) Christ is the first Adam. Creation, fall, redemption are all in him.
 - c) Virgin Birth
 - (1) Barth argues against Bultmann that this is *historisch*. Here he argues as an evangelical might against a position which takes historical-critical methodology too seriously.

- (2) The Virgin Birth, however, is not a “direct revelation.” It is not identical to the incarnation of the Son of God; for that is eternal.
 - (3) The Virgin Birth, then, is important as a sign of that *geschichtlich* reality which is not *historisch*
 - (4) Barth rebukes Brunner (who denies the *historisch* character of the Virgin Birth) for his interest in “biology.” This, says Barth, is not relevant to its redemptive significance.
- d) The Historical Jesus
- (1) His life is datable, *historisch*.
 - (2) But his history is only indirectly revelatory; ambiguous.
 - (3) Sinless? Not as a quality or characteristic in history.
 - (a) He is sinless because he is the standard of sinlessness; but of necessity such a standard cannot be identified in history.
 - (b) Since his person and work are identical, his sinlessness is identical with his substitutionary atonement.
 - (c) By virtue of his atoning love, God himself is involved in sin.
 - (4) Teachings: may compare unfavorably with those of other teachers.
- e) The Resurrection
- (1) As with the Virgin Birth, Barth defends against Bultmann the *historisch* character of the Resurrection. However:
 - (2) The empty tomb may be legendary, and in any case would only be a sign of the Resurrection.
 - (3) The primary reality of the Resurrection is *geschichtlich*.
 - (a) The physical, *historisch* happening is only a pointer.
 - (b) It is only an aspect of the event
 - (c) The full event is known only to faith, not “directly” - so *geschichte*.
 - (d) It happened, but its reality is beyond the competence of a scientific historian.
 - (4) As *geschichtlich*, the Resurrection is real. It is a real meeting of Christ with the disciples, serving as foundation for the church. (Barth says he wants no “parthenogenesis of the faith;” Christianity rests on a solid foundation.)
 - (5) But because it is a real meeting, it is beyond the relativities of time. It is God's pure presence, available to us today.
 - (6) To the church, it is remembrance, expectation (they live between resurrection and return).
 - (7) Jesus' death and resurrection are the same in their significance: that God's grace exceeds his wrath.
- f) Eschatology
- (1) Not in calendar time.
 - (2) Jesus' return: at Easter, Pentecost.

- (3) "The end is near:" All life is under crisis, threat of divine judgment. So eschatology is a metaphor for the ultimate dimension in present life.
- (4) Birth and death are "natural limits" - *contra* traditional views of immortality. We don't know how we'll share the kingdom of God, but we will.

5. Comments

- a) Why is it that "significant" events must somehow be removed from calendar time?
 - (1) It is true that "significant" events gain a certain transcendence over time: we remember them better, they continue to influence future ages, etc. The most significant events, those upon which we base our values, seem on that account to be as real today as when they occurred.
 - (2) Hume and others have argued that one cannot derive value from fact, moral law from mere states of affairs. E.g., "Stealing lands you in prison" does not imply "stealing is wrong." (Hume, however, is not thinking in terms of a Christian view of nature and history, in which the facts of this world are value-laden.) On Hume's sort of basis, one can see why any source of value must be seen as somehow supra-historical. Even on a Christian view, these events are certainly not "mere" facts, as they would be regarded by some secularists.
 - (3) But neither of these considerations dictate anything other than the traditional view: that these events are historical (*historisch*), but have a significance which goes beyond other happenings.
 - (4) Is this all Barth is saying? Sometimes I wonder. But clearly:
 - (a) He denies the *historisch* character of creation and fall, arguing that a *historisch* background would militate against the *geschichtlich* significance of these doctrines.
 - (b) The identification of *Geschichte* with the very being of God puts it in a unique category (or is it not unique after all, because it encompasses all reality?)
 - (c) It just is not clear how Barth understands these events to transcend time, but evidently it was not the *historisch* occurrence (atonement, resurrection) that secured salvation for men. The *historisch* occurrences are only signs and pointers, indirectly revealing some kind of supra-temporal events which actually save (see H, below). That I would judge to be heresy.
- b) Barth defines the *historisch* as that area open to the scrutiny of critical historians working apart from faith. This concession of neutrality is deadly. According to Scripture, nothing may be done or studied apart from faith (Romans 14:23). Barth hereby

concedes to neutral historians the whole expanse of calendar time. (But is this consistent with his description of Saga, the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection, which happen in time, but are beyond the scrutiny of neutral history? Barth's view of the temporality of *historie* and of its access to science don't seem consistent with each other

- c) The equation of *Geschichte* with God or Christ: see E.
- d) On "direct revelation/indirect:" see F.
- e) On the "independence" of Adam from Christ, see H, I below.
- f) Are the *historisch* Virgin Birth, Resurrection, etc. to be construed as "direct revelation?"
 - (1) If we try to construe these events as "brute facts," lacking any significance or interpretation, then as such they are not the means of salvation. As such they reveal nothing. If that is Barth's point, so be it. But we should certainly add that of course these events are not "brute facts;" indeed, the whole concept of a brute fact is unintelligible.
 - (2) And it is true that these events reveal nothing ("reveal" here referring to saving illumination) apart from faith.
 - (3) However, even apart from faith, they make divine truth available to us so that we are responsible to it.
 - (4) And these events do not simultaneously reveal and conceal God.
 - (a) They conceal him to the mind that remains unregenerate.
 - (b) They reveal him to faith.
 - (c) They also reveal to faith something of the incomprehensible nature of God (Romans 11:36)
- g) Summary
 - (1) Ambiguous definitions of *Historie* and *Geschichte*, too many elements in each definition.
 - (2) Barth, like most modern secular thinkers, sees history as a realm of relativity, about which nothing can be known with certainty-. Therefore, religious certainty must be derived from something, somewhere, above history. Yet Barth is also sensitive to the Biblical teaching that revelation is in history. So he develops his awkward, unclear, contradictory makeshift.
 - (3) The wholly other/revealed dialectic demand that God in history be totally hidden, unidentifiable, and that true revelation amount to a virtual identification between God and man. This perspective, correlative to the last, also influences Barth's view of history.

XXVI. Emil Brunner (1889-1966)

A. Background

1. Disciple of Barth. Though Barth differed with him strongly on natural theology and other matters, Brunner said toward the end of his life that he had always been a "Barthian."
2. His distinctive brand of personalism owes much to F. Ebner. Cf. also John Oman, Martin Buber, various existentialists.
3. Brunner was initially more influential than Barth in the English speaking world
 - a) He studied in England, Union Seminary of New York.
 - b) Taught at Princeton Seminary, Union - N.Y.
4. Taught in Japan for a couple years in the mid-1950's.
5. Tends to be a somewhat more common-sensical thinker than Barth, less profound.

B. God

1. Absolute person, subject; so never object. (Transcendence)
 - a) Strictly speaking, God cannot be thought. What man thinks, he masters.
 - b) Utterly free; his righteousness subordinate to his freedom.
 - c) Wholly other
 - d) Not the god of the philosophers.
2. But his essence is revelation; he reveals himself by nature (Immanence).
 - a) So, paradoxically, we can know him.
 - b) Revelational view of the trinity - cf. Barth.
 - c) But revelation is a revelation of a mystery, so still transcendent.
3. His attributes: paradoxical, but complimentary.
 - a) Holiness/love, wrath/mercy
 - b) God is the source of law, but he stands over against it.

C. Revelation

1. A personal encounter with. God himself.
 - a) Personal relationships (I-thou) differ radically from impersonal (I-it).
 - (1) In an impersonal relationship, I can contemplate my object and thereby master it.
 - (2) In a personal relationship, I cannot contemplate or master the other. I can only speak to him, not speak about him.
 - (3) Afterward, I can think about the relationship. But the more I think (objectively) the less personal the relationship becomes.
 - b) Therefore, divine revelation never communicates information, only God himself.
 - c) Formulation of doctrinal propositions always involves a turning away from the original revelation The words can never capture the revelation adequately.
2. Always indirect, veiled. Cannot be seen clearly in this sinful world.
3. Revelation is God Himself (as Barth).

4. Always in the present, pro me, the event of salvation. Never apart from my response.
- D. Forms of Revelation
1. Nature
 - a) Famous controversy with Barth over Brunner's "Natural Theology." Barth's reply was called, simply, "*Nein!*" ("No")
 - b) Brunner holds that despite sin, fallen man has some ability to understand that revelation in nature and in the human heart.
 - c) Barth argues against my "point of contact" as limiting the freedom of God. God creates his own point of contact at the moment of revelation.
 2. History
 - a) Faith rests on objective events which took place 2000 years ago.
 - b) Thus Brunner affirms the importance of the historical Jesus, vs. historical relativism.
 - c) But we know these events only by the revelation of God in the present, by faith.
 - d) Thus, historical criticism is no barrier to faith. Brunner tends to be more skeptical than Barth about miracles, virgin birth, resurrection, etc. Questions may even be raised about Jesus' historical existence.
 - e) Thus revelation may not be identified with anything historical.
 3. Scripture
 - a) Witness to revelation
 - (1) Not itself revelation; points away from itself to Christ. "Crib."
 - (2) Normative witness because it is historically the primary source.
 - (3) Human word about a divine word.
 - b) Instrument of revelation in the present (cf. Barth on "witness, inst.")
 - (1) Brings God's word to me in the moment of faith.
 - (2) Then God "condescends to speak words" (JF: But does this diminish the personalism of the encounter?)
 - c) Strong polemic against the orthodox doctrine of verbal inspiration
 - (1) Idolatry - faith in a law, a book, rather than Christ.
 - (2) Admits this doctrine found in II Tim. 3:16 and in the O.T.,
 - (a) But finds this inconsistent with more antinomian strains in the N.T.
 - (b) And he points out that the N.T. use of the Old is sometimes allegorical, invalidating any concept of verbal inspiration.
 - (3) Pro-higher criticism, therefore.
 - (4) Scripture has no special wisdom on matters of science, history.
 - d) Polemic against "uniform" inspiration - that all parts of scripture are always and equally inspired.

- e) Polemic against orthodoxy in general (bitter tone): anti-scientific, motivated by fear, lacks sense of fellowship, spiritual power, missionary zeal.

E. Faith and Reason

1. Personal relationships are best evoked by paradoxical formulations, as opposed to a “system” of “objective” truths. The incarnation is the “absolute paradox” (cf. Kierkegaard).
2. Reason (thought which masters its object) is appropriate to our dealings with the world, inappropriate in matters of faith.
3. Paradox is also important because of sin, the “controversy” between the word of God and human thought.
4. Faith, therefore, lives in objective uncertainty (Kierkegaard).
 - a) This is compatible with subjective certitude.
 - b) We must decide; the choice is left to us.
5. Faith makes us contemporary with Christ, always changes us.
6. Faith carries its own evidence; indeed, all knowledge begins with non-demonstrable assumptions.
7. Involves action. Statements of faith are not truths, but formulas for action.

F. Doctrinal *Loc*

1. Creation: personal address/causality.
2. Man
 - a) God-relatedness is his essence, the image of God.
 - b) Responsible love.
 - c) Existence in the word.
3. Sin
 - a) Not human nature, nor mere actions.
 - b) Personal transaction with God.
 - c) No historic fall.
 - d) Responsibility is personal, not legal in character.
 - e) Sin rejects community, accepts loneliness.
4. Christ
 - a) Vs. supernatural events: virgin birth, empty tomb, ascension.
 - b) Questions about his historical existence.
 - c) Vs. orthodox doctrine of substitutionary atonement
 - d) Vs. physical resurrection
5. Eschatology
 - a) Vs. bodily resurrection
 - b) Realized eschatology: present decision, not future expectation, is the key to existence.
 - c) Annihilationism.
6. Church
 - a) Service essential, not organization, institution
 - b) A fellowship, bearing the proclamation of the gospel.
 - c) Pastoral epistles show a rigidification of the church.
 - d) Faith always in the church, vs. individualism.

7. Ethics
 - a) *Gebot/Gesetz* (commandment/law)
 - (1) Any one can understand the moral law, but the love commandment is understood only through faith.
 - (2) God takes the law seriously, but stands against it.
 - (3) The love commandment doesn't tell us what to do beforehand (cf. situation ethics).
 - (4) The love commandment sometimes requires violation of the law.
 - b) Emphasizes personalism here too: treat your neighbor as a person not an object.
 - c) Approves self-love, vs. Barth..
 - d) More anti-Communist than Barth.

G. Comments

1. Problems similar to these in Barth (X, above).
2. The idea that "personal relationship" somehow excludes propositional or intellectual knowledge is absurd. On the contrary, such knowledge enriches personal relationships, and it is crucial to those relationships which are distinctively human.
3. It simply is not true that understanding always involves mastery. If it were, Brunner's treatment would be indicated as much as any other.
4. How can a totally non-propositional revelation serve as a standard for propositional doctrine? Brunner's account of this is utterly inadequate.
5. Brunner has a hard time establishing his doctrine of Scripture from Scripture itself. Makes all sorts of admissions damaging to his case. If the orthodox view is validated by the O.T., by the pastoral epistles, and in some way by Jesus' - then where does Brunner's view come from?
6. If theology is limited to paradoxical formulations, how can we think reasonably about these?
7. Brunner's general rejection of the supernatural elements of the gospel leave him with no gospel to proclaim.

XXVII. Rudolf Bultmann (1884 -1976)

A. Background

1. Studied with Gunkel (form-criticism), Harnack, Hermann, Weiss.
2. Close to Barth in early years, but later moved in a more liberal direction. He always insisted that the word of God was something from beyond ourselves.
3. Close to Heidegger when they were colleagues at Marburg from 1922-28.

B. Form Criticism

1. Presupposes a generally critical view of Scripture: Scripture not necessarily reliable. In historical matters, it is generally presumed unreliable unless proved otherwise.

2. Form Criticism assumes, specifically, that the stories told, e.g. in the gospels, did not originate in the settings described. The early church had a great many "sayings" of Jesus and "stories" of Jesus. They arranged these sayings and stories into a framework which was largely their own invention.
3. The form critic seeks to reconstruct the actual settings in which the sayings and stories originated.
4. To this end, he seeks to classify the material into different categories: miracle story, prophecy, parable, etc.
5. This categorization enables us to distinguish earlier from later elements in the history of the tradition.
6. Some tradition - a very small amount - brings us close to the actual teachings of Jesus.
7. About Jesus himself, little is known.
 - a) Born, die, taught.
 - b) Miracles, virgin birth, resurrection legendary.
 - c) Proclaimed (erroneously) imminent apocalypse (cf. Schweitzer, J. Weiss B's teacher).

C. Demythologization

1. "Myth": describes the eternal in terms of the temporal, divine in terms of the human, etc.
2. Much of Scripture is myth in this sense.
 - a) Three-story universe (heaven, earth, underworld)
 - b) Supernatural, miraculous events
3. Modern man cannot believe in these myths, literally understood.
 - a) He believes in a closed system, governed entirely by scientific law; no possibility of supernatural interference.
 - b) He uses the radio and takes medicine.
4. We need not, however, include these myths in our preaching.
 - a) The purpose of myth is not to inculcate irrational belief in a supernatural realm, but to express a certain self-understanding.
 - b) That self-understanding can be expressed adequately (better in our time) without myth.
 - c) The gospel itself does not require belief in any world-view, whether first century or modern, In fact it rejects any attempt to find security through a world-view (see D, below).
 - d) The NT itself demythologizes its message,
 - (1) Paul: the end-time is present now.
 - (2) John: no interest in literal eschatology.
5. Thus we ought to preach Christ without myth.
 - a) The point is not to reconstruct or rewrite the N.T. message, but to present it in a form that communicates clearly to our time.
 - b) We are not eliminating myth so much as reinterpreting it.

D. Existential Analysis

What, then, is the message that emerges once we have seen past the myths to the real concerns of the N.T.?

1. Pre-understanding
 - a) Bultmann argues that exegesis without presuppositions is impossible.
 - b) We ask about God because we are moved by the question of our own existence.
 - c) We must learn from existential philosophy, which is also concerned with this question.
 - d) The question influences the answer we shall find.
 2. Human existence
 - a) Vs. understanding man via “general” categories (philosophical, ethical); these are inadequate to human freedom.
 - b) Man exists in and through his decisions; no abiding “nature” (cf, existentialism).
 3. Inauthentic Existence
 - a) Seeking to avoid the necessity to live by decision (impossible, since this is a struggle against our very nature).
 - b) Seeking security through objective guarantees based on the past or “objective truth.” rational proofs.
 - c) Seeking satisfaction in what is visible, tangible (“the world” in the N.T.; “the flesh”).
 4. Authentic Existence
 - a) Renouncing man-made security.
 - b) Openness to the future (the unseen).
 - c) Faith (N.T.), love (living for others/self)
 - d) Trusting despite evidence to the contrary; “as if not”
 5. Power to live authentically
 - a) For Heidegger, secular existentialism, authenticity comes through human resolve.
 - b) For Bultmann, it comes as a gift of God through the hearing of the gospel in faith. It comes through revelation. We cannot save ourselves.
- E. Revelation
1. Not “communication of information by the word,” but an “event which places me in a new situation.”
 - a) The importance of it is not its content, but the fact that God speaks it.
 - b) It is always an event in the present.
 - c) It is the presence of God himself.
 - d) It creates in the hearer a new self-understanding, authentic existence.
 2. History
 - a) Sharp *Historie*/*Geschichte* distinction: see discussion of Barth, earlier.
 - (1) Events of *Geschichte* - not true apart from risk, commitment.
 - (2) No rational verification: to rest on rationally verified facts is inauthentic (cf. Kierkegaard, Sartre).

- (3) *Geschichte* consists of events which happen again and again in the present. The crucifixion, resurrection, return of Christ “happen” as I respond to preaching in faith. I am crucified with Christ, etc.
 - b) Christianity has some *historisch* basis (cf. B, above).
 - (1) The earthly life of Jesus is the presupposition of the *kerygma* (preaching).
 - (2) But we know very little about him.
 - (3) We know that he existed, but we don't know much about what he is.
 - (4) The what, however, is not important. The important thing is what he means to faith; and that is expressed in the *kerygma*, regardless of its historical foundation.
- F. Doctrinal Loci
- 1. God
 - a) Wholly other, as in early Barth; “infinite qualitative difference.”
 - b) So transcendent that we can know him only in the moment of revelation (*Geschichte*).
 - c) Therefore, immanent: no “God in himself;” his existence is pro me, for in *Geschichte* he exists in granting me a new self-understanding.
 - d) He appears as holy will, qualifying my existence.
 - e) Bultmann opposes traditional dogmas about his nature, attributes.
 - 2. Deity of Christ
 - a) Describes his significance for faith, not a cosmological status. cf. Ritschl's “value judgment.”
 - b) He is God's Son because he saves me, not *vice versa*.
 - 3. The Cross and Resurrection
 - a) Bultmann believes that Jesus died in *Historie*; he rejects the bodily resurrection as mythology.
 - b) Jesus' death in *Historie* is in itself unimportant for faith; as a fact datable in calendar time, it does not belong to *Geschichte*.
 - c) The orthodox doctrine of atonement is also mythological.
 - d) But as the cross is preached in the present, it becomes a saving event (*Geschichte*).
 - (1) It symbolizes our renouncing (dying to) the world (inauthentic existence).
 - (2) It is God's judgment on the world and therefore his act which sets us free for the future.
 - (3) It is the cross of Christ because of its saving efficacy, not *vice versa*.
 - e) The preaching of the resurrection only spells out the meaning of the cross.

- (1) It is not a miraculous proof of the efficacy of the cross: to trust such a miraculous proof would be inauthentic. Paul errs in I Cor. 15 when he seeks to make such use of the doctrine.
- (2) It shows that the power of death, the world, the tangible, is overcome; but that is already known through the preaching of the cross.

4. Justification by Faith

- a) Inauthentic existence is the attempt to be saved through works of the law; authentic existence receives the future as God's gift.
- b) Bultmann applies this doctrine to the intellect: Belief in verbal inspiration or any other ultimately authoritative revelation is justification by works; it seeks favor with God through intellectual orthodoxy.

5. Eschatology

- a) Bultmann recognizes, with his teacher Weiss, that an eschatological emphasis pervades the N.T.
- b) He believes that Jesus was a mistaken eschatological preacher (cf. B, above).
- c) No literal final judgment, etc.: that is mythology.
- d) But biblical eschatology can be used to symbolize the "end" of our former, inauthentic existence in the present.
- e) Authentic existence is openness to the future; God is "the coming one." The identification between God and the future, which plays so large a role in Moltmann, Pannenberg, liberation theology, seems to have roots in Bultmann.

6. Ethics

- a) The gift of freedom for the future enables us to be open to one another in faith and love.
- b) There are no binding ethical prescriptions (that would be inauthentic); only love for God and neighbor (cf. situation ethics).
- c) We discover what to do in the "moment" (*Geschichte*).
- d) Tends to be rather individualistic; not much interest in social issues.

G. Comments

1. Bultmann is more sympathetic to the older liberalism than is Barth, but some differences are instructive (cf. Knudsen in Hughes, ed., *Creative Minds*):
 - a) Herrmann says that the moral goodness of Christ impresses man and leads him to trust in the power of moral goodness. Bultmann thinks that to trust in such a "general possibility" is inauthentic, a surrender of freedom.
 - b) Bultmann does not think, as the liberals did, that N.T. critics can discover a non-supernatural moral teacher lying behind the biblical stories. Jesus' morality (such as we know of it) is inseparably linked to his mythological eschatology.

2. Bultmann does not take sufficient account of the difficulty of his historical thesis. There is far too little time for the development of legend between the death of Jesus and the writing of the N.T., especially when one considers the presence of the eyewitnesses during this time. Therefore, Bultmann's critical positions have generally been replaced by more conservative ones. Note especially the difficulty in accounting for the resurrection as legend (as in Knudsen, other account of evidences for the resurrection).
3. Bultmann's critical position, therefore, seems to be based, not on "evidence," but upon his philosophical assumption that no report of a supernatural event is credible.
4. That philosophical assumption is highly arbitrary.
 - a) Few scientists any more would agree with Bultmann's view of the universe as a "closed system." The "principle of uncertainty."
 - b) Has "modern man" entirely rejected the supernatural? Religious and superstitions of all sorts seem to flourish today.
5. Does the N.T. itself demand demythologization?
 - a) Bultmann is quite arbitrary in setting forth "freedom for the future" as the message of the N.T.
 - (1) The supernaturalism of the N.T. is pervasive, as Bultmann himself admits.
 - (2) The N.T. presents the resurrection as central, focuses our faith in Christ as Lord.
 - b) Some aspects of N.T. teaching (like the three story universe) are not intended to be taken literally. Others clearly are -- like the resurrection.
 - c) The N.T. does reject the notion of "finding security through a world-view" (or any other human work). However, it does require belief in certain propositions about God, Christ, the world, etc.
 - d) Does the N.T. demythologize its eschatology? It does teach that the end times have begun in Christ; but it continues to look toward a future consummation. It is gratuitous to insist that the N.T. writers didn't go far enough.
6. Note Bultmann's anti-abstractionism, his unwillingness to allow the use of "general" categories in explaining man.
 - a) This proposal is doomed to failure. All language is in some degree abstract, including Bultmann's. But if a concrete knowledge of man can come through language, why can it not come through the orthodox language as easily as through Bultmann's?
 - b) This view of Bultmann's is derived from the subjective view of revelation which he shares with all his predecessors since Schleiermacher. If revelation is momentary, in the perfectly concrete "now," then no language can express it; all language will be too abstract.

7. For Bultmann's existentialism, see my treatment of Sartre in "Christianity and the Great Debates."
 - a) Must we renounce all "objective guarantees?" Yes, if they are invented by man; no, if they are provided by God. The essence of faith is trust in God's promise.
 - b) Is it wrong to seek satisfaction in the "visible," "tangible" world?
 - (1) Scripture sometimes does draw the contrast between trusting in the visible and in the invisible (II Cor. 4).
 - (2) The point is that in this sinful world, God's workings are often hidden - especially from unbelief.
 - (3) But not always. In anticipation of the end time, God often makes himself visible -- in theophany, in Christ, and (somewhat metaphorically) in the gospel.
 - (4) Thus the issue is not essentially one of visibility/invisibility, but of sin/God.
 - (5) Bultmann often confuses ethical and metaphysical categories. He misunderstands Paul's statement about not knowing Christ "after the flesh" - thinks it deals with knowledge of Christ as tangible/intangible. Actually it refers to a knowledge in sin/in grace.
 - c) Does Scripture call us to be free for the future? It calls us to be open to God's future; certainly not to accept joyfully whatever the future brings. And it certainly does not call us to lay aside criteria based on the past. On the contrary: the words of Christ and Scripture are to be our permanent source of divine authority.
8. Bultmann's non-propositional concept of revelation: It does bring out some important points neglected by evangelicals - the presence of God in revelation, its power to create a new self-understanding. But to deny its propositional truth is simply unbiblical.
9. *Historie* and *Geschichte*: see under Barth.
10. Transcendence/Immanence dialectic: so what else is new?
11. Treatment of the deity of Christ and other doctrines similar to Ritschl: these doctrines are really only expressions of Jesus value for me.
12. Bultmann eliminates the atonement and resurrection of Christ; on that account alone, he has renounced the N.T. gospel.
13. Although Bultmann accuses the orthodox of justification by works, the shoe is actually on the other foot. Justification by faith is justification on the basis of God's gracious promise (Romans 4). Bultmann substitutes his own wisdom for God's promise. Thus it is he who trusts in an "intellectual good work."

XXVIII. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-)

- A. All understanding involves interpretation; therefore epistemology is hermeneutic, the study of interpretation.
- B. All inquiry embedded in "horizons" of language, history, tradition.
 1. So timeless truths not available to us.

2. And, inevitably, we approach inquiry with prejudices.
 3. These are both helpful and harmful. We cannot escape from them, but we can refine them as our knowledge grows.
- C. Understanding, interpretation, application require each other. The importance of *praxis* (cf. liberation theology).
- D. Modern science tends to dominate and dehumanize experience.
1. We should, rather, emphasize *praxis* (responsible decision) over *techne* (technology).
 2. Similarly, *phronesis* (practical knowledge) over *episteme* (scientific knowledge).
 3. Vs. Jurgen Habermas: language is more central than reason.

XXIX. Ferdinand De Saussure, 1857-1913: Father of modern linguistics and, through his disciples, of philosophical structuralism and deconstruction.

- A. Signifier (a sound or cultural object) vs. Signified (a mental concept)
- B. *Langue* (the system or structure of language) vs. *Parole* (actual speaking)
- C. Diachronic vs. Synchronic analysis: historical-genetic background of language vs. an account of current use.
- D. The "arbitrariness" of signs
1. Verbal symbols are conventional, not uniquely appropriate to their objects.
 2. Different languages yield different concepts, as they cut the "pie" of reality into different shapes.
 3. So things do not have fixed essences.
- E. Language is a system. The position of a term in the system of language determines its meaning. The important thing about a word is not its sound, but its differences from other words.
- F. Influenced later linguists: Chomsky's transformational grammar, R. Jakobson, et al., who maintained that all language reflects "deep structures" in the human mind, common to all people.

XXX. Claude Levi-Strauss

- A. Studied anthropological phenomena as language, particularly mythology, using Saussurian model.
1. Societies organized according to various forms of communication, exchange.
 2. Exchange of information, knowledge, myths, members.
- B. Symbolic elements have no fixed interpretations; vary with their position in the myth.

- C. Using language always brings some loss of individuality. Language must be understood in terms of society.

XXXI. Deconstruction (Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault)

- A. Like structuralism, stresses language, but argues that the signifiers of signs are other signs rather than objective realities.
 - 1. Barthes: "anti-constructionist:" There is no underlying system for signs to reveal. We should merely try to describe their relations.
 - 2. Derrida: "deconstructionist:" discourse undermines its purported philosophical presuppositions.
- B. In written language, the author is not present to describe his intentions, to explain his "meanings." Do not assume the "myth of presence."
- C. Once written, the meaning of a text is independent of its author, depending on its social context and ultimately the reader's use of it.
- D. A text may convey much that is contrary to the author's intention, such as racial prejudice, gender oppression, etc. It may thus refute its own ostensible purpose (i.e. "deconstruct").
- E. Therefore, there is no one, including the author, who can authoritatively declare the meaning of a text.
- F. Thus it is hopeless to try to find objective truth in language.
- G. Evaluation:
 - 1. Rationalism-irrationalism.
 - 2. Good insights into the broader social contexts of language.
 - 3. But the denial of normativity shows apostasy from God's revelation.

XXXII. Jurgen Moltmann (1926-): The Theology of Hope

- A. Ernst Bloch
 - 1. Marxist philosopher, knew Moltmann at Tübingen in early 1960's.
 - 2. Rejects traditional Marxist eschatology (the dictatorship of the proletariat and the classless society) in favor of an "open" future.
 - a) History moves in no predetermined direction.
 - b) Matter ultimately determines the course of history (cf. Marx).
 - c) Nothing can be defined as having a fixed "essence" or nature, only the future will disclose what something "is," and that future will never arrive. Cf. existentialism on human nature.
 - d) Thus our thought and action ought to reject "the way things are." Thought ought not to correspond with "being" (as in much

previous philosophy); rather it ought to be governed by hope for the future.

- e) Present reality is incomplete, therefore. Present and past have value only insofar as they are valued by the future.
 - f) No fixed categories for thought.
3. Bloch suggests that on this basis one may view religion in a more favorable light than in traditional Marxism.
- a) Man in Scripture is oriented toward God's promises, and therefore toward the future.
 - b) Yahweh is the one who "will be what he will be."
 - c) Sin, however, is necessary for creativity, for being "as gods." Sin rejects the "structures of creation" for an unstructured future. Thus it rejects the god of creation for the God of the future.

B. The "Future Orientation"

1. Moltmann's appeal to Scripture
 - a) God is the God who promises. Man is related to him through the promise.
 - b) God's people are "strangers and pilgrims," wanderers in the world who seek a future kingdom.
 - c) Prophecy intensifies the expectation.
 - d) But the "fulfillment" of prophecy only enlarges the future expectation.
 - e) What God does cannot be anticipated on the basis of past expectations. His acts are enormously surprising. Thus we must think of him in terms of the promise, not in terms of anything that has happened in the past. Creation *ex-nihilo*; resurrection.
 - f) The N.T. is pervasively eschatological. Jesus is an apocalyptic visionary, and his disciples are caught up in eschatological hope.
2. Moltmann and previous theology
 - a) Older liberalism suppressed the eschatological element in Scripture.
 - b) Schweitzer, Weiss showed that the N.T. was pervasively eschatological; but they made no positive theological use of this discovery.
 - c) Barth
 - (1) Sought to make more positive use of eschatology: the "theology of crisis."
 - (2) But to Barth, *Geschichte* (the realm of redemptive occurrence - see earlier discussion) is an eternal present, not a future. Thus eschatology, in the end, becomes a metaphor for a relationship with God in the "here and now." For Barth, revelation is only present, never past or future.
 - d) Bultmann
 - (1) Emphasized, as does Moltmann, the "open future." And he does come close to identifying God with this open future, as Moltmann also does.

(2) But, again, his existentialism allows no relevance for the passing of calendar time. Our relation with God is wholly in the present.

e) Secular theology

(1) "This worldliness" - a useful corrective to Barth and Bultmann, for whom the movement of secular history was irrelevant.

(2) But loses any sense of transcendence. Moltmann believes he can restore this by placing transcendence in the future.

C. Hope

1. Ought to be the central category of theology, not something peripheral.
2. Not knowing the future, but accepting it as a gift, being open to whatever happens. The future is genuinely open.
3. Optimistic, not fearful. Since God acts in "surprising" ways, we should never despair at the difficulties of our present situation. Vs. pessimism of neo-orthodoxy.

D. Revelation

1. Has the character of promise.
2. Apocalyptic, not epiphany. Epiphany is an illumination of "what is," of the nature of present reality. Apocalyptic reveals what God is doing from the perspective of the end.
3. Thus it carries us beyond rational expectations. (Moltmann finds Pannenberg, e.g., too rationalistic.)
4. Since the future is open, revelation does not give us propositional information about the future.
5. Therefore, all our thinking about God is provisional. The future is open, and the past is no sure guide.
6. Yet we can think of the future in hope, courageously expecting it to be better than the present.
7. There can be no "static" norms for thought or life.
8. Nor can there be any certainty about historical events.

E. God

1. Present only in his promises, in hope.
2. Therefore, "future is his essential nature." (Cf. Barth and others, who identify God with his revelation, then derive the nature of God from that identification.)
 - a) We cannot "have" or "possess" God (cf. Barth).
 - b) The "existence" of God is problematic.
 - (1) He does not fully exist now, because the future is not here yet.
 - (2) Today, we experience an anticipation of God, but not "God himself" as in Brunner, e.g.
 - (3) This explains the dialectic between God's "presence" and "absence." The problem of evil.

- c) There is no “transcendent sphere” of reality in the present. But the future is transcendent over the present, and the fact explains and justifies faith in God's transcendence.
- 3. God is the future of human history. The story of God is the story of human history. Hence, immanence.

F. Christ

- 1. God participates in the history of humiliation, oppression.
- 2. Jesus is true humanity in the midst of inhumanity. *Kenosis*.
- 3. Thus he embodies the future. In that sense he is divine.
- 4. Resurrection: not past event, but beginning of future; basis of history, hope.

G. Man

- 1. As in existentialism, man has no fixed definition. He is “becoming,” rather than “being,” and thus can be understood only at the end of time.
- 2. The image of God: man's capability to transcend the present and anticipate the future. Freedom.
- 3. Sin is hopelessness.
 - a) Presumption: seeking to bring about future change in one's own strength, without hope in God (works-righteousness).
 - b) Desperation: apathy, indifference, unbelief.

H. The Church

- 1. The Constantinian model, in which the church rules the world, focuses upon the present, as if the end of history had arrived and the church were fit to impose its will on others.
- 2. Rather, we should see the church as servant to the world.
 - a) It has no favored position.
 - b) Not qualitatively different from the world, but vanguard of new humanity —the promise of humanity's future. The sacraments proclaim future hope.
- 3. The church is important in social matters. It should confront directly the evils of society, not merely leave this up to individual Christians.

I. Ethics

- 1. Only the future is ethically normative. No fixed norms derived from the past.
- 2. Therefore, the standard for action is the anticipated result. The end justifies the means. (Cf. Marx)
- 3. The future frees us to love those who are not presently attractive or appealing: *agape*.
- 4. Thus we are called to identify ourselves with the oppressed, as God does in Christ (above, F, 1).
- 5. We cannot accept the *status quo* that would be “desperation” (G, 3, b). We must challenge “what is” in the interest of what “will be.”
- 6. Revolution is one appropriate means for accomplishing change.
 - a) No revolution will bring in utopia, as Marx thought. Still, it may in some cases be necessary.

- b) "The problem of violence and non-violence" is "an illusory problem. There is only the question of the justified and unjustified use of force and the question of whether the means are proportionate to the ends." (*Religion, Revolution and the Future*, 143).

J. Comments

1. It is not clear how we can make any decisions about the future unless we have knowledge of the present and past. But to deny present human "nature" to urge opposition to all that presently "is," is to rob us of any-even provisional means of preparing for the future.
2. Moltmann's treatment of Scripture
 - a) Good to remind us of how pervasive eschatology is in the biblical text.
 - b) "Hope" is a legitimate vantage-point from which to view the Bible's teaching. It is not, however, the only one, or necessarily the best for all purposes.
 - (1) Theology is not Scripture, but application of Scripture to human needs. However useful the "theology of hope" may be as an application of Scripture, it cannot replace Scripture itself. But that means that God has given us in Scripture something more than a "theology of hope." The same would go for a "theology of" anything else.
 - (2) Other possibilities: covenant, trinity, history, personalism, holiness, love, word of God, freedom, etc., etc. And liberation.
 - c) Moltmann often distorts Scripture.
 - (1) He denies, in effect, that God's promises are confirmed by divine acts and words given in history.
 - (2) He denies the permanence of covenant relationship. Moltmann's God can revoke his covenants at will (the transcendence principle). He denies the biblical emphasis upon law as central to covenant.
 - (3) Scripture speaks of a definite consummation of history which according to God's word will surely come to pass. It does not speak of Moltmann's "open future" in which anything can happen.
3. If we do not know the future, if it is genuinely open, then why should we be "hopeful" about the success of present actions? If there is ground for hope, then the future is not entirely open. Irrationalism.
4. In Moltmann as in other modern theologians, the transcendence/immanence dialectic robs us of the biblical God.
 - a) His deity is so transcendent that he does not "now" exist.
 - b) His transcendence, however, is only that of an "open" future over against the present. What ground of hope is that?
 - c) His immanence is identification with history, which again robs us of hope.

5. Presumption, desperation
 - a) Theologians of liberation often criticize Moltmann for his confusion about man's role in initiating social change.
 - (1) Clearly, Moltmann wants to justify such human initiative, even revolution in some circumstances.
 - (2) Elsewhere, however, he insists that the future is unknown to us and therefore we must wait to be "surprised" by some divine action. Thus we avoid "presumption."
 - b) On Moltmann's non-propositional view of revelation, I really don't see how one can know whether he is acting in hope or in presumption.
6. As other modern theologians, Moltmann emphasizes the servant character of the church. That is fine, but not without some qualification.
 - a) The church does have "status" with God that the world does not have.
 - b) Therefore the servant character of the church does not imply universalism or the normative character of secularity.
7. Moltmann's ethics are inadequately biblical, rejecting the law of God in favor of utilitarianism. But how can he even decide the end by which to justify the means?
8. Moltmann's correlation of *agape* with hope is interesting and biblically sensitive.
9. His critiques of past theologians are often insightful. Note that he agrees with Van Til concerning the unimportance of history in Barth. But it is unclear to me how Moltmann expects to improve on the performance of his predecessors. He has explicitly denied to the past and present any normative significance for theology. And his future cannot have any normative significance either, since it is entirely open-ended. Therefore there is no norm at all, and no significance to history in any "tense." It seems to me that if Moltmann's theology says anything at all, it can be reduced to Tillich's Protestant principle: the only absolute truth is that there are no absolute truths.
10. This normlessness removes any justification for his revolutionary ethic. Who is to say what constitutes oppression or liberation? He responds to the liberation theologians by distinguishing the "foreseeable" future from the "unforeseeable," and advocating social action based on the foreseeable. But the whole dynamic of Moltmann's theology is that our lives ought to be governed by the unforeseeable. Thus the rationalist/irrationalist dialectic: the more intelligible Moltmann's prescriptions, the less authoritative they are, and *vice-versa*.

XXXIII. The Theology of Liberation

A. Background

1. Importance

- a) Liberation theology seems to be exerting, today, a greater influence upon the theological world than any other single movement (as of 1983).
- (1) Example: Deane W. Ferm's *Contemporary American Theologies* (1981) contains eight chapters, five of which discuss currently fashionable theological positions. Of these five, one is "evangelical theology," one Roman Catholic theology, and three are various forms of liberation theology: Latin American, black, feminist.
 - (2) Example: Gundry and Johnson, *Tensions in Contemporary Theology*, which (oddly enough) was published in 1976 without any chapter on liberation theology (some of the liberationists were mentioned in connection with the theology of hope), was republished in 1983 with two chapters on liberation theology, together taking up 110 of the book's 471 pages.
- b) Liberation theology seems to be the focus of a developing consensus in present day liberal theology.
- (1) Most Roman Catholic theologians today are profoundly influenced by it.
 - (2) Moltmann's later writings have moved closer to the liberationists, and he was never very far from them. See XIX, G, 5.
 - (3) Pannenberg is farther from them, but shares a significant conceptual vocabulary with them.
 - (4) The process theologians boast that they have supplied a metaphysics helpful to the cause of the liberationists and some liberationists agree.
- c) Slogans of liberation theology have appeared frequently in evangelical theology. The extent of actual influence is debatable.
- (1) R. Sider: "God is on the side of the poor." Costas, Padilla, Escobar.
 - (2) Much hermeneutical discussion on the contextualization of theology: avoiding the use of western theological models in presenting the Gospel to the third world. Developing new, indigenous models.
 - (3) Growing sympathy for socialism among people of evangelical background: *Sojourners, The Other Side*, Sider.
2. Figures
- a) Theology in the 1980s is a rather communal enterprise. We are faced primarily with schools of thought rather than by great individual thinkers (as in the days of Barth, Bultmann, Tillich). This is true of liberation theology, process theology. Roman Catholic theology has always been by nature communal, on the whole, and there is certainly a kind of "consensus" developing there (cf. Gregory Baum, *New Horizon*). Pannenberg may be

one exception: he has the talent to become a “towering figure.”
But even he began as a member of a “school.”

- b) Latin American Liberationists
 - (1) Rubem Alves: his *Theology of Human Hope* (1969) was a seminal work.
 - (2) Gustavo Gutierrez: *A Theology of Liberation* (1971) - standard text of the movement. Peruvian.
 - (3) Hugo Assmann - Brazilian
 - (4) Jose Miranda - Mexican; influential biblical scholar. *Marx and the Bible*. (1976)
 - (5) Juan Luis Segundo - Uruguayan; focus on hermeneutics, systematic theology. *The Liberation of Theology* (1976).
 - (6) Jon Sobrino - Spanish, compares European with liberationist Christology.
 - (7) Leonardo Boff - Brazilian Christologist.
 - (8) Jose Minguez-Bonino - Argentinian Protestant.
- c) Black Theologians
 - (1) Albert B. Cleage, *The Black Messiah* (1968): black nationalist, racist.
 - (2) James Cone: seeks theological justification for black power. *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970) - standard text.
 - (3) J. Deotis Roberts, Sr.: *His Liberation and Reconciliation* is comprehensive theology. Somewhat more moderate in tone.
 - (4) Major J. Jones - also moderating influence. Vs. “God is black.” Ethicist.
 - (5) W. R Jones - challenges the traditional doctrine of God.
- d) Feminist Theologians
 - (1) Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968); *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (1973). Left the Roman Catholic church in 1975 to become a “post-Christian” feminist.
 - (2) Rosemary R. Reuther, *Religion and Sexism* (1974), many other books.
 - (3) Letty Russell, *The Future of Partnership* (1979), others. More moderate.
 - (4) Sheila Collins, *A Different Heaven and Earth* (1974)
 - (5) Penelope Washbourn, *Becoming Woman* (1977)
 - (6) Letha Scanzoni and Hancy Herdesty, *All We're Meant to Be* (1975) - feminism within an evangelical perspective.

B. Hermeneutics, Epistemology

1. The “Hermeneutical Circle”

- a) It is common in theology to note that we always bring presuppositions to the text of Scripture which influence our exegesis and theology. Ideally, the text ought to reform those presuppositions, so that in the two-way dialogue between text and interpreter a better understanding will result. However, there

is always the danger of vicious circularity - i.e. reading out of the text only what we wish to find there.

- b) Liberation theology focuses on the socio-economic presuppositions that we bring to the text. It emphasizes that there is no exegesis which is socially, racially, economically or politically neutral.
 - (1) Vs. the common assumption that European or North American theology provides adequate categories for theology in the third world.
 - (2) Those in rich nations often fail to see what Scripture says about poverty.
 - (3) We must seek to bring our presuppositions, in these areas also, in line with revelation.
2. Understanding also presupposes practical involvement.
 - a) It is not enough to bring the right ideas to our exegetical work. We must also be involved in the right kinds of activities.
 - b) Truth is itself something practical.
 - (1) Theory is part of practice.
 - (2) Truth is an act, an event, something which happens efficaciously.
 - (3) To know God is to do justice, Jer. 22:16.
 - (4) We need contact, experience, with reality if we are to think rightly about it.
3. Understanding presupposes specifically socio-political movement. *Praxis* vs. "abstraction."
 - a) Christ must be heard in all areas of life.
 - b) Everyone already has some social agenda; the only question is which one it shall be.
4. Such involvement is necessarily "conflictual" in character.
 - a) Interests of the poor and rich inevitably conflict. We must choose sides.
 - b) Combat with one's enemies does not necessarily involve hatred. It may be for the enemy's good. In any case, one cannot love his enemies until he has identified them as enemies. Cheap conciliation helps no one.
5. Therefore all theology must take its bearings from the "axis" of oppression and liberation.
6. Marxist thought presents the best analysis of the oppression/liberation conflict in terms of class struggle. Thus the thinker must be a person committed to Marxism at least as an "analytical tool," at most to socialist revolution. (This emphasis is much less widespread in black theology than in Latin American theology.)
7. *Praxis* is also the means by which truth is verified. Those ideas are true which bring about improvement in society, determined by one's political commitment.

8. Feminist Epistemology (Helen E. Longino)
 - a. Vs. stereotypes: associating rationality with masculinity, etc.
 - b. Situatedness (Nancy Hartsock, reworking Lukacs' Marxism)
 - i. vs. superiority and priority of mind over body, culture over nature, abstract over concrete.
 - ii. Advantages of multiple standpoints.
 - c. Subject and object
 - i. vs. superiority of one to the other.
 - ii. Understanding your own assumptions important to objectivity.
 - iii. Emotions can be sources of knowledge.
 - iv. Don't be prejudiced against certain objects of knowledge as "distortions."
 - v. Helps to love what you are seeking to know.
 - d. Recognition of the knower's dependence on objects, society.
 - e. Accept judgments of non-experts, the disenfranchised.
 - f. Justification involves society: encounters between cognitive agents.
- C. Theology
 1. Theology is the critical reflection on praxis, from within *praxis*.
 2. Its ultimate goal: not to understand the world, but to change it (cf. Marx). Theology as servant.
 3. Vs. theology which seeks merely to protect and defend a tradition.
 4. Pro-contextualization
 - a) Don't assume the universal application of North American or European theological models.
 - b) Make use of sociological analysis (marxist) to understand the culture for which you are writing or speaking.
 5. Thus *orthopraxis* is more important than orthodoxy.
- D. Revelation, Secularity, Autonomy
 1. Liberation theology borrows many concepts and much rhetoric from the "theology of secularization" (above, XVIII), but seeks to be more humanistic, more sensitive to the dangers of modern culture, especially technology. Follow Gutierrez' discussion:
 2. Anthropological aspects of revelation (7f)
 - a) "The word about God is at the same time a promise to the world."
 - b) Gutierrez quotes Barth (!): "Man is the measure of all things, since God became man."
 - c) Thus we are not interested in the supernatural *per se*, but in its relation to man and the world.
 3. The "signs of the times" as a locus of revelation (8f, 271f): "hear, distinguish and interpret the many voice of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine Word."
 4. Need to interact with philosophical movements calling for human autonomy (9f, 27ff). While we ought not to accept the ideas of

Descartes, Hegel, Marx, Freud uncritically, they are right to insist that real freedom is a “historical conquest” (32) in which man must struggle to take control of his own destiny. Cf. 36f.

5. Need to accept the modern development toward secularization (66ff).
 - a) Modern man is turning his attention away from other worlds, toward this one (Cox).
 - b) Man comes to a new understanding of himself as a creative subject, and thus, necessarily conceives his relation to God in a different way.
 - c) This process coincides with a Christian vision of man:
 - (1) Offers the possibility of becoming more fully human.
 - (2) Affirms creation as distinct from God, man as lord of creation.
 - d) Therefore, religion should be defined in relation to the profane, not *vice-versa*.
 - e) And the church must be seen in terms of the world, not *vice-versa*. Illegitimate for the church to use the world for its own ends.
 6. All are invited to salvation (69ff). Cf. 149-152.
 - a) Within human nature is an “infinite openness” to God, an “innate desire to see him.” No antagonism between natural and supernatural.
 - b) Because of God's “universal salvific will,” all are affected by grace.
 - c) Thus all are in Christ, efficaciously called to communion with God.
 - d) Thus, the boundaries between church and world are fluid. “Some even ask if they are really two different things...” (72). Cf. 258ff.
 - e) Thus, participation in liberation is a saving work.
 7. Therefore, history is one; no profane/sacred distinction. (153ff).
 - a) Creation is a saving act.
 - b) Political liberation (the exodus) is a self-creative act.
 - c) Salvation is re-creation, fulfillment, in which man is active participant (in response to grace).
 8. Incarnation underscores the sacredness of the profane (189ff, esp. 194).
 9. Jesus was not directly involved in the politics of his day, in part, because he respected “the autonomy of political action.” (228).
- E. Present and Future
1. Gutierrez follows Motlmann's argument that theology ought to be “future-oriented.” See XIX, above, especially B, with comments under G. In Gutierrez, see 14f, 160ff, 213ff, 272.
 2. Gutierrez, however, places more importance than Moltmann upon the present situation.

- a) The promise is “already” being fulfilled, though “not yet” in completeness. “Both the present and future aspects are indispensable for tracing the relationship between promise history.” - 161.
- b) The prophets are concerned with the present situation in Israel, without excluding an action of God at the end of history. (163).
- c) Partial fulfillments in history are the road toward total fulfillment (167).
- d) “The hope which overcomes death must be rooted in the heart of historical *praxis*; if this hope does not take shape in the present to lead it forward, it will be only an evasion, a futuristic illusion. One must be extremely careful not to replace a Christianity of the Beyond with a Christianity of the Future; if the former tended to forget the world, the latter runs the risk of neglecting a miserable and unjust present and the struggle for liberation.” (218).
- e) Moltmann, Gutierrez points out (footnote 33, p. 241), is moving closer to a liberationist position.

F. God

- 1. Transcendence: The First Commandment brings judgment against all false gods, including those forms of Christianity which accept injustice.
- 2. Immanence:
 - a) God acts in history to deliver the oppressed.
 - (1) Gutierrez: “I am who I am” in Ex. 3:14 may mean “I will be who will be.” He is a force in our future, not ahistorical. In context, the phrase denotes God's presence and his readiness to act in power. (165)
 - (2) Same redemptive emphasis in other references to *YHWH*.
 - b) God exists in, with mankind. (Gutierrez 189ff)
 - (1) Mobility of the ark, God's transcendence even above the temple, indicate God's omnipresence.
 - (a) Hence his presence is universal. Gentiles as well as Jews.
 - (b) Since God's saving will is universal, he dwell in non-Christians too (193).
 - (c) And his presence is internal, within the heart, the whole person.
 - (2) God dwells in the “neighbor” (194ff). Matt. 25, I John 4:20. Includes all people.
 - (3) “Conversion to the neighbor” brings union with God and *vice versa* (207).
 - (4) Thus God is involved in political Change.

G. Man

- 1. Open to grace, object of God's universal salvic will (above, D, 6).
- 2. Man is man in transcending himself through work. (Gutierrez, 9f, 27ff)

- a) Gen. 1:26ff
- b) Hegel, Marx, Freud
- 3. Therefore every man has the right to become master of his own destiny, participate in the direction of society, throw off dehumanizing structures. 36f.

H. Sin

- 1. A selfish turning in on oneself; refusal to love neighbors (and therefore refusal to love God). (Gutierrez, 35).
- 2. Man is the ultimate cause of poverty, injustice, oppression, though to say this is not to negate the structural features of society which contribute to these evils.
- 3. Social transformation, no matter how radical it may be, will not automatically suppress these evils.
- 4. Not merely a private matter. Sin also has a collective dimension: the absence of brotherhood and love in relationships among men. (175) We encounter it only in concrete instances of alienation.
- 5. In footnote 98 (187) Gutierrez mentions Marx's correlation between private ownership and sin. Because of private ownership, in Marx's view, the worker is alienated from the fruit of his work. Gutierrez warns us against "overestimating" the importance of this correlation.

I. Christ

- 1. The Historical Jesus: Most liberation theologians accept the biblical account in its main outlines. A few, like Boff, tend to be skeptical. They do not, however, put much emphasis upon the miracles, atonement, resurrection of Christ.
- 2. Jesus and the Political World (Gutierrez, 225ff)
 - a) Relation to the zealots
 - (1) Some of his best friends were zealots.
 - (2) Agrees with them on the soon coming of the kingdom, his role in it, the seizing of it by violent men.
 - (3) Purification of the temple, power over the people.
 - (4) Yet Jesus kept his distance.
 - (a) His was a universal mission, not narrow nationalism.
 - (b) His attitude toward the law was different from theirs.
 - (c) He saw the kingdom as a gift, not from one's own effort.
 - (d) He saw the root of the problems in lack of brotherhood.
 - (e) He respected the autonomy of political action.
 - (5) Thus his revolution was more radical than theirs.
 - b) Confrontation with powerful groups: Herod, publicans, Pharisees, Sadducees, the rich.
 - c) Died at the hands of oppressors, for sedition. They were right, in an ironic way, to think that he challenged their power.
 - d) Did Jesus err about the soon end of the world? His teaching involves a tension between present and future matters, so the question is not simple.

- e) Jesus did not oppose change in social structures, and as prophet denounces evils. His insistence on heart-religion leads to structural change.
- 3. Christ the Liberator (Gutierrez, 175ff).
 - a) Three levels of liberation: political liberation, the liberation of man throughout history, liberation from sin (176)
 - b) The gift of grace destroys sin as we accept Christ's liberation.
 - c) Only this grace eliminates the root of the problem; but all attempts to overcome oppression are also opposed to selfishness, sin, and are therefore liberating. These are not all salvation, but they are saving works. Vs. separation of sacred and secular.

J. The Church

- 1. Nature: "universal sacrament of salvation" (Gutierrez, 258ff).
 - a) The church's center is outside itself. Apart from the saving work of Christ through the Spirit, the church is nothing.
 - b) It is a community oriented toward the future promised by the Lord.
 - c) Thus the church should not be preoccupied with its own problems, but the with the world' s.
 - d) The church is also part of the world, must be inhabited, evangelized by the world.
 - e) It reveals the world s true nature as being in Christ.
 - f) Universal salvation - see above, D, 6.
- 2. The Church as Servant
 - a) The church ought to accept suffering on behalf of the oppressed.
 - b) It should not seek liberation for its (the church's) own sake.
 - c) It should not seek to rule by power, or to repress others. Vs. the "Constantinian model" using temporal power for the church's benefit. This leads to alliance with oppressors.
- 3. Task: to announce the reality of salvation in all dimensions, including the political.
 - a) Vs. privatization - the idea that the gospel deals only with inner "spiritual" matters, or with the next world. Escapism.
 - b) Vs. individualism - the idea that the church may influence politics only through individual Christians, not as an institution.
 - c) Denunciation (232ff, 265ff)
 - (1) Reject existing order. Name the oppressors.
 - (2) Purge the church of all compromising attachments.
 - d) Annunciation
 - (1) Of the love of God: displays the root of the problem as loss of brotherhood.
 - (2) Involved conscientization (Freiere): to help the oppressed to feel oppressed. Hence to politicize the poor.
- 4. Revelation to temporal sphere
 - a) Vs. Constantinian model (2 c above).

- b) Vs. “distinction of planes” model: church must not interfere in temporal matters except through moral teaching (Gutierrez, 56ff).
- (1) On this model, the church acts upon the political order through individuals. The church instructs his conscience.
 - (2) The church, then, has two functions: evangelization and the inspiration of the temporal sphere. Hence, priest/ layman.
 - (3) Since Vatican II, however, it has become difficult to distinguish these two missions.
 - (a) Some clergy forced by conscience to take positions on political issues, causing disunity.
 - (b) Realization that if the church says nothing, it sides with the oppressors.
 - (c) Misery of the world is inseparable from God's redemptive purpose.
 - (d) Vs. sharp distinction between nature/supernature: God affirms secularity which, in turn, is open to him. (D, 5, 6 above).

5. Unity

- a) Difficult in the present Latin American situation, since some Christians are oppressors and persecutors (Gutierrez, 137). Hard decisions must be made. The church's stand for justice must not be compromised by desires for short-run unity. Unity is a long-term process.
- b) Oppressors and oppressed cannot share the same sacraments (282, note 34).
 - (1) In the sacrament, we celebrate the saving act of God in Christ which brings liberation in history.
 - (2) Thus we celebrate what is achieved “outside the church edifice, in human history” (263).
 - (3) Human brotherhood, then, is crucial to the meaning of the sacrament. It takes precedence over the formal rite (Matt. 5:23f). Cf. I Cor. 11:17-34, James. 2:1-4. *Koinonia*. To take communion, then, is “to accept the meaning of a life that was given over to death - at the hands of the powerful of this world - for love of others.”

K. Christian Political Ethics

1. Here we come full circle; for we will recall that liberation theology sees a political stance, not as a remote implication of its theology, but as a presupposition for doing theology. See B, above. This political stance influences all that is said about all the topics discussed above. However, we must discuss liberationist politics in more detail. So, read this section, and then go back and read the rest again.
2. Vs. individualism, privatization (above, J, 3).
3. Vs. political neutrality

- a) Such neutrality is impossible. By not taking a stand, one supports oppression. (Above, B, 2-4, J, 3, 4).
- b) Interests of rich and poor inevitably conflict. We must choose sides.
- c) Christ must be heard in all areas of life.
- d) Politics is central to human life, especially in the modern period (Gutierrez, 47ff).
 - (1) "The construction - from its economic bases of the *polis*, of a society in which people can live in solidarity, is a dimension which encompasses and severely conditions all of man's activity. It is the sphere for the exercise of a critical freedom which is won down through history. It is the universal determinant and the collective arena for human fulfillment."
 - (2) Within this context, politics can be understood more narrowly as an "orientation to power." The quest for power takes on varied forms. "But they are all based on the profound aspiration of man, who wants to take hold of the reins of his own life and be the artisan of his own destiny."
 - (3) "Nothing lies outside the political sphere understood in this way. Everything has a political color."
 - (4) All social relationships become political when we seek to make them lasting and stable.
- 4. The problems faced by Latin America
 - a) Alienation of labor
 - (1) Capitalism alienates the worker from the fruit of his labor. He works for the benefit of another, himself remaining poor (cf. G, above).
 - (2) Developing technology renders workers dispersible and robs work of its capacity for human fulfillment.
 - b) Economic inequality (Gutierrez, 21f)
 - c) Coercion as the source of this inequality (22). The gap is the result of "violence." (108ff). cf. 88ff.
 - d) The gap between rich and poor has increased, despite attempts to close it.
 - (1) The "development" model: Seeking to help the situation through exchange of technology, aid from rich countries, free-market processes. This was the common approach in the 1950s, but it did not succeed; rather it reinforced the existing structures. Gutierrez, 22ff, 82ff. Didn't take differences in political structure into account when it sought imitation of developed societies. Sometimes called "reformism" in liberation theology.
 - (2) Experiments in pure capitalism (Brazil, Chile) fail.
 - e) Colonialism by, and economic dependence upon, rich nations.

- (1) "The underdevelopment of the poor countries...(is) the historical byproduct of the development of other countries." (Gutierrez, 84).
 - (2) Latin American countries were colonies originally, and therefore dependent. After political independence, they continued to be economically dependent upon other nation.
 - (3) This dependence is reinforced by foreign investors who reinforce the capitalistic elements of the country to their own advantage.
- f) Class struggle: underlies above process, responds to it in counter-violence. 272ff.
5. Christian obligation to the poor
- a) Ambiguities of "poverty" (Gutierrez, 287ff)
 - (1) Traditionally, the church has produced confusion in its use to the word "poverty." They have used it both to designate material destitution and to designate a commendable attitude of indifference to material things ("spiritual poverty"). But spiritual poverty can involve material poverty, e.g. in the religious orders. Thus it is unclear whether the church is advocating poverty or struggling against it.
 - (2) Legitimate distinctions
 - (a) Material poverty: a scandalous condition brought about through oppression, Amos 2:6f, 10:1f.
 - (i) Moses led the people out of slavery in Egypt.
 - (ii) Gen. 1:26ff; Man fulfills himself by transforming the world. Poverty alienates (4, a, above).
 - (iii) Man is a sacrament of God; poverty defaces this "image" and therefore opposes God.
 - (b) Poverty as spiritual childhood - openness to God, humility.
 - (i) The remnant called "poor" in the O.T.
 - (ii) Matt. 5:1 should be understood in this way.
 - (iii) Luke 6:20 poses difficulties. Though parallel to Matt. 5:1, it probably refers to material poverty, but not in such a way as to "canonize" the poor as a social class or to foster complacency with poverty. It indicates that the power of the kingdom is present to alleviate material poverty.
 - (c) Poverty as solidarity and protest
 - (i) No idealization of m
 - (ii) No idealization of material poverty.
 - (iii) Like Christ, we ought to become poor, not to idealize poverty, but to struggle against it.
 - b) Other biblical considerations
 - (1) *Mishpat* as social justice, salvation of the poor.
 - (2) Exodus, God's deliverance of the poor. Prophets.

- (3) Jesus: the gospel for the poor.
 - (4) O.T. "limitations on private property."
 - (5) N.T. "massive sharing" (Acts).
6. Solutions
- a) Don't ask the poor to imitate the rich. The systems of rich nations are oppressive
 - b) Vs. "development" model, attempts to revitalize capitalism (above, 4, d)
 - c) Capitalism must be replaced by socialism.
 - (1) "...a socialistic system is more in accord with Christian principles of true brotherhood, justice and peace..." (Gutierrez, quoting Mendez Arceo, 111)
 - (2) Private ownership "leads to the dichotomy of capital and labor...to the exploitation of man by man..." (same page, quoting ONIS statement)
 - (3) Socialism "does offer fundamental equality of opportunity Through a change in the relationships of production, it dignifies labor so that the worker, while humanizing nature, becomes more of a person... It asserts that the motivation of morality and social solidarity is of higher value than that of individual interest." (112, quoting Santiago priests)
 - (4) Miguez-Bonino:
 - (a) In capitalism, humanization is unintended by-product; in socialism it is the goal.
 - (b) Solidarity: accidental for capitalism, essential for socialism.
 - (c) Socialism's failures are in spite of its intentions; Capitalism has bad intentions.
 - (d) But Marxism cannot explain the fundamental source of alienation, or provide a mediator to deliver us. (see Conn in Gundry-Johnson, 372f)
 - d) We must definitely reject the pattern of oppression. See B, 3-5, J, 3.
 - e) We must actively struggle against it, "taking the reins of our own destiny." Gutierrez frequently chides the "timidity" of previous theology, church pronouncements on these issues.
 - f) Revolution, violence.
 - (1) Economic oppression is the result of violence (above, 4, c).
 - (2) Against such violence, it may be necessary to use "counter-violence." Thus some, but not all liberationists justify revolutions in some situations.
 - (3) Conn warns (352f) against equating the theology of liberation with the theology of revolution." Conn takes this phrase as a technical term for certain concepts introduced at the 1966 WCC conference on "Church and Society," concepts to which Assmann objects. The terminology

doesn't matter much; most liberation theology can be described as "theology of revolution." Bus Assmann's comments on the 1966 discussion are instructive. They show us that liberation theology, in Assmann's formulation, is much more radical than "theology of revolution."

- (a) "Theology of revolution" seeks a theological justification for projected action -theological permission, as it were.
- (b) Assman's theology of liberation is critical reflection upon antecedent action. No theological permission is needed. Commitment to the revolution is independent of and prior to any theological rationale.

L. Comments

1. Liberation theology has a good sensitivity to the importance of presuppositions in theology, and I think it is quite right about the importance of socio-economic presuppositions, and of the presuppositions which arise from commitment to action. Cautions:
 - a) We have to be careful lest we argue this point in such a way as to render communication impossible. In God's world, presuppositional differences are never so great as to destroy communication. Even believers and unbelievers have in common that knowledge of God (Romans 1) which the unbeliever suppresses.
 - b) Thus the liberation theologians ought not to deny as they sometimes appear to do, their obligation to take seriously those theological views which arise out of different cultures, *praxes*.
 - c) And the liberation theologians ought to recognize more clearly than they do that cultural and ideological bias create problems also from their side. Perhaps they would not be so harsh with European and American theologians if they understood "from the inside" the problems facing the "rich nations."
2. The correlation between truth and praxis is one which I find insightful up to a point - cf. my "theology is application." Truth is something practical, rightly understood in the context of right action. I would agree, too, that theory does not necessarily precede practice; right thinking and right action go together. And I would not dispute the legitimacy of including socio-political involvement as one form of epistemologically relevant *praxis*. However:
 - a) While I agree that human understanding and human practice are mutually dependent, I would not want to say that the truth of Scripture as God's word is dependent on my practice of it. The liberation of theologians do not make this distinction, and therefore they polemicize against anything being true apart from human *praxis*.
 - b) The liberation theologians confuse me somewhat on the question of the "priority" of *praxis*. Sometimes they seem to be saying that theology and praxis are correlative, that theology

criticizes *praxis* and *praxis* interprets, verifies theology. That I can accept. But on the other hand, as in Assmann's reply to "Church and Society" (above, K, 6, f, iii), they sometimes want to assert an unequivocal priority to *praxis*: *praxis* comes first, theology later reflects on it. This representation suggests that the *praxis* must be adopted without thinking, uncritically, without bringing to bear upon it the criteria of the word of God. That notion I consider irrationalistic and unscriptural.

- c) Even worse, in my opinion, is the view that the only acceptable *praxis* is commitment to Marxist revolution. Remember that to Assmann and others, this commitment is the presupposition of theology; it must be adopted without any theological "permission," before any theology can be done. Therefore there can be no argument about it. But in my view, this matter is to say the least, highly arguable.
 - d) I really don't understand the liberation theologians when they ask me to accept Marxism as an "analytical tool." I could understand someone analyzing history in terms of class struggle and then suggesting revitalized capitalism as the solution: he would be adopting some (but not very many) Marxian ideas as a "tool of analysis" without being a Marxist. But this is not what the liberation theologians do. They demand allegiance to a wide range of Marxian theories and practices (prior to theology); they uniformly advocate socialism, generally justify class struggle and revolution. By and large, they are Marxists in substance, not only in their "analytical tools." My guess is that "analytical tool" is essentially a euphemism intended to avoid giving offense to capitalists; but in that case it is a form of "timidity" which the liberationists, on their principles, ought to eschew.
 - e) I agree that *praxis* is one means by which truth is verified, but not the only one. Surely an idea may be true, and may be verified as true, before its social and political implications are known: e.g. the theory of relativity before the invention of the bomb.
 - f) The truth is useful, but not every useful idea is true. And many true ideas are not immediately useful.
 - g) Scripture, not *praxis* must be the ultimate test of truth, thought to be sure Scripture must be understood in the context of a Scriptural *praxis*.
3. The principle of autonomy is quite clear in liberation theology. Notice how Gutierrez ties his secularism to the immanence-principle of Barth, "Man is the measure of all things, since God became man," 7f.
- a) Does Gen. 1:26ff justify secularism? It does confer upon man a kind of lordship and an important responsibility. But this fact does not render invalid the authority-structure of society, and it emphatically does not set man free from the authority of God's

word. To the contrary, Gen. 1:26ff is a word of God, a word by which man's obedience is tested.

- b) Does salvation aim to “make man more fully human?” Yes, in a way. Adam was originally created in knowledge, righteousness, holiness, and redemption restores these. To say this, however, is not to allow man to define himself autonomously, as the liberationists try to do.
4. Is political liberation part of salvation?
 - a) Not all men are saved. Therefore, some distinction must be made between the history of mankind in general and the history of God's elect. The liberationists hold, basically, a universalist position and thus are unable to make any such distinction.
 - b) Is there an “infinite openness to God” in human nature as such? Well, human nature is such that God is never prevented from doing his will in us. But to put it as the liberationists do grossly underestimates the depth of sin. God is able to reach anyone; but unregenerate sinners have not desire for God whatsoever. (Note ambiguity of “openness:” accessibility to God/desire for him.) The liberationists, however, ignore this distinction, and therefore insist with Barth that all men are created and redeemed in Christ.
 - c) Are creation and redemption correlative?
 - (1) The creation narrative is written in such a way as to anticipate redemption, and, of course, as supralapsarians point out, it is a prerequisite to redemption.
 - (2) And salvation is described as a “new creation.” Thus there are at least important analogies between the two.
 - (3) Creation, however, does not save anyone. Many are created who are not saved.
 5. Gutierrez, in my view, has a more biblically balanced position than Moltmann on the question of “future orientation.” But neither he nor Moltmann faces the question of our relation to the redemptive events of past history.
 6. The immanence side of the transcendence/immanence dialectic is prominent in Gutierrez. God's activity is virtually identified with secular social change
 7. Despite the secularist rhetoric (3, 4 above), Gutierrez does admit that there is more to salvation than political liberation, and that liberation will not in itself abolish all evil. What more is needed is somewhat obscure.
 8. Gutierrez' treatment of Jesus' politics is interesting and edifying. I have no critique of it, though some biblical scholars might. Of course, Gutierrez does not say enough; the crucial matter, e.g., of Jesus' relation to the O.T. law is ignored.
 9. Universalism vitiates Gutierrez' view of the church. Orthodoxy cannot accept his church/world dialectic. However, I rather like his account

of the church's responsibility to be directly involved in politics. From a reformed perspective, see Lyman Smith's paper in the ST 702 (Christian Life) "Hall of Fame."

10. The critique of capitalism

- a) Does capitalism alienate the worker from the fruits of his labor? Only if we suppose that he ought to receive more than he actually receives. But who is to say what a man "ought" to receive, if not the free market? Furthermore, this concept of "alienation" assumes that the capitalist is not entitled to a fair return on his investment. However,
 - (1) That assumption is unbiblical.
 - (2) If no return is justified, then there would be no incentive for capital investment, and only the most primitive kind of economy would be possible, or socialism, of course, q.v.
 - (3) It is true that many in the world are hungry and destitute. In Scripture there are poverty laws which deal with such people in love. But Scripture never allows the poor to claim economic equality as a right. See my "Doctrine of the Christian Life," Eighth Commandment. They have a right to whatever wages their work will bring; anything beyond that is charity.
- b) Is economic inequality caused by coercion and violence? Sometimes, as, e. g., when governments give tax benefits to some over others. Certainly not always. Inequalities arise because of unequal abilities, unequal desire to work, unequal training.
- c) Has "developmentalism" failed? Has capitalism failed?
 - (1) Capitalism has always had a hard time in Latin America. One important reason is that these Roman Catholic countries have never been profoundly exposed to the "Protestant work ethic." Roman Catholicism, as Gutierrez points out, has often illegitimately glorified poverty. Planning capital accumulation for the future is rare, working for bare subsistence more common.
 - (2) It can also be doubted whether capitalism in Latin America has had anything like a fair trial. Nearly every Latin American government has been an authoritarian dictatorship of the right or the left, and even these on the "right" have been quick to seize private property, impose extortion tax rates, spend large amounts on government "showcase" projects, print money to finance foreign debt, discourage foreign investment. This has been the case in both Chile and Brazil, sometimes referred to in liberation theology as "failed experiments in capitalism."
 - (3) Foreign aid has only reinforced these arbitrary regimes and thus done harm for the Latin economies.

- d) Does Scripture forbid private property? In a word, no. The eighth commandment validates private property. Scripture does call us to care for the poor; see a, (3), above. "Possession," "inheritance" is crucial to the covenant.
- e) Does socialism promote brotherhood, personal relationships, humanization?
- (1) On the contrary. Capitalism is more genuinely altruistic. The capitalist, like the socialist, seeks his self-interest. But the capitalist seeks it by trying to meet the needs of someone else - by producing a product or service that someone will buy. The socialist seeks the goods of others at the expense of others. George Gilder (*Wealth and Poverty*) and Michael Novak (*The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*) have done much to seize the moral initiative from the socialists on behalf of capitalism.
 - (2) Capitalism also sees people more as individuals, while socialists see them more as "masses" and "classes." In a sense, then, capitalism is more personalist.
 - (3) If man's dignity does come (in part, at least!) through the fruit of his labor, then-one could make a case that it is socialism, in which government confiscates anything it likes, which creates more alienation between the worker and the fruits of his labor.
 - (4) All this talk about humanization becomes positively ludicrous if one applies it to the tyranny of Cuba or the Soviet Union. But most leftist movements in Latin America would move in that direction if not resisted. Can a Christian conscientiously support such goals?
- f) Isn't Marxism scientific? Much is said in liberation theology about the pretension of Marxism to be "objective" science. But in the first place, there is no "objective" science, as the epistemologically sophisticated liberation theologians ought to be the first to realize. Secondly, much of the "scientific analysis" presented in liberation theology is not much more than unsubstantiated value-judgments.
- g) Are the rich capitalist nations responsible for poverty in Latin America? They must bear some responsibility, e.g. for the misuse of foreign aid. But in general, rich nations are not the cause of poverty elsewhere in the world. If that were true, Japan and Taiwan would be destitute.

XXXIV. Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-)

A. Background

1. Pannenberg is probably the most impressive individual thinker today in Protestant systematic theology.

- a) As I suggested earlier, contemporary theology tends to be done in “schools” or “movements” rather than by great individual thinkers as was the case through the Bultmann era. In some ways, Pannenberg exemplifies this tendency.
 - (1) His distinctive position first emerged through the cooperation of several thinkers in a “working circle” a discussion group which met regularly through 1969. This group was interdisciplinary, including Rolf Rendtorff (O.T.), Klaus Koch (O.T.), Ulrich Wilckens (N.T.), Dietrich Rossler (N.T.), Martin Elze (Church History), Trutz Rendtorff (Church and Society.)
 - (2) Pannenberg is sometimes listed (as in Gundry and Johnson, *Tensions*) among the “theologians of hope,” which group in turn is very closely related to the theology of liberation.
 - b) While there are parallels between the thought of Pannenberg and those of these other theologians, he is best understood today as an individual thinker.
 - (1) He differs with other members of the “working group” (sometimes called the “Pannenberg circle”) on various points, among them the historicity and significance of Jesus’ resurrection - a central point, of course.
 - (2) Although Pannenberg shares with Moltmann some important ideas - the “future orientation,” e.g., he is quite critical of the theologians of hope and they of him.
2. Influence of previous thinkers
- a) Studied with Barth and Jaspers at Basel, 1950. His theology today can be understood in many respects as a reaction against Barth, though not in every respect.
 - b) Studied historical disciplines at Heidelberg, beginning in 1951. There the “Pannenberg circle” began to meet. The circle was encouraged by Profs. Hans von Campenhausen, Gerhard Von Rad, Gunther Bornkamm.
 - c) Pannenberg's distinctive teachings reflect unmistakably the influence of Hegel—so much so that the major differences between Pannenberg and his predecessors may be understood in terms of a major shift from Kantian categories to Hegelian ones. This contrast is not a radical one; both Kant and Hegel operate within the non-Christian transcendence/ immanence dialectic. Rhetorically, however, the difference is substantial.
 - (1) Note, e. g., the Hegelian approach to the existence of God in *The Apostles’ Creed*
 - (2) Pannenberg, like Hegel, seeks to rehabilitate rationalism after a period of Kantian criticism of reason.
 - (3) Pannenberg, like Hegel, sees the truth as a rational historical process, in which contradictions are resolved in higher syntheses.

- (4) For Pannenberg as for Hegel, “the truth is in the whole.” We do not know the definitive truth about anything until the final consummation, the final historical synthesis.
 - (5) Therefore, if we are to know anything in the present, that final consummation must already be present in some sense. An “already and not-yet.” Hegel's absolute also has this dual character.
 - (6) The student, then ought to re-read our earlier discussion of Hegel before he tackles Pannenberg.
3. Evangelical reception
- a) Many evangelicals expressed pleasure at their first acquaintance with Pannenberg's writings, among them Daniel Fuller and Clark Pinnock (writing in *Christianity Today*).
 - b) They applauded, in particular,
 - (1) Pannenberg's argument for the historicity of the resurrection - similar in many ways to the evangelical “evidentialist” argument.
 - (2) His emphasis on the need to verify matters of faith through reason - a corrective to the *fideism* of Barth, Bultmann, *et al.*
 - c) In my opinion, this applause was premature. Pannenberg is something of a breath of fresh air, to be sure, in modern theology; clear, common-sensical, often helpful. However, serious problems remain:
 - (1) He maintains a critical view of Scripture; in fact this is one of his major emphases - the need to bring theology into line with the findings of biblical criticism.
 - (2) His view of the historicity of the resurrection is not as straightforward as it appears. See below.
 - (3) The parallels between Pannenberg and “evidentialism” I regard as danger signals.
4. In what follows, I shall be discussing Pannenberg's thought, following the outline of his book *The Apostles' Creed*. Page numbers refer to that volume unless otherwise indicated.
- B. Faith and Reason
- 1. Faith is commitment (2).
 - 2. The validity of the commitment depends upon the reliability of its object (5), its truth (6). Trust is not “theoretical cognizance,” but it involves “believing certain things to be true.”
 - a) Faith depends on the support of historical natural facts.
 - b) On the basis of these, it commits itself to the reality and truth of the invisible God.
 - c) It rests on the truth of promises - things hoped for in the future. (7)
 - 3. All knowledge, including the knowledge of faith, is incomplete, provisional.
 - a) God is an invisible reality (8).

- b) Statements of the creed are “subject to considerable doubt” (10).
 - c) Our experience of the world is constantly changing. What was certain yesterday is not necessarily certain today (25f).
 - d) Final answers will not be known until the consummation of history (35f). Only the future will show the essence of things (38).
 - e) No absolute laws or similarities in nature (40f).
 - f) Our understanding of Christ, like our response to him, will always be “capable of improvement” (127).
 - g) The Spirit does not give to us “theoretical certainty” (131f, 140).
 - h) No form of life (in the organized church or for the individual) is final. (155)
 - i) Faith in God entails a realization of the provisional character of the world (156), of all finite reality. This is the only reason for the continued existence of the church as an institution separate from the world (157).
4. Therefore, the claims of faith must be subject to rational verification.
- a) Else we leave the truth of these claims undecided; but their truth is crucial (10) - cf. #2, above.
 - b) The truth of these claims is not established merely by our decision to believe them: that is blind faith, self-redemption (10).
 - c) We can test assertions about the resurrection (etc.) “solely and exclusively by the methods of historical research. There is no other way of testing assertions about happenings that are supposed to have once taken place in the past.” (108f)
 - d) Not every Christian need be involved in this verification process, but every Christian ought to know that somewhere in the church this process is going on (11).
 - e) We can subscribe to the creeds even though we are critical of them, as long as we accept the “intentions” of the authors (13).
 - f) People who try to make Christianity independent of historical research are trying to escape the “vulnerability” of Christianity - its susceptibility to falsification. But that vulnerability is central to the very nature of the gospel (45ff). Historical facts, therefore historical research, are indispensable in Christianity.
5. Presuppositions and verification
- a) “... in every historical judgment the valuator's whole experience of the world and himself plays a part. What this or that historian believes to be in any way possible depends on his own picture of reality....” (109)
 - b) The historian is not justified, however, in assuming that nature is absolutely uniform. Science itself denies that (111f). Cf. 40ff.
 - c) Thus the historian must “keep an open mind” when faced with possible events which are not fully explicable according to normal rules. (112f)
6. Revelation (not discussed directly in *The Apostles' Creed*)

- a) Pannenberg disagrees with the neo-orthodox contention that revelation in Scripture is never propositional. He recognizes that Scripture represents God as conveying information to and through prophets.
- b) He himself denies, however, that revelation has this kind of "directness" (cf. Barth). For him, revelation is "indirectly" given to us. We discern it through the rational analysis of historical events. Direct revelation occurs only at the end.
- c) The event of Christ - incarnation, resurrection, ascension - is the criterion for our thinking about God, for in him the end of history is disclosed.
- d) Scripture teaches us of Christ, but we must study it critically.

C. God

1. Importance
 - a) Only the presence of God in Jesus gives his message universal significance (16).
 - b) The ethic of forgiving love is too demanding for men unless God stands behind it (16).
2. Existence: the question is unavoidable. (18ff)
 - a) Challenges of Feuerbach, Marx, Freud, "Death-of-God"
 - b) Vs. Barth, Christianity is analogous to other religions. Thus we can defend Christianity only by showing that the God of Jesus is the true God.
 - c) Legitimacy of the philosophical dialogue over God's existence: assumed from the beginning of the mission to the Gentiles. Christianity adopted the philosophical principle of the unity of God, exploited it (20f). Cf. 34.
3. Arguments for God's existence
 - a) Old causal arguments no longer cogent, since infinite regress, self-explanatory inertia are no longer considered absurd. (21f)
 - b) Modern approach: Consideration of our own limits presupposes knowledge of an absolute beyond those limits (22-24). Not a deductively certain conclusion; each one must decide for himself whether the concept of God illumines reality for him (25f).
4. God as power
 - a) Attributed to God because the incalculable, surprising forces we experience in the world (29). Especially in the history of redemption. (cf. Moltmann) (cf. 39ff)
 - b) Hence, creation. (30f)
5. God as father
 - a) In Christianity, related to God's fatherhood in respect to Jesus.
 - b) The nearness of God who, before the coming judgment offers salvation to all. (32)
6. God as person
 - a) The analogy of personality arises because of the incalculability of forces in the world (28f). Even modern man recognizes this when

he looks at the world in depth, and in comparison with his own nature.

- b) The changeability, newness of the universe must be balanced by an understanding of the covenant faithfulness of God. But even the covenant is fulfilled in “continually new and surprising ways” (38). The unity, then, is visible only at the end.

7. God as future

- a) Since God's power and kingdom, the coherence of history, are yet to come, therefore God himself is “yet to come.” (39)
- b) Only in the light of this future is the truth unveiled.
- c) Creation and providence can be understood only in the light of the end.

8. God as eternal

- a) Not timeless. God has not fixed the details of history from eternity (173f).
- b) Temporal history is of decisive importance for God himself. His eternity is still dependent upon the future of the world. (174)
- c) Already and not-yet: The truth about this life is already present, but it is still to be decided. The ultimate form it takes in the future will be new, surprising (174).

D. The Person of Christ

1. God known through Christ, *vice versa*.

- a) Historically, Israel's faith in God comes before Jesus; Jesus presupposes it (44f).
- b) But through Jesus, this presupposed understanding of God is remodeled, receiving a new and specific definition (45).
- c) Thus (vs. Barth's Christo-monism) there is a kind of reciprocal relation between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of Jesus Christ (44f).

2. The historical Jesus

- a) Christianity has a unique vulnerability since its faith in God is related to a historical person. History can refute its claims. But these claims are indispensable (46). Vs. theological flights from history.
- b) History must seek to get behind even the Scriptures, to discover the truth about Jesus (48).
- c) What do we know about Jesus?
 - (1) His life and message were determined by his expectation of the immediately impending end of the world (49).
 - (a) This idea causes offense to modern man.
 - (b) cf. Schweitzer, Weiss.
 - (2) We cannot construct a biography of Jesus (49).
 - (3) We do know the basic facts: the baptism by John, basic features of his earthly activity and message, death on the cross in Jerusalem, resurrection (or at least the assertion of it by the first Christians). (50).

- (4) His message (50f)
 - (a) Repentance in preparation for the coming judgment (50).
 - (b) Promise of salvation to anyone who accepts the message and Jesus as herald.
 - (c) The fate of men depends solely on their attitude toward the coming kingdom.
 - (d) Therefore, salvation is not by the law (hence, conflict with Jews).
 - (e) To accept Jesus is to accept the coming kingdom and *vice-versa*. Therefore, Jesus is criterion for all knowledge of God.
- d) Is this message incredible for modern man? (51ff)
 - (1) We cannot accept Jesus apart from his eschatological expectation. The ethic of love and forgiveness rests upon that.
 - (2) The kingdom of God did appear definitively in the resurrection (q.v. below). Only through the resurrection was it possible for the disciples to believe in him after the cross.
- 3. Son of man (as Daniel) - comes in the clouds to judge the world (55) (cf. 118ff).
- 4. Suffering servant of God (Isa.)
- 5. Messiah, Christ, King of the Jews (55ff)
 - a) Jesus rejected the title, for he did not want to be regarded as the bearer of Jewish national hopes. He heralded the end of worldly political organization.
 - b) After the resurrection, the title became appropriate.
 - (1) No room for any other bringer of salvation.
 - (2) Jesus himself had changed the nature of messianic expectation. It was now seen as a hope of reconciliation beyond death and the world.
 - (3) The title sums up the meaning of Christ.
 - (a) Christ as coming judge.
 - (b) His present, hidden rule.
 - (c) His dignity in suffering.
 - (d) His mediation of salvation, divine sonship (especially important in the mission to the Gentiles).
 - c) Importance (58ff)
 - (1) Forces us to a decision to accept the divine future, live the present life in trust.
 - (2) Continuity with the hopes of Israel, despite discontinuity.
- 6. Son of God
 - a) Originally, Jesus is "Son" because he proclaims God as father. At this point the title does not indicate Jesus' deity, but arises out of his peculiar sense of intimacy with God (62).
 - b) Closely related to the Messiah in the O.T. (62ff)

- (1) Like the title “Messiah,” therefore, the church attributes this sonship to Jesus in the light of the resurrection.
- (2) Since they see the resurrection as vindicating his pre-resurrection claims, the Christians see Jesus as Son of God even before the resurrection.
- (3) As such, the title does not signify a divine being, but Messianic function (63f).
- c) Also indicates Jesus' uniqueness (64ff).
 - (1) Therefore he is the mediator of creation. In him is the end of all things; therefore all things tend toward him.
 - (2) And he is the sole bearer of revelation.
 - (a) His message is unique because it is God's, but we recognize it as unique, and as God's because of its content: trust in the divine future.
 - (b) Thus we cannot think of God apart from Jesus (68).
- 7. Lord (68ff)
 - a) Used during Jesus' earthly life as polite address.
 - b) After the resurrection, applied to him as a divine title, as in the LXX use of *kurios* for *Yahweh*.
 - c) Justified by his oneness with God as the Son, the final revelation.
 - d) In the Jewish context, “Son” still implied subordination, though it indicated divinity within the Hellenistic sphere, *Kurios* goes beyond this as a direct divine title.
 - e) Emphasizes Jesus' relation to the world, while “Son” emphasizes his relation to God.
 - f) Challenges all other gods, thus emphasizing the claim of universality. Important to the missionary proclamation.
- E. Jesus' Conception and Birth (71ff)
 - 1. Virgin birth—originally emphasized the humanity of Christ, that the Son of God came into the world by natural birth.
 - 2. But some NT passages contradict the virgin birth.
 - 3. The story can be explained as a retrospective justification for Jesus' sonship.
 - 4. Thus, unlike the resurrection, the story of the virgin birth is legendary.
 - 5. Its motive: to confess the presence of God in Jesus' life from its beginning, in the light of Easter. We can honor this intent better through the doctrine of Jesus' pre-existence, But we may confess the virgin birth by confessing its basic intent, as a sign of our unity with the historic church.
- F. Jesus' Sufferings and Death
 - 1. How was Jesus' death vicarious?
 - a) The charge of blasphemy.

- (1) Jesus knew that his death was possible, though he did not seek or prophesy it, Rather, he went to Jerusalem to force the Jews to make a decision concerning him (79).
- (2) The Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy, falsely accused him to the Romans of sedition. (79ff)
- (3) The resurrection shows these charges were wrong.
- (4) Moreover, it exposes the Jews themselves as blasphemers,
- (5) Therefore, Jesus literally died the death which they deserved.
- (6) Since the Jews and Pilate were acting as office-bearers, representative of the Jews and mankind, Jesus died for all.
- b) Vs. Christian enmity towards the Jews (82ff)
 - (1) The Jewish people represented mankind as a whole.
 - (2) The N.T. does not repudiate the promises made to Israel; rather it sees Gentile and Jewish believers in solidarity.
 - (3) The Jewish condemnation of Jesus was proven wrong through the resurrection, as was the right of the Jewish judges to pass such condemnation. Therefore they did not, in this case, speak for the Jewish people.
 - (4) The resurrection vindicates the thrust of Israel's tradition. A proper understanding of that tradition can lead the Jews themselves to repudiate the crucifixion.
- c) Sedition (85ff)
 - (1) Jesus' message of the kingdom did threaten the claims of political rule, though the charge was literally false.
 - (2) But the resurrection shows Pilate and Rome themselves to be guilty of sedition against God. Thus his death was in their place, vicarious.
- d) Atonement
 - (1) Jesus not only died in the place of his accusers, but also takes away their guilt. (85f)
 - (2) He takes it away by offering forgiveness to those who trust him as the herald of God.
- e) Is substitution incredible? Immoral?
 - (1) Each of us is responsible for his work, answerable in some degree for the group of which he is a part.
 - (2) Each of us does live a blasphemous existence apart from grace. God rightly established the Jews and Pilate as our representatives. (88f).
- f) As we die in faith, our death is no longer meaningless, but in solidarity with Jesus death and its meaning. (89).
2. The descent into Hell (90ff)
 - a) Separation from God (Luther)
 - (1) Since Jesus rejected by God's people, rejected also by God.

- (2) The agony of death, especially to one like Jesus, is to know the nearness of God, yet to be cut off from him. Agony of conscience (92).
 - b) Descent as triumph: conquest of Satan, preaching to the disobedient dead (I Pet. 3:19f, 4:6).
 - (1) Image of the missionary preaching of the church.
 - (2) Those who have not had contact with Jesus or with the preached message nevertheless are related to them. They are not guaranteed salvation, but may obtain it through a right relation to him, as described in the beatitudes (94f; cf. 54).
- G. Jesus' Resurrection
1. All accounts of his salvation presuppose this (above). Without it, the story of Jesus is only a story of failure (96f).
 2. The nature of the resurrection
 - a) Not a "revivified corpse" (99f), but transformation to an entirely new plane of life. The appearance in time of that "end."
 - (1) Radical transformation, unity with the creative origin of life, so no more death (I Cor. 15:35ff.) (98f).
 - (2) Thus the resurrection should not be confused with the miraculous railings of Lazarus, others, which do not fit into this category (100f)
 - (a) These less credible.
 - (b) These only temporary, only signs of the true resurrection.
 - b) Thus, resurrection is a metaphor for something unimaginable (98).
 3. Background
 - a) Paul as a Pharisee expected the resurrection, based on prophetic traditions, apocalyptic. Path to blessing, glory, judgment (100ff).
 - b) Jesus, Mark 12:25, Luke 20:36.
 - c) Belief in general resurrection vindicates resurrection of Jesus, *vice-versa*. (102f)
 4. Historicity
 - a) Resurrection is a meaningful concept.
 - (1) Man recognizes the limitations of life; this presupposes some knowledge of what lies beyond the limit (105; cf. 22-4).
 - (2) Can describe this only by analogy with what we know; hence "life after death" (106).
 - (3) Resurrection is a more realistic concept than the Greek notion of immortality. (106)
 - (a) It takes more seriously the gap between life and death.
 - (b) It takes more seriously the physico-spiritual unity of man.
 - b) Must test by methods of critical research (see above, B).

- (1) One must be skeptical up to a point. The resurrection claim is a claim to a very unusual event, to say the least.
 - (2) No scientific objection.
 - (a) Science doesn't determine what can happen.
 - (b) Though natural law inviolable, unknown factors can relate to those laws in new ways.
 - (c) And the resurrection, if true, comes from a sphere inaccessible otherwise to human experience, and thus is expressed only metaphorically (111).
 - (d) And science doesn't take adequate account of the contingency of events (112).
 - c) State of the question
 - (1) There are legendary elements in the resurrection accounts (113), but they cannot be shown to be legendary as a whole.
 - (2) Hallucinatory explanations won't work (113).
 - (3) Otherwise, strong evidence, though still room for dispute.
 - (4) One may suspend judgment, but in doing so he renounces the possibility of understanding the origins of Christianity (113).
 - (5) One would expect the resurrection to be controversial, since it "cuts so deeply into fundamental questions of the understanding of reality." (114)
- H. Jesus' Session, Judgment, Return
1. Logically, these doctrines develop as implications of the resurrection. (116ff)
 - a) The resurrection is connected with the ascension since the resurrection itself is an exaltation to God from the grave.
 - (1) Early, the resurrection appearances are described as coming from heaven.
 - (2) Later more emphasis on the earthliness of the appearances, so the ascension is seen as a later event.
 - b) Session and judgment develop the meaning of the resurrection in relation to the world.
 2. Historically, they develop from the pre-Christian idea of the Son of Man as judge (118ff). Jesus may have referred to this person as someone distinct from himself, but after the resurrection this distinction was no longer possible. The judgment, then, was identified with his kingdom.
 3. This is related to the concept of the "second man" who overcomes the sins of Adam and brings man's destiny to fulfillment (120). He is the criterion for true humanity. This concept reinforces that of judgment, *vice-versa*
 4. Since Jesus is the judge, judgment is present as well as future (121ff).
 5. He rules because he one with God (124ff).
 - a) No distinction between the kingdom of God and that of Christ.

- b) It is fulfilled when it brings all men into fellowship with God (125).
- c) Its purpose is found in love, liberty.
- 6. Rule of Christ not limited to the church, but through the church's proclamation is directed toward all mankind. (126)
 - a) Since that rule is now hidden, only Christians now recognize it.
 - b) Their acknowledgment will be unconvincing unless it is by deeds as well as words.
- I. The Holy Spirit
 - 1. Not ground for irrational faith (130ff), supernatural absolute certainty.
 - 2. Primarily, origin of life.
 - a) We should perhaps relate this even to biological life: spirit as the environment leading living things to transcend their present existence for something higher. (cf. Teilhard) (134f).
 - b) Active in the end-time to give new life to all, eliminate death (136ff).
 - c) Since Jesus' resurrection marks the beginning of the end, the spirit is present for men through Jesus (138).
 - d) Freedom from death liberates us from self-centeredness (139).
 - e) The spirit gives all of life a prophetic character, since its work points toward the endtime.
 - f) The God of Jesus is present in the spirit. (140f)
 - g) The spirit provokes that creative love by which we participate in God's future.
- J. The Church
 - 1. Attributes
 - a) Holy (145f)
 - (1) Belongs to divine sphere.
 - (2) Not separation from the world, but sanctified in the midst of the world.
 - b) Unity: includes elimination of visible divisions (146f).
 - c) Catholic: limited in membership, but open to meet the needs of all mankind (147).
 - d) Apostolic: must preserve mission to the world, not conditions and thought forms of the 1st century (147f).
 - 2. Communion of saints
 - a) Martyrs (149)
 - b) Sacraments
 - c) Mediating Christ through the Word, preaching (150ff)
 - 3. Church and kingdom
 - a) The kingdom is the church's future, and also that of the world (152).
 - b) The church displays the rule of Christ, but the historical form of the church's life at any given time is not identical with the kingdom. (153).
 - c) Thus the church should not seek other-worldly isolation in a special religious sphere (154)

- d) The church lives by faith in the future of the kingdom. (154f).
- e) The church must be concerned, therefore, about justice, but will not hold any social arrangements to be final (155). It must remind the world of its provisional character (156f).
- f) It ought not to contribute to the stabilizing of inhuman institutions (157).

K. Forgiveness of Sins

1. The present state of those united to Christ, anticipating the perfect, future salvation. (160)
2. Negative side of communion with God - liberation from all that separates us from him.
3. Sin is essentially selfishness - almost impossible to escape in human life. Forgiveness, therefore, makes sense only as a future hope.
4. Baptism (161ff)
 - a) In the early church, closely linked with forgiveness; now much less so.
 - b) The modern attitude obscures the relation between forgiveness and the hope of resurrection symbolized in baptism.
 - (1) Forgiveness is a life and death issue.
 - (2) Forgiveness is not an end in itself, but a passage to new life.
 - (3) Modern man cannot see the relevance of "sin" as transgression of moral law; thus we ought to explain forgiveness as rescue from meaninglessness and death (164). But liberating hope will improve morality (165).
 - (4) Forgiveness is the consequence of trust in the future of God (166).
 - (5) Self-liberation from external obstacles is possible and useful only for those liberated from selfishness. Otherwise, people's needs for self-realization collide with one another. (166) And otherwise, the demand for freedom appears arbitrary (168).
 - (6) Thus Christianity encourages personal liberty.
 - (7) Acknowledging sin means a detachment from oneself, but also an expression of true freedom; it already presupposes grace. (168f).

L. The Resurrection and Life Everlasting

1. Resurrection and immortality (170ff)
 - a) The fundamental Christian hope is resurrection of the body; but "immortality" is generally combined with this to account for the period between death and resurrection.
 - b) The problem is that the church has had too "linear" an understanding of time.
2. The Already and Not-yet (172ff)
 - a) What is future already exists in divine concealment
 - b) Is this to be explained by God's timeless eternity? No.
 - (1) Timeless eternity means either that history is fixed by God, or that history has no importance for God.

- (2) But history is decisive for God. His eternity is still dependent upon the future of the world (174).
- c) Thus continuity with the resurrection life is in the divine hiddenness.
- 3. Individual and society (175ff)
 - a) Modern secularism gives no hope for the individual, the dead.
 - b) No direct approach to the kingdom of God by political change, (177)

M. Comments

1. Pannenberg's view of faith as involving assent, resting on historic facts, is a sound position. It is vitiated, however, by Pannenberg's insistence that all knowledge - even knowledge of the resurrection! - is incomplete, provisional.
 - a) No doubt there is always room for improvement in our understanding, faith, lives.
 - b) Scripture, however, teaches that the truth of Christ is known with certainty (Luke L;1-4, Acts 1:3, I Cor. 15:58 (in context), I Pet. 1:3-9, II Tim. 1:12). It is not "merely probable." Ps. 93:5, John 6:69, Isa. 53:4, John 17:8, Acts 12:11, Rev. 22:20.
 - c) Reasons for this certainty.
 - (1) God's infallible speech in history, which Pannenberg does not recognize (principle autonomy).
 - (2) God's speech serves as our presupposition when we seek to ascertain historical information. But Pannenberg rejects this principle also. He insists that every historical judgment must be verified by "neutral" evidence. (This is also a manifestation of the principle of autonomy.)
 - d) The fact that the end of history has not arrived in its consummate form does not mean that our knowledge is all "provisional." Scripture never draws that inference; quite the contrary.
 - (1) The new covenant is a time of completed revelation, Hebrews 1:1-3, 2:1-4, II Peter 1:3f.
 - (2) We have no excuse if we fail to understand or believe. (Hebrews 2:1ff, other "warning passages")
 - (3) Our knowledge is partial, incomplete (I Cor. 13:9-12). But incomplete does not mean uncertain or provisional. Pannenberg regularly confuses these notions.
2. Pannenberg is right to insist that Christianity is based on facts and therefore verifiable; but he is wrong in his view of how that verification takes place.
 - a) Historical research, yes; neutral-secular historical research, no.
 - b) Pannenberg makes some good observations against Bultmannian anti-supernatural prejudice. But he is wrong to advocate total openness.
3. Revelation

- a) Good critique of the neo-orthodox opposition to propositional revelation
- b) Denial of “direct” revelation: The notion that we must evaluate all purported revelation through neutral rational analysis is, again, unscriptural.
- c) Does revelation in its completeness come only at the end? Yes and no. See 1 d, above. True, it is “surprising.”
- 4. Good critique of secular and death-of-God theologies on the importance of the divine existence.
- 5. Gives secular philosophy too much credit in the discussion over God's existence.
- 6. God as future, temporal, dependent on the future of the world: unbiblical positions, similar to process theology (see below).
- 7. Christ
 - a) Seeks to get “behind” the Scriptures to find the truth about Jesus. Compromises biblical authority, sufficiency.
 - b) Eschatological focus of Jesus' message: here, Pannenberg is accurate and honest, though I think he overstates his case a bit. His discussion is helpful here as he shows that Jesus was right about the impending end of the world - the resurrection as the beginning of the end
- 8. Atonement
 - a) Very interesting argument to show how Jesus, in a very literal sense, died as “substitute” for the Jewish and Roman representatives of the human race, and therefore for all.
 - b) The substitution here, however, doesn't quite measure up to the biblical concept of sacrifice for sin. Jesus dies in the place of Pilate *et al.*, and he offers them freedom from sin. But how does his substitutionary death warrant this offer? Nothing much is said about propitiation, expiation, reconciliation, redemption. Nothing much is said about God's involvement in the atonement.
- 9. Resurrection
 - a) Granted, the resurrection is a unique event, not precisely parallel to the raising of Lazarus and others. But this does not entail that “resurrection” is a metaphor for something utterly unimaginable. Scripture presents resurrection appearances in a straightforward way. Jesus appeared, taught, ate, drank, etc.
 - b) Good to emphasize that the resurrection is an “intrusion” of the end-time.
 - c) Verification: see above, 1, 2.
- 10. Spirit
 - a) Pannenberg's account is helpful in stressing the spirit's work in giving life.
 - b) His work in the prophets, however, cannot be reduced merely to an anticipation of the end in their spirit-filled lives. The spirit also gives words.

- c) Thus more needs to be said about the spirit's role in giving assurance (Romans 8:15f, I Thess. 1:5, II Tim. 3:16f). Pannenberg gives this function short shrift, because of his antipathy to certainty and to inspiration.
11. Sin
- a) Wrong to downplay sin as transgression of law. Typical Lutheran!
 - b) Better than the liberation theologians in distinguishing forgiveness from its sociopolitical consequences.
12. Politics
- a) See 1, b above.
 - b) Moltmann's critique of Pannenberg:
 - (1) For Pannenberg, the future is not entirely "open," since the resurrection belongs to the end-time. (F: agree with P here.)
 - (2) For Pannenberg, the cross is less important than the resurrection; thus insufficient emphasis on the servant-character of the church in the world.
 - (3) Insufficient emphasis on the need to transform the socio-political institutions of the world and the methods for doing so.
13. Dialectics
- a) Anti-abstractionist emphasis on "history" and "future" as those things from which theology may not abstract. This emphasis is legitimate, but it introduces confusion as to precisely how our faith is related to these categories.
 - (1) As it turns out, the resurrection, for Pannenberg, is not exactly "historical" in the usual sense.
 - (a) We don't know what happened. We only know that it is analogous to the end-time in some significant way. But it is unclear as to whether Jesus really spoke with apostles after his death, ate, drank, walked through walls, etc.
 - (b) But we do know, we know only provisionally. Thus we cannot present the witness to the resurrection as Paul did as the unshakable basis for faith.
 - (c) Pannenberg finds many "legendary" elements in the resurrection accounts.
 - (d) The relation of the resurrection to our redemption is unclear. So is he talking about the same resurrection Paul talks about?
 - (2) If this unclarity exists regarding the resurrection, then it exists regarding all redemptive-historical events.
 - (3) The end-time, similarly, is far beyond our understanding. In Pannenberg, it becomes a kind of name for that which transcends the limit of our understanding. Cf. Kant's noumenal, Hegel's absolute. But how can such an unknown quantity be of help?

- b) Transcendence and Immanence
 - (1) Transcendence: the super-rational character of the end-time.
 - (2) Immanence: God's temporality, etc., the competence of neutral scholarship. Why shouldn't the transcendence of the end-time reduce our confidence in "historico-critical method?" And *vice-versa*?
 - (3) By adopting a Hegelian epistemology, Pannenberg falls into a Hegelian snare.
 - (a) Since the truth is in the whole, and we don't have the whole, we really know nothing.
 - (b) Therefore, the whole must be present in some sense. But if it is present, then we know everything.
 - (c) Thus, Pannenberg must use modifications: "the end is the present in hidden form," etc. But this sort of principle merely gives him liberty to be dogmatic when he wants. It doesn't help me to know the powers and limits of my reason.

XXXV. Twentieth Century Language Analysis

A. Introduction

1. All philosophers of the twentieth century are preoccupied with language not only the British analysts (now under discussion) and structuralists, but existentialists as well. To Heidegger, language is the "house of being".
2. This emphasis comes partly out of frustration with the continual inability of philosophers to solve problems which have been known for hundreds of years. Maybe some of these problems are the result of misunderstandings; let's define our terms."
3. It comes also from a more profound observation - that language is a kind of gateway to reality: "The real is the sayable and the sayable is the real".
 - a. Nothing can be said to exist unless it can be spoken of.
 - b. Anything which can be spoken of has some sort of reality.
 - c. If language is a key to determining what is (metaphysics), then it is also a key to determining what is knowable (epistemology) and what is right (ethics).
4. Modern thinkers have therefore placed unique emphasis upon the study of language. This approach does, however, have roots in the history of philosophy.
 - a. Plato - determines the nature of "justice," "virtue," etc. not by watching people perform just or virtuous actions, but by discussing how we talk about justice and virtue.
 - b. Aristotle does metaphysics by observing relations between subjects, predicates, attributes, etc. in language. Cf. the categories of Kant.

B. Logical Atomism

1. Figures

a. Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

- (i) Early influences: empiricism (J. S. Mill), idealism (F. N. Bradley), realism (A. Meinong).
- (ii) In 1911 Russell published, with A. N. Whitehead, *Principia Mathematica*, a ground-breaking treatise in logic and mathematics which unveiled a remarkably fruitful new approach to those disciplines.
- (iii) Russell came to feel that the system of the *Principia* reflected in a unique way the structure of the world itself and thus was the gateway to a new philosophy.

b. Ludwig Wittgenstein

- (i) Born to wealthy, tragic family; full of despair, passion for clarity.
- (ii) Early training in engineering; precocious student of Russell.
- (iii) *Tractatus Logica-Philosophicus*: his first book (1918), developed a philosophical system based on the structure of the *Principia*.

2. Ideas

a. "The picture theory of language"

- (i) The way to knowledge in metaphysics is to develop a language purified by Russell's logic, which will then be a "picture" of the world.
- (ii) Every sentence would correspond to a fact in the world.
- (iii) Every word would correspond to an element of a fact - a thing, property or relation.
- (iv) To purify our ordinary language, we must make its sentences correspond with simple facts; we must reduce the complex to the simple.
 - (A) Reduce compound sentences (coordinate clauses with "and") to simple.
 - (F) Reduce statements about generalities ("happiness," "green") to statements about individual sense-data. "England declared war," though simple in form, is really a report about many different events.
 - (G) In the end, the perfect language consists of momentary sense-experience ("This red

now," etc.) (Cf. Russell's "Knowledge by Acquaintance")

(H) But (JF) has anybody actually ever seen a "sense-datum" in this sense? Are these the fundamental building blocks of experience, or are they abstractions from our experiences of red things, etc.?

- (v) What cannot be translated into such "atomic sentences" about "atomic facts" must be eliminated from the language.
- b. Epistemology: Only that is knowable which can be translated into the perfect language. Anything else is unknowable because unspeakable. Wittgenstein did think, however, that there was a realm of "Unknowable" objects. He called it *Das Mystische*, the mystical. It exists, but cannot be spoken of. Cf. the Kantian noumenal.
- c. Ethics
 - (i) Statements about right and wrong cannot be reduced to reports about atomic facts.
 - (ii) Thus there are no ethical truths; ethics is unspeakable, unknowable, improper subject-matter for philosophy.
 - (iii) However, Wittgenstein had deep ethical sensibilities, feelings of guilt. He believed there was something to ethics, though strictly speaking it was beyond the competence of philosophy. Hence ethics belongs to the mystical realm.
- d. Religion
 - (i) "God does not reveal himself in the world": and God is also unsayable, and therefore mystical.
 - (ii) Same for the soul, salvation, etc.
- e. Philosophy
 - (i) God, soul and world are beyond the scope of the perfect language (cf. Kant)
 - (ii) The perfect language can only picture facts; it cannot picture relationships between language and fact. (The eye is not part of its own field of vision.
 - (iii) A perfect language cannot speak of what is possible or impossible, or of what ought to be.

- (iv) Wittgenstein recognizes that most all philosophy—including the *Tractatus* itself!--violates these restrictions. Thus at the end he rejects his own statements as meaningless! They are useful only as tools to bring us to the point where we stop asking senseless questions. The book closes with the following "mystical" passage: "My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak, throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly. Whereof one cannot speak, thereof must one be silent."

3. Comment

- a. Rationalism: All reality must conform to the structure of Russell's logic and the perfect language. But this rational structure rules out all rational discourse, so:
- b. Irrationalism: In the end, we are left with an irrational, inexpressible, mystical vision.

C. Logical Positivism (R. Carnap, M. Schlick, C. Hempel, H. Feigl, A. J. Ayer)

1. Background: Viennese scientists and philosophers were intrigued by the *Tractatus* and tried to develop a system which stripped the *Tractatus* of its mysticism and self-refuting character. They adopted some of the ideas and messianic pretensions of European positivism (A. Comte); hence "logical positivism". During the ascendancy of this position, Wittgenstein had abandoned philosophy ("Whereof one cannot speak...") Cf. also Charles Peirce.
2. Revisions of Logical Atomism
 - a. Rejection of the "picture theory": language is not, nor ought it necessarily to be, a perfect picture of the world.
 - b. Rejection of all metaphysics, including that of the *Tractatus*. Philosophy does not discover any facts unavailable to other disciplines.
 - c. The task of philosophy is simply to analyze and clarify the language of science.

3. Kinds of Language
 - a. Tautologies ("The chair is a chair"; "either it will rain tomorrow or it will not") We know that these are true merely by knowing the meanings of the terms.
 - b. Contradictions ("It is raining and it is not.") We know these are false merely by knowing the meanings of the terms.
 - c. Empirical statements ("The back fence is white.") These may be true or false. We cannot determine their truth or falsity merely by the meanings of the terms; rather we must investigate ("empirically") the facts in question. Only statements in this category convey information about the world.
 - d. "Emotive language" - a catch-all category misleadingly used to include commands, questions, poetry, etc.
4. The "Verification Principle":
 - a. For any statement to be "empirically meaningful" or "cognitively meaningful" (i.e. to fit into group c, iii above) it must be verifiable by methods akin to those of natural science.
 - b. By this test, all ethical, metaphysical and religious language is "cognitively meaningless," though it may have some "emotive" value. It conveys no information about the world, but may express attitudes toward the world, etc.
5. Criticisms of the Verification Principle
 - a. Its vagueness
 - (i) An early formulation of the principle was that a statement is cognitively meaningful if it is conclusively verifiable through empirical evidence. However, this version of the principle ruled out as meaningless all general statements ("For any falling body"), and therefore proved intolerable to science itself.
 - (ii) An alternative, suggested by Karl Popper: a statement is cognitively meaningful if it is conclusively falsifiable, i.e. that there are empirical means of showing conclusively that the statement is false if indeed it is false. But this version ruled out as meaningless all "particular assertions" ("Black holes exist," "Some

- cows are yellow"), and thus also proved intolerable to science.
- (iii) A third version: a statement is cognitively meaningful if there is some empirical evidence relevant to its truth or falsity. But this version appeared to allow for all the metaphysical, ethical and religious language which the positivists wanted to reject.
- c. Its arbitrariness: The positivists appeared to be involved in a frenzied search for a formulation which allowed for scientific language while ruling out the language of metaphysics, religion and ethics from the sphere of "cognitive meaning". As such it appeared to be a mere rationalization of prejudice.
 - d. Its dubious basis: The positivists found it difficult to agree on what, exactly, constitutes empirical knowledge. What is the empirical "foundation," the "protocols," by which hypotheses are verified?
 - (i) Carnap, Neurath: determined by coherence or by the role of the sentences (e.g. as axioms) in a body of science.
 - (ii) Schlick: more Humean, Russellian: psychological experiences of sensation, pain, etc.
- c. Its self-refuting character: The verification principle itself was not "verifiable" under any of its various formulations. Therefore, if the verification principle were true, the principle itself would have to be rejected as cognitively meaningless, i.e. as a quasi-religious utterance. Thus positivism manifested itself as a religion.
 - d. The contradiction arises from the rationalist/irrationalist dialectic. As rationalists, the positivists attempted to reduce all meaningful utterance to their rational scheme. But that scheme turned out to be:
 - (i) vacuous and trivial, for it defined a concept of "cognitive meaning" which did not correspond with any concept actually used in science or anywhere else.
 - (ii) self-refuting (iii above) and arbitrary (ii above) - the result of an (irrational) faith commitment which calls the rationality of the whole scheme into question.

6. Is Christianity verifiable? falsifiable? (cf. "Doctrine of the Knowledge of God.")
- a. Some years after the heyday of positivism, Antony Flew reiterated the positivism challenge to Christianity, using the verification principle in the Popper formulation. Cf. Frame, "God and Biblical Language". "What would have to happen to make you abandon your belief in God? And if no event could make you do that, then how is a theistic universe different from a non-theistic one? And if there is no difference, what difference is there between theism and atheism?"
 - b. Response
 - (i) From a Christian perspective, Christianity is verifiable; all facts speak of God. Christianity is also falsifiable. If God's promises fail, God is not true.
 - (ii) But Christianity resists all arguments which purport to falsify Christianity from a non-Christian presupposition.
 - (iii) Christianity resists falsification from non-Christian assumptions, because it is itself a presupposition; it claims the right to judge evidence.
 - (iv) Flew's verification principle is also a presupposition (see above), and logically therefore in the same boat as the Christian presuppositions.
 - (v) But Flew's principle makes predication impossible.

F. Ordinary Language Philosophy

1. Background

- a. In 1929, Wittgenstein returned to philosophy after some years of "silence." He had never been a logical positivist, but he had been rethinking the ideas of the *Tractatus*. After a few years he had developed rather different approaches - "the later Wittgenstein".
- b. Most of his writings after 1930 reflect this new approach. The standard work is *Philosophical Investigations*; the general approach is best understood through *The Blue and Brown Books*.
- c. Wittgenstein's disciples: Ryle, Strawson, Malcolm, Waismann, Holmer, Austin, Urmson, et al.

2. Emphases

- a. Language has a wide variety of uses vs. logical atomism which reduced all uses of language to that of "picturing facts," and logical positivism which ignored all uses of language except its use to convey propositional information. Promising, thanking, cursing, praying, joking, greeting, pretending, etc. - mutually irreducible.
- b. Thus, there is little point in stigmatizing language as in some way meaningless because it fails to picture facts or convey verifiable information.
- c. vs. notion of "perfect language"; no language is perfect for all purposes.
- d. In general, the meaning of language is its use. All language including metaphysical, ethical and religious language, is meaningful if it has a legitimate use among some group of people.
- e. Vs. reductionism
 - (i) It is not always clear what is meant by "reducing complex facts to simple ones," in logical atomism. Complex facts have many sorts of complexities all at once. No fact is "simple" in every respect.
 - (ii) One cannot always reduce vague language to more precise language. "Stand roughly there" is vague, but untranslatable. It says exactly what the speaker wants to say.
- f. Vs. generalizations: A group of things bearing the same name may have no single characteristic in common, but rather an overlapping set of similarities of various sorts - "family resemblances."
- g. Philosophy
 - (i) vs. metaphysics: Philosophers have no access to facts unavailable to other disciplines.
 - (ii) vs. metaphysics: Philosophical problems arise when words are used outside their natural contexts in human life. "Time" poses no problems when used in ordinary life; but when someone asks the "nature" or "essence" of time, everything gets confused.
 - (iii) The philosopher aims to "cure" those confusions by showing that such

problems never arise when the word is rightly used.

- (iv) Though Wittgenstein mainly saw philosophy negatively - as curing misconceptions, he also said that once the confusion is cleared away then we see the world rightly. This more positive function of philosophy, analyzing language in use to determine what the world is really like, has been emphasized by Strawson, Austin and others ("descriptive metaphysics").

h. Religion

- (i) Religious language is a peculiar use of language found among certain groups of people. It has a legitimate use, and is therefore meaningful.
- (ii) Religious language is different from scientific language in important ways:
 - (A) It tends to be concerned with certainties, not possibilities or probabilities.
 - (B) Though offering reasons for its statements, it claims more certainty than the reasons appear to permit. (The old verification problem.)
 - (C) It has a large emotional component
 - (D) It makes belief or disbelief a moral issue.
 - (E) It regulates the conduct of those who use it.

(iii) Thus religious language must not be used to question scientific conclusions. It has a unique character, a unique use. It must therefore be kept in its own compartment.

i. On Certainty

- (i) Two kinds of doubt, two kinds of knowledge
 - (A) Practical doubt, that can be resolved by methods accepted in the language game (leading to practical knowledge). "Not seeing, but acting" is the key to justification.
 - (B) Doubt that is merely theoretical and has no means of resolution, e.g.
 - (1) Doubt that I have two hands.
 - (2) Doubt that other people exist.
 - (3) Doubt that the world has existed more than

five minutes.

- (C) Such doubt illegitimate, because it uses terms like “believe,” “doubt,” and “know” outside their normal (“language game”) contexts.
- (D) Epistemological theories often try to relieve doubt of the second kind. But these are useless, for they stretch language beyond its limits. Cf. “is it four o’clock on the sun?”
 - (i) What evidence can be brought to bear is no stronger than the original assertion.
 - (ii) If we question the basic certainties, we question our whole way of life.
- (ii) How do we define the proper language game?
 - (A) It is something we inherit.
 - (B) Intuition: “What would it be like to doubt that I have two hands, and to try to relieve that doubt?”

3. Comments

- a. Many useful points here about the richness of language.
- b. Irrationalism: the critique of metaphysics, the desire to allow any use of language and to make no judgment as to its propriety.
- c. Rationalism: the critique of metaphysics rests on the notion of “proper use,” which is never defined except in a question-begging way. All is made to conform to this notion, but the notion itself is so vague that it becomes a pretext for asserting prejudices.
- d. Some useful points about the distinctiveness of religious language, some not so useful. But religious language is distinctive, not because it deals with some narrow, peculiar subject- matter, nor because it is properly used only in certain restricted areas of life. It is distinctive precisely because it is presuppositional, and thus demands authority over all of life.
- e. Certainty: again, defining the language game is difficult. It is not obvious that general or metaphysical doubts are illegitimate. The metaphysical-epistemological language games are also played, and various thinkers have indeed proposed methods of resolving these questions. Where do we draw the line between an improper question and a proper one that is simply difficult to answer?

A. Foundationalism

1. Goals
 - a. a clear structuring of beliefs
 - b. basing beliefs on a certain foundation
 - c. clarity in justification: specifying where justification ends
2. Main distinction
 - a. “basic beliefs,” which are not justified by other beliefs
 - b. “nonbasic beliefs,” which receive their justification from basic beliefs
 - c. This structuration is not necessarily conscious, nor does it necessarily reflect the actual reasons people give for believing. It is, rather, normative. The claim is that this is the way our knowledge *ought* to be structured, to meet the above goals.
3. “Strong” foundationalism
 - a. The foundation is infallible; of it we are invincibly certain. It includes such as the following:
 - (1) Self-evident truths, immediately known when understood (e.g., “no part is greater than the whole,” axioms of logic and mathematics).
 - (2) Incorrigible propositions (e.g. Descartes’ “I exist,” Russell’s “I am in pain”)
 - (3) Truths evident to the senses (Hume’s impressions, Russell’s sense-data, Chisholm’s “I am appeared to freely”).
 - (4) Derivation of nonbasic beliefs
 - (a) Descartes: only logical deduction preserves certainty.
 - (b) Others allow induction also. Induction permits only probable conclusions, but at least that probability, in their view, is based on certainty.
 - b. Problems
 - (1) Wood: but how do we know that we know?
 - (2) And mustn’t we assume that the logical structure reflects reality?
 - (3) Actually, we accept many other beliefs without support, such as the reliability of our senses, that are neither self-evident, nor incorrigible, nor evident to the senses.
 - (A) Even truths that are supposedly self-evident, etc., depend on “background beliefs.”
 - (i) In Descartes’ “I exist,” who is the “I”?
 - (ii) Sellars: perceptual beliefs unintelligible without connections to past experience.
 - (iii) JF: do we actually have “momentary experiences of redness,” or is our experience of redness an abstraction from experiences of red cars, red shirts, etc.?
 - (iv) Toulmin, Kuhn, Hanson: observations are theory-laden.

- (B) So these not absolutely foundational, nor the ground of certainty.
 - (i) For strong foundationalists, we must not only have foundational beliefs, but must also know why these are certain. That is a difficult criterion to meet.
 - (ii) It is hard to know how this criterion can be met, except by basing the foundational beliefs upon even more foundational beliefs, creating an infinite regress.
- iii. Methods of supporting the nonbasic: are deduction and induction sufficient?
 - (A) What about abduction, retroduction?
 - (B) Chisholm: *mutual* support among beliefs.
- iv. Individualism
- v. How do I know that I know (infinite regress)?
- vi. Wolterstorff: do these basic propositions serve to establish the whole of human knowledge? Is the foundation sufficient?
- vii. Presupposes mind-body dualism? Knowledge actually takes place in particular situations, with concrete aims and obstacles in mind:
 - (A) Kuhn's "paradigms"
 - (B) Wittgenstein's "language games"
 - (C) Dilthey's "life categories"
 - (D) Gadamer's "horizons"
- viii. Ignores noetic effects of sin
- 4. "Modest" Foundationalism
 - a. Basic beliefs not absolutely certain, but "innocent until proved guilty." Like Reid's common-sense axioms.
 - (i) Universal, indispensable, irresistible.
 - (ii) Don't require us to be aware of what propositions are basic.
 - (iii) We may believe them, since they are produced by reliable epistemic processes. (Wood: why only these, and not other beliefs?)
 - b. Problems
 - (i) Underestimates possibilities of disagreement about basic beliefs. (Wood: e.g. arguments about the principle of sufficient reason.) So some might credibly argue rejection of Reid's basic beliefs.
 - (ii) Or some might argue for basic beliefs that don't meet Reid's criteria (are *they* basic?) like Plantinga's God.
- 5. Evidentialism (W. K. Clifford): Always wrong to believe something without sufficient evidence.

- a) A kind of foundationalism, since the evidence serves as the foundation.
 - b) But there must also be evidence for the evidence, etc., so the process leads to infinite regress, or perhaps a form of coherentism (below).
 - c) Urged on pragmatic grounds. But are these sufficient to establish truth?
 - d) Insists that evidence be consciously held: to know something, we must know why we believe it.
 - (1) Reid and others would question this. Isn't an experience sufficient?
 - (2) Wykstra: at least somebody in the community should be able to defend the belief.
 - e) How much evidence is enough? Differences in different fields, etc. The nature of evidence presupposes knowledge of a subject.
- B. Coherentism: A belief is justified just as long as it fits in with the rest of what we believe.
- 1. Doesn't necessarily mean that old beliefs must always be held to against incompatible new candidates. Sometimes it is the old belief that must go, to achieve coherence.
 - 2. The concept of coherence
 - a) Non-contradiction; but many incompatible systems can be non-contradictory.
 - b) Explanatory power: what accounts for more data? Two systems can be tied in this respect as well.
 - c) Having a coherent set of beliefs may be attributable to pathology.
 - 3. Keith Lehrer: coherence as *competition*.
 - a) Vs. paranoids, etc., you must accept your beliefs in the interest of gaining truth.
 - b) If no competition between a belief-candidate and another belief, anticipate possible objections.
 - c) You must be able to rebut those objections, in order to believe justifiably.
 - d) Wood's objections
 - (1) But that process can lead to more objections, more rebuttals, infinite regress.
 - (2) And if you must have a belief *about* the coherence of your belief with others, that in turn requires justification, ad infinitum.
 - (3) Hard to show that a new belief coheres with *all* our others, many of which we are not aware of.
- C. Reliabilism
- 1. Externalism
 - a) Foundationalism and coherentism are *internalist*, for they justify beliefs by something within the knower.

- (1) These are also *doxastic* forms of internalism, for they justify beliefs by means of other beliefs. Other forms of internalism, like the “direct realism” of John Pollock, justify beliefs by internal data other than beliefs (sense data, other forms of “acquaintance”).
- (2) For them, justifying a belief involves being able to justify it to myself and to others.
- (3) But it’s possible that I could be justified in believing something, even though I cannot describe that justification. E. g. the knowledge of young children, many of our present beliefs.
- b) This fact suggests the possibility of an *externalist* justification: a belief is justified if it is rightly related to the truth, regardless of whether I may myself be able to justify it.
- c) Here, the term “justification” takes on a somewhat different meaning, however.
 - (1) Internalist justification is subjective. It represents my own reason for believing.
 - (2) Externalist justification is objective. It appeals to the way in which a person’s cognitive equipment is related to the world.
- 2. Reliabilism says that we are justified in believing p if that belief is produced by reliable epistemic processes.
 - a) Various views of reliability
 - (1) D. M. Armstrong: *nomologically*, by the laws of nature (like thermometer).
 - (2) Robert Nozick: *counterfactually* (“if p weren’t true, S wouldn’t believe that p”).
 - (3) Alvin Goldman, “process reliabilism”: justified when a belief has the right causal history.
 - b) Problems
 - (1) Problem of generality: what processes must be reliable in each case, and how reliable must they be?
 - (a) Vision, for example, is not equally reliable in every case.
 - (b) But if you specify the case too narrowly (“seeing a cardinal while seated in my kitchen on August 7 and 5:32 a.m...”) it can happen only once, so nothing general can be said about its reliability.
 - (c) Plantinga: cognitive faculties must work properly, in the right environments, in the way God intended them to function (“proper function”).
 - (2) Laurence Bonjour: vs. rejecting subjective justification: you need to be aware of your justification in order to pursue truth responsibly.
 - (a) Wood: both are important.
 - (i) Internalism: to take personal responsibility.
 - (ii) Externalism: to be in accord with the objective truth.

(b) Compare in ethics, the need to satisfy conscience *and* to act rightly. (JF: the normative and existential perspectives.)

- D. Relation of Above Views to Biblical Epistemology
1. All Christian beliefs must be brought into accord with Scripture. In that sense, Christian epistemology is foundationalist.
 2. Scripture warrants propositions that are not in Scripture, by deduction, induction, abduction, application.
 3. But we can also argue for Scripture from extra-scriptural premises, as long as those themselves are warranted by Scripture (the epistemological circle). In this sense, Christian epistemology is coherentist.
 4. Ultimately, however, the truth of our beliefs is determined by God himself, particularly his providence in creating us and redeeming us from sinful distortion of the truth. In that sense, Christian epistemology is reliabilist.
 5. Subjective justification: we seek (existential) to attain conformity to God's revelation of himself (normative) in understanding the world (situational).
 6. Objective justification: our beliefs are objectively true when they agree with God's revelation (normative) in its application to the world (situational) and the self (existential).

XXXIV. Alvin Plantinga (1932-), "Reformed epistemology"

- A. Plantinga distinguishes between "warrant" (external) and "justification" (internal), interpreting warrant as proper function (see above).
- B. So Plantinga argues that belief in the Christian God need not be subject to the evidentialist demand. We have the right to believe in God without evidence.
- C. For Christians, belief in God is a foundational belief, "properly basic."
 1. Though arguments can be helpful, this belief is not based on argument.
 2. Positively, it comes through proper function of our cognitive faculties in certain situations. E.g., when we are moved by the starry heavens to believe in God, this belief is not necessarily caused by a cosmological or teleological argument. Rather, something about that situation stimulates our epistemic faculties to believe in God. (Calvin's *sensus deitatis*).
 3. This belief is defeasible. It can be rebutted by evidence against God's existence. Of course the believer may also find defeaters to such evidence.
- D. Questions
 1. Why should we *take* belief in God as properly basic?
 - a) Plantinga, vs. classical foundationalism, believes that we should not limit basic beliefs to self-evident truths and such. But what criterion is there for choosing beliefs that are properly basic?

- b) The “Great Pumpkin Objection”: can you take just anything as properly basic?
 - c) Plantinga: the relevant examples of basic and nonbasic beliefs will come from those accepted as such in one’s community.
 - d) Members of other communities may disagree; some will be rationally justified in taking atheism as basic.
 - e) So there will be disagreements that are hard to overcome; but that is not a problem for Christian belief; disagreements are always to be expected.
 - f) Though non-Christians may be justified in taking their beliefs as properly basic, their beliefs are not thereby true or warranted (subjective vs. objective, internal vs. external).
2. How does this conclusion aid the confidence of the Christian?
- a) It shows he is rational in taking belief in God as properly basic.
 - b) It does not show that this belief is true.
 - (1) It is defeasible.
 - (2) Those who oppose it also have the right to take their beliefs as properly basic.
 - c) So Plantinga’s religious epistemology requires supplementation to show that Christian belief is not only properly basic, but also “warranted” or true.
 - (1) Plantinga himself has offered arguments to this effect in other writings.
 - (2) This is the role of apologetics as such. In my view, the phrase “Reformed Epistemology Apologetics” (in Steve Cowan, ed., *Five Views of Apologetics*) is a misnomer.
 - d) Scripturally, it is not enough to believe in God as properly basic. God is, rather, the Lord of all and therefore of all reasoning. He is the *presupposition* for all human thought.
 - (1) Unlike properly basic beliefs, a presupposition is not defeasible as long as it is held. For it serves as the criterion of truth and falsity, of epistemic justification.
 - (2) Those who hold contrary presuppositions (unlike Plantinga’s view of those who hold contrary basic beliefs) have no right to hold them. They thereby willfully violate the clear knowledge of the true God revealed to them, and they will be judged for their unbelief. This is a fuller reading of the implications of Calvin’s epistemology.

XXXV. Gordon H. Clark (1902-1985)

1. Significance: Next to Van Til, Clark is, in my opinion, the most interesting apologist of our century. He excels Van Til in clarity and often in cogency of argument. His critiques of non-Christian thought are among the most useful available, and unlike most apologists, he has an appreciation for the need of presupposing the Word of God in all of thought.

There are, however, some serious difficulties in his approach.

2. The Critique of Empiricism
 - a. Clark uses standard rationalistic, Humean and Kantian arguments to show that from sense-experience one can derive no universal or necessary principles.
 - b. Scientific laws do not describe the real world but only summarize a set of experimental operations ("operationalism," P. Bridgman).
 - c. Thus attempts to criticize Christianity on scientific grounds are fallacious.
 - d. It is also impossible to prove the existence of God from the data of sense-experience. The cosmological argument is invalid.
 - (1) Unclear and ambiguous terminology (in part stemming from Aquinas' doctrine of analogy).
 - (2) Kantian and Humean arguments that such proofs go beyond the realm of possible experience; if reduced to their proper sphere they establish at most a finite god.
 - e. Historical evidences "including the Resurrection) prove nothing in themselves. As isolated events, they could mean anything.
3. Presuppositionalism
 - a. Facts, therefore, have no meaning in themselves, but only in relation to others and ultimately to a whole system of thought.
 - b. Each system is governed by presuppositions which serve as the ultimate tests of truth within the system.
 - c. Ultimate presuppositions are not demonstrable, for they are the very basis of all demonstration.
 - d. For Christianity, the ultimate presupposition is the propositional truth of Scripture. Only Scripture, in fact may be regarded as genuine knowledge, in contrast with all knowledge allegedly derived from experience.
4. Logical Consistency
 - a. How do we decide among competing presuppositions? Ultimately no demonstration is possible (above); but as in geometry, one may seek the most logically consistent and richest system.
 - b. Logic, being universal and necessary, cannot be based on sense-experience. It is the structure of the divine thought itself implanted into man's mind at creation.

- c. One cannot question the principles of logic and still speak meaningfully.
 - d. Non-Christian systems display contradictions on analysis which are not found in Christianity.
 - (1) Materialism reduces its own thought to matter and motion and thus invalidates itself.
 - (2) The positivist verification principle cannot be verified.
 - (3) Non-Christian systems end up in "skeptical futility."
5. The Criterion of Richness: Though this is less explicit in Clark, he does seem to use this criterion as well.
- a. Cf. Clark's use of the geometric analogy - above, 4, a.
 - b. Lack of such a criterion would produce a problem easily solved with this criterion: Many sets of propositions are logically consistent, but few are adequate to stand up as world views.
 - c. Clark often recommends Christianity as giving satisfactory accounts of ethics, epistemology, language, psychology, etc.
6. Divine "Incomprehensibility"
- a. In Clark's view God's thought is unlike man's
 - (1) Quantitatively (God knows more facts)
 - (2) In mode (God's thought is an eternal intuition)
 - b. But God's thought may be equivalent to man's in "content" -- when God thinks of a rose and man thinks of a rose the same thing is in two minds.
 - c. Else, says Clark, we are lost in skepticism, for we never attain to really true ideas, those in God's mind.
7. The Concept of Faith: Clark reduces faith to intellectual assent, though he finds a richness in the concept of "intellectual assent" not generally acknowledged. He praises Christianity for giving primacy to propositional truth, over against emotion, etc.
8. Evaluation
- a. Empiricism
 - (1) Empiricism is inadequate.
 - (2) Clark is right to use arguments from rationalists, Hume and Kant to show that even from an unbelieving standpoint empiricism will not hold up.
 - (3) It is true also that facts taken in themselves prove nothing. God never intended for them to be taken "in themselves".
 - (4) Clark, however is weak in showing that these difficulties are part of a larger problem, that the

problems with empiricism are part of the rationalist/irrationalist dialectic native to sinful thought.

- (5) Clark acknowledges little positive role for sense experience within the context of the Christian "system". Surely it is the case that when facts are taken, not "in themselves" or "in isolation" but in conjunction with the whole pattern of divine revelation, they yield a clear revelation of God (Ps. 19, Rom. 1, etc.)

b. Presuppositions:

- (1) Clark is inclined to see presuppositions only as propositional axioms, not as "basic commitments" of the whole person. Many of our decisions, however, arise from commitments which we have never expressed propositionally.
- (2) To say that ultimate presuppositions are not demonstrable is to say that the evidence for Christianity is, in the end, only probable. On the contrary, these presuppositions are demonstrable by argument which, though circular, incorporates premises from outside themselves (cf. "Doctrine of the Knowledge of God").

c. Logic

- (1) Human logic has a history; there have been many different systems. Which of these is Clark's ultimate test of truth?
- (a) Not just the law of non-contradiction in the abstract. Clark knows that rules for the application of this law must also be agreed on if the law is to be useful as a criterion.
- (b) Clark holds to Aristotle's system over against that of Bertrand Russell. But does this not elevate Aristotle to a status equivalent to Scripture, namely as the supplier of an ultimate test of truth?
- (c) When questioned as to why he accepts Aristotle over Russell, Clark referred to one of his own papers. When asked whether he was sure that his paper was right Clark replied, "If it isn't, no predication is possible." Does this not elevate, not only Aristotle, but Clark

himself, to quasi-canonical status, thus compromising the sufficiency of Scripture which Clark elsewhere is zealous to guard?

- (2) Logic cannot be applied unless we know the meanings of the words in the sentences to which the logic is applied. But learning the meanings of words is inevitably an empirical affair. Cf. Poythress, *Philosophy, Science, and the Sovereignty of God*, 199ff.
- (3) Why is it that the truths of logic appear to be "universal and necessary" and thus in a different class from other truths? The question leads us into a highly difficult area. Ultimately, I would say that these truths seem unexceptional because we adopt them as presuppositions of our systems at fairly basic levels (cf. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"). -But if this is the case, then for the Christian Scripture must be seen as a more basic presupposition than any logical theory. Scripture does indeed teach that God is wise, and hence logical; but it does not validate any human system of logic as being infallible. Thus we must beware of putting any such system on too high a plane.
- (4) Clark is rather too confident in his ability to resolve all apparent contradictions within Christianity. If we come across an apparent contradiction which neither Clark nor we can resolve, are we on that account to abandon our faith? That would not, in my view, be warranted.
- (5) Clark's logical critiques of non-Christian systems:
 - (a) Often these are excellent, and we can use them to show one sort of problem which arises from the rationalist/irrationalist dialectic.
 - (b) However, logical problems are not the only sorts of problems worth exploring.
 - (c) And, as in his critique of empiricism, he often fails to trace the logical contradictions to their roots in the general structure of unbelief.

- (d) No non-Christian will give up his whole system because of one apparent contradiction which he cannot resolve, nor ought he, any more than a Christian ought to.
 - (e) Clark often misleads the unbeliever into thinking that logic is one point of "neutral" common ground which Christians and non-Christians share. Of course, Christians and non-Christians do assent to the same formulations of the laws of logic. But they apply the "laws of thought" in such radically different ways that they cannot be said to agree on a common meaning for them (meaning = application).
- d. Richness: Here too there is much good material. Clark presents Christianity as speaking to all areas of human life. However, he often appears to concede to the unbeliever the capacity to judge this richness in terms of his own principles.
- e. Incomprehensibility
- (1) The notion of "sameness in content" is extremely confused. Cf. Frame, *Van Til the Theologian*, 21-23.
 - (2) Clark's purpose, to avoid skepticism by insisting that our thoughts "agree" with God's, is laudable. To say without qualification that there is no continuity between God's thoughts and ours is a denial of the divine image and is a deistic notion.
 - (3) But Clark's opponents (including Van Til) also have a point: the creator/creature distinction must be preserved; at no point may we suggest that God and man are composed of the same "stuff."
 - (4) Points ii and iii were intentionally phrased in vague terms. Scripture does not enter into precise detail as to how God's mind differs from ours. However, we must confess that since God is creator and Lord, there is a Lordly quality to his thinking which does not pertain to any of our thinking. A "qualitative difference".
 - (5) Clark's problem is that he puts very little emphasis on the difference between God's mind and ours. He is so anxious to save us

from skepticism that he makes Aristotle's logic equivalent to God's. But if a human logical system can be equivalent to God's, what is to prevent us from saying that human knowledge in some other field is equivalent to God's (cf. above, c, iii)? This sort of approach certainly contradicts such passages as Rom. 11:33-36. In fact, if as Clark says, facts get their meaning from a total system, and if (as Clark seems to deny, but I think plausible) logical truths are facts, and if God and man share the same logical truths, then we would have to conclude that God and man share the same total system, and there is no difference between divine and human thought.

- f. Faith
 - (1) The "primacy of the intellect" is not, in my view, a Scriptural notion. Cf. "Doctrine of the Knowledge of God."
 - (2) The relation between faith and intellectual assent is a complex question. One can, of course, make them equivalent if one defines the latter broadly enough. Indeed, it is not possible to "assent" fully to God's truth and yet disobey him (cf. my remarks on the devil's irrationality). Yet people do assent to true propositions about God without having true faith, and thus Clark's way of putting it can cause confusion. Certainly one must not intellectualize faith so as to rule out regeneration of the emotions, will, etc., from its scope.
- g. Summary: Despite many good emphases and helpful arguments, Clark's work contains too much reasoning on a would-be-neutral basis, shows an inadequate grasp of the distinctions between creator and creature and between Christian and non-Christian reasoning. His intellectualism confuses some biblical teachings and unduly restricts the material he can bring to bear upon the non-Christian.

XXXVI. Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987)

- A. Bible-believing, Reformed
- B. Creation
 - 1. All facts pre-interpreted by God, so no "brute" or uninterpreted facts.
 - 2. Facts and laws are correlative. Neither exist without the other.

3. The world is one and many in analogy to the Trinity. So neither unity nor multiplicity is ultimate or without the other. Vs. extremes of realism and nominalism.
- C. Analogical Knowledge
1. Aquinas argued that the language we use about God can never be literal (univocal), but bears some *analogy* to God's actual nature. Van Til neither affirmed nor denied this, though he was critical of Aquinas's "analogy of being."
 2. For Van Til, analogical knowledge is simply "thinking God's thoughts after him," which for Van Til could mean only "thinking according to God's revelation."
 3. In Van Til's view, our thoughts are never *identical* to God's, contra Clark.
 - a) God's thoughts are original, ours derivative.
 - b) God's thoughts have divine attributes (eternal, infinite, omniscient, etc.), while ours do not.
 - c) God's subjective experience of thinking is very different from ours.
 - d) We are called to think as servants, in subjection to another; God thinks as Lord.
 - e) But in my view Van Til does not deny that God and man can affirm the same propositions, though he was accused of denying this.
 4. The "analogical system"
 - a) Van Til affirms the use of logic in developing a system of thought.
 - b) But because God is incomprehensible, there are "apparent contradictions" in his revelation, that we may not be able to resolve, such as the goodness of God and the reality of evil, divine sovereignty and human responsibility, etc.
 - c) These should motivate caution in our logical deductions. We should constantly look at the explicit teachings of Scripture, lest our deductions lead us into conflict with God's revelation.
 - d) "Multiperspectivalism:" each doctrine includes the others and the whole.
- D. Presuppositions
1. Not an apriorist in the sense of disparaging empirical or a posteriori knowledge. As indicated above, Van Til insisted on the correlativity between facts and logic.
 2. But he did maintain that God's Word has absolute authority over all aspects of human life, including thinking and reasoning. So our knowledge of Scripture must govern our understanding of everything else.
 3. This must be the case even when we are witnessing to non-Christians. Especially then, for to do otherwise is not a consistent witness.

4. A presupposition may be defined as a belief that takes precedence over other beliefs.
5. An *ultimate* presupposition is one that takes precedence over *all* other beliefs. It will be the basic commitment of one's heart.

E. Evidence

1. Van Til does not deny (as often accused), but strongly affirms the legitimacy in using evidence to verify the truth of revelation.
2. However, that evidence must be used in a biblical way, not as "brute fact," but as facts created and directed by God.
3. This introduces circularity into theological and apologetic reasoning.
 - a) Van Til warrants circularity only at one point: when we are arguing for God, the very criterion of truth.
 - b) All other systems must do the same. The rationalist can offer only a circular argument for the validity of reason, etc.
 - c) Can such circular arguments be persuasive?
 - (1) Yes, because this is the way God intended for our minds to think, in order to reach him.
 - (2) "Narrowly" circular arguments (e.g. "God exists because God exists") are not persuasive.
 - (3) But we can broaden the circle by bringing in facts, e.g., "Archaeological discoveries support the reliability of the Book of Acts." Of course, we seek to analyze the archaeological data in accord with Scripture, so the argument is still circular. But exposing an inquirer to this data is often epistemically beneficial.
 - d) In another sense, the argument is linear: from God's rationality, to human faith, to the theistic argument, to the theistic conclusion.

F. The Noetic Effects of Sin

1. Van Til put much emphasis on Romans 1.
 - a) The unbeliever knows God clearly.
 - b) But he suppresses that truth, exchanges it for a lie, etc.
2. Scripture often emphasizes the antithesis between the wisdom of the world and the truth of God, between the mind of the flesh and that of the spirit, etc.
3. For Van Til, the antithesis is absolute "in principle." Satan and his unbelieving servants oppose the truth of God, though they know it is true. This is almost the definition of irrationalism.
4. But in fact Satan and human unbelievers do often utter true statements, even about God.
 - a) The devils admit that God is one and that Christ is "the holy one of God."
 - b) The Pharisees were relatively orthodox Old Testament believers, but were children of the devil.
5. Van Til tries various ways of formulating the antithesis that must be judged inadequate:

- a) The unbeliever is obligated to know God, but doesn't actually know him (contradicts Rom. 1:21).
 - b) The unbeliever is in contact with God's revelation, but always interprets it wrongly. (But Scripture presents Satan and unbelievers as making true statements.)
 - c) The unbeliever knows God in a formal sense. (The meaning of this is unclear.)
 - d) The unbeliever knows God, but doesn't love him. (True, but isn't there also a defect in his actual knowledge?)
6. In my view, there is no truth that the unbeliever cannot utter. The antithesis is rather to be found
- a) In the unbeliever's overall project, of joining Satan to overthrow God's sovereignty. This project is so irrational that it infects his thinking in profound ways.
 - b) In the unbeliever's consistent purpose of attacking the truth of God, both in his own consciousness, in others, and in society.
- G. Rationalism and Irrationalism
1. As the result of sin, the unbeliever tries to combine belief in his intellectual self-sufficiency (rationalism) with belief that there is no ultimate rationality to the world (irrationalism).
 2. This pattern can be seen through the history of thought (see above), and it serves as a powerful tool for criticism of non-Christian thinkers.
- H. Van Til's Apologetic
1. The "traditional method"
 - a) Assumes human intellectual autonomy.
 - b) Fails to presuppose God's revelation, sometimes for fear of circularity.
 - c) Assumes that the world is intelligible apart from God, and furnishes premises by which God's revelation can be proved true.
 - d) Argues only that Christianity is "probable," which, in Van Til's view, denies the clarity of revelation. (JF: I don't agree here. A claim of probability may simply be an admission of the limitations of one's own argument. The evidence, revelation, is necessarily clear; our arguments, our formulations of the evidence, are not necessarily so.)
 - e) JF: Van Til is correct to find these errors in *much* of the apologetic tradition, but I find presuppositional tendencies there also. The tradition is not consistently autonomist, and its errors do not invalidate every argument.
 2. The presuppositional method
 - a) Frankly deny intellectual autonomy, presuppose God's revelation.
 - b) Insist that God's revelation is, indeed, the only source of meaning and rationality in the world.
 - c) Argue "transcendentally"

- (1) Show that the truth of Scripture is the very condition of meaningfulness and rationality.
- (2) Show that to deny this leads to chaos and irrationality.
- (3) JF: I question the extent to which transcendental argument differs from non-transcendental argument.