

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

TRINITY AND TIME:

AN INVESTIGATION INTO GOD'S BEING AND HIS RELATIONSHIP

WITH THE CREATED ORDER, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

KARL BARTH AND ROBERT W. JENSON

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

BY

JASON M. CURTIS

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

JUNE, 2007

For Marya, Evan, Will and David

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
----------------------------	-----

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION: IS GOD TEMPORAL OR ATEMPORAL?	1
Arguments for Divine Atemporality	
Arguments for Divine Temporality	
Ramifications of Time Theories	
2. ROBERT W. JENSON ON THE TRIUNE IDENTITY	18
The god of the Greeks and the God According to the Gospel	
The Triune Identity and Character: Starting with the Gospel	
The Triune Identity and Character: Narrative Identification	
The Triune Identity and Character: Dramatic Coherence	
3. ROBERT W. JENSON ON THE DIVINE ETERNITY: TRINITY AND TIME	38
Triune Identity and the Gospel Claims	
Trinity as <i>Temporal Infinity</i>	
Time	
4. KARL BARTH ON TIME AND ETERNITY: THE PRIORITY OF TRINITY AND INCARNATION	64
Schleiermacher and the Theology of the Day	
<i>Romans</i> II and the Time-Eternity Dialectic	
The Christological Grounding of Revelation	
God's Triunity: Divine Being and Act	
<i>Excursus: History as Urgeschichte</i>	
God's Triunity: Immanent and Economic Trinity	
God's Triunity: The Divine Freedom	
God's Triunity: Unity in Multiplicity	

5. KARL BARTH ON TIME AND ETERNITY: TRINITY, JESUS CHRIST, AND HUMANITY	105
The Divine Eternity	
The Time of Jesus Christ	
Man’s Time	
Pannenberg on Time and Eternity	
6. TIME AND ETERNITY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF BARTH AND JENSON	157
The <i>analogia fidei</i> in Relation to Time and Eternity	
God’s Temporality in Himself and With Us as His Futurity	
God’s Futurity: An Assessment of Jenson’s Proposal	
7. CONCLUSION	188
BIBLIOGRAPHY	191

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Years before we would end up there I clearly remember the first time I logged onto the website for the divinity school at the University of Edinburgh and simply stared at it, wondering what it would be like to study at such a place. I consider myself one of the fortunate ones to have enrolled and accomplished something at such a prestigious institution under the tutelage of some of the finest scholars in the world. It has been an experience I shall not soon forget and one that I hope to aid other young scholars attain.

However, I have not completed it alone and there are many dear friends and family to thank. The nine or so years I spent at the Community Bible Church shaped me in many ways, but especially through my relationship with John Barnett. Hopefully the lessons I learned there will remain with me in spite of stepping into a slightly different world with different challenges. I am grateful to CBC for their love, prayers and financial support that they gave our family during our time in Edinburgh. This relationship, though formally severed some five years ago, continues today as strong as it ever was. I am especially grateful to Joe and Margrit Fusco, Todd and Denise Corey, Tom and Patti Rishforth, and Dan and Terry Beach for all their love and care for our family.

No doubt there are many students who are far more skilled and intelligent than I and can finish a PhD without significant interaction with other students or professors. I am not one of those people. Without my colleagues this would have been at worst, a disaster, and at best, a very dull affair. Long hours of conversation, debate, prayer and just plain fun enriched my experience and gave invaluable insight into my own work. I am especially grateful to Darren Kennedy, Eric Ortlund, Andrew O'Neill, Andrew MacFarland, Guy Richard, Hunter Bailey, and my very good friend, Todd Daly. In them I not only encountered scholarly collegiality, but I have made lifelong friends. In addition to my wonderful colleagues my supervisor, Professor David Fergusson, has been a significant influence. His gentle and patient instruction has expanded my horizons and taught me to strive for excellent scholarship, brevity, and a spirit of humility, all with a view toward being a benefit to the church. I am also grateful for the golf outings and the friendly football banter, especially since Celtic normally got the best of Hearts!

Prior to moving to Edinburgh I was encouraged to find a good church congregation and God blessed us with two. We are indebted to the congregations of St. Paul's and St. George's Church and Barclay Church for their love and support. Special thanks to Dave

Richards, Duncan and Esther Maclean, David and Mairi Simpson, Rob and Dorothy Plummer, Sam Torrens, and John Ritchie for their abiding friendships.

Thanks should go to my in-laws, Wayne and Janice Osborne, whose prayer and financial support have made a great impact on us. They are prayer warriors and have not failed to lift us up on a daily basis. Who can count the impact of this? We are truly grateful. My parents, Larry and Linda Curtis, have been a huge blessing to us in many ways, not the least of which was a massive financial sacrifice in order to see this through. They are the most generous, sacrificial people I know, putting aside their own security for the sake of their children. I only hope to be half as loving as they have been to us. Other family members have also been a particular blessing, especially my brother and his wife, Chris and Gina Curtis, and my sister and her husband, Shannon and Jeff Capshaw. All have sacrificed time and money that they really did not have in order to keep us in Edinburgh. Chris and Gina made countless runs to the bank, paid bills, wrote letters and checks for us, and did all the little, annoying things that no one even wants to bother to do for themselves. Shannon made many a deposit into our bank account, simply because she loves us. She then gave me a job upon our return to the U.S., and for her love and generosity I am forever grateful.

Though all of those mentioned have played an essential role in this project, none is greater than my wife, Marya, and my boys, Evan, Will, and David. To my boys, I am so grateful for your patience and flexibility as Dad pursued something that was difficult for you to get your heads round. You were content to sleep on hard mattresses and live in a wee box of a flat for four years just for me, and I will always be grateful. I am also thankful that you have managed so well after leaving your Edinburgh home and moving to the strange new world of the United States. I love you more than you know. To my dear wife, words simply cannot express how much I am indebted to you for your support, patience, sacrifice, endurance and love for me and the boys. You left security and stability and opted for insecurity and uncertainty in order to give me a chance at a dream. My dream became your dream. Your fingerprints are all over this project, so that it is as much yours as it is mine. It is with a heart full of love that I dedicate it to you.

Florida
2007

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: IS GOD ATEMPORAL OR TEMPORAL?

It seems that from the inception of western civilization as we know it the question of the nature of our time has been prominent. In fact, Sherover has claimed that “it was concern with the nature of time and change that first provoked the Western development of rational thinking about the world...”¹ Thinking about time, though, has experienced the ebb and flow of history that is typical of any subject, where at certain epochs the issue was more recognized than at others. Among the many important contributions of twentieth century thought has been a renewed interest in the nature of time² and the correlate to this phenomenon has been the resurgence within Christian thought of the relationship of God and time.

Even though for centuries philosophers and theologians have grappled with the topic, since Augustine (354-430) the basic view that God is atemporal has ruled the tradition.³ The Medieval Scholastics devoted more energy to the question than anyone else, either following Augustine or building upon his foundation.⁴ Since this medieval period, however, Christian theology has only tangentially treated the matter, normally taking the shape of a perpetuation

¹ Charles M. Sherover, *Are We In Time?: And Other Essays on Time and Temporality*, ed., Gregory R. Johnson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003), 3.

² Ibid. Some of the most influential thinkers are: J. M. E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence*, vol.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927); Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans., John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962); Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam, 1988); Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose, *The Nature of Space and Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); D. H. Mellor, *Real Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Hans Reichenbach, *The Direction of Time*, ed., Maria Reichenbach (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956); and J. J. C. Smart, *Language and Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

³ What I intend by the predicate “atemporal” is a being that lacks temporal location and extension. That is, God is atemporal in the sense that he did not exist *before* today, nor will he exist tomorrow, for to say this is to affirm that he is contained within the “now” of time and to be eternal God must be free from any sort of containment. This is what it means to say God lacks temporal location. Additionally, God lacks temporal extension in that he does not have duration within time. So, it would be logically possible to assert that God has temporal location without duration, but not the reverse. That God lacks *both* temporal location *and* extension is what in this thesis I will categorize as atemporal, which is the version that can most closely be identified with the Christian tradition. To this see, Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 6-15. But, as I have already stated, it is possible that God has temporal location without temporal extension—at least, the type of extension that loses to the past and anticipates the future. This kind of possibility could be labeled “timeless” in that God’s temporality has location within our time, but extension that is uniquely his own. This thesis is an argument for a repudiation of atemporality in favor of timelessness in this specific sense.

⁴ The most prominent patristic and medieval thinkers on this subject are the following: Augustine, *Confessions*, trans., Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), XI; Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans., P. G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Anselm, *Proslogion*, trans., ed., M. J. Charlesworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965); Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica and Summa Contra Gentiles*; John Duns Scotus, *A Treatise on God as First Principle*, 2nd ed., ed., trans., Allan B. Wolter (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966); and William of Ockham, *Predestination, God’s Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, 2nd ed., trans., Marilyn Adams and Norman Kretzmann (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1983).

of divine atemporality within a brief discussion on eternity,⁵ and certainly not in any thorough, scholastic sort of sense. Therefore, that God is atemporal has been the given within theology, and I would argue, at least at the grassroots level, that remains the case.

Yet philosophical challenges to this conception arose with Kant's first *Critique* when he proclaimed the primacy of time for human understanding.⁶

Kant's essential argument here is to challenge the entire tradition in its postulation of atemporal or supratemporal concepts as the source of cognitive truth. Against all rationalisms... , Kant argued that the human understanding is only able to obtain knowledge of the world in which it finds itself by the use of concepts which are temporally structured and which are thereby qualified to enter into the field of time in which all our experience transpires.⁷

The Kantian challenge for theology (or, better, an aspect of it) was to explain exactly how an atemporal God could be apprehended within human cognition that is temporally bounded. The conclusion to this dilemma was that since "timeless concepts are not cognitive and that the only ways in which we can make legitimate cognitive claims about the world as we perceive it is to use concepts that are temporally structured,"⁸ then it would be impossible to obtain knowledge of an atemporal entity. Further, if our cognition of the world and not the world in itself becomes primary, then time and not space is the fundamental dimension of human existence.⁹ The challenge would prove to be one taken very seriously both by philosophy and theology, indeed, much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be understood as a movement toward some kind of resolution between the world as it is and our experience of it; or, what we can know in ourselves and what it is that grounds or enables that knowledge.

⁵ As in Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, eds., H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976), 203-06.

⁶ *Critique of Pure Reason* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1996).

⁷ Charles M. Sherover, ed., *The Human Experience of Time: The Development of Its Philosophic Meaning* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1975), 114. Hereafter referred to as *HET*, followed by page number.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 115. Of course, in Kantian terms, time and space are functions of the mind and not necessarily the way the world is in itself. Our *knowledge* of the world is essentially temporal and that which is outside that temporal cognition may exist but cannot be attained by means of that cognition. See Andrew Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy: From Kant to Habermas* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 14.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 118. Below we will discover that this is a critique of Barth from Richard Roberts, i.e. that his theology as a whole hangs on his conception of time and eternity. I will argue there that this overstates the case, yet it does appear that Barth is willing to articulate his theology within the context of Kant's temporal challenge, demonstrated by the fact of his lengthy explanation of how the Kantian challenge, i.e. time and eternity, is answered by God's revelation in Jesus Christ. See his, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History*, trans., Brian Cozens and John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 2001), 290-98.

This effort comes into sharp relief through the philosophy of Hegel whose attempts to ground our existence in time and history nevertheless could not be freed from an intrinsic connection with the timeless, static eternity. Hegel insisted that our time is dynamic, that only the present is actual, and that our time is a constant movement of the present negating that which by such negation becomes the past. Time is a linear movement of “presents.” Yet, the dynamic nature of our history is grounded in the eternal Present that does not move and, in turn, grounds our temporal presents.

Seeking to understand the nuances of dynamic existence, Hegel, in the end, rooted the temporal in the non-temporal, discovered the dynamic in the static, derived contingency from necessity, and grounded time in eternity. Advocating concreteness, he found the existential concrete in the abstractions of logical formulas... Subjecting time to logic, we see here, as Gilson once observed, that “logic has eaten up the whole of reality.”¹⁰

The echoes of charges laid at Karl Barth’s door, as we will see, are striking, yet not without remedy.¹¹

The resurgence in the twentieth century of the preoccupation with time has taken the form of a strict analysis of temporal concepts and a continued concern with what it means to experience time.¹² Additionally, Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity has raised questions regarding any possibility we might have of reaching a uniform understanding of time. Philosophy and science have continued to search for that elusive, all-encompassing description of temporality as the way things are and temporality as we experience it. This, in

¹⁰ Sherover, *HET*, 162.

¹¹ Barth’s own perspective on Hegel can be seen in his *Protestant Theology*, 370-407. While in some respects his doctrine of time may indeed stand on Hegel’s shoulders he is nonetheless critical of him in particular regarding God’s freedom. “Hegel, in making the dialectical method of logic the essential nature of God, made impossible the knowledge of the actual dialectic of grace, which has its foundation in the freedom of God” (406). Hegel’s Trinity cannot be identified with Barth’s centrally due to the former’s equating of it with a logical concept, rather than with God’s gracious freedom to reveal himself as Father, Son, and Spirit. I believe that this focus upon the trinitarian personal event is the key to understanding time and eternity. Additionally, the relationship of Barth, Jenson, and Hegel would be an interesting one, but one that falls outside of this thesis. I am primarily interested in the priority that Barth and Jenson give to Trinity, how that determines their view of time and eternity, and where *these* two thinkers converge and diverge. I must leave the question of Hegel’s role in their theologies to the side, for the diversion would be too great and would steer us away from our central interlocutors. For more on Hegel’s view of time and eternity see his Lectures of 1824 in, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume III: The Consummate Religion*, ed., Peter C. Hodgson, trans., R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 185-98; *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans., A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 486-90; *The Philosophy of Nature*, trans., A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), §§ 257-61. On Hegel’s relationship to Christianity and especially his doctrine of God see, Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 124-52; Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 127-40; and William Desmond, *Hegel’s God: A Counterfeit Double?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 145-51.

¹² Sherover, *HET*, 261-77, 437-65.

turn, has had its impact on the world of Christian theology, especially regarding the implications for an understanding of God's eternity, and only in the last twenty or thirty years have theologians and Christian philosophers of religion begun to reexamine the received doctrine of divine atemporality. Most have done so in the wake of these philosophical and scientific challenges, combined with an unease concerning the tradition's seeming disregard of the picture the Bible presents of God's close relationship to time and change.¹³ There is a strong and sustained movement away from the traditional doctrine of atemporality—that much is certain. What is less clear is the shape of alternative proposals. That is, much of the work done by Christian philosophers has primarily centered on the argument for a dynamic or process view of our time, as opposed to a version of time that would be more conducive to an atemporal eternity. How that dynamic view of time accords with the God to which the Bible testifies is on the whole uncharted territory. Thus, in my judgment, what Christian theology needs, not as a replacement to the philosophical work undertaken as a response to specific challenges but rather as a supplement to it, is a theology of time and eternity that links current opinions with God's own self-revelation. I will embark upon this task by considering some recent proposals on time within the context of comparing and contrasting the theological approach to the topic of time and eternity of Karl Barth¹⁴ and Robert W. Jenson.

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the continuing search for a way of understanding the relationship of God's eternity to our temporality, but to do so from eternity as the starting point, rather than the nature of our time. That is, God's self-revelation as Father, Son, and Spirit reveals what his eternity is, and, given that he is in relation to our world as Creator and, consummately, in Jesus Christ, he has priority to determine the nature of both eternity and time.¹⁵ I do not dispute the contributions of the philosophers of religion that begin with time and move toward eternity, but, as I will argue throughout the thesis, true statements about God must spring from God himself, thus a theological approach to time and eternity seems to me to be the foundation of the doctrinal structure.

¹³ See, for example, James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (Naperville: IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1969). The pitfalls, in my view, of the tradition's adherence to atemporality will be demonstrated below.

¹⁴ My interest in Barth also is due to the burgeoning Barth scholarship, primarily in the English-speaking world. Indeed, most published works in the last twenty-five years on Barth have English as their primary language and most of Barth's major works are now in English. Further, the only full-length work published on Barth's view of time and eternity was by an English-speaking author. It is reasonable to accomplish the task of this thesis working principally within the English language sources. I will make reference to German sources as necessary, but enough has been written in English to garner an accurate picture of Barth's doctrine of time and eternity.

¹⁵ Thus, the fear that this approach is little more than a regression to Greek metaphysics as the speculation of what a divine being (any divine being) should look like is assuaged by its dependence upon what comes to us from God, not what we posit concerning him.

This chapter will briefly outline the most relevant arguments for and against divine atemporality. It will serve to demonstrate an opinion of this thesis, namely, we should understand God as temporal *in some sense* and the view that has characterized the tradition is unacceptable for Christian theology. The remainder of the thesis will compare and contrast Barth and Jenson on the possibility of divine temporality and what that sense would entail, followed by a critical engagement of both that, hopefully, will contribute to the broader discussion on time and eternity.

Arguments for Divine Atemporality

Aquinas, building on Aristotle's *Physics*, argues for God's atemporality from his understanding of simplicity and immutability, and he arrives at a definition for each through the *via negativa*, i.e. by describing what he *is not*.¹⁶ God is simple because he is not composite, for being composite entails change and individuality in terms of form and matter. What does it mean that God lacks individuality in form and matter? For Aquinas, everything that exists in this world has form and matter. The form of something is what it is in actuality. For example, it is what makes a particular dog a dog. The dog may be black, but if it were somehow turned white, it would not cease to be a dog but only be described as a white dog. Certainly the dog is different, but, for Aquinas, the change has not been "substantial," only "accidental."¹⁷ On the other hand, if the dog dies, then its form substantially changes and becomes something other than a dog, namely, a corpse. So, form is necessarily connected to an individual thing, in our example, a dog. Matter is also something that is necessary to individuals, but it is the opposite of form.¹⁸ Davies is helpful in this regard:

It is that by which something having a nature might cease to have it and turn into something else...Matter, for Aquinas, is opposed to form. Form is that by which something actually *is*, while matter is that by which what it is might *not be*. In other words, in thinking of matter Aquinas has in mind a historical line (though not a quantity of actual imperishable stuff) running through a series of perishings and comings to be.¹⁹

¹⁶ See Colin E. Gunton, *Act and Being Towards a Theology of Divine Attributes* (London: SCM Press, 2002).

¹⁷ For a good discussion on Aquinas's ideas in this regard see, Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 45-51.

¹⁸ For a detailed treatment of Aquinas's teaching on matter see, Christopher Hughes, "Matter and Actuality in Aquinas," in Brian Davies, ed., *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 61-76.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

Aquinas, then, regards matter as existing only potentially, dependent on its form, not possessing substance, property, or attribute.²⁰ Based on these definitions of form and matter, Aquinas develops his idea of the individual. What makes a person who she is, as opposed to another person, is not characteristics such as height, hair color, etc., for saying that they are individuals based on such accidentals is already presupposing their individuality.²¹ Neither can individuality be understood in terms of essence or nature (substantial form), because two people who are essentially human beings share that fact and it is not something unique to them.²² Aquinas concludes that matter, which in this world cannot be separated from a physical body, distinguishes individuals.

Therefore, for Aquinas to assert God's simplicity is to say that he is not subject to substantial change, nor is he composed of form and matter. Matter is the thing that causes something *not* to be. There can be no potentiality in God, only pure form, so he is not an individual as we normally understand them to be.²³ Furthermore, to identify a human being is to say that they exist because of their nature. But we have seen that the nature of being a human is something that is shared; hence, one is not *identical* to human nature, but it is something one *possesses*.²⁴ This is not the case for God. God, not composed of either form or matter, is simple in that he is identical to his own nature.²⁵

For Aquinas, simplicity is linked to immutability. Being simple God is identical with his nature, so nothing can be added to it for that would imply potentiality, and Aquinas believes that anything having potentiality undergoes change. Additionally, Aquinas believes that God is changeless because he is the first cause of all change in the world. If the first cause were mutable, then something else must exert change upon it, thus undermining the very idea of a first cause, and Aquinas clearly affirms that there cannot be an infinite number of first causes.²⁶ These concepts directly impact his doctrine of divine eternity. Aquinas believes that creatures bound by time inescapably undergo *ontological* change. Again, relying on Aristotle's *Physics* he argues that time measures change, and without change there is no time. Strictly speaking, time is not itself change, but it is incomprehensible to speak of the passing of time apart from change. Every being subjected to time must have past,

²⁰ *ST*, Ia. 76. 7.

²¹ Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 49.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans., ed., James F. Anderson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), I, 16-17, 100-03. Hereafter, I will refer to this work as *SG*, followed by book number, chapter and page.

²⁴ Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 52.

²⁵ *ST*, Ia. 3. 3.

²⁶ *ST*, Ia. 9. 1.

present, and future, and this is precisely what it means to change. Since time and change are bound together Aquinas must say that God is not subject to time. He explains:

As we attain to the knowledge of simple things by way of compound things, so must we reach to the knowledge of eternity by means of time, which is nothing but the numbering of movement by “before” and “after.” For since succession occurs in every movement, and one part comes after another, the fact that we reckon before and after in movement, makes us apprehend time, which is nothing else but the measure of before and after in movement. The idea of eternity follows immutability, as the idea of time follows movement, as appears from the preceding article. Hence, as God is supremely immutable, it supremely belongs to Him to be eternal.²⁷

Therefore, based on the nature of time as inextricably bound to change and on God as essentially simple and immutable (in a strong sense) Aquinas argues that God must be atemporal.

Giving classic expression to God’s eternity, Boethius argues that if God were temporal as we are, he would not possess all his life at once, and failing to do so would disqualify one from being eternal. A being that loses life to the past or anticipates its future, or that is subject to time in that it is merely everlasting cannot be eternal. Rather, the eternal being possesses his life at once without loss or anticipation. He states: “So what does rightly claim the title of eternal is that which grasps and possesses simultaneously the entire fullness of life without end; no part of the future is lacking to it, and no part of the past has escaped it.”²⁸ Thus, Boethius assumes that if God is indeed a “life,” then he must live it, i.e. it must have duration, for the life that is an instantaneous point is not a life, and, further, could not be the God of the scripture. But this raises an interesting concept and one that has relevance for this thesis: can there exist an eternity with duration? That is, can there be an eternity that has duration yet without any temporal extension—that does not have any earlier or later moments? Two recent efforts to justify Boethius’s theory come from Stump and Kretzmann²⁹ and Brian Leftow.³⁰ Additionally, (and more to our point) Barth favorably quotes Boethius’s definition, though he works out his definition of eternity in a much different fashion than the aforementioned philosophers. Nevertheless, we find similarities

²⁷ *ST*, 1a. 10. 1.

²⁸ *Consolation*, 5.6, 111.

²⁹ Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, “Eternity,” *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981),

³⁰ Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 125-46. Both Stump and Kretzmann and Leftow argue in detail for the possibility of a durational eternity, though this is disputed on two levels: first, whether they have accurately read Boethius, and second, whether such a concept can exist in relation to dynamic temporality. Interestingly, temporalists are not the only ones to dispute the idea of a durational eternity. See, for example, Paul Helm, “Divine Timeless Eternity,” *Four Views: God and Time*, ed., Gregory E. Ganssle (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 37.

between Barth and Boethius, principally in language, e.g. Barth's *reine Dauer* (pure duration). Barth will follow Boethius in positing an eternity that possesses temporality and in viewing our time as dynamic (process). Nevertheless, for all the disparity between commentators on Boethius, it at least seems clear that he was not advocating some kind of divine temporality that would resemble one of the contemporary options. For Boethius, if God was not timeless,³¹ then some of his existence would be past and some would be future, thus lacking aspects of his existence. God can lack nothing necessary to him, thus Boethius considers his timelessness crucial to maintain his full immutability and omniscience.

One final argument for atemporality comes from Paul Helm and it considers the ramifications of a temporal view of God for divine spatiality.³² Helm's argument is an attempt to lend credence to the idea of divine atemporality by countering assertions for divine temporality with parallel arguments that would necessarily cause God to be spatial (in Helm's view). The first argument is one from "indexicals" from Nicholas Wolterstorff.³³ Helm frames Wolterstorff's argument in the following manner: from

- (1) The kettle is boiling
we can infer
- (2) The kettle is boiling at present
From
- (3) The kettle boils on 19th January
we cannot infer (2).

What we discover from this is that (3) does not tell us that the kettle is boiling at the present time as (1) does. So, if one does not know temporally where one is in relation to when the kettle boils and when January 19 is, then one cannot know when (1) is actually true.

Someone can only know that (1) is true if they know *when* it happens, since every event is necessarily temporally indexed.³⁴ Wolterstorff believes that God can only know true events, and since all events are temporally indexed, on Helm's scheme there are things he cannot know, i.e. the past and future.³⁵

³¹ Interpreters of Boethius argue as to his specific definitions and intentions regarding God and time. I fear that he can be used by varying positions to say whatever one wants him to say, but it is difficult for me to see exactly how he would fall outside the basic Augustinian tradition. The impetus for these thinkers in the tradition was to preserve God from temporal contamination, and Boethius affirms a similar view. See Garrett J. DeWeese, *God and the Nature of Time* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 134-45, hereafter referred to as *GNT*, followed by page number, and Pike, 10-15.

³² Paul Helm, "God and Spacelessness," *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, eds., Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 99-110.

³³ Nicholas Wolterstorff, "God Everlasting," *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, eds., Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz, 77-98. We will examine Wolterstorff's theory in some more detail below.

³⁴ Helm, "God and Spacelessness," 100-01.

³⁵ Of course, Wolterstorff believes all this is true, *if we view God as atemporal*. He does not believe that God has incomplete knowledge. God, according to Wolterstorff, has complete knowledge *because* he is temporal.

Helm's counter to this indexical argument is simply to replace "time" with "space." It goes like this: while from

- (1) The kettle is boiling here
we can infer
- (2) The kettle is boiling at this place, i.e., where I am or we are
we cannot infer (2) from
- (3) The kettle is boiling in the Old Kent Road.³⁶

The application to God should become obvious. God can only know that an event takes place "here" if it is truly occurring. Further, he cannot know that the kettle is boiling at Old Kent Road unless he occupies that particular space. According to Helm, we must concede some ignorance on God's part in regard to where things take place if we follow this line of thought.³⁷ Helm's conclusion is that most theists (either for or against divine timelessness) are not willing to concede God's spatiality, nor should they. Thus, Helm views God's spacelessness and atemporality as necessary to maintaining the proper view of God.³⁸

Arguments for Divine Temporality

First, Wolterstorff argues for God's temporality because the scripture represents him as such. No atemporalist would object that scripture presents God as acting within time, but rather would affirm it as fervently as Wolterstorff does. Interestingly, even an atemporalist as conservative as Helm admits that scripture does not present an airtight case for divine atemporality; however, he believes it does not contradict atemporality, and may favor it.³⁹ Over against the scripture's apparent testimony of God's temporality the bulk of Christian history affirms his atemporality. What does Wolterstorff make of this? He posits three defenses for his position:

1) Wolterstorff proceeds on the hermeneutical principle that "an implication of one's accepting Scripture as canonical is that one will affirm as literally true Scripture's representation of God unless one has good reason not to do so."⁴⁰ The "good reason for not doing so" amounts to whether a "literal interpretation conflicts with 'purity of life or

³⁶ Ibid., 101-02.

³⁷ Ibid., 102. Helm also dialogues with two other arguments for divine temporality, applying the same "space-formula" for both. See, 102-07.

³⁸ Space does not allow a thorough discussion of Augustine's view of the nature of time and eternity. See his *Confessions*, XI; Christopher Kirwan, *Augustine* (London: Routledge, 1989), 151-86; Roland J. Teske, S.J., *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996); and Paul Helm, *Faith and Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 79-103.

³⁹ Helm, "Divine Timeless Eternity," *Four Views: God and Time*, 32.

⁴⁰ Wolterstorff, "Unqualified Divine Temporality," *Four Views: God and Time*, 188.

soundness of doctrine.’’⁴¹ Obviously for him, divine temporality does not provide such a conflict, so there is no reason to believe that God is not ontologically exactly as the Bible presents him to be, i.e. temporal.

2) Wolterstorff also believes that the passages used to support atemporality do not actually succeed in doing so; in fact, they really favor an everlasting view. Further, he says that the passages used to support God’s immutable ontology, when taken in context refer to other things such as covenant fidelity and God as a constant source of good.⁴²

3) Finally, Wolterstorff believes that Platonic and Neo-Platonic sources inescapably influenced the classical, Christian writers’ interpretation of scripture.⁴³

Wolterstorff believes God must be temporal because the scripture presents him as such, and, secondly, God must be temporal for him to know temporally indexed statements. He paraphrases Aquinas:

In no case does the temporality of the event that God acts with respect to infect the event of his acting. On the contrary, his acting with respect to some temporal event is itself invariably an everlasting event. So whenever the biblical writers use temporal-event language to describe God’s actions, they are to be interpreted as thereby claiming that God acts with respect to some temporal event. They are not to be interpreted as claiming that God’s acting is itself a temporal event.⁴⁴

To refute this theory from Thomas that God’s actions with respect to temporal events are not in themselves temporal, Wolterstorff argues based on God’s knowledge of a given temporal event.⁴⁵ For someone to know that an event is happening, that event has to be occurring *now*. Every event has a beginning and an ending. No one can know that an event is happening before it occurs, and once it ends no one can know that it is occurring. Therefore, one can only know that an event occurs due to its temporal nature. That is, the observer of a given event is not divorced from the time constraint of the event she is observing. It necessarily affects her. This, Wolterstorff reasons, is precisely why God is not atemporal. God knows all that has happened, does happen, and will happen, and at least some of these events are temporally indexed, therefore, God must be temporal. Further, in order for God to respond to an agent, he must know *when* that agent does something, which means that he must know temporal (tensed) facts. If one knows when something is happening, then they have present knowledge that it is happening only as long as it does, then it becomes past. If God has

⁴¹ Wolterstorff, “Response to Critics,” in *Four Views: God and Time*, 227.

⁴² For his exposition of these passages see, Wolterstorff, “Unqualified Divine Temporality,” 190-93.

⁴³ Wolterstorff, “God Everlasting,” 78.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 93-5.

present-tensed knowledge of facts, then there is change in God's knowledge, because those events become past, as they were once future. So, if that is the case, then God has a history, therefore God is temporal.⁴⁶ Wolterstorff believes that if God were atemporal, he would have no way to intervene in time because he has no tensed knowledge, i.e. he does not know the exact moment when an event is occurring. Wolterstorff does not mean that God cannot know something like, "South Carolina secedes from the union in 1860." He can know the time every event occurs without being temporal, but he cannot know when an event is actually occurring without having temporal knowledge.⁴⁷

Consider further two arguments from Richard Swinburne.⁴⁸ The first notes the ramifications of God's eternal present. If, according to Swinburne, the theory of atemporality is correct, then God is simultaneously present with what one is doing today, and is also present with what one did two days ago, and is present with what one is doing three days from now.

But if t_1 is simultaneous with t_2 and t_2 with t_3 , then t_1 is simultaneous with t_3 . So if the instant at which God knows these things were simultaneous with both yesterday, today, and tomorrow, then these days would be simultaneous with each other. So yesterday would be the same days as today and as tomorrow—which is clearly nonsense.⁴⁹

To say that all times are simultaneous with each other is absurd, and Swinburne believes that this is the necessary consequence of a belief in divine atemporality.⁵⁰

A second argument from Swinburne relates to cause and effect. The Christian believes that God does certain things in the world at certain times, e.g., speaks, redeems, forgives, performs miracles, etc. The question naturally arises as to *when* these actions take place. For example, if God forgives someone at a given point in time for committing a sin, then it is logical to assume that that person sinned prior to the time of God's forgiveness. Or, say that God at some point in time creates a human being. It is logical to assume that the baby necessarily came into existence *after* God's act of creating it. Swinburne thus believes

⁴⁶ Wolterstorff, "Unqualified Divine Temporality," 206.

⁴⁷ Wolterstorff, "God Everlasting," 94.

⁴⁸ Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 220-21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁵⁰ See, William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 167-68; and Paul Helm, *Eternal God: A Study of God Without Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 27-28 for a counter to this argument.

that it is incoherent to say that God can timelessly produce these causes with their resulting effects being bound within time. A temporal effect must have a temporal cause.⁵¹

So far in this section we have looked at the stronger arguments that support the idea of divine temporality, and we have only assumed a crucial element, that is, the nature of time and how that bears on God's temporal status. Following a brief discussion on the nature of time we will present the temporalist's arguments against atemporality that flow from that discussion.

Since J. M. E. McTaggart philosophers have spoken of time in terms of two perspectives: A-series and B-series. The A-series view of time is one with an identifiable past, present, and future, based on the perspective of one's present. An example of an A-series sentence would be, "I went to the store yesterday." This sentence is not identifiable in an indexical way, rather only the speaker truly knows when her "now" is, thus being able to identify her "yesterday." We tend to think of A-series time in terms of the dynamic nature of time, i.e. its movement. The past shapes the present and the future, and the future may impact the present. The A-series theory (or, "tensed" view) is a world in which things are in a constant state of ontological change. Something comes into being, exists, and then goes out of being. The present is the only real existence, and in no way do the past and future exist in the tensed theory. As will become more obvious below this is the highly disputed crux of the issue for contemporary proposals on divine temporality. If our time is indeed dynamic, as many suggest, then how can God participate in it without losing at least some of his being to the past and anticipating from the future? Most medievalists and the tradition as a whole have opted for atemporality, which negates the question, making it a non-problem. Twenty-first century Christian theology is not so convinced and would rather explore new possibilities. I believe this is a positive step, though, to be sure, the new proposals must be faithful to God's self-revelation in Jesus.

A-series differs from B-series time in which we think of events in a "tenseless," linear sequence. Something happens "earlier" or "later" than something else does. An example of a B-series sentence would be, "Celtic won the Scottish Premier League in 2006." On this theory one need not presently exist in time and reference an event in the past or future as on the A-theory. Since each event is tenseless, then it ontologically exists and does not change that status. For example, we cannot say that someone is typing this paper now, and when the paper is delivered to the professor to be examined that someone has *typed* this paper. In the

⁵¹ Swinburne, 221.

B-series version of time, the typing of the paper simply occurs and does not change status into the past. The same would hold true for the future. The B-series does not deny that there is change, since it is obvious that more than one event will exist at a given time and other events immediately follow (in a tenseless sense) those events. What it does deny is that there is *ontological* change in an object or event.⁵² Back to the typing example. To say that someone is typing this paper in the present, then to say that someone is not typing this paper is not to say that there has been an ontological change, but only to say that *not-typing* occurs (tenselessly). So, one might view B-series time on a linear model which all events occur, not at the same time, but nonetheless have the same ontological status, i.e. they occur at their particular present.

Wolterstorff states that “no one disputes that the ordering of events in the B-series is objectively real; the issue under discussion is whether the distinction between past, present and future marks a difference in ontological status of events.”⁵³ Hence, those who would view A-series time as not objectively real would hold to a tenseless model (B-series), and those who view it as objectively real hold to the tense theory. If it can be shown that the tense theory is objectively real and things undergo ontological change as time passes, then that bolsters the arguments for divine temporality (though it does not offer an airtight case).⁵⁴

To borrow Wolterstorff’s illustration consider someone deciding to do something at a particular time that something else will occur. If one wants to turn on the radio at one o’clock in order to hear the news, when would they do that act? Presumably, the answer to that question is when it is *now* one o’clock. The question he poses to the tenseless theorist is how would one decide when that time is? One o’clock occurs twice a day every day—a veritable sea of events, which certainly poses a great difficulty in determining the exact moment to turn on the radio. Additionally, Wolterstorff says, there are so many events over time that comprise one’s turning on the radio that it may prove difficult to know exactly which one coincides with the one o’clock news. The answer to this dilemma is that one must know the present status of things. That is, one must know when it is *now* one o’clock and that it is *now* time to turn on the radio. Wolterstorff contends that on the tenseless theory of time all events have the same ontological status, and it is impossible to make proper temporal

⁵² Alan G. Padgett, *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 4-5.

⁵³ Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Unqualified Divine Temporality,” 195.

⁵⁴ Wolterstorff critiques the tenseless theory of time in two ways. First, he refutes D. H. Mellor’s “tenseless token-reflexive theory” that “involves picking out some token of a tensed sentence and determining whether its truth condition is satisfied” (200). Since this particular critique is too large to do justice to Wolterstorff’s reasoning I will forego an explanation and only examine his second critique of the tenseless theory.

determinations. Therefore, the tenseless theory is incoherent and the tensed theory must be regarded as objectively real.⁵⁵

Ramifications of Time Theories

Wolterstorff, Pike and others have criticized divine atemporality because it leaves us with a static, unresponsive God who is unable to engage in relationships with humans.⁵⁶ For them, only if God is temporal and experiences some sort of succession can he truly respond to creaturely events. This is a serious charge, for if God is unable to enter into personal relationships with humans, then many core Christian doctrines are up for debate or entirely nullified. Can God even be a personal being? What can we say about Jesus Christ? If he was truly human and had personal relationships on earth, could he still be God (that is, *if* God is not personal)? What are we to think of Christ's work of redemption? That teaching is predicated on the possibility of human-divine interaction, and if God is atemporal and static, then it could collapse. Scripture itself presents God as temporally acting in the past, present, and the future. A basic example would be the Exodus. In order to foster present-day fidelity among its people Israel recounts this historical event on multiple occasions. From a New Testament perspective the Exodus is a foreshadowing of Christ's liberation of all humanity from bondage—something that is occurring now and will continue to occur. Therefore, this is also a serious charge leveled against atemporality that it would strip God of his personal involvement with humanity in all our temporal moments. For the Christian if it does not do justice to scripture, then it must not be worthy of serious consideration. If Christians are left with a God that is static and unresponsive, then they have nothing on which to place their faith and hope, and theology is cut off at the knees. Hence, one must ask why the classical

⁵⁵ Swinburne also endorses A-series time as objectively real in his section on time in *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 90-95. Strong rebuttal has been given both to Swinburne's assumptions and conclusions in Edward R. Wierenga, "Timelessness out of Mind: On the Alleged Incoherence of Divine Timelessness," *God and Time*, eds., Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 157-62.

⁵⁶ Wolterstorff, "God Everlasting," 78; Pike, 128. Chiefly this argument surrounds the question of personhood and atemporality. I will avoid an extended discussion here and merely summarize the objection by citing Pike: "A timeless being could not deliberate, anticipate, or remember. It could not speak or write a letter, nor could it produce sounds or written words on a piece of paper. It could not smile, grimace or weep. Further, a timeless being could not be affected or prompted by another. It could not respond to needs, overtures, delights or antagonisms of human beings."

writers retained this model in the face of such serious ramifications? A major part of the answer lies in the debate on God's foreknowledge and human freedom.⁵⁷

Stated simply, if God has exhaustive knowledge of all events, including future ones, then can we consider human agents to be free to do anything other than what God already knows will occur? One can answer the question in at least three main ways: 1) human beings possess autonomy to the extent that they are free to do otherwise for any given decision; therefore, God's omniscience concerning such future free acts is limited. 2) Humans possess freedom, but not the type that grants freedom to do otherwise; therefore, God possesses exhaustive foreknowledge of the future, yet without destroying human freedom. 3) God exists in a timeless eternity that sees all actions in their present; therefore, he does not *foreknow* them at all, but only knows them because they occur. If God is outside time and lives in this eternal present, then, strictly speaking, he does not know the future because there is no future tense for him, only a present tense.

It was Boethius's concern that God's foreknowledge and human freedom could not be reconciled, thus, he saw a timeless eternity as the only viable solution to the problem.⁵⁸ However, today generally *both* atemporalists and temporalists agree that Boethius was not successful in solving this dilemma.⁵⁹ Atemporality in itself cannot adequately explain how God can have knowledge of the future, yet we still do not act by necessity.

If one holds to atemporality, the temporalist does not see any escape from the divine cage of static unresponsiveness. Yet if we are to talk of God as taking joy in his creation, being grieved by human actions, or expressing anger over sin, then we must reject atemporality. All of these emotions or actions are *responses* to another being. If God atemporally knows all actions including future ones, then the response is hardly a real one. The temporalist also believes that atemporality cannot properly account for human freedom. Without a libertarian view of human freedom many believe that ethical considerations are void, and Christianity is left with an unsuitable answer to the problem of evil.⁶⁰ Therefore, it

⁵⁷ Another portion of the answer surrounds immutability. I believe that one can hold to God's immutability in certain senses without being forced to embrace the Aristotelian version of it. For a reconstruction of the doctrine of divine immutability see, Isaak August Dorner, *Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration*, trans., Robert R. Williams and Claude Welch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 131-95.

⁵⁸ *Consolation*, 5.6, 111.

⁵⁹ Helm, *Eternal God*, 95-108.

⁶⁰ See, Alvin Plantinga, "God, Evil and the Metaphysics of Freedom," *The Problem of Evil*, eds., Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 83-109. Barth and Jenson both reject libertarian freedom and embrace divine temporality. Thus, we are not necessarily required to take every step some divine temporalists take.

is crucial for scholars such as Swinburne to maintain God's temporality because indeterministic freedom entails it.⁶¹

Atemporalists, on the other hand, are quick to point out the radical nature of this approach. In order to preserve libertarian freedom embracing God's temporality causes one radically to redefine omniscience. That is, God cannot know the future actions of free creatures, but can only know them as they occur. Since he is temporal, he does not see the future (something that is impossible to know), but only knows the past and the present, albeit comprehensively.⁶² Atemporalists are also keen to point out that under this scheme God is conditioned by something outside his nature and changes because of free human actions. Some temporalists readily admit and defend both elements.

Given the ramifications of each position one may detect a certain amount of fragility in atemporality, though it must be acknowledged that the arguments given for it are not altogether futile. Is there sufficient reason, though, to defend atemporality in its classical form, or is continuity with the contemporary proposals possible?

Wolterstorff's challenges are compelling. The classical model lacks sufficient explanation for God's relationship with a changing world. It is difficult to imagine how, as on the classical version, an atemporal being can relate, respond and cause effects in a temporal world, i.e. one of process or succession. More importantly, however, the classical model fails properly to address scripture's picture of God's temporality. Assigning it to anthropomorphism is arbitrarily opting for one model over the other, but not doing justice to God's self-revelation. Conversely, scripture also presents God as Creator, thus Lord and Ruler of all that is. It is puzzling that God would subject himself to the whims of his creation, thereby abdicating aspects of his Lordship. If our time is a created thing, then in some manner God must rule over it. Could God transcend our time in the sense that he is not subject to its limitations or degeneration? Could God enter into real relationships in a temporal way so that he does experience real change, yet not change that entails loss or deficiency?

This is the question that this thesis explores. However, as stated above, I believe the best way to answer this question is from an explicitly theological approach. I am persuaded that our time truly is dynamic (A-series), but I am also persuaded that conclusions regarding the nature of our time only yield what (probably) *cannot* be the case, i.e. that God cannot be atemporal *and* be in relationship to our world. It is the *via negativa* all over again. The

⁶¹ Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 167-72, 220-21.

⁶² Helm, *Eternal God*, 127.

nature of our time lacks the authority and resources to give a definitive picture of God's eternity, though it may point us in a direction. Karl Barth and Robert Jenson are also preoccupied with problems associated with atemporality, yet both resist the pull toward a philosophical or scientific resolution for it. It is the trinitarian theology in particular relation to time and eternity of these two men that will constitute the rest of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

ROBERT W. JENSON ON THE TRIUNE IDENTITY

When one surveys the theological landscape at the start of the twenty-first century it is evident that some have hearkened to the seriousness of Nelson Pike's dictum given over thirty years ago, that "the position that a theologian takes on the topic of divine eternity has a kind of controlling effect on the general shape and texture of his broad theological view about the nature of God."⁶³ If Pike is correct in his evaluation, then the question of time and eternity is far from superfluous. For the bulk of the Western Christian tradition the nature of God, theology proper, has been a starting point for subsequent doctrine. Hence, following Pike's thinking causes us to conceive of the possibility that many (dare we say, most?) within this tradition have erred as to God's relation to time causing the rest of their system to go astray, or at least to contain damaging inconsistency. Despite the alarmist tone to this assertion it is precisely what some contemporary theologians have concluded, and as I will argue, Robert W. Jenson is representative of this current trend to such an extent that he is a natural interlocutor for a discourse on divine temporality.

Primally, according to Jenson, it is the misguided appropriation of Greek philosophy that constitutes the church's unwarranted diversion regarding the divine identity; specifically how the former defines deity as immunity to time and how the gospel "identifies its God by temporal events of Exodus and Resurrection."⁶⁴ It is not an overstatement to say that the remainder of *Systematic Theology* is an exposition of that proposal. It is the aim of this and the next chapter to demonstrate how Jenson provides a theologically grounded view of divine temporality that relies on the tradition yet advances it beyond any integration with and dependence upon Mediterranean antiquity. In so doing he attempts to avoid on the one hand, a god of process and on the other, one of static impassibility; or put another way, a god subject to the passage of creaturely time and one of atemporality. Ultimately, Jenson's theology is about "God who takes time for us."⁶⁵ My exposition will follow that designation in its sequence: "*God*"—his identity and character; "who takes *time*"—its nature and relationship to divine eternity; "for *us*"—our identity as temporally finite in relation to the Infinite, that is, God's presence to the created order.

⁶³ Pike, ix.

⁶⁴ Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: Volume I, The Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 165. Hereafter referred to as *ST I* followed by page number.16.

⁶⁵ Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: Volume II, The Works of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 35. Hereafter referred to as *ST II*, followed by page number.

Since his approach is to overcome the debilitating effect of the god of the Greeks upon the Christian conception of God it is necessary for us to juxtapose the two, and in doing so, we will catch a clearer vision of Jenson's project and how it is relevant for this thesis.

The god of the Greeks and the God According to the Gospel

The question of whether God exists is superfluous, apart from identifying *which* particular god among the many possibilities we might mean. Thus, Robert Jenson deems the identity of God as “an initial and determining theme of theology.”⁶⁶ Of the many options available to us it is the Greek conception that has demonstrated itself most resilient to the consistent challenges of Christian theology and is the antecedent which especially early Christianity reinterpreted.⁶⁷ Consequently, to understand the distinctively Christian formulation of Trinity this confrontation must be elucidated.⁶⁸

According to Jenson, the divine identity is inextricably tied to one's conception of eternity. Thus, the chief diagnostic question about religion is, “What eternity does it posit?” Without question time is “the metaphysical horizon of specifically human life,” and such life is irreducibly past, present, and future.⁶⁹ Jenson believes that as such human life is characterized by a passion to preserve meaning in the present by transcending the discontinuities of past and future.⁷⁰ This “embrace” around created time in personal “dramatic coherence” is what we designate “eternity.” Transcending these discontinuities by means of an eternity becomes the telos of religion, and understanding how it construes eternity directly relates to its perception of divine identity. And if this religion's eternity involves a conversation, it therefore entails a personal God or gods. Hence, when we declare “God redeems” it is not as much a question of *whether* God exists, as it is of *which* god we regard as “eternal”—overcoming the discontinuities of this life.⁷¹

⁶⁶ *STI*, 42.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶⁸ Robert W. Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 57. Hereafter referred to as *TI*, followed by page number.

⁶⁹ *STI*, 54-55.

⁷⁰ And regardless of one's position on divine (a)temporality this concept enjoys a rich theological tradition stretching from Boethius to Pannenberg.

⁷¹ *STI*, 55-56. At this point it is worth recalling the terminology established in chapter one concerning “eternalists” and “temporalists.” While the literature roughly equates eternalists with divine timelessness (and it is not wholly unreasonable to do so), Jenson's perspective reminds us that viewing God as eternal does not entail atemporality. Indeed, how could it, given his description of eternity? That is, *our* eternity is this embrace in dramatic coherence and we are wholly temporal. God's being is also constituted in dramatic coherence (see below), thus being wholly temporal within his eternity. It is precisely this point that I find most intriguing in

According to Jenson, the Greeks' answer to this problem of temporal discontinuity was to define eternity in terms of timelessness.⁷² Aristotle framed the question by asking

...what is the being of beings? What is true of anything that is, just so that it is? His answer was: that in anything which is *changeless*, that in which so long as it is what it is it always is just what it was. The hidden unrest in all Greek philosophizing was the question: Can it be that all things pass away? Aristotle answered: No. That in the world which does not cease to be, which does not die, is what grants reality to the world.⁷³

Time is the irretrievable force that demands such passing away, thus time must be overcome, destroyed. Since human experience cannot envelope our past, present, and future giving us the coherence of life that we naturally desire the Greeks projected that ability onto God and, therefore, defined deity in terms of persistence or immutability. Thus, Greek religion entered into the quest to discover such a deity, one that exists above or apart from temporal experience and also grounds temporal being.

Jenson concludes that this theology is a negative theology and an analogical one. Negative in the sense that every reference to God must be a negation of those predicates of temporal reality, that is, God is "impassible," "ineffable," etc. It is analogical in the sense that even though it negates temporally-bound predicates it does not entirely abandon them, for it has no other linguistic tools to speak of deity. Therefore, Greek theology must say that God is "x," but always qualify that "x" as something that is not like temporal reality.⁷⁴

Jenson notes that "only a sort of blink of the metaphysical eye was needed" to turn this mutual negation of time and eternity on its head.⁷⁵ Hence, all meaning and value was transferred to the timeless, unchanging reality, leaving the temporal shut out, and the search for a mediator between the timeless and time had begun.⁷⁶ Clearly, the Greek god who exists outside of time, characterized by changelessness, and located at a great distance from the created order is incompatible with the God of the gospel who operates within time, primarily

Jenson's project: how the eternal Trinity transcends temporal discontinuities, yet is temporal. A verdict as to Jenson's success on this issue awaits us in chapter six.

⁷² *TI*, 57-64; *STI*, 95-104; Robert W. Jenson, *God After God: The God of the Past and the God of the Future, Seen in the Work of Karl Barth* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969), 10-13. Hereafter referred to as *GAG*, followed by page number.

⁷³ *GAG*, 157-79.

⁷⁴ *TI*, 60. For example, on the preponderance of negative theology in Plotinus, see L. P. Gerson, *God and Greek Philosophy: Studies in the Early History of Natural Theology* (London: Routledge, 1994), 212-13.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

witnessed in his fidelity to his people.⁷⁷ Indeed, both are eternal, but a very different genus of eternity. The question we now face is twofold: what was Christianity's initial response to this Greek religion? And did that initial strand of Christian thought persist, or was it eventually overcome?

According to Jenson, the early church did not simply assimilate Hellenism into its theology, rather in the course of its mission the church Christianized Hellenism.⁷⁸ That is, Jenson goes on to explain, "Christians took over the procedure of penetrating to the 'real' God by abstracting from time with negative analogies."⁷⁹ This juxtaposition of the two divine conceptions (specifically centering on the two natures question) could be illustrated from any number of historical figures.⁸⁰ Jenson carefully traces the Greek influence through major Christian writers and events demonstrating how there existed a facile transference in the initial response to Hellenism, and the possibility of overcoming it entirely only being grounded in the creeds and the work of those such as the Cappadocian fathers.⁸¹ However, when the Western church began to assimilate these Christian trinitarian dogmas, it did so under the towering influence of men like Boethius and, particularly, Augustine.⁸² And what Augustine did, according to Jenson, was to lay "down this axiomatic status of divine timelessness for all subsequent Western theology," and with it a thoroughgoing and far reaching doctrine of divine simplicity.⁸³ Watson corroborates this, asserting that Augustine (and others) "helped to give Christian theology what might be called its classic shape in the works of Thomas Aquinas."⁸⁴ In Jenson's perspective, the unfortunate consequence of this move by Augustine and his successors is, 1) it "is incompatible with the heart of Nicene trinitarianism,"⁸⁵ and 2) it exposes the failure of Western theology to rid itself of the debilitating features of Greek religion regarding the divine identity.

This, in a nutshell, is the backdrop to Jenson's theological program, the culmination of which is embodied in his systematics. Of course, Christianity is a religion of history and cannot accommodate a metaphysical axiom that so strikingly resists its core tenet. Therefore,

⁷⁷ Jenson's brief evaluation may appear naively simplistic, ignoring discrepancies between thinkers and developments within Greek philosophy itself. However, taking all the differences into account there remains an essential unity within the phenomenon on this score. For a good study precisely on this point see, Gerard Watson, *Greek Philosophy and the Christian Notion of God* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1994).

⁷⁸ *STI*, 90; *TI*, 61-62.

⁷⁹ *TI*, 62.

⁸⁰ Jenson cites Justin Martyr as one example of this phenomenon in *TI*, 63-64.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 103-14. Exposition of this comes in the next chapter.

⁸² Augustine's influence and teaching are well documented and do not need rehearsing here, other than to observe the connection with Greek religion (specifically, Neoplatonism) and the subsequent Christian tradition.

⁸³ *TI*, 117-18.

⁸⁴ Watson, 88. For a detailed account of this thesis see pages 134-45.

⁸⁵ *TI*, 118.

in order to overcome the quandary I must first explore Jenson’s alternative proposal concerning both the path to take with regard to the knowledge of God and (in the next chapter) the triune identity.

The Triune Identity and Character:

Starting with the Gospel

In the first two chapters of *Systematic Theology* the contrasts are immediately apparent with someone like Wolfhart Pannenberg. Pannenberg tirelessly labors to provide a rational starting point for the doctrine of the Triune God, the hub of his theological wheel, so to speak.⁸⁶ Jenson does not approach prolegomena in that fashion, but rather views it as incapable of anything other than to give a description of the enterprise in advance, since it is tied to and dependent upon theology itself. If it is trying to describe theology, then it is discussing theology; thus, if the former is false, so is the latter. Hence, according to Jenson, epistemological treatises in prolegomena are distinctively modern and are ultimately subsumed under theology, even in someone like Aquinas.⁸⁷ Even though Thomas’s analytical approach is firmly grounded in faith-knowledge and not some body of knowledge that is common to humanity, nonetheless it blazed the trail for what would later become a full-orbed natural theology—a theology that is not dependent upon “historically particular divine dispositions,” but on some sort of cognitive content apart from such historical objectivity, yet common to all. Jenson declares that it is the *label* of “natural” theology that is most problematic, and not necessarily the content.⁸⁸ That is, it is impossible to demarcate “natural” and “revealed” theology and suppose they are on different levels. This is the real problem, for even though “natural” became the title for a theology that was distinguished from gospel, its content was often closely related.

A dependence upon full prolegomena began with the Enlightenment (i.e. Locke), which attempted to establish a basis for Christian theology that was natural to our being. In other words, Lockeans wanted to evaluate any theology by “natural” theology—something

⁸⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1*, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 1-258; hereafter referred to as *ST I*, followed by page number. Unquestionably, Jenson and Pannenberg overlap on many issues such as God’s identification with history (though divine temporality is nuanced), the primacy and ontology of the future, and the eschatological coherence of truth in God. However, Jenson’s rejection of even any “tipping of the hat” toward natural theology is one significant and important point of departure.

⁸⁷ *ST I*, 6-11.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

that even Christianity had acknowledged was characteristic of humanity in general—which turned out to be nothing less than “Mediterranean-pagan religious heritage.” When German scholars set out to “overcome the Enlightenment” they did so *on its terms*.⁸⁹ Therefore, Jenson concludes that the entire prolegomena program is flawed from the beginning because it elevates Greek thinking as judge of the whole and is therefore more “rational” or “natural” than Isaiah or Paul.⁹⁰ Christian theology and philosophy (Greek or otherwise) are not different kinds of knowledge or thinking, but are both theology. The latter is simply of the Olympian-Parmenidean type of theology and Christian theology is not obligated to defend itself against the more natural type of knowledge, i.e. philosophy.⁹¹ Hence, we engage philosophy, not because it is a different type of knowledge, but precisely because it is the *same* sort of knowledge.⁹² Therefore, Jenson wants to “eschew systematically pompous prolegomena” that submits theology’s content to a more pervasive, widespread human body of knowledge that, at the end of the day, turns out to be nothing more than the religion of Mediterranean antiquity. Hence, on Jenson’s scheme, shall we accept theology’s unique starting point, its given, its proper object? Or shall we give in to the temptation of alternative starting points, which turn out to be false religion?

Clearly the question follows as to what precisely is theology’s “starting point?” Critically for Jenson the “given” here is that theology is inexorably tied to the church, which, in turn, is tied to gospel.⁹³ Indeed the distinguishing mark of the church is its dependence upon and proclamation of “the gospel.” Yet, the present-day proclamation of the gospel is dependent upon the first witnesses to the resurrection event, down to our reception of it. It is God’s promise that not only opens up a future possibility to our vision, but possesses that very possibility it signifies. Thus, according to Jenson, the gospel must have a history. That is, the gospel is connected to and dependent upon its tradition or historical witness, so that we

⁸⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁹¹ Ibid., 10.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Even though Jenson’s reasoning here is not irresponsible I do find it problematic in that it has the tendency to place church and gospel on the same level. Undoubtedly there is an organic connection between church and gospel (revelation), but the gospel must possess a prior standing in relation to the church, for it is the former that forms and shapes the latter. To say that revelation has a history is true, but this history cannot be forced to be identical with the church. It may include it, but it must remain distinct from it. Jenson’s tendency to conflate ecclesiology and revelation is symptomatic of his overall tendency to blur the lines between God and the world and has brought on the charge of panentheism—a charge I will examine below. Further, I will argue that a more Reformed understanding of God’s identity and his relation to the world would help Jenson overcome these problems. However, the remaining question is whether that necessarily leaves us with atemporality.

have to ask: “Given what we *have* heard and seen as the gospel, what *shall* we now say and enact that the gospel may be spoken?” This type of thinking is our “hermeneutic.”⁹⁴

Of central import to the gospel are the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The early church was sent out to proclaim that life and death, and, emphatically, his resurrection by God the Father. Theology’s role in the gospel proclamation must inevitably address pressing questions concerning these historical events; therefore, Jenson approaches this theme by asking *how* and *in what contexts* God is identified.

The Triune Identity and Character:

Narrative Identification

As to the question of *how* God is identified Jenson demonstrates that, for Israel, God was whoever rescued them from Egypt.⁹⁵ In the New Testament, Jenson judges, God is “whoever raised Jesus from the dead.”⁹⁶ The connection between God’s name and these temporal events should not be lost. In presenting himself to Israel as JHWH he does more than simply give a name, but unites it with the accompanying description, viz., God’s deliverance of his people from Egypt.⁹⁷ The temporal description within the narrative gives life to the name in such a way that it is folly to talk of the latter without the former. There was no way for Israel to speak of JHWH without also speaking of his work.⁹⁸ The reality is further illuminated when the apostles proclaim that Israel’s God is one and the same with this man Jesus and the Father who raised him from the dead.⁹⁹ Thus, the “name and narrative description not only appear together...but are identical.” And again, “Israel’s and the church’s God is thus identified by specific temporal actions and is known within certain temporal communities by personal names and identifying descriptions thereby provided.”¹⁰⁰ Therefore, according to Jenson, God identifies himself as “jealous,” for if he were immune to time he would have no need to guard his identity. “In *time*, each thing must indeed be ‘itself

⁹⁴ *STI*, 15-16.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Exodus 20:2.

⁹⁸ Psalm 105.

⁹⁹ *STI*, 45. On this see, Christopher R. Seitz, “Handing Over the Name: Christian Reflection on the Divine name YHWH,” *TTC*, 23-41.

¹⁰⁰ *STI*, 46.

and not another' or not be at all; temporal entities must be jealous of their identities or cease."¹⁰¹

Jenson underscores that God only reveals himself in and for a historical community, and there is no legitimacy in endeavoring to transcend that revelation and relationship. Because God had made certain promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, namely, that there would be Israel, Israel existed in them prior to the Exodus. The latter remains the answer to the question of God's identity, but this point demonstrates that he is *identifiable* based on the reality of his temporal promises that came to fruition in historical contingencies. God is "identified by certain temporal events but is apprehended as himself temporally *identifiable*."¹⁰² Explicitly, God is not only identified *by* the events of Exodus and Resurrection, but is identified *with* those temporal events.¹⁰³ If God was only identifiable *by* the events, according to Jenson, then we could easily conclude that God is wearing a mask of some sort and is ontologically different than he appears in time and space. "The revealing events would be our clues *to* God, but would not *be* God."¹⁰⁴ Additionally, if God was not identified *with* the events, then that puts a space between revelation and deity, the very place, says Jenson, where idolatry would enter.

Religion fails exactly in this regard because it posits the "voice" of the deity, yet never gives deity in its fullness. "The religious impulse is never satisfied with anything short of deity itself," therefore if God were to hold something of his identity back from us our drive to worship and fulfill this religious impulse would result in idolatrous projections based on self-need.¹⁰⁵ Thus, nothing less than God's objectivity for us is at stake.¹⁰⁶ The event that puts this point beyond dispute, for Jenson, is the death of Jesus. That is, his death does not render the Trinity as a binity during Friday and Sunday morning, nor does it obliterate the incarnation. The only answer is to say that the Trinity is always the Trinity and those *temporal events* must somehow belong to his deity.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the God of Israel and the church can be identified only *by and with contingent events*, and these historical events must take precedence as the way to God's identification, as opposed to metaphysical reasoning.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 47.

¹⁰² Ibid., 49.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 59.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 59-60.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Since God's identification is absorbed in the historical Jesus much has been made in recent years concerning Christology "from above" and "from below." If we are compelled to categorize Jenson he would side with the latter, given his overriding concern for history. However, Nicholas Lash argues convincingly that these

Before proceeding with the question of the contexts in which God is identified it is worth asking whether Jenson's theology qualifies as panentheistic.¹⁰⁹ A recent work on Jenson claims that because he identifies God's life as constituted with contingent events, and because our history is "in the one dramatic life that the triune God is," then we must consider Jenson's theology panentheistic.¹¹⁰ Certainly Jenson's work has overtones that appear to chime with the "en" of this divine-world model, but does the label do justice to the entirety of Jenson's program? To make such a determination we must attempt a brief sketch of this complex phenomenon.¹¹¹

Drawing on Philip Clayton's work we venture a definition of panentheism as "the view that the world is within God, though God is at the same time more than the world." And to further clarify the definition Clayton adds, "...space functions metaphorically when referring to God; hence panentheism is not just a theology about the relative *location* of God and world. Instead, it seeks to stress that the infinite God is ontologically *as close to finite things as can possibly be thought without dissolving the distinction of Creator and created altogether.*"¹¹² Further to this, and prior to stating some of the finer points of the panentheistic analogy (PA), Clayton notes three presuppositions that ground the PA. First, it operates on the assumption that God can suffer change conditioned by something other than himself "and hence that God has the property of being susceptible to causation." Second, because science affirms the strict law-like nature of the universe and because of the problem of evil panentheism posits a divine self-limitation in these spheres, while not abandoning

categories are often obscure and more complex than they appear on the surface. One cannot simply opt for one or the other and expect simple conclusions concerning the way to God's identity. That Jenson is aware of these complexities and has not sided with one to the exclusion of the other (as does Pannenberg) is evident in his chapter "The Christological Problem." Nevertheless, if we understand "from below" Christology to mean something like, "Jesus' being is constituted within the historical events narrated in the gospels," then it is difficult to see how Jenson's project would deviate from that. See, Nicholas Lash, "Up and Down in Christology," *New Studies in Theology 1*, eds., Stephen Sykes and Derek Holmes (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1980), 31-46. For a more detailed account of the strengths and weaknesses in both approaches see, Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 10-54.

¹⁰⁹ Clearly this is a question that will echo throughout the project, but a broad sketch here is not superfluous, though our intent is not as much to critique panentheism as it is to evaluate whether Jenson can be labeled as such. The problem with panentheism is that it is too pantheistic, thus, the real enemy is pantheism. Thus, my defense of Jenson on this point is ultimately against the charge of pantheism.

¹¹⁰ Scott Swain, *God according to the Gospel: A Critical Dialogue with Robert W. Jenson on the Hermeneutics of Trinitarian Identification* (Deerfield, IL: PhD. Dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2002), 84.

¹¹¹ See Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Arthur Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming—Natural, Divine, and Human*, enlarged ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Philip Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

¹¹² Clayton, "The Panentheistic Turn in Christian Theology," *Dialog 38* (Fall 1999): 289-90.

divine action altogether.¹¹³ Third, panentheism rejects a philosophy of substance, opting rather for a philosophy of personhood. Clayton believes that by “using one’s understanding of personhood as the hermeneutical key to unlock the meaning of the ascription, one gets as close as humanly possible to an understanding of God’s nature.”¹¹⁴ Inseparable from personhood is embodiment; hence, on this scheme the world becomes God’s body, yet according to Clayton, he is more than that. Thus, we encounter what Peterson has called the panentheism paradox—“God both is and is not the world.”¹¹⁵

Thus far Clayton’s definition, aside from some questions of methodology, is not as radical as we might have anticipated. However, Clayton goes on to affirm more specifically that since God is the world in the broadest sense he “is present in each physical interaction and at each point in space, each interaction being part of his being...”¹¹⁶ It is important to note that Clayton is asserting more than simply God’s presence *at* any historical event, but is claiming that those events are *in* him, i.e. in some fashion part of his being. Importantly, however, he would not want to slide into pantheism and declare that the world is God, which is, according to Clayton, different than saying that God is the world because of the caveat that God is also more than the world. Nonetheless, if we posit event *x*, and *x* is celebrating my son’s birthday, then somehow that has to be part of the being of God. God’s being is in that birthday party, and if we take Clayton’s premise seriously, then the event must also partly constitute his being. Therefore, ultimately God’s reality is not other than the world’s reality.

Yet, and this is where some ambiguity arises, Clayton also believes that God’s creation of the world is not a necessary one and that as Creator God can exist separate from the world.¹¹⁷ If that is case, then one is surprised to discover the competing claim that historical events are ontologically connected to the divine being. What if they were not so connected? Would he be less than God? According to Clayton, apparently not, but in light of Clayton’s PA we fail to see exactly what affirming this does establish. As Vanhoozer observes this effort to maintain God’s transcendent sovereignty over creation is a significant departure for Clayton from other panentheists such as Moltmann and Cobb. Thus, we are prompted to ask whether this Christian “correction” actually falsifies what the rest of panentheism affirms.¹¹⁸ With questions such as this one lingering among its own theorists it

¹¹³ Ibid., 290. For Clayton’s developed argument for panentheism see his *God and Contemporary Science*, chap. 4.

¹¹⁴ Clayton, “The Case for Christian Panentheism,” *Dialog* 37 (Summer 1998): 205.

¹¹⁵ Gregory R. Peterson, “Whither Panentheism?” *Zygon* 36 (2001): 399.

¹¹⁶ Clayton, “The Case for Christian Panentheism,” 206.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 207.

¹¹⁸ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “The Case Remains Unproven,” *Dialog* 38 (Fall 1999): 283.

is challenging to lay out a homogeneous panentheistic doctrine. It is a thesis in progress. Therefore, labeling any theologian's system as such is risky at best, unless he or she explicitly claims such a philosophy.

We have barely even approached a treatment of panentheism, but we have identified enough of its elements to compare briefly our findings with Jenson's program. To demonstrate the argument we will simply note some of the ways Jenson draws an unambiguous distinction between God and all that is other than God. First, as we have noted above Jenson insists that God is identified not only *with* certain contingent events, but *by* specific temporal actions.¹¹⁹ He states:

A story has more than one agent. In the story of God with his people, can the plurality of agents be constituted only by external relations between God and persons who are simply other than God, so that God is himself but one monadic agent of the history? Since God's *identity* is told by his story with creatures, this cannot be the case. Either God's identity would then be determined extrinsically by creatures or it would at some depth be after all immune to the gospel events. But the God of Exodus and Resurrection is above all free and sovereign, and if his identity is determined in his relation with others, just so those others cannot be merely extrinsic to him.¹²⁰

In rejecting both options of God's extrinsic identification *and* his immunity to gospel events Jenson is navigating a path that distinguishes itself from panentheism and timelessness. God in time, according to Jenson, "must indeed be 'itself and not another' or not be at all..."¹²¹ Thus, in being himself within time, God's reality is triune, not one that is extrinsically determined. We must also emphasize how God's unity to time/created order is within the *gospel events*. The detailed exposition of this comprises the next chapter.

Second, Jenson's deviation from typical descriptions of panentheism is evidenced in his use of the concept of conversation to describe God's being. Interestingly, this move is also employed by Vanhoozer when he refutes Clayton's panentheism in favor of classical philosophical or theological theism.¹²² Jenson states:

Language is the possibility of historical being; the word as address and response is its actuality. It is in that you who differ from me address me, that a possibility opens to me of becoming different than I am. That is, it is in that you address me that I have a future: the *word* is the bearer of spirit and spirit is the power *of* the word. If God's

¹¹⁹ *ST I*, 46. The specific temporal actions Jenson refers to are the exodus and the resurrection. Clearly, he is not identified by *all* temporal actions.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹²² Vanhoozer, 284-85.

being, “into its furthest depths,” is historical, then precisely such address and response must be the actuality of his being.¹²³

Hence, Jenson affirms that God is a triune conversation *in se* between Father, Son, and Spirit, and it is only that conversational event that constitutes his being. Yes, he is indeed historical and within time, but the inter-trinitarian conversation comprises his deity.

Third, and following from the previous sentence, the panentheistic blurring is further mitigated by Jenson’s Christology. That God has created a world other than himself is grounded in and mediated by the Son, as is expressed in this passage:

We may now recur to the Son’s mediation of creation. The Father’s love of the Son is, we have seen, the possibility of creation. Insofar as to be a creature is to be other than God, we may say that the Father’s love of the Son as other than himself is the possibility of creation’s otherness from God. And the Son’s acceptance of being other than God is the condition of that possibility’s actualization. Moreover, we now also see why we had to say that time was the “room” God made for us in his life: did not God set us other than himself, did he not make space between him and us, all time would just be *his* time and there would be no “accommodation” in him.¹²⁴

That is, Jenson is arguing against the precise idea that is panentheism, in that if the world is “en” God in the way that it says he is (whatever that is), then “all time would be his time.” But God is distinct from the creation and this fact is grounded in the Father’s relation to the Son. Further, this grounding evidences that God *does* and *can* create space for other than himself because the Son mediates such a relation. For Jenson, then, apart from a Christology God’s relation to the world is inconceivable, for the Son mediates the Father’s reality to creation.

We must admit, however, that Jenson’s language at times appears to be so committed to a “withinness” that the tendency is to read it in a panentheistic fashion. If we were to identify panentheism with Irenaeus by arguing that anything that God does not contain must contain God and, thus, be God, then Jenson would qualify.¹²⁵ Yet there is such an insistence that this “withinness” not be construed as a panentheistic blurring, much less pantheism itself, that it would be an unfortunate reading of Jenson to classify him thus. Gunton has convincingly argued that Jenson’s position on creation and mediation is nothing short of trinitarian theism, in spite of his Lutheran tendency to emphasize “withinness.” It is a spatial

¹²³ *ST I*, 223.

¹²⁴ *ST II*, 48.

¹²⁵ Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 2.1.2.

metaphor, Gunton claims, whose Christological stress is accented differently than the Reformed, yet fully ground in Trinity and far from the Hegelian push toward pantheism. That it is in constant danger of sliding into panentheism or even pantheism does not imply they are identical.¹²⁶

In answering the question of *how* God is identified (by and with historical events) we have already encountered and integrated the second question concerning the *context* in which he is identified. God is temporally identifiable and identified *because of the biblical narrative*. Jenson is one of several theologians who have taken up this category “narrative identification” as integral to the theological enterprise. Related to this many of his critics charge that Jenson’s project strays precisely because he claims God is identified *with* those inscripturated, narrated events.¹²⁷ Thus, in order to get a clearer picture of Jenson’s doctrine of God we must more fully understand his theological hermeneutic.

According to Jenson the Hebrews read the Torah as “an expansive telling of Exodus, and the Prophets and Writings became Holy Scripture because of their various relations to this narrative.”¹²⁸ Similarly, the church reads the New Testament as the telling of the gospel and the non-narrative portions of it as comment and expansion on gospel. Hence, the scriptures are narrative in that there is a central theme running throughout, namely the identity of the Christian God, and “[i]f we say the Christian God is the God identified by the biblical narrative, we must also say there is ‘the’ biblical narrative...”¹²⁹ As such the biblical narrative stands as the centerpiece to God’s identity, hence we must grasp what the relationship between narrative and identity entails.

According to Hans Frei, “identity” must be the sum total of all the physical and personality characteristics of a person in reference to him or herself, not in comparison or contrast to another person, though the latter is often necessary to talk about those characteristics. Only the self can bridge the gap between the past, present, and future—

¹²⁶ See Gunton, “Creation and Mediation in the Theology of Robert W. Jenson,” *TTC*, 80-93.

¹²⁷ For example, Paul Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (London: T&T Clark Ltd., 2002), 79.

¹²⁸ *ST I*, 58.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* To be sure, narrative theology is diverse in its approaches and arises in various authors for as many reasons. For summaries see, Gabriel Fackre, “Narrative Theology: An Overview,” *Interpretation* (1983): 340-52; George Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1984). Jenson’s theology may very well address many of the facets described in these introductions, but as this paragraph indicates he appears more concerned with narrative because of its consequence for God’s self-identity. Therefore, we will limit our discussion mainly to those works addressing this angle. Primarily, this involves Hans Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000); and *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

something that identity requires to be complete. “Identity, or the temporal continuity of the self, occurs when the sides or sequential aspects of the self are related to the same self that is doing the relating between them.” In short, “[i]dentity is the specific uniqueness of a person, what really counts about him, quite apart from both comparison and contrast to others.”¹³⁰

Identity’s temporal dimension noted here reflects Frei’s awareness that identity is the sameness or unity of the unique individual. One has identity because of the connection to his or her past *and* future. The full import of this will appear in the next section, but our purpose at this point is simply to indicate the unity of identity over time and within the self.

Yet there is a dialectic tension in Frei between this sameness of identity and the changes the unique person undergoes. He states:

We know that the self is not disconnected from the fundamental modifications it undergoes, but it is also true that we may discern the continuity of a person within these changing states, properties, and actions...Identity description is the ingathering into a connected story of both stages. On the one hand, we have to say that that to which changing actions, states, and properties are ascribed or referred is nothing more than they themselves under a certain focus, the focus of self-referral. And when the actions, states and properties change, their change is the self’s change. On the other hand, no set of changing states, properties, and, in particular, set of actions, exhausts the self in such a way that it cannot also provide the *bond of continuity* between these distinct acts, states, and properties which it is.¹³¹

In Frei’s scheme, it is identity constituted in changing events that pushes us to recognize the weight of narrative. To further illuminate this idea Frei offers “intention-action” as a descriptor of identity. An action is an explicit intention, and an intention is an implicit action. Thus, they are polar, yet connected. So, when a person’s intention and action are most closely related or conjoined as nearly as possible he “gains his identity.” “A person’s identity is constituted (not simply illustrated) by that intention which he carries into action.”¹³² The “intention-action” description answers the question as to what a person is like, and is demonstrated in the narrative events that constitute that life.

Frei’s overriding concern in narrative identification is found in his application of it to Jesus’ identity. For Frei, Jesus’ identity “as the singular, unsubstitutable human individual that he is comes to its sharpest focus in the death-and-resurrection sequence taken as one unbroken sequence.”¹³³ For Jesus to be who he is means that the narrative must have transpired as it did, *and* we are unable to discover Jesus’ identity apart from these narrative

¹³⁰ Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ*, 95-96.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 14

events. He was an unsubstitutable human participant in those events; thus, his identity is constituted by them. All of this is to establish the fact that a person's identity is "the inseparability of who he was and what he did...the identity of Jesus is focused in the circumstances of the action and not in back of them. He is what he does and undergoes. It is an intention-action sequence. Indeed, in and by these transpirings he becomes what he is."¹³⁴ Narrative, according to Frei, is integral to identity.

Any person's identity within time is inseparable not only from his or her character or sameness, but also from those changes/events that the person undergoes. According to Jenson, Jesus' identity as the Son and the events that constitute his identity (chiefly death and resurrection) are taken up into the divine identity, i.e. the Godhead. Thus, God is temporal and ontologically related to the historical events that identify him, i.e. as stated above—Exodus and Resurrection. The relationship of time to the divine identity immediately becomes apparent. If God is identified *by* and *with* Exodus and Resurrection, and identity and narrative are inseparable, then God is temporal. To turn it around, if God is not temporal, then those narrated events do not reveal God's true identity.

However, with Frei's insights we have seen that identity is temporal in that it constitutes an embrace of past, present, and future, not unlike the concern of Greek philosophy. What happens when this is applied to God? Or, to put it in Jenson's terms, if God is really identifiable by and with the temporal events of Exodus and Resurrection, what *sort* of being might we conceive him to be? What is God's hypostatic being—one that best reflects all his diverse descriptions in the biblical narrative?

The Triune Identity and Character:

Dramatic Coherence

Jenson's answer to that question is that God's hypostatic being is constituted in *dramatic coherence*.¹³⁵ Jenson finds no problem (contra Aristotle) in saying that God's identification with historical contingency is an "ontological perfection," not a deficit. God is identical with himself in and because of the "eventful actuality," i.e. his identity with history.¹³⁶ Jenson boldly states that we must admit God's self-identity in dramatic coherence if we are discussing the God of the Bible. "Otherwise than dramatically, the Bible's

¹³⁴ Ibid., 30-31.

¹³⁵ *STI*, 63.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 64.

theological descriptions, accounts of divine action, and worshipful invocations are too mutually conflicted to suggest referral to a same someone.”¹³⁷

The striking feature of dramatic coherence is that it must be complete before one can truly identify the personal. That is, “until I die, it remains uncertain who I shall have turned out to be.”¹³⁸ Because God is united with the history of his creatures, he too “can have no identity except as he meets the temporal end toward which creatures live.”¹³⁹ To put it another way, God’s very being and identity is united to history in such a way that he is not merely established in eternity past who he will be and continually persists in that decision, but rather his eternal identity is only seen or anticipated from the end of the story. Hence, the biblical God is not a refuge against an uncertain future, but is the very future of our salvation history. As Israel fled Egypt the great event was not simply leaving Egypt, but was the opening up of the future wilderness wandering with all its uncertainties. Such is the Christian God, according to Jenson, for he does not guard us against the unknown, but *is* the future unknown. God as our future moves the story along from that perspective and not from the past.¹⁴⁰

In this chapter we are attempting to articulate Jenson’s construal of the divine identity. That is to say, *who* is the Christian God? Thus far, the answer to this has been “the One who delivered Israel from Egypt and who raised Jesus from the dead.” Therefore, this Christian God is part of the drama (narrative) that is God’s covenant with his people. However, this is not all that must be said about God’s identity and we have barely considered his relation to time, for the Christian God is triune, and any account of God and time must be trinitarian.

Jenson is wholly committed to a full trinitarianism, rejecting every line of thought in church history that deviates from it, i.e. modalism and subordinationism. To achieve this Jenson relies on the Cappadocian trinitarian formula summarized by Gregory of Nyssa: “All action that impacts the creature from God...begins with the Father and is actual through the Son and is perfected in the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴¹ So, this is to say that any action of the triune God toward his creation is not divided among modes or actors in the Godhead, but is attributed

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 65.

¹³⁹ Ibid. While this might sound reminiscent of process theology, Jenson is far from it. Exposition of his Trinitarian doctrine will illuminate this point.

¹⁴⁰ Jenson’s most detailed discussion of his concept of the futurity of God is in *GAG*. Indeed this aspect of Jenson’s thought is crucial to his view of divine temporality, for he employs it as the tool that overcomes Barth’s analogical account of divine temporality. Therefore, a full exposition and evaluation of it awaits us in chapter six.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in *ST I*, 110.

directly to “a perfect *mutuality* of the agencies of Father, Son, and Spirit.”¹⁴² Yet, according to Jenson, it is impossible to uphold the Cappadocian formula while one works within a timeless model that prohibits such eventful differentiation.¹⁴³

Augustine rejected this “eventful” or “narrative” differentiation in God, says Jenson, due to his superior commitment to Platonic theology, that is, God must be simple. Temporal distinctions, in Augustine’s view, are impossible.¹⁴⁴ For Augustine, God cannot work externally in a *mutual* fashion among the three persons, while each maintaining his own role or agency, for this would imply differentiation in God’s agency. Augustine is forced to say that there is no difference at all between the agencies of the persons, because God is simple and cannot have temporal differentiation. By stripping away the connection between self-differentiation of the Trinity and God’s work within time he is saying that what we read about in the biblical narrative about self-differentiation in created time does not apply to who God is in reality. If this indeed is Augustine’s position, then he is explicitly rejecting the Athanasian/Nicean formula that the three persons are God precisely in their relations to each other. Jenson states Augustine’s proposal this way: “the three identities not only *equally* possess the one *ousia* but identically possess it, so that the differentiating relations between them are irrelevant to their being God.”¹⁴⁵ Effectively, Augustine is rejecting a God that can be “contaminated” by temporality.

According to Jenson the Western tradition needs to correct this idea that the persons are one because they are indistinguishable, by positing that they are perfectly mutual. He states: “The distinction between the triune story as it is about God and as it is about creatures is not a distinction between the simplicity of timelessness and the differentiations of temporality: eventful differentiation is real on both sides.”¹⁴⁶ What are the consequences of not embracing this proposed correction? According to Jenson, Augustine identifies God, not as self-differentiated as in the biblical narrative, but as he “really” is, and we have already noted above that this, by Jenson’s account, runs the risk of identifying someone or something other than the true God. Jenson believes that Western theology must abandon this type of trinitarian ontology because it does not give a clear picture as to our history, but rather

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 111. Jenson notes in passing that Augustine is blind to Nicea’s affirmation of “eventful differentiation in God.”

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 112. For more on Augustine’s view of time and Trinity see his *Confessions*, book XI. For a clear critique on Augustine’s influence on Western theology for good and for ill see, Colin Gunton, “Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 43 (1990): 33-58.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 113.

disconnects God from our history. Our history is dependent upon the life of God with his people precisely because our history is a result of the Father's originating, the Spirit's perfecting, and the Son's mediation of the two.¹⁴⁷

Indeed it is this summary—the mediation of the Son—that is of central concern for Jenson's trinitarian ontology. If Jenson's project is an establishment and explication of a truly Christian doctrine of God as the starting and ending point of all Christian theology, as we hold that it is, the key to such a doctrine is Christology. Jenson states: "A truly Christian doctrine of God is a description of Jesus Christ. It says that this man shall come and every knee shall bow. It says that he is the one who has hidden behind the mask of the absent 'God.'"¹⁴⁸ A brief delineation of aspects of his Christology and the critics of it is in order.¹⁴⁹

Primally, Jenson firmly rejects a *Logos asarkos*—a sort of God behind God that bears little ontological resemblance to the human Jesus. Based on Jesus' words in John 8:58 that "Before Abraham was, I am," Jenson believes that he eliminates the possibility of some sort of divine entity in his preexistence that is not identical with the Jesus of the Gospels. Hence, Jesus the Son is not a *Logos asarkos* in his preexistence, but is precisely Jesus the Son even prior to birth. Nevertheless, he is born at a point in time, so we must account for his eternal state prior to that event. Jenson believes that the narrative pattern for Jesus' life is that of "*being going to be born*." Prior to Bethlehem there is not an unincarnate state, but a pattern of movement within the incarnation event and the triune life of God.¹⁵⁰ Herein one discovers a clear and longstanding divergence between the Reformed and Lutheran traditions—Jenson siding with the latter. Jenson understands the strong Creator/creature distinction in Reformed teaching (which, applied to Christology, is the "one person *in two natures*" formula) as pushing toward the timeless entity devoid of Jesus' history that is characteristic of "religion."¹⁵¹ Alternatively, Jenson is so keen to relate the one hypostasis of the Son with the Father that Gunton claims he is guilty of downplaying "the necessary otherness of Jesus and the Father by overstressing their identity."¹⁵² When this takes place Gunton believes that Jenson runs the risk of subsuming Jesus' humanity under divinity.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 114.

¹⁴⁸ Jenson, "Proclamation without Metaphysics," *Dialog* 1 (Winter 1962), 22-29; quoted in David S. Yeago, "Catholicity, Nihilism, and the God of the Gospel: Reflections on the Theology of Robert W. Jenson," *Dialog* 31 (Spring 1992), 18.

¹⁴⁹ For the historical background on Jenson's position see, *ST I*, 125-33.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 141.

¹⁵¹ Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 111-15.

¹⁵² Gunton, "Creation and Mediation in the Theology of Robert W. Jenson," *TTC*, 85.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

Yet, Jenson's bias remains clear: "[T]he second identity of God is directly the human person of the Gospels, in that he is the one who stands to the Father in the relation of being eternally begotten of him."¹⁵⁴ Thus, Jenson's aim in this rejection of a *Logos asarkos* is to be able unequivocally to state that God is as he reveals himself to be in Jesus Christ; therefore, that God is present within our history. This is not to say that the Reformed tradition wants anything less, and Gunton is clear in his criticism of Jenson that he, too, does not want to sharply divide the humanity and deity that we revert to the fifth century error of identifying some of Jesus' acts as divine and others as human. Likewise, Gunton does not wish to extract God from history in the sense that one easily slips into deism. But a doctrine rejecting the *Logos asarkos* must answer the inevitable complexities that arise with it.

Jenson is not unaware of them¹⁵⁵ and gives an epigrammatic answer to one such difficulty, viz., "What of God's passibility or impassibility?"¹⁵⁶ Because the God Jenson identifies in his work is the biblical God and that God is Lord over history and humanity, he concludes that it is impossible for him to be "*subjected* to created time's contingencies." This, he contends, does not necessarily imply impassibility as most of the tradition affirms. In fact, Jenson considers impassibility to be "alien," yet it forces us to inquire, "*How* does God transcend time's contingencies?"¹⁵⁷ Unquestionably for Jenson Jesus suffers all the evils perpetrated against him, dies on Golgotha, and the Father raises him from the dead by the power of the Spirit.

So and not otherwise the Father triumphs over suffering... The Father and the Spirit take the suffering of the creature who the Son is into the triune life and bring from it the final good of that creature, all other creatures, and of God. So and not otherwise the true God transcends suffering—whatever unknowably might have been.¹⁵⁸

Jesus' action, i.e. suffering, is unequivocally God's action, but this does not subject Trinity to created time's contingencies because of God's victory over that suffering in the resurrection by the power of the Spirit. How can this be so? Jenson's answer just seems to be, "Because that is the way God is." He states:

¹⁵⁴ *STI*, 137.

¹⁵⁵ For others see, Gunton, *TTC*, 86-93.

¹⁵⁶ *STI*, 144. This leads us to the more specific question of God's relationship to time, which is to come in the next chapter. By addressing this question here Jenson gives us a glimpse into how he will answer such questions related to a process view of God. Recall the introduction to this paper, which asserted that Jenson wants to have a temporal God without slipping into a process view where God is *subjected* to time.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

[O]nce it is clear that there truly is only one individual person who is the Christ, who lives as one of the Trinity and one of us, and that he is personal precisely as one of us, then to say that he as creature is our savior—or that he as creature exercises any divine power—is simply to say that he plays his role in the triune life and does not need to abstract from his human actuality to do so.¹⁵⁹

In sum, Jenson perceives a timeless Trinity as the roadblock to properly identifying God as he is and how he interacts with the world. Indeed, Jenson's proposal from the standpoint of the tradition is radical because it not only speaks of God's capacity to enter and interact with time, but it asserts that God is *identified* by dramatic coherence. Exactly how, then, is God's eternity related to time, and to what does Jenson refer when he talks of time? It is to those questions that we now turn.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 144-45.

CHAPTER THREE
ROBERT W. JENSON ON THE DIVINE ETERNITY:
TRINITY AND TIME

If the previous chapter addressed the “who” question of divine identity and identification and answered it by saying that we can know God’s identity in the manner he has revealed himself (in dramatic coherence), then this chapter must ask the “what” question of character and action. That is, how does God act in time and what does that tell us about God’s being and about time? Indeed, for Jenson, it is inconceivable to consider God’s identity apart from the divine action within history, i.e. the Jesus events.¹⁶⁰ This section initiates a more explicit discussion of Jenson’s axiom that God *is* what he *does*. Or, to use Jenson’s terminology from previous discussions, God is identified both *by* and *with* certain contingent events. This has two implications for our study: 1) Jenson’s concept of time is not intended as one of philosophical abstraction, but is linked with, to be sure, *determined by*, the triune identity; 2) that God’s being is determined by what he does in Jesus; that is, “the resurrection is this God’s *ousia*.”¹⁶¹ Thus, if God’s being is so intimately linked with time, then Jenson must articulate his trinitarian theology in a manner that accounts for our temporality. He will attempt that, but because number one above is his overriding principle, he necessarily limits the role a “natural” understanding of time will play. Consequently, I will argue throughout the thesis that he and Barth are essentially unified regarding the divine priority over time and that scientific or philosophical observations of it are subservient to revelation. Additionally, I will argue that eternity’s intersection with humanity is a Christological one, yet the problem arises in his specific delineation of eternity among the triune identities. I believe the move introduces unnecessary complexities for theology, and within Jenson’s overlap with Barth exist the crucial elements for a Christian doctrine of time and eternity.

Triune Identity and the Gospel Claims

Before becoming immersed in Jenson’s divine metaphysic we must briefly recapitulate exactly what is at stake in this discussion. As the title of this section indicates, broadly speaking, Jenson is zealous to be faithful to a trinitarian gospel that is “now the

¹⁶⁰ *STI*, 165

¹⁶¹ *TI*, 168.

West's only open alternative to nihilism."¹⁶² Yet, in doing so he is turning aspects of the Western tradition on its head by positing God's being as constituted by his act, as opposed to act as flowing from his being. As a backdrop, then, to the weighty forthcoming exposition of Jenson's trinitarian ontology we will allow Gunton to outline the significance of "act then being."¹⁶³

According to Gunton Greek philosophy replaced the Old Testament as the controlling factor for knowing the being and attributes of God. This has resulted in an "impoverishment of our grasp of the breadth and depth of the gospel's meaning."¹⁶⁴ Thus, many "have been content...with a list of apparently intelligible and often rather abstract terms as 'the contents of our idea of God'."¹⁶⁵ Because of this misuse of method it has resulted in faulty conclusions about God. For example, looking at the Exodus account of the "I Am" Gunton demonstrates that the early exegesis was likely shaped by "Platonic abstraction," and definitely foundational for subsequent negative theology. So, the question becomes what "is the relation between a metaphysic of being in which God is named by what is essentially a method of philosophical abstraction and the biblical phenomenon of the revealed name?"¹⁶⁶ This last phrase is reminiscent of Jenson's insistence that the Bible should serve to identify God as the One who has done certain temporal, historical activities, and not the one as the shadow on the cave. He is the God who led his people out of Egypt and raised Jesus from the dead.

As a result Gunton believes that within the discussion of philosophy and theology as it pertains to the attributes (or, we could say Greek religion and Christian religion) there seems to be an opposition of being and action respectively, and if placed alongside one another the metaphysic of being tends to swallow up that of action. Or, we could put it this way: the metaphysic of being is the grid through which we understand the biblical revelation concerning God's action and when something of the latter does not fit it is redefined or simply discarded in favor of the former.¹⁶⁷

Gunton summarizes his observations and objections: 1) God's acts are not prioritized or taken as the controlling factor in systematizing his attributes; 2) the attributes are conceived in terms of a timeless eternity bearing down upon the temporal, instead of

¹⁶² Ibid., 186.

¹⁶³ Principally in, Colin E. Gunton, *Act and Being: Towards a Theology of Divine Attributes* (London: SCM Press, 2002).

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 12.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 21-2.

“attributes suggested by divine action in time;” 3) this results in conceiving of a god who is opposed to the world. “A properly trinitarian understanding of God would rather conceive of him as one who is known in his otherness only through his relation.” That is, we know God first because of his positive relation to the world, *then* in terms of Creator, distinct from his creation; 4) this opposition of God and the world is a dualistic account, i.e. material vs. ideal. The result is that spirit is exclusively non-material and can give no account of God’s positive relation to the world.¹⁶⁸

Thus, what is at stake? According to Jenson and Gunton nothing less than God’s positive, real relation to the world is at stake. That is, gospel—soteriology—is intrinsically linked to the divine identity, and one must not opt for a divine ontology that marginalizes act in favor of being. For Gunton and Jenson, God *is* what he *does*. What we have not answered in this sketch is whether Jenson’s conclusions on divine identity constitute the *best* model for understanding this gospel-relation to the world. Indeed, Gunton’s proposals differ from Jenson on several fronts in spite of their basic unity regarding the current theological crisis.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, by accepting Jenson’s axiom of the priority of the divine act we are not forced to consent to all of his conclusions. Further, this reversal of act followed by being does not necessarily demand the priority of time over eternity. God does not thereby become subject to the discontinuities of time merely because his act is primary and that act is in this world. Crucially, what he *does* in the world demonstrates his relation to time, not purely his existence in it; and for Jenson, what God does in this world is overcome the limits of time. It is with these crucial gospel claims in mind that we proceed with Jenson’s metaphysic.

To get at what it means to say “God’s being” Jenson follows Aquinas’ enforcement of the Creator/creature distinction and Gregory of Nyssa’s trinitarian concept of being.¹⁷⁰ First,

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 17.

¹⁶⁹ I also agree with Jenson that much of Western thinking has been shaped by the exaggerated distinction between immanent and economic Trinity, yet this does not demand discarding the model in its entirety as Jenson would suggest. More on this below.

¹⁷⁰ *ST I*, 212. Jenson briefly develops Aquinas’ teaching on divine simplicity and form and being in *ST I*, 212-14. For an extended discussion on this see, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles, Book One: Creation*, 16-17, 100-03; and Christopher Hughes, “Matter and Actuality in Aquinas,” 61-76. There is an inevitability with any exposition of a figure’s thought that the expositor is possibly mistaken, and Jenson’s treatment of Gregory of Nyssa is no exception. Recent scholarship has questioned the now popular reading of the Cappadocians as foundational for the so-called Eastern social/communitarian understanding of the Trinity (a key player in which is John Zizioulas, on whom to some extent Jenson depends) over against the supposed Western substantial Trinity where substance is prior to personhood. This is principally worked out in Sarah Coakley, ed., *Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). It appears that Jenson’s analysis of the historical context of Cappadocian theology is in basic agreement with these current trends, though his conclusions in particular about Nyssa remain debatable. Within this volume only Lewis Ayres, “On Not Three People: The Fundamental Themes of Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology As Seen In *To Ablabius: On Not*

according to Jenson Gregory does not believe “God” and “ousia” are equivalent. If this were the case, says Gregory, when one asserts three instances of the divine ousia, then one quickly slides into tritheism. Therefore, when we say “God” it “refers to the mutual *action* of the identities’ divine ‘energies,’ to the perichoretic triune *life*.”¹⁷¹ “God,” then, is never a reference to a form in and of itself, but is a life-in-action, “a *going-on*, a sequentially palpable event, like a kiss or a train wreck.”¹⁷² This, believes Jenson, is what sets the Cappadocian formula apart from “standard Christian metaphysics.” He explains:

By distinguishing *ousia* from *hypostasis* in the case of God, Basil and his protégés pushed God’s *ousia* unambiguously to the side of the possessed complex of attributes. Their possessor would now have to be either the event of which the Cappadocians predicate “God,” or the hypostases, singly or together. The play of possessor and possessed, which animates Hellenic metaphysics, is thus dissolved; God only *has* an *ousia*; he *is* not one. And then Gregory of Nyssa denied that God’s *ousia* could be any list of linked attributes which God must always continue to exemplify in order to be God. The biblical God cannot be thus bounded, constrained by what already was and is true of him. But what then can *ousia* mean?¹⁷³

Jenson understands Gregory to say exactly what he and Gunton assert: that the persons of the Godhead live this divine life, “other than and prior to the fact that God is.”¹⁷⁴ That is, to say that God has being does not mean we look for something behind the mutual, active life of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The communal life of the three persons precedes (in a logical sense) any notion of being. Hence, what is the answer to Jenson’s question concerning the definition of *ousia*? Again, relying on his interpretation of Gregory, Jenson believes the only way to characterize divine being is “infinite” or “limitlessness.” Jenson understands Gregory as saying in a profoundly anti-Greek fashion that God is not infinite in the sense that he “extends indefinitely, but because no temporal activity can keep up with the activity that he is.”¹⁷⁵ In the same manner as we earlier described God’s passibility it is not that boundaries do not exist for God, but that he *overcomes* the boundaries. Jenson states it in this manner:

Three Gods,” refers to Jenson and intimates that he would disagree with at least part of Jenson’s conclusions. If Jenson’s account of the Cappadocians is flawed, then I suppose it would undermine the force of his argument, but that is not to our point. Our interest is Jenson’s doctrinal conclusions and whether they stand up to scrutiny, explicitly, next to Barth’s theology. A study of whether those conclusions are historically properly grounded would be an interesting one, but one that is not a central focus of this thesis.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 214.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ *TI*, 162-63.

¹⁷⁴ *STI*, 215.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 216.

What Father, Son, and Spirit have from each other to be three identities of *God*, and what characterizes their mutual action *as* God, is limitlessness. What happens among them accepts no boundaries; nothing can hinder what they enact. If we label the triune action “love,” then we must say: the Father’s love can embrace whatever the Spirit’s coming brings; the Son’s love can endure whatever his Father sends him to do; the Spirit’s creativity of love is inexhaustible. Just so, this love is *God* and not creature.¹⁷⁶

Thus, so as not to miss the point: “The divine *ousia* is the infinity...of the work done between Jesus and his Father in their Spirit.”¹⁷⁷ While Greek metaphysics could not conceive of God as infinite since, for them, infinity necessarily collapses into nothingness¹⁷⁸ Jenson interprets Gregory to claim that God is *temporally* infinite. That is, he is precisely God because he overcomes the boundaries of time, while being within time. Our immediate question must be: *How* could God participate within our time yet be unfettered by its limitations? Or put another way, *what is God’s eternity?*

Trinity as *Temporal Infinity*

Jenson’s answer to those questions is that God’s being should be described as *temporal infinity*. This term, in Jenson’s understanding, demonstrates God’s self-liberation from temporal contingencies, i.e., his eternity, without extracting him from history. Therefore, while one might believe that divine temporality necessarily leads one to a god in process or one lacking sovereign lordship, Jenson believes that it is precisely this “overcoming” of boundaries that demonstrates he is Lord.

I would note that such a concept is not alien to the Christian tradition, despite its lack of application to the issue of temporality. In Jesus Christianity affirms that God is fully human, but *overcomes* the sin that is so much a part of our identity. It is not that God *lacked* boundaries in Jesus, precisely the opposite. The gospel accounts labor the point that Jesus overcomes sin by passing the test in the wilderness and defeating it in the cross and resurrection. The tendency in the tradition has been to answer the challenges regarding the person of Christ with a simplisitic, “well, he is divine.” In other words, the reality of the wilderness temptation, the high priestly prayer, Jesus’ comments concerning his own ignorance of the hour of his return, and the garden of Gethsemane are underestimated and

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ *TI*, 164.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 163-65.

swallowed up by his divinity—a divinity that is purportedly immune from such earthiness.¹⁷⁹ But if Jesus *can* be human and remain unstained by sin and defeat its power, is it so radical to say that the triune God embraces temporality, yet overcomes its limitations? Does this not demonstrate his Lordship over time, rather than subject him (willingly or not) to time’s contingencies? God did not lose anything by becoming human, nor did he gain something that he lacked. Similarly, being temporal as demonstrated in Jesus Christ does not mean that God loses his being to the past or gains something from the future that he did not have. Why? Because those limitations can be (and were) overcome.

It is just this theological necessity (Christology)¹⁸⁰ that lies behind Jenson’s passion to overthrow any remains of divine atemporality. Just as being fully human means that those gospel episodes were real and not divine games, so being temporal means being fully temporal. Temporal infinity in Jenson’s scheme is what it means to say “God is temporal”—and this is true temporality, yet without the discontinuities and eventual end that awaits each of us.

Even though we must await a full exposition in the coming chapters on this point here we must observe a striking similarity with Barth’s concept of “pure duration.”¹⁸¹ That is, God does not lose aspects of his life into the past, nor does he not yet have parts of his existence that lay in the future. “Any eternity is some transcendence of temporal limits, but the biblical God’s eternity is not the simple contradiction of time. What he transcends is not the having of beginnings and goals and reconciliations, but any personal limitation in having them.”¹⁸² Yet—and here we discover a crucial distinction for this thesis—he claims to go beyond Barth by explicitly emphasizing the temporal aspect of God’s being just in the Father and Spirit. If the Spirit is the goal or future and the Father is source or past, then they must be “asymmetrical.” According to Jenson this fact preserves a collapse into atemporality, something Jenson believes Pannenberg allows in spite of his Spirit-future orientation.¹⁸³ Therefore, “God is not eternal in that he adamantly remains as he began, but in that he always

¹⁷⁹ For a good discussion on this essential issue see, Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, Volume 2, trans., Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 154-64.

¹⁸⁰ More on this below.

¹⁸¹ Jenson himself notes his unity with Barth on this point and essentially defers to *Church Dogmatics* for the details.

¹⁸² *STI*, 217.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 218. In n. 61 Jenson states that Pannenberg errs when he says that “God is eternal, because he has no future beyond himself but is his own future and the future of all that is other than him.” Jenson argues that just because God is infinite and is not subject to the march of time, it does not follow that he has no future apart from his present. If God’s future is also his present, as Pannenberg seems to be saying, Jenson sees this as stripping away at God’s temporal infinity and collapsing right back into the old nemesis, timelessness. For Pannenberg’s response to this see, “Eternity, Time, and the Trinitarian God,” *TTC*, 62-70, and for more on Pannenberg see chapter five of this thesis.

creatively opens to what he will be; not in that he hangs on, but in that he gives and receives; not in that he perfectly persists, but in that he perfectly anticipates.”¹⁸⁴ God is always opening himself up to the new in and by his Spirit, and not some future unknown. The Spirit is the future and actualizes it for the Father and for us.

Yet, Jenson rightly anticipates the reader’s objection of this application of the divine being to time, which is, “To what kind of time could you possibly be referring?” Here we note an anomaly in Jenson’s thought on divine temporality that *may* prove to be a dilemma for him.¹⁸⁵ We will permit Jenson to speak for himself:

Can we then speak of God’s own “time?” To some extent, the question is surely a matter of linguistic choice. If we speak of the triune God’s eternity as his “time,” we shall have to adjust our language about created time to allow for this. If we choose the contrary, we shall have the continuing need of circumlocution in speaking of the true God’s eternity.¹⁸⁶

At least two suggestions arise from this quotation. First, (and this will become more obvious below) not unlike Barth Jenson’s concept of time exhibits a fluidity since it is determined by Trinity. That is, he is less concerned that we fit the triune God into our conception of time, as he is that we understand the *divine* temporality. One should note his consistency in this regard to his overall divine metaphysic. Second, and certainly more problematic, we have been led to believe in the entire first volume of *Systematic Theology* that overcoming atemporality demands positing divine temporality, presumably the kind of temporality we would recognize, given his insistence upon the divine unity with the *historical* events of exodus and resurrection. Those historical events are certainly intrinsically connected to “our time.” If he retracts this objective and posits “God’s own time” as something unique to God and distinct from created time, then I fail to see anything innovative in Jenson’s concept of temporal infinity beyond that of Barth or anyone else.

One final step in the unpacking of this term, *temporal infinity*: specifically, how do we envisage the mutual action of Father, Son, and Spirit in relation to time? Since the mutual triune identities are foundational for God’s eternity, which is temporal infinity, we must consider how that is the case. According to Jenson, we might look at the Father as the origin of the divine life (“whence”), the Spirit as the goal (“whither”), and the Son as the present. If

¹⁸⁴ *STI*, 217. It seems to me that this fact has significant implications for providence. Would this model lend itself to the notion of divine action that is new and responsive, not simply the acting out of a pre-determined script?

¹⁸⁵ A full evaluation is in chapter six.

¹⁸⁶ *STI*, 218.

origin and goal (past and present) hold together in the divine life so that God does not lose any “time” or duration, then that has to come together in the Son.¹⁸⁷ The reason for this is that death, “time’s ultimate act,” is not transcended by immunity to it, but by conquering it. “Thus the way in which the whence and whither of the divine life are one, the way in which the triune God is eternal, is by the events of Jesus’ death and resurrection.”¹⁸⁸ The Spirit brings the future Kingdom which Jesus came to establish. The Spirit so rested on Christ, according to Jenson, that God’s infinity is apprehended in the “inexhaustibility” of Jesus’ work that continues undeterred. In spite of the boundness of Jesus’ life the Kingdom possibilities are not so bounded because the Spirit takes up Jesus’ work and brings them from the goal of fulfilled Kingdom. As to the Father he “intends himself in the Son,” and this loving consciousness on the part of the Father demonstrates his infinity. That is, as creatures our consciousness can only identify itself within a finite object, hence it is finite. The Father identifies himself in the Son, who in turn identifies himself, not only with the Father, but with those outside the Godhead.¹⁸⁹ Therefore, believes Jenson, “the temporal infinity that opens before us and so embraces us as the triune God’s eternity is the inexhaustibility [or, we might say, the “inability to be limited or overcome”] of one event. That event is the appropriation of all other events by the love actual as Jesus of Nazareth.”¹⁹⁰ God transcends time by overcoming it in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, *but* that transcendence of our time *is his time*. His time is the dynamic life of Father, Son, and Spirit that enters into time and overcomes its boundaries; hence (and this is crucial for this thesis), God’s temporal infinity is not time in the same sense that we experience it, i.e. losing to the past and gaining from the future. We will discover very clear echoes in Barth’s theology. Specifically, to say that the Father is past, the Son present, and the Spirit future, and to say that they coinhere in the Son’s temporal work is very much like saying God is pre-temporal, supra-temporal, and post-temporal. It also dovetails nicely with the idea of “omnitemporality,” which I will examine below.

For now, a brief excursus to consider one of Jenson’s critics is appropriate for evaluating both the soundness of his proposals and that of the criticisms proffered. In so doing we are not attempting simply to vindicate Jenson or demonstrate his superiority to other theologies, but only desire to entertain the aims of his project, avoiding a kind of

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 219.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 220.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 221.

simplistic, knee-jerk response that repudiates any perspective that deviates from any given accepted point of view. One such critic is Paul Molnar.

A close examination of Molnar's critique of Jenson provides the rationale for Jenson's curt response to it.¹⁹¹ It is apparent that Molnar, in spite of his somewhat courteous opening remarks, has not taken Jenson's project seriously since he merely challenges the aspects of his thought that diverge from Molnar's own interpretation of Barth, ignoring the fact that in almost every case Jenson *shares* the same concerns as Barth does, yet recognizes a need to improve upon Barth in order to address certain perceived deficiencies. Thus, Molnar gives the impression that Jenson intends to *affirm* ideas that Barth viewed as problematic, such as natural theology, a god of process, refusing to acknowledge the divine freedom, etc. In no way does Jenson intend this, for he explicitly rejects all of these in various places; hence, the question Molnar should be asking is, "How does Jenson avoid these same problems that Barth sought to avoid?" If Molnar had framed his critique in this manner, then he might have discovered what Gunton and others have discerned: that Jenson is working within the same boundaries as Barth and depending heavily upon the crux of his theology, yet seeking to improve on Barth's shortcomings.¹⁹² Because of Molnar's failure in this regard he can only say that Jenson's conclusions are "puzzling" or "confused."¹⁹³ Of course they are if one thinks Jenson is trying to say the *opposite* of what Barth said; or, worse, what the Christian tradition and scripture have said. To be sure Jenson formulates certain issues differently than Barth, et al., but that is because he believes there is a better way to overcome the same problem Barth was trying to conquer. Thus, Molnar does not appreciate Jenson's work given Jenson's own objectives, and, consequently, is blind to its value and contribution. We must give a concrete example to illustrate the point and to do so we will identify Molnar's repeated objection to Jenson, which directly corresponds to our exposition of Jenson's trinitarian metaphysic in this section of the thesis.

In each of the four categories Molnar uses as occasions to criticize Jenson his conclusion is that Jenson constructs a trinitarian ontology that *depends* upon history (or, created time) in order to have being. That is, time/history *determines* the divine being:¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ See, Jenson, "A Reply," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52 (1999): 132. It amounted to two paragraphs and roughly half of a page.

¹⁹² See Gunton, "Creation and Mediation in the Theology of Robert W. Jenson," *TTC*, 80-93.

¹⁹³ Molnar, 70.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 70-81. I cite pages for the entire article because Molnar specifically mentions this on nearly every page. We might also wonder how Molnar can affirm anything good in Jenson's theology, given this charge. Does this not set up a dualistic account of reality where God is anything but Lord? If Molnar's appraisal is correct, then the question is not to ask whether Jenson's is *good* Christian theology, but whether it is *Christian* at all!

“the implication here is that God is not eternally self-sufficient but is becoming who he will be because of his relations *ad extra*... Here both time and suffering are allowed to define the divine nature.”¹⁹⁵ According to Molnar collapsing the immanent and economic Trinity is the main culprit.¹⁹⁶ However, Molnar has missed the center of disagreement between Barth and Jenson when he identifies this as the problem. Indeed, Jenson never denies an immanent Trinity,¹⁹⁷ only fails to fashion it as Barth (or Molnar) would. Ironically, it is the first of his categories of assessment where Molnar (apparently unwittingly) identifies the point of departure for Jenson—it is a difference of Christology. Molnar believes that Jenson’s emphasis on Jesus humanity “as such” as God’s self-revelation is an overemphasis that risks making the divine identity dependent upon history.¹⁹⁸ After quoting Jenson that “What happens between Jesus and his Father and our future *happens in God*,”¹⁹⁹ Molnar offers this startling evaluation:

But what happened to Christ’s sonship here? It appears to be equated with the human Jesus in his relation to the Father. And to that extent one may either say that the human Jesus exists eternally, that is, before the Word became incarnate (in which case human existence is compromised), or one may say that the human Jesus became the Son of God in his actions in history (in which case he did not in fact pre-exist as the eternally begotten Son of the Father). But one cannot say that Jesus as such is one of the trinitarian hypostases without blurring the distinction between God *in se* and God acting for us *ad extra*. What happens in Jenson’s thinking, in my opinion, is that Jesus is actually stripped of his eternal uniqueness as Son.

Molnar correctly concludes that Jenson wants to say that “the human Jesus in his relation to the Father” is the *Logos*, God revealed. That is, Jenson is addressing the same problem Barth faced in conceiving of the divine identity in relation to the world, and the answer is centered on Christology. Molnar is evidently advocating a greater distinction between the divine and human Christ so as to stress the otherness of God and creation. On the other hand, Jenson’s language is “withinness” (as has been noted above), and this stress in the God-world relation prompts Molnar to conclude that Jenson is virtually a pantheist.²⁰⁰ Yet Molnar’s proposal faces a similar danger that Jenson faces, only the other side of the coin. Such a radical

¹⁹⁵ Molnar, 80.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ *TI*, 140.

¹⁹⁸ Molnar, 70.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 72; Quoted from *TI*, 106.

²⁰⁰ Not that Molnar uses this term, though he is not far from doing so when he states that Jenson denies “Jesus’ antecedent existence... in order to advance a Hegelian notion of God’s involvement with history,” 73. As stated above an account of the God-world relation where the world *determines* or *dictates* the divine being is far from trinitarian theism. Molnar’s charge may be more serious than even he realizes.

distinction between the Logos and the human Jesus brings a plethora of potential problems, not the least of which is the “God behind the God” that Barth himself unceasingly labored to avoid. I would suggest that Molnar’s above quotation comes perilously close to this.

Gunton has given a much more insightful analysis of the situation that demands we draw on his help. First, concerning the above accusation from Molnar that “Jesus is actually stripped of his eternal uniqueness as Son,” Gunton’s conclusion reveals a different accent, namely, that Jenson’s strong adherence to a Lutheran doctrine of the communion of attributes “is likely to eventuate in the effective submerging of the human Jesus in the action of the divine.”²⁰¹ Thus, according to Gunton, Jenson’s tendency is to overstress the identity of Jesus and the Father “that more effort should be devoted to demonstrating that the Logos speaks *as human*.”²⁰² One might surmise that Gunton and Molnar are after the same thing, i.e. how Christ is Mediator between the Father and creation, yet the routes to get there are dissimilar. Further, Gunton demonstrates an understanding of the nuances of Jenson’s theology that gives purchase to his eventual critique of him.

Second, the consequence of this Christology is the question of the mediation of creation, or, how the divine being can be related to this world and be external to it at the same time. We must strongly emphasize that Jenson is working within those parameters and is not giving an account that is so radical it could not be considered Christian.²⁰³ Molnar seems to think that Jenson offers us a god whose being is determined by something else, thus positing someone other than the biblical God. Gunton, on the other hand, identifies the manner in which Jenson’s language of “withinness” is carefully qualified by externality,²⁰⁴ thus formulating the real question in this manner: “Is there a difference between saying, as Barth tends to say, that there is an analogy between God’s spatiality and that of the world he creates, and saying with Jenson that created space is in some way within God? That answer to that is, we have just seen, not necessarily.”²⁰⁵

Therefore, Gunton recognizes that just because Jenson insists that Father and Spirit unite in the event of Jesus Christ, namely death and resurrection, we are not forced to conclude that time and suffering *define* God’s being, as if God relies on or is subject to some greater power. Somehow Christian theology must account for time and suffering in the Son within proper trinitarianism. This is the Being, according to Jenson, who reveals himself to

²⁰¹ Gunton, “Creation and Mediation in the Theology of Robert W. Jenson,” *TTC*, 85.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 90.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 88-89. For example, he cites several passages in *ST II*, chapters 16 and 17.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

us—one whose infinity coheres in the historical event of Jesus Christ. This does not imply that he is powerless against time’s contingencies, but rather that he miraculously embraces time and *overcomes* it, a concept Molnar completely ignores in his analysis. Molnar’s position, revealed within his criticism of Jenson, is precisely Jenson’s worry: by disregarding the unity of God and time trinitarian theology cannot suitably account for the temporality of Jesus,²⁰⁶ nor can it account for God’s redemptive work in Christ. Jenson’s project is an attempt to deal with that question of mediation, and his response to Molnar exposes the latter’s inability to offer a constructive evaluation and critique:

Thus my systematic theology urges that the metaphysics that construes being as perdurance, and contingency as an ontological deficit, is antithetical to the gospel. If a reader takes this metaphysics as unchallengeable, and assumes that the writer also must at bottom depend on it, he will, of course, discover the most horrid consequences and absurdities. But to the elucidation of the book or to critique of its claims, these discoveries will be neither here nor there.²⁰⁷

Molnar’s response to Jenson has as its backdrop the classic atemporal approach, which is preeminently concerned that God remains uncontaminated from time and history. Yet, if atemporality cannot account for God in Jesus (eternity in time), then Christian theology must demand its removal. Therefore, the time/eternity issue is in reality a theological or metaphysical issue.

In sum, Jenson’s position on the divine being: first, for Jenson, God is an *event*.²⁰⁸ That is, history occurs in his being. The implication for Jenson (though not drawn out in detail) is that since God opens himself to us in history in this “event that is himself,” we should discard the idea that his deity is opposed to the new and responsive. God is not an atemporal, fixed entity that determines from the past without movement and creativity. God as event is primally the persons of the Trinity in communion, which we have already discovered encompasses past, present, and future. Yet God, as the triune mutual action of Father, Son, and Spirit, opens himself to that which is other than God. “God is what happens

²⁰⁶ As will become even more clear below this is the problem with much of the apologetic for atemporality, i.e. talk of God’s relation to time becomes *unitarian* instead of *trinitarian*. For example, Peters notes this in regard to Ian Barbour and Holmes Rolston in *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 159. I believe that the opposite case, i.e. that Jenson’s account is primally *trinitarian* is reason to consider his divine metaphysic superior.

²⁰⁷ Jenson, “A Reply,” 132.

²⁰⁸ *STI*, 221.

to the world,” and if we wanted to know what this Being would be like apart from the world, Jenson believes, is mere speculation since it is a counterfactual.²⁰⁹ Of course, the previous discussions have attempted to elucidate Jenson’s “withinness” language within trinitarian theism, and we would insist that a variant reading toward pantheism or its step-sister panentheism is a misreading. To be sure, there are dangers with it, but that does not necessarily justify its condemnation any more than it does to condemn the strict distinction Molnar suggests simply because of its inherent dangers.

Second, according to Jenson, God is a *person*.²¹⁰ As to the consequence of this notion we must acknowledge his activities in the scriptures as personal. He promises, repents, reacts and changes his mind. “Persons do all these things, precisely to be personal, and in that the true God is personal they are ontological perfections, not deficiencies.” Just like Jesus opens himself to human beings, God listens, responds, and opens himself up to human beings since God’s identity, according to Jenson, is in Jesus. “God is not God in spite of changing his mind, in spite of answering prayer or failing to do so; he is God because he does and can do such things wholeheartedly. Operatively: unabashed petitionary prayer is the one decisively appropriate creaturely act over against the true God.”²¹¹ Again, God as a person is not *immune* to history, but *overcomes* history’s discontinuities, and how is that a deficiency?

Third, God is a *decision*. Without much elaboration, Jenson affirms Barth’s insistence that election or predestination should be included in the doctrine of God as the logical outcome of God as event and as personal. Again, I would note overlap between the two.²¹²

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Pannenberg criticizes Jenson on this point in “Eternity, Time, and the Trinitarian God,” 70, by saying that Jenson posits God as personal in his one essence apart from the persons. This, Pannenberg believes, would add a fourth person to the divine being. To be sure, Jenson’s concept of personhood has not gone unchallenged. Brian Sholl has objected to Jenson’s use of Kant and Hegel, to formulate his idea of “identity.” Further, he offers Jonathan Edwards as an alternative to this inappropriate use, in particular of Hegel; however, Sholl attempts too much in this brief article and has failed to demonstrate that Jenson’s employment of Idealist categories is necessarily destructive for his theology. Sholl’s *primary* objection is virtually identical to Molnar’s: in Jenson God’s being is dependent upon finite history. Yet, it is unclear whether Sholl thinks that Jenson is truly attempting to rehabilitate Hegel, or if his use of Hegel is merely unwarranted or unnecessary and *could* lead to Hegelian conclusions. In Jenson’s defense similarities with Kant and Hegel are mitigated or left irrelevant when one avoids their judgments and sides with the divine identity of biblical narrative. Stopping along the way to listen to Kant and Hegel does not render the project ineffectual, and Jenson presses the point over and over again that God is truly other than creation and that he overcomes time’s contingencies. For more see, Brian K. Sholl, “On Robert Jenson’s Trinitarian Thought,” *Modern Theology* 18 (2002): 27-36.

²¹¹ *ST I*, 222.

²¹² Ibid., 223. Pressing this point to see if Jenson compromises God’s freedom by uniting decision and being would be interesting, but beyond the scope of this thesis. For Jenson’s interaction with Barth on this question and other related questions see, *GAG*, 125-27; and for a evaluation of Jenson on freedom in God and humans see, Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 1997), 118-36.

Time

It should be obvious, therefore, that Jenson's definition of time relies upon his trinitarian theology, one that maintains a very close relation between God and the world—so close that he is accused of holding non-Christian, pantheistic beliefs. Time, then, is a creation *enveloped* by the persons of the Trinity. As Jenson puts it: “for God to create is for him to *make accommodation* in his triune life for other persons and things than the three whose mutual life he is. In himself, he *opens room*, and that act is the event of creation. We call this accommodation in the triune life ‘time.’”²¹³ Whatever Jenson asserts regarding the nature of time and God's relation to it, within his theology it must be clearly understood that, as Creator, God is the Lord of time who transcends its discontinuities. At least on this he cannot be said to be at odds with the tradition.

Yet this “roominess” within the divine life implies a relationship to our time in some sense. What is that sense?²¹⁴ Jenson states:

[W]e may say that the Son mediates the Father's originating and the Spirit's liberating, thereby to *hold open* the creatures' space in being. The relation of the creature to the Creator, by which the creature is, holds in the present tense of created time without thereby being a timeless relation, in that one of the three, the Son, has his own individual entity *within* created time, in that he is himself one of those among whom and upon whom creatures' participation in God's story is being “worked out.” The envelopment of our time by God is itself accomplished in the course of our time.²¹⁵

The significance of the above for our purposes is that because of Jesus Jenson has irretrievably linked Trinity with *created time*. That is, our time is created by God, dependent upon his providential hand for its continuance, yet is only real inasmuch as the Son exists within it. And if the Son has his existence within time and is the mediation of it to the Father and Spirit, as Jenson appears to indicate, then when he speaks of “divine temporality” there can be little doubt that he intends *created time*. Even if he were to go on to posit some version of “God's time” over against created time, such a divine time is nevertheless united to, indeed, “accomplished in” created time. Therefore, a resolution of this divine envelopment (or, transcending) yet existence *within* created time is still to come. Before

²¹³ *ST II*, 25.

²¹⁴ For the details of the following see *ST II*, 26-28.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

approaching a resolution however, we must begin with basic definitions. What does Jenson mean when he says, “time?”

Concerning the nature of time itself Jenson discusses two views: the first from Augustine and the second stemming from Aristotle.

According to Jenson, Augustine created a paradox for himself when he determined that if *our* present always remained so, it would be eternity. Hence, even the present must lack temporality and can only function as a geometrical point in the transition from past to future. This leads to time as “nothingness,” but Augustine cannot accept this since he is a Christian. Thus, the soul becomes the place where past, present and future are there for humans, yet not in the same fashion as it is for God. That is, the past and future simply cannot exist for the finite soul, while they do for God. But Augustine does not want to be pressed into this solution, so he sees memory and expectation as the places where they are real as a *distentio* of the soul. Jenson calls this Augustinian version of time “the inner horizon of human experience.”²¹⁶ Augustine seems to view time as a stretched-out line within the creature.

Another version of time handed down in Western thought is Aristotelian: “time is the metric of external physical movement provided by a standard of such movement.” That is, time is something external to us built into the fabric of the universe. Yet, says Jenson, this model does not do justice to the experiential question that we have in relation to time, that is, how it is we are “transcendentally” shaped by it.²¹⁷ So, what contemporary interpretations exist of our time?

According to Jenson, *classic relativity theory* describes the world in which we live and move, in which there are causes and effects—relationality. This theory is “real world,” so to speak, and regards it as irreducibly tensed. *Quantum mechanics* supposes that there is an imaginary time that is detached from our experience of time. If we think of the previous version as “real time,” we might understand this version, according to Jenson, as “imaginary time.” “Two moments of this time...are like points on a map, so that which way the arrow points depends on from which side the two moments are viewed; this time is indeed a ‘fourth dimension’ indistinguishable from the other three.”²¹⁸ As Jenson notes in passing, these two categories might roughly correspond to A- and B-theories of time. While not entering into

²¹⁶ Ibid., 30-31.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 32.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 33.

the philosophical debate on the merits of them Jenson does offer a judgment for theology's role here: theology must side with A-theorists.

Nevertheless, the question remains as to what he will do with "real" and "imaginary" time. He states:

Surely our primal intuition of time is that it must possess the characters of *both* Augustine's "time" and Aristotle's "time," of both "real" time and "imaginary" time. Time is precisely the *horizon of experience*, with both nouns demanding full weight. A resolution suggests itself: that time is indeed, a la Augustine, the "distention" of a personal reality, and that just *so* it provides creatures with an external metric of created events. That is: the "stretching out" that makes time is an extension not of finite consciousness but of an infinite enveloping consciousness.²¹⁹

This solution highlights the key concept around which this chapter revolves: the God who "takes time" for us. For Jenson, creation is that act of taking time or "making room" for us. Hence, creation provides the matrix of our living in him and in this sense time is external to us. Yet, as we move within creation we are participating and experiencing this matrix in a sense that is more integral to our being—as Augustine would say.²²⁰ We experience time in the way we do because God created us to experience *him*, hence time must be his being and experience, as it is ours. Jenson believes Augustine's understanding of divine simplicity blinded him to God's complexity as a being of temporal infinity; rather he projected those complexities onto the human soul. Instead, Jenson asserts, we should understand God as a "life among persons. And therefore creation's temporality is not awkwardly related to God's eternity, and its sequentiality imposes no strain on its participation in being."²²¹ Here again arises the absolute necessity of formulating a *trinitarian* theology of time and eternity instead of one that rests on what the divine being *should* be like. If we think in terms of God, not as a static being, but as the mutual life of Father, Son, and Spirit, then we discover an alternative to Augustine's *distentio* that is far more theologically suitable. God himself—Father, Son, and Spirit—is the location of our time. Past, present, and future are not lost in him, just as for Augustine they were not lost in the human soul.

The consequence of all this, according to Jenson, is that we must affirm a "past and future" in God's very being, which is identical to the self-differentiated Father and Spirit. Still, as we have already affirmed above, nothing in the divine being is subject to time's

²¹⁹ *ST* II, 34.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

fleetingness and he does not gain from the future something that he does not already have. Indeed, the Spirit is the future, hence what or who could give to the Godhead? Further, this triune structure to past, present, and future is prior to our time and holds it together.²²² “It indeed better suits the gospel’s God to speak of ‘God’s time’ and ‘created time,’ taking ‘time’ as an analogous concept, than to think of God as not having time and then resort to such circumlocutions as Barth’s ‘sheer duration.’”²²³

And here again arises the anomaly. It seems that Jenson concedes at the very end of his argument that all he wants to do is free theology from an atemporal God, yet he is really unable to affirm anything concrete about God’s temporality, only that he has it. Jenson has labored to demonstrate that earthly, real time is within God’s being, which enables such time to exist, yet by referring to God’s time and our time as “analogous” does he not undercut what he has just stated? One supposes that to say “God’s time” can now mean just about anything, and discriminating between him and other theologians might prove challenging. Further, it is this very point for which Jenson criticizes Barth, asserting that he has not truly avoided atemporality because of his use of analogy.²²⁴ By insisting that God is not subject to the discontinuities of time, yet he is temporally present with us in Jesus, he has not broken new the new ground he claims.

However, while Jenson’s own aims might go unmet, or, at the very least not clearly stated, it does not follow that his proposals lack any merit whatsoever. It might be possible to accomplish exactly what Augustine wanted to with divine timelessness by saying with Jenson that God has his own time that is only analogous to ours. On this scheme God is not tainted by the vicissitudes of created temporality if he exists in his own time, even though it appears (at times) that this is precisely the idea that Jenson’s entire project zealously avoids—escaping created time to find the God of eternity behind the God of temporality. The crucial points to bear in mind here are: 1) Jenson’s project is not rendered useless by this discrepancy between our time and God’s time, and 2) he does not actually clearly state how our time and God’s time are united—only that they are analogous. I will argue in the coming chapters that this indeed does not create the kind of distance between Barth and him that he might desire.

In sum, Jenson’s definition or description of time is that it is the room created for that which is other than God and bracketed by the persons of the Trinity. Further, it is the internal experience of human consciousness, coupled with the structure of the natural world that

²²² Again, this might be a place to look for reasons for Jenson’s affirmation of A-series time. God’s very being structures what we know of time, hence we must take that structure seriously.

²²³ *ST II*, 35.

²²⁴ *GAG*, 154.

together constitute the nature of time. Yet, I must reiterate that this latter temporal “structure” of the natural world is Trinity. That is, God brackets the created world as Father, Son, and Spirit (past, present, and future). Therefore, time and eternity are not antithetical, but an integrated whole, the former depending upon the latter for its existence. To the non-Christian a definition of time such as this one sounds unusual, to say the least. Thus, is it legitimate to define time in such an explicitly theological manner? Jenson, somewhat surprisingly, does not concern himself with a detailed definition of the nature of time, but rather treats scientific theory as an add-on to his theological framework,²²⁵ which is all the more surprising given the central role temporality takes in his project. Does the absence of a physical understanding of time as a central feature of Jenson’s program create a deficit for his theology?

Ted Peters believes that such an interaction between contemporary physics and cosmology with theology is certainly necessary.²²⁶ Like Jenson, Peters believes that relativity theory describes the real world in such a way that, even though time has different reference points and there is no universal “now,” there is still past, present, and future moving in one direction.²²⁷ However, it is Hawking’s “quantum theory of gravity” that, according to Peters, serves to challenge theology to an extent that we must seriously consider its ramifications.²²⁸

This theory combines relativity theory and quantum mechanics in an effort to produce a mathematical model of the universe dependent upon physics alone. The interesting aspect of the theory is that it posits a universe with no boundaries or edges, and instead offers a view of a sort of timeless nature enveloping our world, which currently pictures time with boundaries. That is, big bang cosmology implies a beginning and ending point to the universe. Time has edges, and, traditionally, what is beyond the edges was often understood as eternity (for theology, God). In Hawking’s theory “no present moment can be isolated from its past and future,”²²⁹ which is what he calls imaginary time. Hawking goes on to say that this imaginary time may be the way the universe *really* is, and that real time is merely a human construct to aid us in our explanation of our experience. Thus, according to Peters, Hawking concludes that a universe without a space-time boundary frees us from assuming a Creator or an eternity beyond the boundary.²³⁰

²²⁵ He relegates discussion of A and B-series time to a concise footnote.

²²⁶ Peters, 151-73.

²²⁷ Ibid., 156.

²²⁸ See his, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York: Bantam, 1988), 143.

²²⁹ Peters, 163-64.

²³⁰ Ibid.

Clearly, Hawking's formulation of imaginary time is closely related to what we have identified in chapter one as B-series time.²³¹ There we noted Wolterstorff's contention that the existence of B-series time is not really disputed, but rather it is A-series that is controversial. Hawking's theory seems to lend credence to this, yet he affords imaginary time a much greater position than either Wolterstorff or Jenson would. For Jenson, imaginary time is relegated to the inner experience of humanity—not that it is unreal, but that we were created in such a way to experience God and to do that we must be temporal (i.e. past, present, and future in succession), for his eternity envelopes time.

To summarize Hawking's broad sketch of real and imaginary time: A (real) time is the human construct that aids us in everyday experience; B (imaginary) time is the quantum realm that envelopes the universe in a boundless, edgeless fashion. It is the latter, Hawking theorizes, that is the way the world really is. Jenson, on the other hand, does not aggressively delineate A and B-series, but offers a juxtaposition of "real" (A-series) and "imaginary" (B-series?) time. It appears that Jenson has preferred to reverse Hawking's ordering and prioritizes real over imaginary time,²³² though he has not abandoned all aspects of Hawking's theory, since he understands God's temporal infinity (eternity) as *transcending* our time, just as imaginary time does for Hawking. Is Jenson justified in this move?

We would affirm, along with Peters, that Hawking's theory is speculation and is yet to establish any sort of empirical evidence.²³³ Hence, to force Jenson's definition of time into strict conformity with Hawking would be premature. However, Jenson's configuration has not violated any obvious scientific data, but rather accepts the reality of A-series and B-series time as the way the world is, and as humans are in the world. Jenson is certainly not

²³¹ Alan Torrance, in an interesting article, utilizes D. C. Williams' version of time to argue against Moltmann's panentheism, or his tendency to assign A-series categories to humanity and God. Torrance argues that this is wrongheaded because the nature of time is not a movement of time or a passage of humanity through time, but rather something like B-series time, though he does not use that term. It is ironic to observe that theologians such as Helm and Torrance are using theories of time (B-series) to disprove (?) divine temporality, and at the same time Hawking is using it in an effort to disprove divine existence. Could there be a lesson here, in that divine atemporality is one small step away from atheism? See Alan J. Torrance, "Creatio ex Nihilo and the Spatio-Temporal Dimensions, with special reference to Jürgen Moltmann and D. C. Williams," *The Doctrine of Creation*, ed., Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 83-103.

It seems to me that Jenson's lack of detail regarding the nature of our time demonstrates, a) solidarity with Barth, and b) that a theological approach to divine temporality cannot give a comprehensive account of the physics of our time. But Jenson complicates matters when he defends both A- and B-series as real temporality, so that presumably God would hold both. Yet, his polemic against Barth reads as a defense of A-series as what it means to be temporal, only to collapse back on B-series when pressed for a description of God's time. God's time is not A-series in that he loses something in the process, but in that his temporality is more related to B-series or imaginary time. I believe this is further evidence for what we will discover in chapter six that Jenson's version of divine temporality is essentially equivalent to Barth's.

²³² In all likelihood because of its immediate occasion for divine atemporality and possibly even atheism.

²³³ Peters, 172.

unjustified in attributing imaginary time to human cognition, and real time to the external world. Hawking has not denied the possibility of such a move, but only wants to move a step further and make imaginary time the force that holds nature together—for Jenson, the very place that God holds.

It appears that Jenson’s construal of time is not antithetical to our current understanding of physics, and despite the theological difficulties that it poses (as I will outline in the rest of the thesis) his theories are certainly feasible. Garrett DeWeese has proposed thinking of God’s time in terms of his “omnitemporality,” which serves as a philosophical support for Jenson’s aims. There are discrepancies, but I believe a brief examination of his work will demonstrate that Jenson is well within the realm of logical possibility, even though ultimately I will suggest theological refinements.

According to DeWeese, the omnitemporal being (entity) would be a metaphysically necessary being who is temporal, but not physically so. “But it follows from the topology of dynamic time that the ‘now’ of metaphysical time coincides with the ‘now’ of any possible physical time, so an omnitemporal entity will be temporally present at every present moment of any possible physical time.”²³⁴ Immediately the definition signals the adherence to the belief of traditional theism that God is necessary and independent of the created order. He is temporal, but he is not dependent upon physical time, i.e. he transcends the discontinuities of our past, present, and future. Thus, again we encounter, just as we did with Jenson (and *will* also with Barth), that God has his own time (what DeWeese and others call metaphysical time). However, there are two elements that differentiate DeWeese’s theory from others: 1) there is a type of congruence between metaphysical time and physical time, and 2) he attempts an explanation of how metaphysical time might be understood as a process albeit in a way that transcends the limitations of our time.

The congruence is that at any given present within physical time, God’s metaphysical time is present to that actual present. It might be more accurate to put it the other way around: any given physical (actual) present is present to the metaphysical time, though it would be impossible to measure the duration of the metaphysical time in terms of our metric. Thus, as Padgett has also claimed, God’s time for DeWeese is also “timeless” in the sense that it cannot be measured in seconds, years, etc., yet it does have an A-series property, viz., presentness.²³⁵

²³⁴ *GNT*, 252.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 253-54. As opposed to the atemporal view where God holds no temporal properties.

For this thesis most interesting aspect of DeWeese's theory is how he accounts for temporal process in the divine life that is not the process of physical time. He states:

What constitutes metaphysical temporality is the same relation that constitutes any other temporality: causation. My suggestion is that the causal succession of mental states in God's conscious life grounds the flow and direction of metaphysical time. And, given that God is creator and sustainer of the contingent order, his causal sustenance of every world will ground the time of that world.²³⁶

There is a crucial aspect to this theory that echoes Jenson and, as I will demonstrate, Barth as well: our time and God's time are both constituted by relations. Our time is not the clock, but the measurement of the relationship of past, present, and future within our world and in our minds. God's time is the measurement of the relations of the Godhead and the succession is what DeWeese has called his "mental states." I would want to modify that statement theologically and call it the succession of the dynamic life between the persons, and in doing so bring it precisely in line with the theological positions of both Barth and Jenson. DeWeese recognizes how this succession of mental states might be theologically expressed and points in that direction in a footnote:

It is an interesting question of philosophical theology whether God's mental life consists essentially in a causal succession of mental states. If this were so, it would not be a limitation on God, since he is the cause of his own being, including his own mentality. Further, it would aid our understanding of the dynamic relations among the persons of the Trinity prior to creation (cf. the doctrine of *perichoresis*, the 'interpenetration' of the persons of the Trinity).²³⁷

Are we not very close to Jenson (and Barth, as I will outline in the next chapter)? To preview Barth's language, God is in becoming because he is God for us, as well as God in himself, and God in himself cannot be static if God is also for and with us. Thus, God's temporality is the relationship and succession of (back to Jenson's terminology) asymmetrical interaction between the persons. At no "time" is that succession lost or overcome by the limitations of our time, but rather it overcomes our time whilst participating in it (or, rather, we in it!). But this is simply a description of God's presentness with creation. However, I have already signified the centrality of the future for trinitarian ontology and our time; thus, what happens to the future in a theory of omnitemporality?

²³⁶ Ibid., 253.

²³⁷ Ibid., 253.

From a theological point of view this is where DeWeese's argument encounters potential difficulties. He summarizes it this way: "If time is dynamic and God is temporal, some account must be given of how God can now know future contingent propositions (or states of affairs) that do not yet exist...if future contingents are logically indeterminate, then we must abandon the idea that omniscience entails knowledge of future contingents."²³⁸ Given the grave consequence for theists of this possible outcome it is not surprising that DeWeese is keen to find a logical possibility. Again, according to DeWeese, God is not dependent upon or subject to the discontinuities of our time, yet his eternity marches along with our time, being present to it at each actual moment. But if the future does not exist, then how can God have knowledge of those non-existent events, as the Bible describes him as having? In addition to possessing knowledge of his infallible will and what he determines to do God, according to DeWeese, can know true counterfactuals of freedom. The solution is really a Molinist one, i.e. middle knowledge.²³⁹ If the middle knowledge option fails, however, then DeWeese is left in a position regarding time and eternity that significantly departs from the Christian understanding of God, for our future would be an unknown to him.

I believe that Christian theology has sufficiently demonstrated the crucial nature of the future for the divine being and for our history—that God is there, and overcoming our discontinuities by bringing in his eschatological kingdom is what it means for God to be united to our world, whilst remaining free. It is the fulfillment of all that has gone before, so that what appears to be irretrievably lost in our time will be a completed whole in the eschaton. As Peters claims, "If we refuse to define eternity as some sort of timeless reality that sits contiguous and parallel to temporal history as we know it, then it will be the future that brings eternity to time."²⁴⁰ This is the eschatological kingdom where the immanent and economic Trinity complete the work begun at creation. This is a future event and though it is not a scientific necessity,²⁴¹ it is certainly a theological necessity. Thus, is it possible to hold to an A-series view of our time whose divine counterpart is the theory of omnitemporality,

²³⁸ Ibid., 262.

²³⁹ Ibid., 264. Space does not allow a full discussion of middle knowledge, but the possibilities are intriguing. For a full discussion see, William Lane Craig, *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991) and *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987); Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 174-80. However, as with much of the philosophical discussion regarding time and eternity, God's knowledge takes on a strangely unitarian flavor, instead of a trinitarian one. I would rather say, especially with Jenson but also with Barth, that the Spirit brings the kingdom to us and that kingdom is an eschatological one. This means that in some sense, the kingdom is already there, though to be sure, not in its fullness, for our time and its salvation history lacks completion.

²⁴⁰ Peters, 177.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 176.

yet maintain “God as future”? I believe that it is in the same way that middle knowledge may provide insight into omniscience. That is, if God *knows* all true counterfactuals, then in some sense he is “there,” for I cannot think of a situation where one could have knowledge of true events, apart from someone’s mind being there to observe it. To be sure, we can know many facts of which we have never personally witnessed, but someone at some temporal moment did (or will), and we can assimilate that information. Therefore, how could God know *true* future events apart from being there?²⁴² But whether God occupies the space that contains our future is not as much to our point as what he *does* from the future.²⁴³ God’s activity from the future is one that is overcoming contingency and sin in response to our free activity and not one that is statically unmoved. He is making all things new. His eternity is “becoming” in the sense that he is ever-responding within the relations of Father, Son, and Spirit, who are *also* in ongoing relations with the created order in a way that establishes and does not detract from our freedom. God’s work in the future is what brings this relation to its climax, so that eternity is not antithetical to time, but has been interacting with it and will embrace it in the eschaton. This is in stark contrast to the atemporal view that presents God as in parallel relation to the world and immune to its contingency.

Here again, the heart of the time/eternity question that every Christian theologian encounters: how is that we hold together the doctrine that God transcends or overcomes all limitations of the external world without being describing that transcendence as immunity? DeWeese gives us a model for understanding God’s temporal relation to the world, but lacks a fail-safe explanation of what it means for God to perform some of the intrinsic qualities the Bible claims he has, namely (exhaustive) omniscience. Is this the inevitable trade-off? Must we make statements that either tend to one side or the other? DeWeese has done just that by emphasizing God’s presentness over his futurity, and it seems that every proposal has an inherent weakness, giving up something that someone deems crucial to the faith.²⁴⁴

²⁴² Lucas is right to note that our minds are not hindered in the same way as our bodies and it can travel to any time, past, present, and future; however, imagining what the future might be like and knowing truth facts of the future are two different types of information. See his, *The Future*, 11.

²⁴³ Only relatively recently has it been proposed by Christian theists that precisely because the future is as yet non-existent and humans do possess libertarian freedom (both controversial) that God’s knowledge of the future is limited. The limitation does not take away from the fact that at the eschaton he will do in creation what he set out to, but rather it indicates that omniscience does not entail exhaustive knowledge of future events. It is contingent omniscience. See, Lucas, *The Future*, 48-54; and Clark Pinnock, ed., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994). Objections to this have been raised by many and I do not have the space explicitly to address those here. However, arguments against them have been implicit in this thesis, specifically in the form of the trinitarian embrace of time and true freedom springing *from* and *with* the Spirit, not in radical independence from him.

²⁴⁴ “But though we should be very cautious in saying anything about the ultimate reality, knowing how inadequate our concepts are to such a task, we cannot say nothing. That would be a counsel of despair. We

However, this is not to say that omnitemporality cannot play its part. Surely his arguments against atemporality carry weight and are instructive for theology, though, to be sure, this thesis contends that those concerns also reside in theologians and spring from trinitarian/theological concerns and not (as much) from science. Furthermore, Jenson contends that God is with us as the Father (past) and the Spirit (future) unite in Jesus (present). DeWeese corroborates this presentness of God with us. If this is true, then God is temporal. But again, the question of how God can be at the same time future (transcending time) and present (temporal) remains unanswered in Jenson. In this sense, he falls in line with Barth.

I have attempted to demonstrate that Jenson's doctrine of Trinity and time is not extreme, but rather is reasonable, especially for Christian theology. Nevertheless, there are weaknesses, most of which I will address in chapter six. For now, I want to ask whether Jenson undermines or unnecessarily strains his project by placing Father, Son, and Spirit at each temporal location? Jeremy Ive thinks so.²⁴⁵

Ive poses the question: "How can the great conversation, which makes time possible, take place if the persons themselves are elements in the temporal process?" The major problem for Jenson, according to Ive, is that he, 1) focuses so strongly on the temporal roles of the persons that he detracts from the involvement of each in every moment of history, i.e. he is guilty of some sort of temporal modalism; and 2) risks reducing God's transcendent actions in history to the historical process itself.²⁴⁶ Ive wants to highlight what he perceives as Jenson's overstress on the temporal Trinity as actually detracting from Jesus as Creator and future King. According to Ive, the persons must be seen in a mutual way in order to preserve their acting in all of history. Ive believes that we must view the relations as mutually transcending all of history and constitutive *of* the historical process, as opposed to *within* it. He states: "Through the coordinate relation, thus, of all three persons, our understanding of the irreducible transcendence of their joint operation in history from beginning to end is secured."²⁴⁷

As to the second objection we simply reiterate what has already been stated. For Jenson, God is unambiguously temporal (historical), yet that fact does not subject him to time

want to know, and need to make up our minds in order to live our lives on the basis of what really is the case rather than what is not. We must, therefore, try to formulate, albeit only tentatively, our best conclusions about the fundamental nature of reality, acknowledging, with St Augustine, that we only say what we say because to say nothing would be more misleading still." Lucas, *The Future*, 212-13.

²⁴⁵ Jeremy Ive, "Robert W. Jenson's Theology of History," *TTC*, 146-57.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

in the same way we are, nor does his being become so integrated into the historical process that he is dependent upon it for his own existence, that is, gathering his being from elsewhere. Citations from Jenson have already appeared in this and the previous chapter and many more could be given. God is within history, but he overcomes time's contingencies, such that Jenson can claim that the resurrection is God's *ousia*.

Ive's first objection—that of uniting the divine identities with specific temporal location—at the end of the day does not enlighten us to some hidden weakness, since Jenson adopts this structure for reasons he makes explicit.²⁴⁸ Ive is correct to observe that Jenson has no problem attributing God's works to the identities and not Trinity as a whole for at least two reasons: 1) if each work is identically each person's, then names like "Son of God" become meaningless metaphysical ideas; 2) it is precisely such a view that Jenson associates with Augustinian timelessness. It is the rejection of the latter that moves Jenson to assume the Cappadocian view of *mutuality* of persons, rather than persons as *identical*. Ironically, Ive calls for a view that makes more of mutuality, yet he obviously understands *mutual* as tending toward *identical*—the very feature Jenson wants to avoid. Further, Jenson mitigates against any perceived weakness here by clearly affirming the one God/Creator/Trinity as personal in "itself."²⁴⁹ That is, God is still One, though thrice repeated in the divine identities, so that when we say "God created" that is not a statement of the Father to the exclusion of Son and Spirit, since each are active in temporal history and his temporal eternity is marching.²⁵⁰

I believe Ive has touched a matter of importance, yet I do not believe he really reaches the heart of the matter. That Jenson identifies the persons with the temporal moments of past, present and future is a weakness that I wish to challenge, in particular, because I simply do not believe it is necessary for a robust doctrine of divine temporality. That which Jenson has already affirmed, apart from this specific construal, points in the right direction. Therefore, I want to echo a significant portion of Jenson's systematic theology and state unapologetically that it is valuable for contemporary Christian theology's doctrine of time and eternity. However, I would like to take the rest of the thesis to challenge and shape some of his

²⁴⁸ Peters, 228, also objects to this configuration on the basis that it undermines the scientific notion of time's monodirectionality—a conclusion he finds convincing based on the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Stoeger is not persuaded and opts for "efficient causality itself." See William R. Stoeger, S.J., "Faith Reflects on the Evolving Universe: Divine Action, the Trinity, and Time," *Finding God In All Things: Essays in Honor of Michael J. Buckley, S.J.*, eds. Michael J. Himes and Stephen J. Pope (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996), 170. Nevertheless, it does not appear that Jenson commits this error, given his doctrine of futurity. That is, time is monodirectional, just not from the past to the future, but the reverse.

²⁴⁹ *ST I*, 116.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 218.

proposals for a better understanding of Trinity and time, and to do that I turn to Karl Barth. Barth does not give us a flawless doctrine of time and eternity and I am not uncritical of him, but the pieces are present and simply need some supplementation.

CHAPTER FOUR
KARL BARTH ON TIME AND ETERNITY:
THE PRIORITY OF TRINITY AND INCARNATION

If Whitehead was right to quip that “all of Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato,” then it is equally correct to claim that virtually all contemporary theology is a footnote to Barth. Barth’s program reoriented theology in such a way as to think *first* in terms of Trinity and revelation, *then* our place in that revelation. The questions of time and eternity strike at the very heart of that effort and shape much of his dogmatic enterprise. The aim of this chapter is briefly to delineate Barth’s break with liberalism as seen through the lens of the second edition of *The Epistle to the Romans*, then principally to give an exposition of his trinitarian formula—the *grounding* of time and eternity. By considering it in this manner I will attempt first, to lay the groundwork for the coming chapters that will explicitly demonstrate the overlap between Barth and Jenson, and second, to argue that their approach to the question of time and eternity is properly grounded and must play an influential part in the discussion. Therefore, the historical background to Barth’s theology is not superfluous, but rather is essential for an appreciation of his method, which profoundly speaks to the content of his doctrine of time and eternity. The next chapter is a closer analysis of that content, and whether it is suitably articulated in its entirety is the subject of chapter six.

Schleiermacher and the Theology of the Day

“How is theology possible?” The question explores the rationale for theology and method, even to the extent of allowing us to replace the “how” with “whether.” How can we say that theology is “true?” It arises against the backdrop of the Enlightenment and an ever-increasing suspicion of the old orthodoxy, particularly in relation to its dependence on the scripture. Further, Hume and Kant had dealt a mortal wound to natural theology and the older metaphysics.²⁵¹ Schleiermacher’s answer to this challenge was to turn theology inward toward the self. Any talk of God is inextricably tied to the religious subject—the self-conscious mind and will. For him this implied a redefinition of revelation, thus the nature of true religion came to be located in the realm of feeling (*Gefühl*), so that anything considered

²⁵¹ Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century: Volume 1, 1799-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 59. On Kant’s impact on nineteenth century theology see, Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, trans., Brian Cozens and John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 2001), 150-96.

doctrine must be understood in conjunction with affections.²⁵² Feeling, according to Schleiermacher, is not on the same plane as knowing and doing. Religion has to be distinct from metaphysics and ethics, though this is not to imply that the tie is completely severed. Feeling is at a deeper conscious level than intellect and will, which Schleiermacher calls “an immediate self-consciousness.”²⁵³ He states:

But while Knowing, in the sense of possessing knowledge is an abiding-in-self on the part of the subject, nevertheless as the act of knowing it only becomes real by a passing-beyond-self of the subject, and in this sense it is Doing. As regards Feeling, on the other hand, it is not only in its duration as a result of stimulation that it is an abiding-in-self: even as the process of being stimulated, it is not effected by the subject, but simply takes place in the subject, and thus, since it belong altogether to the realm of receptivity, it is entirely an abiding-in-self; and in this sense it stands along in antithesis to the other two—Knowing and Doing.²⁵⁴

In order for knowing and doing to occur the subject must self-initiate toward the thing outside itself. On the other hand, feeling is not something the subject can creatively enact, rather it simply occurs within the subject who can merely receive it or recognize its existence. The essential nature of this immediate self-consciousness is an “absolute dependence” on that outside the self. Schleiermacher identifies this dependence as both springing from and moving toward God.²⁵⁵ This absolute dependence takes place not in the intellect and will but in feeling, which does not allow for any “give and take” between God and humanity in the same sense that objects are perceived within the created order. Religious truth comes about through self-consciousness. As Mackintosh describes Schleiermacher’s perspective, “[I]t is only human reflection on the content of our religious feelings or affections which requires [doctrine], or *calls it into being*.”²⁵⁶ However, he did not intend for the self to be in isolation and, thus, possess religious feeling apart from God. Nor did he intend religion to be abstract or universal, but rather particular and historical. Out of all the infinite reflections on feeling, doctrines arise, but this, for Schleiermacher, did not lead to a radical individualism, since he always held that Christianity is inherently social.²⁵⁷

²⁵² Welch, 62.

²⁵³ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh, J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976), 6.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁵⁶ Hugh Ross Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth* (London: Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1937), 44. Italics mine.

²⁵⁷ Welch, 67. These sentences seem to confirm Mackintosh’s sentiment that “we are dealing with a thinker who (it has been said) took both sides on every question.” Mackintosh, 42.

Schleiermacher successfully revolutionized the theological world by undercutting the rationalist-orthodox debate,²⁵⁸ and by surpassing Kant's restrictions on the impossibility of theoretical knowledge of God.²⁵⁹ His truly was an era that came to dominate the nineteenth century and beyond in spite of Ritschl's attempts at correction.²⁶⁰ It was this world—Schleiermacher's world—that Barth entered, primarily under the tutelage of his teacher, Wilhelm Herrmann. Herrmann did not uncritically assimilate Schleiermacher, he was, at least initially, Ritschl's most zealous exponent. Yet there is no mistaking his rejection of aspects of Ritschlianism and his decided adherence to a neo-Kantian philosophy, which necessitated that theology be independent from, among other things, the bounds of Kant's theoretical knowledge. Religion is confirmed in “self-authenticating religious experience.”²⁶¹ Herrmann's influence upon Barth's thinking is indisputable in that the latter would always maintain the independence of religious thought from the bounds of philosophy, etc., yet there was also a clear break. As Robert Jenson puts it:

The defining character of liberalism, as Barth came to look back at it, was that it took the Christian *religion* as its starting point. It began with religion, i.e., with man's strange propensity to reach beyond himself and beyond the realities which limit his life to a unity and completion which everything in life drives him to seek but does not provide. Then it tried to grasp the faith as the species of this genus.²⁶²

Barth's break with liberalism was not centered on historico-critical method, metaphysics, or epistemology, *per se*. He discovered that liberalism was founded upon the recognition of the phenomenon of human religiousness, *then* after that supposition, asked what the coming of Christ did to impact that reality. In countering this state of affairs Barth attempted a new sort of direction, one that McCormack calls a “critically realistic starting point.”²⁶³ That is, “*if the unintuitable God is truly to be known, God must make Godself intuitable.*”²⁶⁴ Notice that this starting point is not anti-Kantian or anti-idealistic, but rather assumes some of its

²⁵⁸ Welch, 68.

²⁵⁹ On this see Bruce McCormack's excellent article, “Revelation and History in Transfoundationalist Perspective: Karl Barth's Theological Epistemology in Conversation with a Schleiermacherian Tradition,” *The Journal of Religion*, vol 78 (1998), 22.

²⁶⁰ There is no doubt that Ritschl's influence was significant, particularly at Marburg, but it is generally agreed that unlike Schleiermacher, his was an “episode in more recent theology, and not, indeed not, that of an epoch.” See Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 390.

²⁶¹ McCormack, “Revelation and History,” 24. For a summary of Herrmann's theology see, Gary Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology: Theology Without Weapons* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 15-32.

²⁶² *GAG*, 5.

²⁶³ McCormack, “Revelation and History,” 25.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

foundational concepts. Barth's realism is not of the classical variety, which started with the assumption of objective empirical reality, to which we have immediate access. Rather, it is a *critical* realism because it is sustained by: 1) "the validity of Kant's epistemology (where it touched upon knowledge of empirical reality), and 2) the success of Kant's critique of metaphysics."²⁶⁵ Additionally, unlike the uncritical realism of classical theology, Barth understood the human being's propensity to create "objects of knowledge," thus potentially distorting reality.²⁶⁶ Liberalism, likewise assuming the success of Kant's critique, turned religion (revelation) toward the self and disconnected the God who is objectively real in himself from reality. This, for Barth, was the fatal move; for though naïve empiricism cannot lead us to God, it does not follow that God cannot cause himself to be known.

Barth is often charged with removing God from historical reality by means of a radically transcendent perspective. However, this is precisely the opposite of what he is attempting to do. His quest is to make "the transcendent God whose transcendence is *not* that of the terminus of our alienation from the things of this world, and of the religious quest in which we enact that alienation, but rather the transcendence which limits us *to* the tasks of time, and just so frees us from and for them."²⁶⁷ When people charge Barth with radical transcendence they level against him a charge that was his very target.

This "religious quest" that Jenson mentions is the human self's effort to find some transcendent reality beyond the confines of time. Barth objected to the fact that the Christian God was the outcome merely as a result of this intuitive, religious quest. This was the essence of what he called "religion," and was the focus of his initial attacks in *The Epistle to the Romans*. Barth found it utterly preposterous that one could find the eternal God, the Christian God of the Bible, by gazing inward at the religious nature of humankind.²⁶⁸ Here is an ironic state of affairs: in liberalism we find that God is detached from our temporality, seen in that our goal is to get beyond our restraints to the infinite; yet, that journey is a very short one that begins and ends with religious self-awareness. Indeed, Schleiermacher's lifelong struggle was between pantheism and Christian belief.²⁶⁹ At the end of the day, however, the "Infinite is only a projection; it is the finite, stripped of all its limitations and

²⁶⁵ Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130. Hereafter referred to as *CRDT*, followed by page number.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *GAG*, 6.

²⁶⁸ See his, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 240-57. Hereafter referred to as *Romans II*, followed by page number.

²⁶⁹ Mackintosh, 51.

projected on to a higher being. But because it is a projection, it always remains *inseparably bound* to the finite as its antithesis, its mirror opposite.”²⁷⁰ Hence, what path did Barth take to destroy “religion” avoiding this radical divine transcendence, expressed in self-transcendence? Or, we could ask it this way: what is the relationship of time and eternity?

Romans II and the Time-Eternity Dialectic

Barth’s commentary on Romans is a radically one-sided effort to break with and leave broken the core of liberalism.²⁷¹ The fundamental operating principle of *Romans II* is the “infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity;” a result of Barth’s perception that the essential problem in liberalism is the temporal encroachment upon eternity. Religion forgets how far above us God really is, and subsequently elevates the human possibility to a divine status. Thus, “Barth’s dialectics are born of a basic contradiction between time and eternity.”²⁷² Eternity described as atemporality emerges in direct relation to his break with liberalism because he posits humanity as understood only in terms of the transcendent above created time. The best way, according to the early Barth, to rid the world of religion was to demonstrate that God is wholly detached and set against humanity—he is eternally atemporal and we are finitely temporal, and it is impossible to overcome this boundary.²⁷³ That is, Barth believed that humanity must come to grips with Overbeck’s No as part of the hope of objective knowledge of God.²⁷⁴

Therefore, it is in this sense that Barth intended the time-eternity dialectic to function: it was an “apparatus” to witness to God’s self-revelation (objective knowledge of God) without being transformed into something creaturely.²⁷⁵ It was a tool to eliminate all human

²⁷⁰ McCormack, *CRDT*, 247.

²⁷¹ For summaries of the background and theology of *Romans II* see, McCormack, *CRDT*, 241-90; Timothy J. Gorrige, *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 55-72; and T. F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology 1910-1931* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1962), 48-95. As is well known Barth eagerly revised the first edition of his Romans commentary to clarify and intensify his message. As McCormack argues the link between the two was greater than the reviews might indicate, in particular for our purposes, regarding time and eternity. Already present in *Romans I* was revelation as the only possible theological starting point, and the unity and distinction of God (“real history”) and the world (“so-called history”) by “an *Urform* of the time-eternity dialectic which would come to dominate his reflections in the period of *Romans II*.” See McCormack, *CRDT*, 144. Due to the significance of the latter and its more explicit link to *Göttingen* and *Church Dogmatics* we will forego a detailed analysis of the *Romans I* commentary.

²⁷² *GAG*, 8-11.

²⁷³ John E. Colwell, *Actuality and Provisionality: Eternity and Election in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1989), 20.

²⁷⁴ Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction...*, 43.

²⁷⁵ McCormack, *CRDT*, 265.

possibilities for religion. Eternity does not *become* time, but encounters it at a particular point that is without temporal extension.

In this name two worlds meet and go apart, two planes intersect, the one known and the other unknown... This known plane is intersected by another plane that is unknown—the world of the Father, of the Primal Creation, and of the final Redemption. The relation between us and God, between this world and His world, presses for recognition, but the line of intersection is not self-evident. The point on the line of intersection at which the relation become observable and observed is Jesus... In the Resurrection the new world of the Holy Spirit touches the old world of the flesh, but touches it as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it.²⁷⁶

Even though it appears that Barth is naming the person of Jesus as the point of intersection, he goes on to narrow it even further to the event of the cross.²⁷⁷ Yet, even the cross is “unhistorical” in the sense that it does not arise from historical possibilities, but from eternity. Time and eternity are unified behind and above the separation of the two, but “we hear it only as a No.” Since we are utterly separate from God’s eternity we can only know that eternity in the face of God’s judgment—the only connection with eternity.²⁷⁸ As a ground-clearing device of religion the time-eternity dialectic was very effective, yet it revealed weaknesses that Barth clearly did not intend. That is, atemporality or, eternity as a limit to time, could not operate in the manner in which Barth envisioned the Christian God acting. God is not restricted to the past and barred from the present, but rather brings about the new within time—something the time-eternity dialectic should not have allowed, yet Barth affirmed concepts such as the supernatural event of faith as a gift from God, actualized within time. The same is true of Jesus’ resurrection, and of knowledge of God.²⁷⁹

That Barth did not intend this outcome is evident in the structure and emphasis of *Romans II* itself, i.e. in its eschatology. It is this point where Jenson notes Barth’s divergence from traditional models of atemporality. Jenson claims that *Romans* falls directly in line with this Western tradition in that it is not much more than “pure Platonism”—time as the image of eternity. Yet, in a different way than his Greek predecessors, Barth’s time-eternity dialectic is not designed to push us toward eternity when we finally come to the end of our “temporal rope,” so to speak, but to demonstrate the absolute impossibility of movement in either

²⁷⁶ *Romans II*, 29-30.

²⁷⁷ McCormack, *CRDT*, 253.

²⁷⁸ *GAG*, 27.

²⁷⁹ McCormack, *CRDT*, 265.

direction and forces us to live in the “in-between.”²⁸⁰ Thus, Barth intends to stand both Greek atemporality and liberal theology on its head by positing God as “the One who justifies the ungodly,” or, the One who overcomes the infinite gap (the “No”) and unites himself to humanity (the “Yes”).²⁸¹ Herein is the key for Barth that Jenson attempts to illuminate: “...life and its meaning is the distinction between past and future...”²⁸² Faith in life is designed to look toward the future, and the past paints a picture of God in order that we might understand how he is the new, unexpected way. Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom brought the future into present reality. His death signified “a victory of the future over the past and for the past...” “So the life called for by the exilic prophets was lived—and it was revealed why it was not lived before. Alienated, past-bound, man can be free for the future only in death—and then it is too late. Only the *success of death*, only resurrection, can be the act of life from the future free from and for the past.”²⁸³ His risenness means that we look for him in the future, not just as a past event, which is exactly what he would be if he had not risen. So, it is the *future*, not eternity, that triumphs and Jesus is that future. Clearly, Barth’s desire even in this early stage is to reach Blumhardt’s Yes by way of the No.²⁸⁴ Granted, the Yes is more vivid in the *Church Dogmatics*, since the No was “a necessary purgation of the anthropocentric debris of Liberal Neo-protestantism,”²⁸⁵ yet it would be difficult to deny its existence.

In spite of Barth’s intentions that God be understood as free to act in the present within creation the time-eternity dialectic was an overemphasis on post-temporality²⁸⁶ that he had to modify to prevent creating this vision of a disconnected, radically transcendent God, understood in terms of an abstract eternity. These modifications began in Göttingen and continued through the *Church Dogmatics*.

“Barth’s first [Göttingen] lectures in dogmatics mark a distinct advance over against the theology of *Romans II*,” and McCormack includes in such advances his concern for doctrine and the Scripture-principle.²⁸⁷ However, it would be a mistake to think that the

²⁸⁰ *GAG*, 14-15.

²⁸¹ Thus, we would expect Barth to navigate some other course regarding time and eternity, and in the *Church Dogmatics* that is precisely what we find him doing.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁸⁴ Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction...*, 43. Ironically, in the face of his just noted evaluation Jenson seems to believe the opposite, viz., that Barth *had* to move beyond *Romans II* because it was a dialectic stuck on the No. See, *GAG*, 68.

²⁸⁵ Colwell, 21.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 20. Colwell rightly notes that he did not dispense with post-temporality, but only reoriented it in *CD*. In this sense much of *Romans II* is not abandoned, but honed and modified.

²⁸⁷ McCormack, *CRDT*, 302.

modifications we have in mind entail Barth's disavowing *Romans II* in favor of a fundamentally new theology. Barth never abandons the *aim* of *Romans II*, which, we must constantly remind ourselves, centered on the possibility of objective knowledge of God whilst preserving the critical and infinite distance between God and humankind. The shift is not a "relaxation here of Barth's fundamental radicalism. What is in view here is an advance along the same line which Barth had first entered in 1915; not a break with it."²⁸⁸ However—and here we transition with Barth from the broad assertion of revelation to the question of time—how should we define or describe that "distance?" Is it one of eternity set against time (timelessness)—the critical moment of intersection that is like the tangent on a circle that does not actually touch the circle? Simply stated, Barth replaces the time-eternity dialectic in *Romans II* with the event of Jesus Christ. As Jenson notes:

Not one word of what is said in the *Commentary on Romans* is withdrawn. But where abstract eternity was, Jesus of Nazareth now stands. All human works are relativized quite as radically as before, but from the event of Jesus' existence rather than from the event of the contentless moment of eternity... Indeed, the entire pattern of the dialectic we traced remains quite unaltered in Barth's post-1930 theology. If one went through the *Commentary on Romans* and replaced the tangential intersection of time and eternity with the story narrated by the second article of the Apostles' Creed, he would obtain the theology of the *Church Dogmatics*.²⁸⁹

Given the centrality of the relationship of Jesus Christ to time and eternity that Jenson posits we must briefly sketch Barth's Christological grounding of revelation before we approach his mature view on time/eternity. This will serve to demonstrate that, regardless of exactly how he stated it at various times, Barth always ardently maintained the infinite qualitative difference between God and humankind, *along with* the objectivity and actuality of the knowledge of God. He is *with* us, but he is not *of* us. The event of God's self-revelation is *in* time, but is not *of* time. Barth never intended—and this is crucial for a doctrine like that of providence—to disconnect God from history as if his transcendence is antithetical to his immanence. Additionally, it is precisely this pattern that shapes his understanding of time and eternity, i.e. Trinity and incarnation determine time and eternity.

²⁸⁸ McCormack, *CRDT*, 328.

²⁸⁹ *GAG*, 71.

The Christological Grounding of Revelation

Even though it is impossible for Christian preachers to speak about God they do and they must. It is impossible because “[w]e are human...and so cannot speak of God. For to speak of God seriously would mean to speak in the realm of revelation and faith. To speak of God would be to speak God’s word, the word which can come only from him, the word that *God becomes man*.”²⁹⁰ Preachers must speak about God because “Man as man cries for God. He cries not for *a* truth, but for *truth*; not for *something* good but for *the* good...He does not cry for solutions but for salvation; not for something human, but for God, for God as his Saviour from *humanity*.”²⁹¹ These statements emphasize what we previously noted how that Barth cut off every escape for “religion.” Humanity cannot build the bridge to God, or find meaning within their religiosity. If preachers are going to be able to escape the morass and contradictory nature of their task,²⁹² there is only one hope: “*Deus dixit*, God has spoken.”²⁹³ Revelation is the only permission humans have to speak of God, and this permission is a miracle of God. Further, God and revelation are identical, and only so, for revelation is not the same as its historical media.

In distinction from scripture, however, revelation is God’s Word itself, God’s own speaking in which he alone is the subject, in which no flesh also speaks, but he and he alone. This is found in scripture, this pregnant *Deus dixit*, God speaking personally as the subject, God as the author, God not only giving authentic information about himself but himself speaking about himself...The fact that God himself is on the scene, speaking about himself, is an adequate reason to speak about him...God in his revelation, God as speaking subject, is a possible object of human speech which at once becomes a necessary object.²⁹⁴

Therefore, the “*Deus dixit* means that God spoke about himself.”²⁹⁵ God’s self-revelation is God, and even though this proceeds in the scripture and preaching²⁹⁶ it is not possible to equate revelation with any of them, “[a]s no thing, no contingent entity, no historical fact as

²⁹⁰ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans., Douglas Horton (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1928. See also, Colwell, 198-99.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

²⁹² Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion, Volume I*, ed., Hannelotte Reiffen, trans., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 45-51. Hereafter referred to as *Göttingen*, followed by page number.

²⁹³ *Göttingen*, 56.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

²⁹⁶ For the complete discussion of Barth’s threefold doctrine of the Word of God see his, *Church Dogmatics*, 1.2, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956-77). Hereafter referred to as *CD*, followed by volume and page number.

such is the speaker, so none can be what is said, the content of revelation.”²⁹⁷ Yet, it does not follow that revelation is an eternal event that is outside of history. “[C]ontingency lies in the nature of revelation. *Deus dixit* indicates a special, once-for-all, contingent event to which these specific writings rather than any possible writings bear witness.”²⁹⁸ Thus, the difference between *Romans* II and what Barth says here should be evident. God’s revelation is not simply an eternal event wholly disconnected from time, but is contingent, even though it does not spring *from* time it nevertheless exists within time. God does not encounter humanity in an “eternal moment” that touches, yet does not touch, but rather the location of God’s self-revelation is in the temporal person of Jesus Christ.

It remains programmatic for Barth from *Romans* II onward that theology does not reverse the process in the doctrine of revelation. That is, we do not delimit what would be possible or what revelation should look like, and then subsequently demonstrate how God fits into our preconceptions. “The position to be maintained against this is, simply, that theological judgments and convictions can only be reached when what a man acknowledges and confesses to be appropriate to God and salutary for himself is that which God has previously determined and revealed to be appropriate to Himself and salutary for man.”²⁹⁹ We must do this, according to Barth, because in order to be doing real theology it must be dependent upon scripture as it speaks God’s revelation to us. It cannot be theology if it is arbitrary or grounded elsewhere. Therefore, when Barth inquires as to what the scripture says concerning God’s revelation and the answer is unequivocally Jesus Christ, such discussion must proceed from the *fact* of Jesus to the *possibility* involved and God’s freedom in the event.³⁰⁰

The facts are, according to Barth, that “the first and the last thing to be said about the bearer of this name is that He is very God and very Man. In this unity He is the objective reality of divine revelation.”³⁰¹ Nothing can supplement the revelation of God, hence, when we want to talk about God it must only be “a reading and exegesis of this reality.”³⁰² Revelation in Jesus Christ immediately presses Barth to conclude that it is contingent.

First, because of Jesus “we infer...that He is God not only in Himself but also in and among us, in our cosmos, as one of the realities that meet us.”³⁰³ Revelation is contingent.

²⁹⁷ *Göttingen*, 89.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁹⁹ *CD* 1.2, 5.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-11.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

Barth has two purposes in mind here: 1) he sets up the insurmountable boundaries for humans to build bridges to God, crushing the hopes of “religion,” even though it does not follow that God is not capable of crossing over into our location, which we find is exactly the case in Jesus.³⁰⁴ The event of Jesus is where time and eternity meet. It replaces “eternity” in the time-eternity dialectic of *Romans II*. The history of Jesus is eternity

without becoming something other than the temporal event in Palestine...He [Barth] proclaims the life of the man Jesus, just as it was, as the presupposition of all other reality. Here escape from time and history is shut off for good for our search for the sense of our lives in time is directed exactly to a temporal event—not merely as its revelation or facilitation, but as its *occurrence*.³⁰⁵

Jenson believes this illumines Barth’s dialectical attack on the synthesis of religion and faith. The problem is not that time is so distant from eternity that it demands we strive to reach the latter, but rather that that attempt to reach eternity presupposes the idea that God is gone from us. That is, religion assumes that we have life apart from Christ’s life, so it is religion’s call to try to get to God, but Barth rejects the possibility of that effort mainly on the grounds that God is here with us in Christ.³⁰⁶ 2) Only God can reveal himself, hence if Christ reveals God, then he must be God. There can be no revealer that is “more or less” or “almost.” “What God reveals must be God himself, wholly God, equal to God. Would revelation be revelation if something smaller, intermediate, or partial were its content?”³⁰⁷ Kyrios is God, but only God is God, so when the early church calls Jesus “Lord” that is to say that they hear the revelation of God in the voice of Jesus of Nazareth.³⁰⁸

Second, because of Jesus we must conclude that the Son must be in the form recognizable to us, i.e. a human being. By being human he is immediately demonstrating his solidarity with humanity and its sacred status. Yet, he is veiled in flesh, which “has to take place in order that it may lead to His unveiling and exaltation and so to the completion of revelation.”³⁰⁹

Third, because of Jesus we understand that “His Word by becoming Man at the same time is and remains what He is, the true and eternal God, the same as He is in Himself at the

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ *GAG*, 70-71.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 71.

³⁰⁷ *Göttingen*, 117-18.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 110-11.

³⁰⁹ *CD I.2*, 36.

Father's right hand for ever and ever."³¹⁰ The veiling of the divinity does not mean that Jesus is any less the Word as he is in eternity. He is veiled, but he does not abandon or lessen his divinity. "He who the third day arose from the dead was no less true God in the manger than on the cross. By becoming flesh the Word is no less true and entire God than he was previously in eternity in Himself."³¹¹ "It can be God's revelation as the presence of the Word, undiminished though veiled in its God-ness, in the fleshly reality different from God. In this way God may be present to us, but present precisely as God."³¹² Barth insists that we can only talk of the incarnation *as it is revealed to us in Holy Scripture*. Thus, God must be with us in only the way that he is in fact with us *in Jesus*.

Fourth, because of Jesus we understand that revelation is possible only because Jesus became man, that is, human. He became exactly that which is objective to us—the one thing we can most intimately recognize—our humanity.³¹³

As the above evidences Barth moves beyond the time-eternity dialectic of *Romans II* and replaces the eternal moment of nothingness with Jesus of Nazareth as the locus of unity between God and humankind, and therefore, a discussion of the person of Christ is directly correlative to the relationship of time and eternity. Time and eternity are what Jesus Christ is. Yet a treatment of time and eternity cannot stop there for revelation does not end at Jesus, but directly leads us to God's being in Triunity. Thus, since revelation is seen in Jesus Christ, a temporal event, *God himself must be temporal*, a conclusion that is inevitable given Barth's insistence that revelation is the source of all God-talk. The critical nature of this for Barth's theology as a whole and for understanding his view of time and eternity cannot be overstated, and Jenson has eloquently summarized it:

It is the absolute priority of Jesus' existence, of the life of our brother-man, which is the key to the otherwise puzzling convolutions of the great dogmatic theology which Barth has developed through his years at Göttingen, Bonn and Basel, and recorded in the twelve huge volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*. That one starts with the story of this man, is the key to a thinking which hammers on the sole and absolute majesty of God and the irrelevance of all our works and thoughts to reach him, yet finds anything human an appropriate object of dogmatic reflection. It is the key to a theology which is really one vast doctrine of God... If we forget the priority of Christ in considering any Barthian doctrine we will infallibly turn it into its direct opposite, the kind of isolation of God which people have mislabeled "Barthianism." Barth can insist on the otherness of God because his God is from the beginning one person with the man

³¹⁰ Ibid., 37.

³¹¹ Ibid., 38.

³¹² Ibid., 39.

³¹³ Ibid., 41-43.

Jesus; God's otherness is therefore the otherness of one man from another, which is the very condition of mutual involvement.³¹⁴

This shift in Barth's focus shapes the *Church Dogmatics* into nothing less than an expansive doctrine of God. It is important when reading both Barth and Jenson always to bear in mind the controlling effect that incarnation and Trinity have on their theological project as a whole, and particularly upon time and eternity. In both the classical formulation and contemporary theology much of the discussion on God and time assumes a natural understanding of time then posits temporal theories upon the divine.

As Barth puts it: "God has time for us...Moreover in the interpretation of the concept of this time, which is now our task, we shall not have to take as a basis any time concept gained independently of revelation itself." That is, revelation has to dictate 1) what time is; and 2) what it means for God to take up that time.³¹⁵ Barth rejects arriving at a definition of time by any other means precisely because of his "basic subordination of the investigation here instituted to the revelation attested in Holy Scripture."³¹⁶ He identifies the contrasting figures of Augustine³¹⁷ and Martin Heidegger³¹⁸ as examples of poor methodology, resulting in incorrect conceptions of time. Both of them regard "time definitively and unequivocally as a self-determination of man's existence as a creature." Neither one of them suggests that time is something God gives and reveals, but rather they both look for the answer to time within humanity itself. Humanity "possesses time—and he possesses it undisturbed through realising himself."³¹⁹ The reality of time is determined by man's being in existence. The self posits time. Even though Augustine believes God creates time, he only does so inasmuch as he creates being, "which as a *distentio* on its own account is the creator of time." We cannot define time, says Barth, or understand God's possession of it "as the product of man's existence interpreted as *distentio*; it must be regarded as a proper reality, as accessible to God as is human existence."³²⁰

³¹⁴ *GAG*, 72.

³¹⁵ *CD I.2*, 45.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ For Augustine on time and eternity see his *Confessions*, trans., Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), XI; Roland J. Teske, S.J., *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996); and Paul Helm, *Faith and Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 79-103.

³¹⁸ For Heidegger on time especially in relation to Barth's criticism see his, *Being and Time*, trans., John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1962), 370-80.

³¹⁹ *CD I.2*, 46.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

Here is the line of demarcation between Barth and his critics, not only of his own day, but also among contemporary thinkers. Barth is clearly endorsing the view that time flows from the concept of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, not unlike that, for him, theology proper and anthropology flow from and are intrinsically bound to Christology. The failures that accompany an alternative approach to time are, for Barth, obvious, and such failures compel us to look to *revelation* for our concept of what "real" time should be. Why, according to Barth, must we reject a "natural" or human-oriented understanding of time in favor of a revelational or theological view? Or, to put it another way, in the determination of what our time is, who has priority, physics or theology? Barth's answer:

First, to say that God created time is not to say that created time is identical with what we presently claim as "our" time. Between God's created time and our time stands the Fall, and what we possess now is not created time. Thus, "[i]f God's revelation has a time also, if God has time for us, if we really...know and possess time, it must be a different time, a third time, created alongside of our time and the time originally created by God."³²¹ Thus, a theology of the Fall imposes an immediate hindrance to an apprehension of time in the same way that other concepts elude our self-determined grasp, i.e. our own humanity. To define time from an anthropological or natural starting point is to ignore the basic human problem of the Fall.³²²

Second, in addition to the Fall as a barrier to apprehending time there are questions about our condition that press upon us, which, at the end of the day, Barth believes to be unanswerable. What is meant by the present? Is it not simply a relegation to the past or the future? "What do we know of time, if we have to admit that we know nothing of the present, which is apparently its so manifest medium, and which, so they say, is supposed to be its ground as well?"³²³ Does time have a beginning and ending? And probably most troubling, what is the relation between time and eternity? Barth's aim is to elucidate the incongruence of our time with created time. If we truly understood created time, he believes, then these questions would not be difficult for us, yet since they are approaching unanswerable, we must be blind to created time.

To assert the reality of time in face of and in spite of these difficulties without the desire or the ability to set them aside, or even without letting one-self be worried by them, is perhaps in practice only possible for theology when it is revelation theology,

³²¹ Ibid., 47.

³²² Just as it is, for example, to attempt a definition of God by means of human comparison or reasoning. See his rejection of the *vestigium Trinitatis* in CD I.1, 333-47.

³²³ CD I.2, 48.

and as such in a position to reckon not only with these two times, but in addition, with a quite different time.³²⁴

Significantly, Barth is not only saying that one cannot know “real” time or “God’s” time apart from revelation, but he is saying that one cannot even recognize what *our* time is apart from revelation. The complexities and unanswerable questions are too prevalent to determine what we mean by earthly time, much less what can be said of God.³²⁵ Therefore, Barth’s rejection of any “natural” path to knowledge of the divine applies to time—ours and his. Further, to posit a human comprehension of time would be to impinge upon God as creator—something that is simply not possible for the creature to do. Hence, Barth’s method of the Christological determination of time rests upon the infinite qualitative difference between God and humanity, the essence of which is an inherent lack of ability fully to comprehend this natural world. Science has made huge advances since Barth wrote these words, and it might be argued that we know more about time than ever before. However, Barth is correct in that no matter how great the advances, our knowledge is never exhaustive and cannot be so, given our status as created, rather than Creator.

Moreover, much of the contemporary discussion focuses on the idea that if we are to say something is real, it is temporal. If God is real and he is with us, then he is temporal, and, as far as this goes, perhaps Barth would agree. But by “temporal” what is it that we suggest? Most contemporary philosophers intend “time like we have,” though what that signifies is incessantly disputed. But since Barth posits revelation as the determination of concepts such as time the divine event cannot spring from historical time, but from eternity. From Jesus, Barth believes, we know God is historical and temporal, but not temporal in the sense of being subject to a general law of history or time, since revelation maintains the infinite qualitative difference between Creator and creature, and breaks into the created order. Immediately, questions arise concerning the place of the natural order (time) in such a scheme. If revelation determines time and God is temporal but not in the sense of being subject to some absolute, then would not “our” time be some sort of unreality or swallowed up into God’s time? Further, should a *theological* account of divine temporality be scrutinized by current scientific theory, since the latter can merely offer observations of our

³²⁴ Ibid., 49.

³²⁵ Listening to the polarized opinions of contemporary philosophers lends credence to Barth’s view on this point.

time, observations that Barth insists cannot reflect the real because they fall outside the realm of faith?³²⁶

That would be an unfortunate construal of Barth's view of God's relation to the world. Never is it the case that Barth operated independently of "natural" categories of time or that he consciously ignored them. How, then, does Barth do justice to the external world outside of faith and at the same time the reality and priority of the Trinity? Dalferth persuasively argues that Barth stands in stark contrast to his theological predecessors in the manner in which he treats the relationship of what he calls the "perspective of faith" and the "perspective of the world."³²⁷ According to Dalferth:

Barth takes neither a simple theological [Reformation theology] nor a twofold theological and philosophical approach [Schleiermacher], but a twofold *theological* approach to the problem of the external perspective. He interiorises the whole problem and thus reproduces the discontinuity between the external and internal perspectives as a categorical distinction *within* the structure of the internal perspective of faith.³²⁸

This "interiorisation" that Dalferth refers to is Barth's method of constructing a dogmatic grid through which he then interprets the external world. More crudely put the world of faith does not swallow up and extinguish external reality, nor do they stand side by side as disciplines in a never ending search for synthesis. Rather, Barth's approach was clearly to give precedence to theology as that which is truly real, yet afford the external world its existence "only in so far as it is incorporated into the concrete reality of God's saving self-realisation in Christ."³²⁹ We learn of true reality in Jesus Christ, and then we take what we have learned and interpret the world around us. To be sure, under this scheme the natural world assumes a status that would seem to run cross-grain to common sense. It becomes "an anhypostatic abstraction, unable to exist on its own and systematically at one remove from the texture of concrete reality."³³⁰ Nonetheless, according to Barth, this does not render it unreal, and his effort to include our experience of the natural world within his dogmatic enterprise is evidence that a retreat into a "separatist fideism" is hardly his intention.³³¹

³²⁶ CD III.1, 3.

³²⁷ Ingolf U. Dalferth, "Karl Barth's eschatological realism," *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, ed., S. W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 31.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 38. Barth is not lacking for critics who charge that this methodology renders the natural world as unreal. Famously, one such critic is Richard Roberts in his *A Theology on Its Way?: Essays on Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991). The problem for Roberts is Barth's insistence on subsuming the created order

It was never Barth's objective to create a theology isolated from the external world, deaf to other vital contributions outwith dogmatics. Indeed, merely positing theological priority does not absolve one from the burden of giving a rigorous account of divine temporality. Certainly for Barth time flows from God's triune act, yet it is still time—still part of our created order—which is precisely the reason for a thorough examination of the issue. Barth's doctrine of revelation is designed to accomplish the very task of giving an account of the reality of our world by means of a theological priority. Theology is not a discipline set alongside many others, which turns a deaf ear to their contributions. Rather, theology listens to those other disciplines, for it is the grid through which they must be interpreted. T. F. Torrance aptly portrays both sides of the coin, and when commenting on Barth's position in this regard he states:

What, then, is the relation between theology and philosophy? Between theology and a philosophy that remains strictly philosophy, there can be and will be, not only a

both ontologically and epistemologically “within the confines of Christology and the doctrine of God” (63). This, he claims, renders the created order unreal and Barth's use of the *analogia fidei* leads to such inconsistencies and ambiguities in his theology that it is the “glorious hulk of some great Dreadnought” (58). Time and eternity, according to Roberts, is the place where these ambiguities are clearly discerned and affords him the opportunity to question Barth's entire theological program. However, Roberts places undue weight upon the notion of time in Barth, effectively replacing an *analogia entis* with an *analogia temporis*. Time cannot be, as Roberts claims, “the medium of relation and disrelation between God and man” (56), for that place is reserved for Christ. Jesus Christ is temporal, but that does not mean all time is identical to Jesus any more than to say that because he is being, all being is identical to him. Further, Roberts makes the mistake of omitting a full treatment of Barth's view of divine freedom within the context of God's relation to time. What could be more fundamental for Barth than God's freedom in relation to his creation? Interestingly, in Barth's discussion of the divine perfections (those of “loving” and of “freedom”) eternity comes under those most specifically pertaining to his freedom, making Marshall's criticism of Roberts for his relative omission of any treatment of the divine freedom all the more poignant. Marshall admits that merely positing divine freedom in the time-eternity question does not automatically resolve all ambiguities, yet it does address a fundamental link in the chain—one that any “account of ‘eternity and time’, not least one which sees this as the key to an isolationist reading and criticism of Barth, should come to grips.” See, Bruce D. Marshall, “Review of Richard H. Roberts, *A Theology on Its Way? Essays on Karl Barth*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 44 (1983): 453-58. Finally, George Hunsinger points out that Roberts overlooks the trinitarian *structure* of Barth's doctrine of time. That is, if one would like to quibble with Barth on time, one must also object to his doctrine of the Trinity. Roberts does not do this, and even though he recognizes the *grounding* of the reality of time in Trinity and incarnation, he does not discuss the merits or demerits of understanding it in a structurally trinitarian way. See Hunsinger, “*Mysterium Trinitatis: Barth's Conception of Eternity*,” *For the Sake of the World: Karl Barth and the Future of Ecclesial Theology*, George Hunsinger, ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 177.

It is unfortunate that Roberts excludes Barth's entire project based on this methodological issue, for one would hope for a more balanced approach. He judges Barth's theology to be “dangerous,” “extremely serious,” an “alienation,” and “nothing less than a comprehensive theological disaster” (78-79). Such emotive, sensationalist language characterizes Roberts' work to such an extent that it is difficult to take seriously aspects of his argument. Hence, even Roberts' language conveys a sense that he has exaggerated his point. A more appropriate slant on Barth's view of time might be Alan Padgett who rejects Barth's *conclusions* regarding time and eternity not because of the priority of revelation, but because Barth does not relinquish a stasis theory of time (“timeless” in the sense of “atemporal”) when he refers to God in himself. Padgett affirms much in Barth's position, yet believes that it is deficient since it rejects any sort of divine temporal process. See *God, Eternity*, 141-45. Interestingly, this is also a key criticism from Roberts, though, as noted, his conclusions are much more radical and unwarranted.

benevolent neutrality, not only peace, but, at least for theology, the most instructive co-operation. But between theology and a philosophy which insists on being a theosophy there can only be war to the knife.³³²

And to clarify the point even further Torrance states:

In this involvement with epistemological and methodological questions theological science is inevitably committed to dialogue with the other sciences and with philosophy, as well as with ordinary experience, for they too are engaged in disciplined activity to clarify the referential relations of human thought and speech and are continually at work refining and enlarging their range to in hitherto unknown realities.³³³

It is precisely this that I am suggesting fills in a missing piece within contemporary studies on time and eternity. Time and eternity are *theological* determinations. If we begin with time, judge its nature or characteristics (e.g. process, illusory, or what have you), then move to God's eternity we have necessarily constructed God's nature out of that which is created, rather than the Creator.

The time/eternity discussion tends to be dominated by philosophers who are preoccupied with arguing for the *possibility* (or *impossibility*) of atemporality. Yet, what happens if or when that argument succeeds? Presumably we must simply transpose the findings to the Christian God, and if we do that, what has made this distinctly Christian any more than pagan Greek philosophy? I suppose establishing the possibility of something has its place, but it is a very different thing to apply the argument to Christian theology. For example, Hasker has argued against timelessness (by which he means atemporality) by attempting to demonstrate the incoherence of divine timeless intuitive knowledge, i.e. a timeless God cannot have immediate knowledge of a temporal world. The argument is thorough and detailed, yet it is only in the conclusion that anything distinctly Christian appears. He states:

I believe these considerations add up to a compelling case for rejecting the doctrine of timelessness. It is with considerable relief—indeed, with a powerful sense of liberation—that we turn from the labyrinth of timelessness to the biblical conception of a God who has freely created our spatiotemporal world and involves himself

³³² Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction...*, 166; see also his *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 136-59.

³³³ Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), xii. Regarding this relationship of theology and philosophy Barth gave an address to the Free Protestant Theological Faculty of Paris, France in April, 1934 that was later published in the pamphlet series *Theologische Existenz Heute* that Eduard Thurneysen and Barth edited. The English translation can be found in *God in Action*, trans. E. G. Homrighausen and Karl J. Ernst (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1938), 39-57.

actively in its history. God calls things into existence, he orders and arranges them, he speaks to his rational creatures and involves himself intimately in their lives. He issues promises and commands and suffers grief when the promises are spurned and the commandments broken. He frames a plan for the redemption of the broken world and executes that plan at great cost to himself. He places before us his children the goal of a Kingdom that shall have no end.³³⁴

I find this type of argument (not his theological statements) problematic. As a Christian and given his assertions in the above quotation Hasker presumably *believes* how the Bible attests to God in Jesus Christ, yet apparently that revelation is not persuasive enough to debunk atemporality. Instead a further argument from analytic philosophy is the only one that brings incomparable *relief* that we are no longer bound by this. Additionally, apparently rejecting the possibility of atemporality automatically leads one to the Christian God—a dubious assumption, especially given that the reworking of God’s eternity by many (Christian) philosophers today centers on “everlastingness,” which is explicitly rejected by Barth and other theologians as the core of the divine eternity. It is not at all clear, then, that these philosophical arguments lead us where the authors want us to go, but rather they drive us right back to revelation for the answers. In order to make this even more obvious I shall examine a recent proposal on time and eternity from Alan Padgett on God as “relatively timeless.”³³⁵

The progression of Padgett’s thesis can be summarized in the following points: 1) the Christian tradition has, by and large, taught that God is atemporal, having no temporal extension, i.e. time is absent from his being; 2) It can coherently be said that God is absolutely timeless and absolutely immutable *only* if the stasis theory of time is true; 3) the stasis theory of time is not true; 4) God really changes because he is in relationship with the world, therefore God is temporal; 5) God as Creator transcends our time and his time is not Measured Time. Even without any further comment it should be obvious that Padgett shares much with our theologians. However, I will, for the sake of clarity, flesh out some of his

³³⁴ William Hasker, “The Absence of a Timeless God,” *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*, eds. Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 202.

³³⁵ Padgett is an interesting combination of philosopher/theologian in a way that appears to set him apart on the one hand, from someone like Barth and on the other, someone like William Lane Craig. Though he is very concerned with the theology of his doctrine of time and eternity I believe the priority rests upon the philosophical viability of the stasis theory of time. It is on this basis that he then evaluates theology (See, *God, Eternity*, 138-46). For this reason I find Padgett to be an appropriate interlocutor for this chapter in that the heart of his thesis is philosophical arguments, whilst relating the results with his deep concern for theology.

assertions, and then specifically interact with his comments on Barth to demonstrate that my thesis would dovetail nicely with his.

Points three through five are the most relevant for us, hence, I will omit his historical discussion and the detailed treatment of contemporary defenders of the stasis theory. Furthermore, in chapter one I have sufficiently covered the theories of time and the possibility of atemporality/timeless causation. What is most interesting about Padgett's evaluation of the stasis theory is that since he believes it must be rejected on philosophical grounds, any theological use of it also is unwarranted. As we will see below, he believes Barth assumes it in his doctrine of time, thus it too is fatally flawed.

It seems to me that Padgett's fundamental and overriding argument against the stasis theory of time is that "it leads to incoherence with our fundamental intuitions about the world," and those intuitions should not be abandoned without overwhelming grounds to do so.³³⁶ Thus, Padgett is less interested in proposing his own theory of time³³⁷ as he is in dismantling the theory of time that underpins an atemporal view of God. According to Padgett, both the scientific and philosophical arguments supporting the stasis theory are not sufficiently sound to merit the abandoning of the intuitive process view of time.³³⁸ "Of course the utility and necessity of a stasis type of perspective on time, as a kind of 'fourth dimension' for certain reflective activities, is not in question. What we want are reasons for adopting a stasis view of time as the only proper view of the physical universe as it is in itself."³³⁹ Padgett's conclusion is that if some process view of time is the way the world actually is, then the stasis theory is *not* the way the world actually is; and if it is not, then the theory of divine atemporality upon which it rests must be rejected.³⁴⁰ Instead, some other version of divine temporality must be adopted that resonates with a process view of time. That theory is what he calls "relative timelessness."

³³⁶ *God, Eternity*, 94-95. For a more detailed defense of this axiom see, DeWeese, *GNT*, 29-35. J. R. Lucas also makes this claim in *The Future*, 1-13.

³³⁷ *God, Eternity*, 121.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 82-121. Because my interest in Padgett centers more on his *theological* conclusions I will omit a summary of his objections to these arguments. Suffice it to say, I (along with Jenson, incidentally) find Padgett's overall argument for a tensed theory of time persuasive.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 95. See also, Wolterstorff, "Unqualified Divine Temporality," 195.

³⁴⁰ This is the problem with trying to determine the divine eternity from a view of created time: what rescues Padgett's theological conclusions from the same faulty approach of the atemporalists? That is, if Padgett's understanding of time as a process can be incontrovertibly proven to be false, then necessarily his version of eternity must collapse. He even tacitly admits this when he states: "This third view starts with time rather than with God." See Padgett, "Eternity as Relative Timelessness," *God and Time: Four Views*, ed., Gregory E. Ganssle (London: Paternoster Press, 2002), 104. In my opinion that he makes proper theological conclusions should not and, in fact, does not necessarily result from his methodology. Jenson and Barth have it right: Trinity determines time, not the reverse.

Of course, from the title alone we should infer similarities with Barth and Jenson, and, indeed, that is the case. Padgett begins the explication of what it means for God to be relatively timeless by reaffirming that God really changes and must, therefore, be temporal.³⁴¹ Yet, rightly, he notes how we cannot simply make such a statement and proceed, lest we commit critical theological errors. The fact is, according to Padgett, that God is the “ground” and “Lord” of time. By the former he suggests that God has made an eternal decision to live a dynamic life within himself, and this is entirely possible. He has also decided to live in relation with the created order and given that this world is temporal, then the dynamic nature of our world must be grounded in the dynamic nature of its Creator.³⁴² By “Lord of time” Padgett, like Barth and Jenson, emphasizes God’s power over time as an aspect of his creation, which cannot limit or overcome him as our experience of time does to us by losing being to the past and by death. Entailed in this concept is divine aseity and immutability. However, it is immutability that depends upon Dorner’s³⁴³ definition of it—that “God is necessarily or essentially immutable with respect to a limited set of predicates, which are his character and perfections.”³⁴⁴ Similarly, Barth endorses Dorner’s view of immutability and even credits him with the source of Barth’s discussion of what he prefers to call God’s “constancy.”³⁴⁵ To borrow Jenson’s idiom, so far, so very good.

The answer to the conundrum of God’s changing *and* his immutability—we might say, his temporality and his timelessness—is that he is relatively timeless. For this Padgett argues in the following way. First, causes and effects that are temporal in themselves are also temporally related. God is temporal and the world is his causal relationship, therefore, there must be some kind of temporal relationship between God’s eternity and our time.³⁴⁶ As “is the case with God, no duration occurs between direct divine act and immediate effect, then

³⁴¹ See especially chapter one of *God, Eternity*. This assertion, however, can only be stated to prove that God is not “absolutely timeless” (122). I stress the importance of this because of Padgett’s forthcoming arguments concerning God’s immutability and his relative timelessness. Furthermore, we can affirm his overlap with Barth and Jenson by highlighting the incongruence of God’s time and our time. More on this below.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 122-23.

³⁴³ See his *Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration*, trans., Robert R. Williams and Claude Welch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 131-95.

³⁴⁴ *God, Eternity*, 125.

³⁴⁵ *CD II.1*, 493.

³⁴⁶ *God, Eternity*, 125-26. There is some danger here with Padgett’s terminology and structure of argument in that he tends to rely too much on an analogy of “things” when determining the God/creation relationship. It may be that cause and effect in this world will have temporal relations and that is easily determined because of their nature as “things.” However, God does not fit that category. Furthermore, to posit the temporal relation as a strictly *causal* one is to run the risk of a highly deterministic, depersonalized relation. Padgett does not believe that is theologically the case, but the argument from temporal cause and effect pushes him in this direction; thus, further evidence that Jenson and Barth properly approach the question.

the divine cause will be Zero Time Related to the created effect.”³⁴⁷ Thus, Padgett believes that the temporal relation God has to creation is not a one-to-one relation, or, God’s time is distinct from our time and cannot be measured in the same way we measure our time. In this sense, he is “timeless;” that is, God has a temporal relation to the world because he lives a dynamic, temporal life in himself, but that temporal relation has no metric. The reasons for this are twofold: 1) “God is not subject to the laws of nature, as anything in Measured Time must be,” because our measurement of time depends upon the regular law-like activity of the created order; and 2) “any Measured Time is relative to a particular frame of reference, which need not apply to God’s time.”³⁴⁸ Therefore, since creation and our time do not envelope God, but rather the reverse, God cannot be measured by something that depends upon a law subordinate to himself. Moreover, the question based on STR concerning which temporal frame of reference God is in is meaningless for Padgett since such contingent facts cannot be established even within our world. “If, then, for different observers in our own space-time the difference between *E1* and *E2* is not always one Stund, how can we insist...that the duration between *E1* and *E2* will be one Stund *in God’s time*?”³⁴⁹ I would suggest that this further supports Barth’s method that we must look to revelation if we want to perceive the divine eternity.

To summarize, Padgett has developed a proposal where God is sovereign Creator, not subject to the laws of nature and is possessor of his own time; where an A-series, process theory of time is built into the fabric of our world; where God and the world have a temporal relation, yet that relation lacks duration and is Zero Time Related; and since God’s time grounds our time and we live in his time rather than the reverse, there is no congruence between God’s time and our physical time. I should further clarify what Padgett has and has not accomplished. By making a strong argument against the stasis theory of time and for some sort of process view of time he has effectively made conclusions only regarding *our time*. That we live in process is intuitively what we believe and he has provided good reasons for sustaining that belief. Additionally, he has claimed—notably, based on what he believes

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 126. This Zero Time Related theory concerns the relationship of God’s direct (as opposed to indirect), causal sustaining of the world apart from any causal sequence or chain of events. There is no duration between God’s act to sustain and that sustaining itself. “This is as it should be, since God is omnipotent and omnipresent, and is not limited in causal powers in the same way that physical things are” (21). But here is where confusion arises: If God’s direct act to sustain the world is lacking duration, then what is temporal about that relation? Zero Time Relation supports Padgett’s view that God is in one sense “timeless,” yet it does not illuminate how that relation can be in process. Given the weight of his arguments against absolute timelessness and for the process theory of time, we would expect more clarity regarding exactly what it means for God’s direct sustaining of the universe to lack duration, yet the God/world relation remains a temporal one.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 127.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 128.

to be true of God, i.e. a *theological* argument—that God is temporal because he changes not by doing the same thing throughout time but by doing new things,³⁵⁰ sustains the world whose time is in process, and, nevertheless, that he transcends A-series time. Missing from this theory is the component we would expect, viz., a theological model of exactly what God’s time is and how it can be a time of process, yet transcend the discontinuities of our processional time. Put another way, how can God be in a temporal relation to an A-series world, yet not be constrained by the very elements that make A-series what it is, viz., past, present, and future? Presumably, the answer is that since the created order is A-series time and God is in relation to this time, then he, too, must experience some sort of process time, though it is his own. Merely coming to this conclusion and giving an account of it are certainly very different animals, and the explanation of how these times relate is conspicuously absent.

This is not to say that Padgett’s thesis is irrelevant, but only to demonstrate that at the end of the day he makes similar theological conclusions Barth and Jenson do, albeit without a rigorous effort at trinitarian theologizing, and coming at precisely in the opposite direction that Barth does. To make the theological conclusions that he does he must rely on revelation, just as Barth implores us to, so why not center his work there? Padgett’s work is helpful in that it confirms or supports many of the conclusions in Barth, Jenson, and even this thesis, yet it should be evident that his method falls short of being theologically satisfactory since it cannot offer a strong statement on divine temporality merely by means of a natural understanding of time.

Therefore, due to Barth’s unambiguous theological approach we can progress toward his understanding of time and eternity only by way of Trinity, and we will do so by asking the following questions: 1) what is the relationship of God’s being in eternity with his temporal action? 2) What of the “immanent” and “economic” Trinity? 3) What account does Barth give regarding God’s freedom? 4) What of unity and multiplicity in the Godhead?³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ “Response to Critics,” *God and Time: Four Views*, 125.

³⁵¹ By way of a disclaimer, it would be impossible to give a full treatment to Barth’s doctrine of God, thus the aim of this chapter is to elucidate these aspects only as they significantly impact time and eternity.

God's Trinity: Divine Being and Act

“*God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through Himself. He reveals Himself.*” That is, God is Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness. Thus, one cannot begin a doctrine of revelation apart from a doctrine of the triune God.³⁵² “Revelation is not made real and true by anything else, whether in itself or for us. Both in itself and for us it is real and true through itself...”³⁵³ So, even scripture is God’s Word not because it is revelation, but because “revelation has become an event in it.” God’s revealing is such that to make himself known he causes scripture to be related to himself, therefore, nothing can identify itself as revelation, save Trinity. For Barth, this is to say that God is Lord, and is only so because he is free. Revelation is so only because of his freedom as Lord, thus revelation is God himself. Hence, Barth concludes, God reveals himself as the Lord, which is revelation itself, and we call this “the root of the doctrine of the Trinity.”³⁵⁴

One implication of this for Barth is that the statements about the Trinity are only summaries that cannot be regarded as identical to Trinity itself. That is, theology and exegesis and interpretation always “make use of other concepts besides those in the original.”³⁵⁵ Accordingly, when the theologian takes from the text what is there, he necessarily and unavoidably adds concepts to the original, rendering the doctrine dissimilar to the thing itself. Thus, “we are not saying, then, that revelation is the basis of the Trinity, as though God were the triune God only in His revelation and only for the sake of His revelation. What we are saying is that revelation is the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity; the doctrine of the Trinity has no other basis apart from this.” That is, revelation is God *in se*, and our *doctrine* of the Trinity can only derive itself from revelation without being identical to it.³⁵⁶ Thus, even though language is insufficient and cannot be identified with God, nevertheless God empowers it to “fit the object” he intends.³⁵⁷

Yet, to speak of the root of the doctrine of the Trinity this way means that God is at one and the same time Revealer, Revelation, and Revealedness—concepts derived, according to Barth, from subordination to scripture, which intend to show “to what extent we are in fact led by revelation itself to the problem of triunity.”³⁵⁸ Not only is Barth indicating that the

³⁵² *CD* I.1, 296.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 305.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 307.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 312.

³⁵⁷ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 120.

³⁵⁸ *CD* I.1, 314-15.

sole criterion of God's identity is God himself, but also that the God who in himself cannot be unveiled to humans has unveiled himself within history, within a particular form. That is, his self-unveiling takes the form of a self-distinction within God between the hidden mode of being and the revealed mode of being, and the fact that it is *self*-distinction demonstrates there is a real difference, but no subordination. Barth maintains that this self-distinction is proper to God, "i.e., to be God in Himself and in concealment, and yet at the same time to be God a second time in a very different way, namely, in manifestation, i.e., in the form of something He Himself is not."³⁵⁹ But for God to take form does not mean that he abandons his veiling. "He assumes a form, yet not in such a way that any form will compass Him...His 'second time in a different way' does not really prevent Him from remaining the same."³⁶⁰

Crucially, Barth views the divine identity through the temporal existence of Jesus Christ, therefore the God that is hidden is the same God that reveals himself in Jesus, "for the decisive word about its proclamation the Church cannot listen to any other voice than the voice of its Lord."³⁶¹ Once again, "Jesus is Lord," according to Barth, leads us directly into the question of the divine being; thus, we must say that what God *does* in Jesus, i.e. in time, he *is* in eternity, for there are not two gods, but one God who is fully present in Jesus Christ. Further, God is one in his eternal being, but that eternal being is not disconnected from his being in Christ, and though they are different, they are the same. Thus, in the same way that humanity and divinity are perfectly united in Jesus and this presents no hindrance to God, so time and eternity are perfectly united in Jesus Christ as Lord, who is one with the Father and Spirit.

Excursus: History as Urgeschichte

Because Barth relies on the Christological grounding of revelation it means that revelation is a *historical* event, yet, again, Barth's view of history (and time) is controversial. Indeed, Pannenberg frames the problem by rejecting both the existential historicity of Bultmann and the "suprahistorical ground of faith" he perceives in Barth.³⁶² That is, Pannenberg's charge is that Barth's theology is stripped of its meaning due to his doctrine of *Urgeschichte*—that the "transition from the Christological to the anthropological sphere [can]

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 316.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 323.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 255.

³⁶² Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology: Volume One* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1970), 15.

consist in anything but an assertion that the latter has been displaced altogether by the former.”³⁶³ To evaluate this charge, I will begin with a summary of Barth’s view of history.

First, when Barth talks about revelation being “historical” he does not intend it to mean that revelation is “apprehensible by a neutral observer.” That is, one may have seen the temple or the crucifixion since those events took place in history, but that does not mean, for Barth, that they saw revelation. They very easily could have interpreted it to mean something other than God, thus not seeing revelation. Hence revelation is not historical in the sense that anyone can observe it, grasp it, and control it as and when they wish.³⁶⁴

Second, “historical” does not indicate a general relation between God and humanity that always obtains, but the Bible marks out the specific time and event that is revelation. So then, revelation does not take place, then continually so as some sort of process or state of being that anyone in any epoch can merely observe. “History” means that it took place then and there.³⁶⁵

Third, some general concept of history cannot be the judge of biblical history. It can neither “claim nor deny that this point or that God has acted on men.” To do so, according to Barth is to abandon neutrality and opt for faith or unbelief. Thus, what kind of judge could general history claim to be if it adopts either one of these positions? “General historicity” cannot decide the question of the “hearing or non-hearing of the biblical history.” According to Barth, if revelation was something that could arise out of history as the “realization of a general possibility,” then we should reject such a revelation. It cannot spring from any general historical principles or possibility. It does not come from our history. It is historical, but not in the sense of being subject to our rules.³⁶⁶ This is where Barth’s use of analogy comes to the fore in the sense that even though revelation is historical it is only analogously so and not a generally existing relationship.³⁶⁷

Thus, it is Barth’s use of the word *Urgeschichte*³⁶⁸ that summarizes this view of history. Though the precise impact of this concept becomes more evident in the next chapter

³⁶³ CD IV.1, 293.

³⁶⁴ CD I.1, 325.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 326.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 326-28.

³⁶⁷ We will examine in detail Barth’s use of analogy and the ambiguities resulting from it in chapter six.

³⁶⁸ In his discussion of this term, Colwell mistakenly cites Barth as using it in IV.1, 336 (p. 371 of *Kirchliche Dogmatik*), where in fact he employs the word *prähistorischen*. Thus the translation of “pre-history” in that particular passage is the accurate one, though, to be sure, Barth appears to use it as a synonym for *Urgeschichte*, which is translated in other places, e.g. II.2, 8 as “primal history.” Colwell is correct to say that primal history is a better way of expressing what Barth was saying, especially in light of his use of other concepts such as “pre-temporality” and the “pre-Easter history” of Jesus. This is also the English translation of Jüngel’s use of the term in *God’s Being is in Becoming*, 90.

under the discussion of resurrection and incarnation, it is appropriate to lay the groundwork here. The problem, as it has been throughout the history of theology, is “how that which is proper to Him be recognized as proper to us?” Or, what right do we have to say that what Jesus has done can rightly and justly be applied to us?³⁶⁹ At the root of this problem for Barth is the question of time; or, how is it that redemptive events can truly participate in our time whilst avoiding the twofold consequence of existential historicity and “critical-historical investigation as the scientific verification of events?”³⁷⁰ That is, how is God both eternal and temporal whilst remaining free from the constraints of our time?

The answer Barth gives to this is that the history of Jesus Christ is the primal history, or the one that is of prime order, the ground of all other history. It is history that truly occurs in our space and time, even though its historicity is not that of the types described above. He uses the term in relation to several realities including the incarnation, the divine eternal decision that precedes this event,³⁷¹ creation,³⁷² and the resurrection.³⁷³ Each of these realities is a pure act of God that is played out in the theater of his relation with the world. Thus, the primary “history” is not that of everyday events as such (*Historie*), but is the *Urgeschichte* of God’s pure act *ad intra* and *ad extra*. And in the foregoing statement rests the key to Barth’s view of history: God is identical in his being-for-himself (eternity) with his being-for-us (temporality/history). Thus, to be certain that the one does not collapse into the other bringing fatal consequences to the Christian gospel Barth forges this conception of history where God’s act in time is “non-historical” in the sense that it is purely from God and “it cannot be deduced and compared and therefore perceived and comprehended.”³⁷⁴ Yet, it is historical in the sense that God’s unique history has taken place in our time.

This may indeed sound like a classic case of Barth having his cake and eating it, yet the ground it is on, in my opinion, is certainly more stable than that of the alternatives. Barth discounts as “sheer superstition” the idea that something can only be verified to have occurred in time when it is judged so “by the methods, and above all the tacit assumption, of modern historical scholarship.”³⁷⁵ Not only would such historicist methodology rule out the possibility of something like the resurrection, but it is also, once again, a graphic illustration

³⁶⁹ CD IV.1, 286.

³⁷⁰ Pannenberg, *Basic Questions*, 16.

³⁷¹ CD II.2, 105, 124.

³⁷² CD III.1, 78-81.

³⁷³ CD IV.1, 336. Though, as we have already argued, the terminology here when taken in context is synonymous to *Urgeschichte*.

³⁷⁴ CD III.1, 80.

³⁷⁵ CD III.2, 446.

that the fundamental difference between Barth and many of his critics is in the understanding of rationality and the knowledge of God. For Barth, actuality determines rationality, and what is actual is God's self-revelation. For his opponents, what is actual is human rationality and what must be assimilated into that is the gospel.

Ultimately, this is Pannenberg's objection to Barth because Pannenberg is operating under the presupposition that "all theological questions and answers are meaningful only within the framework of the history which God has with humanity and through humanity with his whole creation."³⁷⁶ Now, if you mean by that there is no other possible world than our present one from which to determine the reality of the gospel, the answer is obviously affirmative. But if you mean (as Pannenberg does) that faith in the resurrection depends upon rational, historical investigation, then God's freedom in his redemptive act is necessarily tied to the created order and, for Barth, that obliterates the freedom of God for himself, collapsing him into a necessary existence with history.³⁷⁷ The correspondence between *Urgeschichte* and Barth's doctrine of time is basic—both flow from Barth's understanding of God-for-himself and God-for-us. Thus, just as God's history is historical in the sense that it actually happened within our history, but is not historical in the sense that it can be subjected to historical investigation because it is of a different kind, so God is temporal in that he "happens" in our time, yet we cannot subject him to our time because it is of a different kind.

Returning to the subject of this section, "God is who He is in His works." By this statement Barth intends that we cannot identify God as someone separate from the works he demonstrates to us, because it is in them that he reveals himself. We do not see his works on the one hand, and then on the other identify his being apart from them. "The reality of God which encounters us in His revelation is His reality in all the depths of eternity."³⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the works do not exhaust God. "They are bound to Him, but He is not bound to them...But He is who He is without them...Yet in Himself He is not another than He is in His works."³⁷⁹ As expected, Barth warns that the doctrine of God should not collapse into the doctrine of being. The works manifest him, yet he is distinct from them. Hence, he is opposed to "a concept of being that is common, neutral and free to choose, but with one which is from the first filled out in a quite definite way."³⁸⁰ So, when Barth titles this section

³⁷⁶ Pannenberg, *Basic Questions*, 15.

³⁷⁷ Colwell, 90-91.

³⁷⁸ *CD* I.1, 479.

³⁷⁹ *CD* II.1, 260.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 260-61.

the “Being of God in Act” he means that “God is who He is in the act of His revelation.” His acts declare the nature of his being. Or, as Jüngel puts it, “God’s Being is in Becoming.” God’s revelation—the content of the Word—is intrinsically related to his act, which causes us to recognize it as an event. God is in becoming (*ist im werden*) because God is a particular event. That particular event is God’s revelation to humanity in Jesus Christ, and by doing so he is making himself an object to be known. Therefore, he is the God of revelation and of concealment, and that tells us that “it is proper to Him to distinguish Himself from Himself, i.e. to be God in Himself and in concealment, and yet at the same time to be God a second time in a very different way, namely, in manifestation, i.e. in the form of something He Himself is not.”³⁸¹ If God is becoming in his nature, then this implies that what we know scripture attributes to him, that he can do. This is Barth’s attack on religion—on *a priori* theological method. Barth is adamantly opposed to a decision on what is and is not appropriate for God prior to or above revelation. Likewise, it puts no strain on the being of God temporally to distinguish himself from himself, so that when the scripture testifies that God is temporal in Jesus, yet he also transcends our earthly boundaries, we can recognize this is proper to him. Yet, if God is what he does *among us*, then why include the distinction of “immanent” and “economic” Trinity—God in his being for himself and in his being for us? Surely we have reached the center of Barth’s doctrine of God that is not without controversy.

God’s Triunity: Immanent and Economic Trinity

In revealing himself to us in this gracious way, God must remain free from necessity or condition. He reveals himself to humanity, but is not thereby man’s “prisoner.” Gunton puts it another way: “The asymmetry consists in the fact that while act is indeed a true guide to essence, knowledge of essence does not entail knowledge of the particular acts that God is going to perform.” Further, God always retains his freedom to reveal himself, even “in the form He assumes when He reveals Himself...It is not the form, but God in the form, that reveals, speaks, comforts, works and aids...God’s self-unveiling remains an act of sovereign divine freedom.” This undergirds Barth’s understanding of the veiling and unveiling. They are not in contradiction with one another, but there must be the veiling in order to recognize that there is an unveiling. “The upshot is that there is not imbalance between God’s

³⁸¹ Ibid., 316.

becoming God in the form of something that he himself is not, and his remaining true to himself in this becoming.”³⁸²

In sum, there is a unity and distinction in God’s being for us and God’s being for himself. God’s being corresponds to itself in both, the former ontologically and relationally grounded in the latter.³⁸³ Moreover, “God’s being for us does not define God’s being but, in his being for us, God does indeed interpret his being.”³⁸⁴ Therefore, the “is” in Barth’s phrase “God is who he is in his works” should not be construed to mean God’s being is identical to, or the sum total of his works, but should be understood as “correctly reflecting,” or “distinct, but not separate from.”

To say, however, that God’s being for us is grounded in his being for himself is also to open the door to potential misunderstanding and speculation. It does not mean that Barth did not consider God’s works *ad extra* to constitute the divine being, which would, of course, include the incarnation and Jesus’ temporal existence. McCormack carefully considers the weight Barth places upon the extent to which God’s being for us is “constitutive” of his triunity. He concludes that the only sense in which it is correct to say that Barth considered God’s external works as constitutive of his eternal being is “as a consequence of the primal decision in which God assigned to himself the being he would have throughout eternity (a being-for the human race), God is already in a pre-temporal eternity—*by way of anticipation*—that which he would become in time.”³⁸⁵ McCormack also claims that Barth himself has inconsistently applied his commitment to the unity of God’s being for himself and God’s being for us by opening the door to a radical distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity in places like *CD IV.1, 52*.³⁸⁶ We might consider it in this manner: at times Barth seems to have classic Reformation theology in the back of his mind as he writes concerning the unity of God’s being for himself and his being for us. Indeed, as McCormack rightly points out, the difference between Barth and Calvin is an onto-theological one: there is no god behind the God we know in the revelation of the man, Jesus Christ. At other times Barth seems to have the nineteenth century historicizing of theology in the back of his mind when he insists on God’s otherness from history and our time. That Jesus had his own time, eternal time, real time creates that distance lacking in the natural, historicized religion of

³⁸² Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 133.

³⁸³ Jüngel, 121.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ Bruce McCormack, “Grace and Being: the role of God’s gracious election in Karl Barth’s theological ontology,” *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, John Webster, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 100.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

Schleiermacher's era. Finding a way to give full and proper weight to both proved difficult, and Barth seems on the whole to have left some gaps. Nevertheless, the gaps here and the resulting ones in time and eternity, though they most certainly call for further development or revision, do not prove fatal for Barth's entire theology.

Furthermore, it is not entirely clear how these gaps must be resolved. McCormack's proposed correction, for example, is to take Barth's guiding principle of God's being for himself is his being in act to the logical conclusion that election determines Trinity, rather than the reverse. It may be, as McCormack claims, that Barth was simply unwilling to revise his earlier work on revelation and Triunity in view of his mature thought on election; or it may be that Barth recognized the potential pitfall into which McCormack has fallen and he decided to avoid it. Jenson offers his own version of corrections to which we will turn in chapter six, along with further critical evaluation of Barth. Thus, there appears to be theological reasons that Barth maintains this unity in distinction between God's being for himself and God's being for us. We must now turn to the question of *how* he expects to hold this together.

God's Triunity: The Divine Freedom

A feature constantly to keep before us: this unity in distinction is held together by God's freedom; it is the "crucial proviso" in his relation to the world. The fact that he can and does relate himself to the world does not entail that he must.³⁸⁷ God is the God of grace and love, not compelled to do something he may or may not wish to do. What is unique about God's freedom (since God defines God's self) is that it is more than the negative sense of an absence of limits or restrictions, but rather includes the positive sense of being "grounded in one's own being, to be determined and moved by oneself."³⁸⁸ This relates to the old orthodox term *aseity*, though the current idea of freedom or *independentia* tends to emphasize the positive aspect, rather than the negative.³⁸⁹ It is crucial to recognize this fact in Barth, for it is a point of contention in some modern Barthian commentators.³⁹⁰ Barth

³⁸⁷ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 154.

³⁸⁸ *CD* II.1, 301.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 302.

³⁹⁰ I agree with Kevin Hector's recent evaluation of Paul Molnar in this regard. Molnar, according to Hector, "confuses God's freedom with an abstract account of freedom as absolute independence;" or, what Barth calls the negative aspect of freedom. When *this* becomes the definition of freedom, then there is the tendency to transform the *distinction* between God and world (or God's being in himself and God's being for us) into a *separation*—precisely a problem Barth was aiming to avoid in uniting act and being. See Kevin W. Hector,

refuses to define freedom solely in terms of the negative, even though he acknowledges that concept is indispensable to a proper understanding of God's relation to the created order.³⁹¹

The Bible, says Barth, testifies to a transcendent God who is so not only because of the Creator/creature distinction, but in exercising his freedom he enters into full communion with reality other than Himself. He goes on: "God has the prerogative to be free without being limited by His freedom, free not to surrender Himself to it, but to use it to give Himself to this communion and to practice this faithfulness in it..."³⁹² All this serves the idea that we cannot view God's freedom as transcendence in strictly the negative sense of distinction from the created order. If we do, according to Barth, then we fall back into a view of God that is oriented toward abstraction and laden with preconceived or philosophical notions of God that in no way resemble the God of the Bible. Time and eternity follow the same pattern. If God as timeless is viewed in the sense that it has been in the tradition—the negative side of our temporal existence—then we risk positing a God that is little more than the god of Greek metaphysics. God is not abstractly and obscurely everything that we are not, especially atemporal. He is timeless, not in the sense that his being is absolutely independent from created time, but in that he enters into our time and yet remains eternal.

A comparison with Jenson on this idea of God's freedom is instructive: that God's being is identified *by* and *with* the temporal works within history, i.e., the Exodus and Resurrection. By claiming that we cannot know God through any other means than his works Barth is challenging any natural theology that would posit the knowledge or being of God through some path other than God himself; consequently, of *a priori* theological method. Still, he falls short of Jenson's move to make the divine being *identical* to those temporal events (though, as detailed in previous chapters Jenson recognizes the panentheistic tendencies his position brings and makes an effort to militate against it). However, the reality is that Barth has more clearly distinguished ontology and epistemology in that God is Father, Son, and Spirit *a se*, while Jenson has pushed Barth's position a step further and intermingled the two. To use Jenson's terminology we might say that Barth believes that God is identified *by* Exodus and Resurrection, and is united to those events, with the caveat that he retains freedom in that unity; while Jenson believes he is identified (freely—in Barth's sense) *by* and *with* the temporal events. The goal for both theologians is the same— God is with us as he is in himself —yet the paths diverge, which will lead us directly into the issue of time. Barth is

"God's Triunity and Self-Determination: A Conversation with Karl Barth, Bruce McCormack and Paul Molnar," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7 (July 2005): 255-56.

³⁹¹ *CD* II.1, 303.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

happier with the distinction between God in himself and God for us, which also gives him the theological freedom to say the same about time—God’s eternity is different than ours, though not in contradiction with it. Likewise, God is who he is in himself apart from the created order, though the divine act that we meet within that order is not in contradiction with who he is in himself. Jenson desires a more explicit relationship between God and our time, though, as I have alluded to in previous chapters and will expand upon in chapter six, he does not clearly outline what that is and, consequently, remains closer to Barth than he might think (albeit introducing problematic elements).

One final step is needed before expositing Barth’s full perspective on time and eternity, and that is briefly to examine its triune structure.

God’s Triunity: Unity in Multiplicity

By now it should be obvious that God’s eternity is grounded and structured in Trinity. Strictly speaking, it is Christology that reveals divine eternity and time, yet it is axiomatic for Barth that Christology directly leads us into God’s triunity.³⁹³ Thus, as Barth unfolds his understanding of Trinity a corresponding unfolding of eternity could accompany it. This does not imply that all our answers concerning time are thereby unambiguously answered, though it does go far in explicating *Barth’s* understanding of it. The structure is roughly as follows: Unity in Trinity (*ousia*), Trinity in Unity (*hypostases*), and Triunity (*perichoresis*).

It is significant that for Barth that discussion of the divine *ousia* (the One) is logically prior to that of the *hypostases* (the Three), for so he claims: “The doctrine of the triunity of God...does not entail—this above all must be emphasized and established—any abrogation or even questioning but rather the final and decisive confirmation of the insight that God is One.”³⁹⁴ Thus, according to Barth, the task of the church has always been to answer the question how it is that God is One. Though Barth, as evidenced by his doctrine of revelation, may appear to lay a foundation for a priority of threeness not oneness,³⁹⁵ he does not pursue this line of thought. This is not to say that he follows a scholastic understanding of divine

³⁹³ *CD* I.1, 296, and countless other places. Additionally, it is worth a reminder that Jenson’s essential approach to the question of time is also trinitarianly structured. Humanity, according to Jenson, is the search for meaning by uniting the discontinuity of time—past, present, and future. “We speak of ‘God’ to name that union. Or rather, we speak to and from God to invoke it. Just so, we need to know who he is, to know how our lives hang together. *Trinitarian discourse is Christianity’s answer to this need*” (emphasis mine). Jenson, *TI*, 5. At its most basic level, then, Jenson’s project is an effort to address the problem of time in an explicitly trinitarian fashion.

³⁹⁴ *CD* I.1, 348.

³⁹⁵ Jenson, *TI*, xiii, 1-18.

simplicity, or oneness in the sense of singularity or isolation. Rather, oneness is what revelation determines it to be, and oneness for God includes his “threefold repetition” of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, “in such a way also that He is the one God only in this repetition.”³⁹⁶ Barth clearly maintains that the threeness of the persons do not subvert the unity of the one God, for it is not “threeness of essence,” an essence of plurality, individuals or parts. Therefore, while threeness in revelation is what it means to be one, the threeness cannot rule over the oneness, for it is that oneness that is the name “Yahweh-Kyrios.” In other words, according to Barth, to say “God” is to speak of the One God in his essence as Lord, or, his *ousia*.³⁹⁷ To substantiate this point even further Barth believes that today when we say “personality” of God, we refer to the *ousia*, “which the doctrine of the Trinity does not seek to triple but rather to recognize in its simplicity.” That is, God is “He,” not “It.” “Person” does not equal “personality” in the sense that is intended in this doctrine. The latter is to safeguard against the “It,” and the former denotes the identities of Trinity without saying there are three personalities. “Identity of substance implies the equality of substance of ‘the persons.’”³⁹⁸ Therefore, Hunsinger’s judgment is correct when he claims that “although there is no *ousia* without the *hypostases*, and no *hypostases* without the *perichoresis*, the divine *ousia* is, in Barth’s judgment, logically prior and determinative.”³⁹⁹ Yet, Barth refuses to deduce the nature of Trinity from the common concept of the number one. Numerical unity in its general understanding has the limitations of *singularity* and *isolation*, that is, “one” cannot be understood apart from the accompanying “two” or “three.” But Barth rejects this when applied to God, saying that he is not limited or isolated in relation to others; thus, he does not need a second or third in order to be the one God.⁴⁰⁰

Consequently, God is one, i.e. Unity in Trinity, and that above all is to be affirmed. Yet, he is not one apart from the *hypostases*, i.e. he is also Trinity in Unity. What are we to say about Father, Son, and Spirit that establishes their unity? Barth proceeds by means of a discussion vis-à-vis the term “person” that has traditionally been used to designate the distinction within Trinity. Barth prefers the term “modes of being” due to the fact that he is uncomfortable with the evolution of the term in modern studies, namely, the problems of translation between East and West, and the evolution of the term to denote a close association between “person” and “essence.” With the addition of the idea of self-consciousness to the

³⁹⁶ CD I.1, 350.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 349.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 350-51.

³⁹⁹ George Hunsinger, “*Mysterium Trinitatis*,” 170.

⁴⁰⁰ CD I.1, 354.

term “personality” it becomes nearly interchangeable with the patristic and medieval *persona*, creating problems for trinitarian theology. Rather than make an attempt to return to that ancient connotation Barth opts for a different term on the basis that it is not a new idea, but reflects the central one in the history of this discussion, viz., that “God is God in a special way as Father, as Son, and as Spirit.”⁴⁰¹ Without a doubt this has caused confusion for Barth’s readers over the years; nevertheless there is little ground on which to accuse him of modalism.

God is the one God only in the three modes of being; thus the distinction between the modes of being is essential to what it means to be God to such an extent that if we were to say the Father could just as easily be the Son or, put another way, could have died and risen from the dead, makes the modes of being unessential to the divine being and disposes of Trinity.⁴⁰² Similarly, when describing God with something like love or righteousness it would be wholly unacceptable to apply it to one mode of being and not the other, for they are true of the one God.⁴⁰³ Consequently, if the modes of being are not distinguishable materially, then how are they distinguished? Barth says that they are distinguished *relationally*. Or put another way, the modes of being “can be derived from the regularly recurring relations of the three concepts to one another as these occur most simply between the concepts of Father, Son and Spirit.”⁴⁰⁴ “He brings forth Himself and in two distinctive ways He is brought forth by Himself. He possesses Himself as Father, i.e., pure Giver, as Son, i.e., Receiver and Giver, and as Spirit, i.e., pure Receiver.”⁴⁰⁵ Therefore, Barth, along with Jenson, rejects the doctrine of simplicity in its tendency to reduce in importance the threeness in favor of the oneness.

This would roughly correspond to time and eternity in that there exists the tendency to assign temporality to the persons and atemporality to the divine unity. Indeed, most talk of God’s atemporality gives a strangely unitarian impression. For Barth, the truth is that God is not exclusively unity or multiplicity, timeless or temporal, but rather he is one, timeless God who is also three and temporal. And this is so because of the dynamic, relational life of the *hypostases*. This will play a more prominent role in chapter six as I outline my own suggestions on time and eternity.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 357-59.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 360.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 362.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 364-65.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 364.

With a view toward preserving more of a balance between “unity in trinity and trinity in unity” Barth adopts the term “Triunity.” Each time we talk about one, according to Barth, we tip the scales in favor of that one to the detriment of the other. By adopting Triunity (*Dreieinigkeit*) Barth is trying to marginalize further this inherent weakness.⁴⁰⁶

The specific concept that combines both emphases is that of *perichoresis*, and Barth employs it by asserting that there is not a separation of the modes of being, but “a complete participation of each...in the other...” Yet *perichoresis* does not in any sense imply “the identity of one mode of being with the others but the co-presence of the others in the one.”⁴⁰⁷ And the divine *perichoresis* is not merely the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit among themselves, but is “their unity *ad extra*.” God’s essence and work are not twofold but one.⁴⁰⁸ We can only know of God because of his work, so that anything we say about God (attributes, etc.) is about his work. Thus, that work is God’s essence. Yet, Barth is quick to add the caveat that this does not abrogate his freedom, for that work is a free decision of his grace that is grounded “but not constrained” by his essence. In other words, it is still important for Barth to distinguish between his essence and his work. So it might be proper from our viewpoint to say that God’s work is his essence, but this is more than his work because he is free and not bound by it.⁴⁰⁹

Hence, the distinction between the essence of God from “His essence as the One who works and reveals Himself,” or, we could say, immanent and economic Trinity is his freedom.⁴¹⁰ Yet, what is the actual content of these assertions? Barth has labored to assure us that the *hypostases* are one in their relations, and the relations of Father, Son, and Spirit are soteriological relations, i.e. temporal. Consequently, the work of the *hypostases*, according to Barth, is one with the essence, which is an obvious claim to make if it is the very *relations* of the modes of being that are God. That this is so prompts Barth to declare that “these three names are really in their threeness the one name of the one God.”⁴¹¹ Nevertheless, he appears to backtrack and say almost exactly the opposite of what he has just said. No surprise, then, that this declaration of divine freedom in God’s work *ad extra* is immediately followed by a lengthy passage on God’s incomprehensibility and mystery.⁴¹² If the unity of God *is* the relations of the *hypostases* to such an extent that there is no name for God other than Father,

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 368-69.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 370.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 371.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 363.

⁴¹² Ibid., 371.

Son, and Spirit, then who is it that maintains this freedom? Is the Son's redemptive work and his essence one and not one (free) at the same time? Even being careful to apply Barth's definition of freedom it is confounding how this can hold any content. When we approach the issue of time and eternity in the next chapter and we encounter the sticky matter of assigning temporality *and* timelessness to God, we would do well to bear in mind that it is not merely an issue of temporality for Barth, though it is that, but it is fundamentally a question of how to speak of Trinity. This accentuates the problem theologians encounter who are committed to orthodoxy, yet sensitive both to the failures of classical theism and of modern scientific insight. In such a circumstance does one side of the debate necessarily diminish the other? Can theologians posit an omniscient, omnipresent God who is also temporal? Some answer this question in the negative and have opted for nearly a complete reversal of the tradition on Trinity.⁴¹³

God, as we will see in the next chapter, according to Barth is both timeless and temporal. If we are only saying God *could* have been without the world, then that is a legitimate theological assertion with its proper place (a notion Jenson shares). However, Barth is saying more than that. He is not merely saying that God *could* have been without the world, but rather he is saying that God's essence is united to his temporal work and it (essence, *ousia*) is free from it. Again, what is the sense of this if God's very *ousia* is Father, Son, and Spirit, i.e. temporal relations?

In sum, Barth grounds revelation *and* the reality of the created order in Jesus Christ, which in turn leads us to God's Triunity. This raises the related issues of the unity/distinction of the immanent and economic Trinity, God's freedom, and the triune structure of unity and multiplicity.

Once again, a comparison of where Jenson and Barth overlap and diverge on the question of divine unity and multiplicity is a useful tool to clarify their positions on time and eternity. Jenson, similar to Pannenberg,⁴¹⁴ Moltmann⁴¹⁵ and others, does not view *ousia* or

⁴¹³ Most recently, Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker and David Basinger, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), and Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

⁴¹⁴ Pannenberg is particularly critical of Barth on this score. He states: "To derive the trinitarian distinctions from the self-differentiation of the divine Spirit in its self-awareness is to subsume the threeness of the persons into the concept of a single personal God. This derivation, then, comes into conflict with the doctrine of the Trinity itself." This, Pannenberg believes, is tantamount to Sabellianism since it virtually interprets Father, Son, and Spirit as psychological "phases in the economy of salvation." On such a scheme, God may be self-conscious of differentiation, yet he remains a single subject, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of three with their own subjectivity. According to Pannenberg, Barth did little to advance beyond Hegel's legacy here primarily due to his doctrine of revelation. That is, God's self-revelation unites subject, object and

oneness as logically prior for God—though he works it out in a unique way that also distinguishes him from his otherwise closely allied contemporaries. To grasp this distinction we will follow Jenson’s argument concerning his use of the term “identity” in reference to Father, Son, and Spirit.

The essential question in the post-Nicean church, according to Jenson, was “how one could avoid both polytheism and modalism otherwise than by subordinationism.”⁴¹⁶ This new way was forged by the Cappadocians: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzus, and the first step was to differentiate between *ousia* and *hypostasis*. The former was to refer to God’s being, while the latter would refer to the persons of Father, Son and Spirit. They drew the comparison with humans in that we share humanity (*ousia*), but are distinct persons (*hypostases*). So, why are Father, Son and Spirit not three gods as humans would be three persons? The answer is that human beings are differentiated by characteristics that are not endemic to humanity, i.e. short stature, race, etc. God cannot have those types of characteristics, so the analogy breaks down; yet if he does have individuating characteristics they must belong to his essence, just like it would be to our humanity. “The

revelation itself into one, which forces Barth to view the Trinity in much the same fashion as a Hegelian, self-conscious Absolute. If the Trinity is God’s revelation of his own subjectivity, and that subject is one, then it is not possible to have three subjects. Thus, Barth conceived of different modes of being in the one Subject, or three repetitions of the same God. Pannenberg presses the point that moving from one to threeness is a failure in Trinitarian dogma since it leads either to Sabellianism (subordinationism) or modalism. The Trinity, he believes, must be understood in the way that the three persons relate to one another, and that is the only means to an understanding of the oneness of God. See, *ST I*, 291-99.

⁴¹⁵ Similarly to Pannenberg Moltmann states: “After considering all this, it seems to make more sense theologically to start from the biblical history, and therefore to make the unity of the three divine Persons the problem, rather than to take the reverse method—to start from the philosophical postulate of absolute unity, in order then to find the problem in the biblical testimony. The unity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is then the eschatological question about the consummation of the trinitarian history of God.” Moltmann criticizes Barth that his worry to preserve divine sovereignty has resulted in an absolute subject that cannot remotely reflect trinitarianism—the problem being, in his opinion, that “no real independent, personal activity can be assumed in God’s self,” leaving us with Barth’s “one divine personality” or “a subject for whom all three trinitarian Persons are objective, even as ‘modes of being.’” See, Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1981), 139-44, 149. Moltmann and Pannenberg represent, of course, the trend among “social trinitarians” to charge Barth with modalism. It has been repeatedly answered on Barth’s behalf, recently by Dennis Jowers, “The Reproach of Modalism: A Difficulty for Karl Barth’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003): 231-46. Interestingly, in spite of Jenson’s relative affinity with the likes of Moltmann and Pannenberg he is undaunted by the charge, and even seems to side with Barth on this issue. The point is relevant for us: I would argue that Jenson, unlike other critics of Barth, is essentially working within the framework of *Church Dogmatics*, whilst attempting necessary corrections (a similar approach might be his late student, Colin Gunton. Jenson’s mark is evident in Gunton’s work.). Hence, even though Jenson demonstrates a greater inclination toward threeness it does not arise out of the same critical considerations as Moltmann and Pannenberg, nor would it be fair to classify him as “social trinitarian.” The latter is especially true given Leftow’s characterization of social trinitarianism. Consider this description: “For [social trinitarianism], Father, Son, and Spirit are three individual cases of deity, three divine substances, as Adam, Eve, and Abel are three human substances.” See Brian Leftow, “Anti Social Trinitarianism,” *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, eds., Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, SJ, Gerald O’Collins, SJ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 203-49.

⁴¹⁶ Jenson, *ST I*, 105.

three can in fact be individually identified, by their relations to one another, precisely with respect to their joint possession of one and the same deity.”⁴¹⁷ As Gregory of Nazianzus puts it, “Differentiated though the hypostases are, the entire and undivided godhead is one in each.”⁴¹⁸ Hence, the three persons can only be named or described in relation to the other two. Jenson puts the Cappadocian formula another way: “each identity’s relation to each of the others is to that other as the possessor of deity, and just so constitutes his own reality as an identity of that same deity.”⁴¹⁹ Thus, we might say that the *relation* of the *hypostases* not only defines the *hypostases*, but also defines the *ousia*—this, in contrast to the substance-oriented approach to divine unity.⁴²⁰

The scholastic formulation sharpened the Cappadocian trinitarian formula by saying that a trinitarian person is “a relation...in the mode of substance, a relation that itself subsists and is not merely a connection between subsistents” (a definition from Aquinas, *ST*, 1, 29, a.4.).⁴²¹ How, then, would such a metaphysical definition cohere with God’s narrated reality? The answer relies on Pannenberg: all three persons of the Trinity refer to the other two as the one God, indicating that all three are perfectly “correlate to that other.” That is, if all three refer to the other as the one God, then there can be no higher being than the persons of that Trinity.⁴²² Each points to the other as God, thus all three are possessors of full deity. Father, Son, and Spirit are *agents* in the external operations of the Creator upon the creation. Yet, they comprise the *one agency* of God. That is, in Cappadocian terms, any action from God that impacts creation must begin with the Father, be actualized through the Son, and perfected in the Holy Spirit. The formula is in concert with Barth’s doctrine of God’s being in becoming, being revealed in and with act; so that “it is by the temporal dynamic between Jesus and his Father and our Destiny, that the three are *God*.”⁴²³ All this is designed to affirm for Jenson Trinity’s temporal reference and the unity of the *hypostases* and *ousia*.

What about the use and definition of “person,” and why would Jenson opt for “identity?” “Person” in the Latin West, following Tertullian, came to signify a “subsistent social relation.” Hence, a person is constituted in its social relations of address and response, so that “the Father’s speaking his Word, the act in which the Son is constituted, is in itself a call for response, thereby constituting the Son as himself a speaking being like the Father.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 106.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 108.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 111-13.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 108-09.

⁴²² Ibid., 109.

⁴²³ *TI*, 107.

The Father's breathing the Spirit, the act in which the Spirit is constituted, is in itself the Father's entry into the communal freedom that the Spirit gives, to constitute the Spirit a personal agent also over against the Father."⁴²⁴ To borrow Jenson's phrase, so far, so very good.

Yet Jenson seems to share Barth's aversion to the modern sense of "person" and prefers "identity" because "it is exactly the ontological function...that the trinitarian *hypostasis*, in its separation from *ousia*, invoked."⁴²⁵ However, even though the Father, Son, and Spirit are "identities" the Trinity is not an identity, for if we said that, then there would be four identities and we would fall back into modalism. Hence, must we be forced to say that the Trinity is not personal or is not one in essence due to this linguistic configuration? To answer this Jenson refers to Jonathan Edwards who thought of identity and person as distinct. That is, Adam and his descendants and Christ and his believers are different identities, yet "one complex person." So, suggests Jenson, it might be that *being personal* is not singular in its meaning, but we may be one person with Adam, yet a different identity.⁴²⁶

To conclude this matter, we are able to say that Jenson gives a greater priority to threeness, not in the way Moltmann does, but by placing the term "person" or "personality" on the relations of Father, Son, and Spirit, and by designating them as the divine proper name. It is the threeness of the identities that gives the oneness. There is one divine personality (Trinity) with three "identities" whose relations *are* that divine *ousia*. God is One not in that he subsists timelessly in some set of attributes, but in that he perfectly and mutually relates in Father, Son, and Spirit—the only name of God. There is no name for the divine *ousia*, according to Jenson, save only the three names of the divine identities. The following passage from Jenson illustrates his concern for threeness, without losing oneness:

Let me once more state the problem at its simplest. The three derive from God's reality in time, from time's past/present/future. But if the One is one precisely by abstraction from time, the one-and-three can never be made to work. The relations are either *temporal* relations or empty verbiage. In Western trinitarianism, which will not let the relations be temporal, that God is "one and three" becomes the sheer mystification Western churchgoers accept—or reject—it as: something we assert because we are supposed to, not knowing even what we are asserting.⁴²⁷

Clearly, then, given the previous exposition of Barth's doctrine of Triunity Jenson is following him almost to the letter, yet he believes that Barth, by insisting on oneness and

⁴²⁴ *STI*, 119.

⁴²⁵ *TI*, 108. For his argument regarding the meaning of identity in modern usage see *TI*, 108-11.

⁴²⁶ *STI*, 120.

⁴²⁷ *TI*, 125-26.

substantial priority *in order to preserve God's freedom* is reverting to the failure of Western trinitarianism. According to Jenson, Barth's initial insights concerning Trinity and revelation must be carried through and this is accomplished by designating the divine identities with the temporal moments of past, present, and future. The *ousia* is the relations—the relation of Father, Son, and Spirit in past, present, and future, and it is exactly that temporal happening that *is* God's *ousia*. Because of his shortcoming in this regard Jenson believes Barth has no conceptual scheme both for transcendence and God's being as what happens in Jesus. In Jenson's estimation the result is, despite his best efforts, an atemporal eternity.⁴²⁸

By examining Barth's trinitarian theology this chapter set out to establish the overlap between Barth and Jenson and, consequently, for time and eternity. Additionally, a second aim was to endorse the trinitarian approach to the nature of time and eternity which both adhere to. I believe that in doing so I have highlighted the need for the contemporary discussion to be infiltrated with a more robust treatment of the doctrine of God if the question of time and eternity will be given due course. Furthermore, the chapter has demonstrated that there are gaps in Barth's trinitarian theology that raise questions concerning God's relation to time, and Jenson has brought those to the fore. Whether he properly overcomes the problems is the subject of chapter six, but before that can be evaluated, I must give Barth a chance to outline the content of this doctrine of time and eternity. It is to this that I now turn.

⁴²⁸ *GAG*, 154.

CHAPTER FIVE
KARL BARTH ON TIME AND ETERNITY:
TRINITY, JESUS CHRIST, AND HUMANITY

Colin Gunton has noted the modern tendency to make time absolute and exhibit a reticence to speak of eternity. “If a thing cannot be reduced to temporal relationships, we doubt whether it can exist at all, or, if it does, whether it can be spoken of.”⁴²⁹ Though humanity is interwoven with earthly time *as we know it* (recalling Barth’s challenge regarding exactly what it is we know about time) does it follow that this earthly time absolutely encompasses all existence, both inside and outside this universe? Or put a different way, there is certain resilience on the part of humanity to insist upon anthropological or temporal primacy. Barth presses in the opposite direction, demanding that because of the primacy of God’s self revelation we *can* and *must* speak of eternity, and, further, eternity is prior to our temporality. This is certainly counterintuitive for most contemporary thinkers and, for that matter, for teaching that has found its way into the Christian tradition. Divine atemporality, as I have explicitly and implicitly noted in this thesis, springs from a pattern of thought that begins outside of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, then maneuvers its way into back into that teaching. The same is true for the opposite tendency, namely, that God is wholly temporal in terms of time that has limitations, as is the case in some Christian theologians of our day. Both approaches ultimately depend upon a non-theological or non-revelational foundation, but rather rest on some sort of empirical observation of our world. Barth and Jenson resist this pressure and insist that any conception regarding our time, humanity, and the time of Father, Son, and Spirit must depend upon God’s own revelation. That is, time and eternity are *theological* problems. However, the unique place that Barth and Jenson hold is that they do not fall for either extreme—that of divine atemporality or divine temporality in a sense where God is limited by time. For Barth, eternity is inextricably temporal; yet, it is eternity and temporality of an unexpected sort.

I begin this chapter with Barth’s understanding of the divine eternity, which is the most immediate and explicit consequence of the Christological grounding of revelation discussed in the previous chapter. Proper understanding of the divine eternity (God’s time) is only possible for Barth through an examination of the time of Jesus Christ; thus, the second section will discuss his treatment of time and eternity in light of incarnation and, specifically,

⁴²⁹ Colin Gunton, “Time, Eternity and the Doctrine of the Incarnation,” *Dialog* 21 (1982), 263-68.

resurrection. The third section, logically following on from the previous two, is Barth's conception of "man's" time, also established by revelation time (the time of Jesus Christ).

The Divine Eternity

Barth begins his exposition of the divine eternity with the standard assertion of Christian theology that God is eternal. Yet, as Leftow reminds us, today "eternal" has come to signify a variety of conceptions, many of which seem incompatible.⁴³⁰ Barth weighs in with his understanding of eternal as God having "pure duration" (*reine Dauer*), i.e. beginning, middle and end are undivided but exist in simultaneity (*Gleichzeitigkeit*). "God is simultaneous... without separation, distance or contradiction."⁴³¹ Eternity and time, therefore, are not correlates since the duration in eternity (NB the use of the temporal term "duration") is unified not divided, as in our temporality. Thus, we might say that eternity is duration in a similar way to our time in that it has duration, movement, and succession, yet without the separation of past, present, and future.

Immediately one recognizes trinitarian echoes in Barth's structure of eternity. It might be possible to associate Barth's idea of "pure duration" with God's *ousia*, "beginning, middle and end" with God's *hypostases*, and "simultaneity" with *perichoresis*. There is a unified, undivided being that exists in three distinct moments. Hunsinger recognizes this trinitarian melody in Barth but attempts to create a stricter parallelism than is perhaps present in Barth's work.⁴³² While Hunsinger recognizes the potential for misunderstanding if the comparison is pushed too far, he nonetheless wants to give greater weight to Barth's doctrine of eternity as a logical and necessary result of his trinitarianism than even Barth does. I find it intriguing that from the start, though there exists these trinitarian overtones, Barth *does not* explicitly state the comparison that Hunsinger makes, until the very end of his exposition. Even at that point, however, Barth's allusion to Trinity is only meant to demonstrate what he had been arguing in the preceding twenty pages, viz., that we should not overemphasize pre-, supra-, or post-temporality to the exclusion of the others. They exist in a perichoretic unity. Barth specifically *avoids* a direct association of the divine eternity with *ousia* and *hypostases* in the discussion of divine eternity in II.1—the section under scrutiny by Hunsinger.

⁴³⁰ Brian Leftow, "Response to *Mysterium Trinitatis*: Barth's Conception of Eternity," *For the Sake of the World: Karl Barth and the Future of Ecclesial Theology*, George Hunsinger, ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 191.

⁴³¹ *CD* II.1, 608.

⁴³² Hunsinger, "*Mysterium Trinitatis*," 177.

Furthermore, the allusion to Trinity is a formal one that is more like a comparison as opposed to a direct relation between the persons of the Trinity and the temporal moments, which Hunsinger is correct to point out. Thus, the point here is that while it is instructive to consider Barth's doctrine of eternity within its trinitarian background, it is not as if you could place it like a template, as it were, on top of Trinity and have a carbon copy.

If we were to press in this direction, Barth's doctrine of eternity (as no doubt he realized) could very well lend itself to identifying the *hypostases* with the temporal moments of the created order, the identification that Jenson explicitly carries out. Given the structure of pure duration, beginning-middle-end, and simultaneity, it would appear natural to equate each with being, persons, and life, but Barth hedges and applies each to God himself: "Pre-temporality, supra-temporality and post-temporality are equally God's eternity and therefore the living God Himself."⁴³³ Here again arises the difficulty of relating God to time in that Barth struggles to find a way of articulating God's transcendence over time, whilst being aware that a trinitarian theology requires his interaction with that time. No doubt Barth recognized that if he made the simple move of merging the *hypostases* with the temporal moments of the created order, then perichoresis would be placed in jeopardy, if not rendered impossible. Interestingly, this is part of Jenson's solution to Barth's doctrine. It appears to me that Barth is perfectly aware of the path Jenson has chosen, yet instead he emphasizes the uniqueness of God's eternity as the ground of our time. In other words, rather than attempting to force too close a fit between God's eternity and our time, he is content to leave a measure of mystery to the exact nature of both. Jenson, on the other hand, is pushing for higher proximity, and as a result encounters theological dilemmas that Barth sought to avoid.

A further qualification of Barth's initial definition: eternity is not "an infinite extension of time both backwards and forwards." If this were the case, according to Barth, then the eternal being would still be in a time that is separated by past, present and future. Thus, everlasting is not a synonym for eternal,⁴³⁴ and Barth concludes that "time can have nothing to do with God."⁴³⁵

At face value this appears to be nothing short of Barth's support of atemporality; however, this is the only sense in which eternity can mean non-temporality, viz. in the sense that God is not hindered by the separation of past, present, and future. God's eternity, he has

⁴³³ *CD* II.1, 638.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 608-09. Barth takes the biblical passages that affirm God's everlastingness such as Psalm 90:2 to denote "from duration to duration," i.e. pure duration. It is unclear how he reaches this conclusion or what kind of compelling evidence he might offer for it.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 608.

already affirmed “is a quality of His freedom.”⁴³⁶ Therefore, God is free to be constant, according to Barth, because time does not have power over him. This is the first clear indication that Barth is associating change and flux with time, and that this change and flux is unreliable. “Eternity has and is the duration which is lacking to time. It has and is simultaneity.”⁴³⁷ For God to be a reliable being not subject to that sort of change he must be free from the constraints of time; therefore, for Barth, “timelessness” when applied to God can only signify God’s freedom from the *discontinuities* of time, rather than an absolute freedom from time.

Moreover, eternity is unique to God and, even though as creatures we may taste of it, this eternity is exclusive to God’s being. In terms of God’s freedom, time is the “formal principle of His free activity outwards. Eternity is the principle of His freedom inwards.”⁴³⁸ That is to say, Barth is rejecting the notion that *being* is the dominant divine concept and instead replaces that with the concept of eternity. “Eternity is the source of the deity of God in so far as this consists in His freedom, independence and lordship.”⁴³⁹ The Bible, Barth believes, places the emphasis on that which endures and even duration itself as that which can be identified as divine. “God Himself is eternal, and for that reason and in that way He is.” Eternity encompasses being, not the reverse.⁴⁴⁰ Hence, Barth seems to be laying some foundations in this section for eternity to be understood trinitarianly, for to say “eternity” is to say “God.” Admittedly, Barth’s language lends itself toward misunderstanding, but if we bear in mind his overall method in this section on God’s perfections, then we might avoid such confusion. God does not possess a thing called, “love,” “constancy,” or “eternity.” God *is* each of those. I believe this is all Barth is trying to say here: to be eternal is to be God, and there is not a thing or god behind Trinity determining its being. Eternity *is* God’s being.

Yet, in spite of Barth’s unambiguous assertion of God’s eternity as “having nothing to do with time” it is not, by consequence, a negation of time for the following reasons: 1) it

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 609.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 610.

⁴⁴⁰ This might appear to lend credence to Roberts’ claim that time becomes the controlling analogy in Barth’s theology since he rejects the *analogia entis*, yet I do not believe that this is the case. Barth’s idea of eternity is still controlled by Trinity and not some platonic (or otherwise) view of time, though, clearly, he does not rid himself entirely of this tendency toward Platonism that Jenson describes in *GAG*, 14-15. Our time is still the image of eternity, though now understood in *CD* in a profoundly Christological manner. Furthermore, eternity that is timeless is the only possible divine model, though it is “timeless” in a different sense than Greek thought intended. See also Leftow, “Response,” 195. The fine print section on 614 demonstrates the fact that Roberts is wrong to think of time as the analogy that replaces an *analogia entis* in Barth. Barth explicitly denies that our time and God’s time can be related in the way that Roman Catholic theology uses being. Time is a result of God’s grace and cannot be “a partner for God’s eternity.” Ibid., 614.

possesses, but is not possessed by time. God's eternity is true duration because it holds all three moments of time—beginning, succession and end—in its total possession. 2) It grounds, make possible, controls, and conditions our time's moments—beginning, succession, and end. In this connection Barth favorably quotes Boethius' definition and rejects Augustine's and Anselm's as unnecessarily negative.⁴⁴¹ The total, simultaneous possession of life is, again, the eternity of God, not the eternity of being itself, and because we cannot directly compare his "now" with our time as in the *analogia entis*, consequently his totality and undividedness is not the flip side of the coin to our non-simultaneity—it is an eternity unique to God, known only by revelation and not through some natural possibility of timelessness.⁴⁴² That is, eternity is not forced to mean timelessness in the sense of atemporality—absolute disconnectedness with time. If we posit our time, then try to think of eternity, then we might perceive eternity as the negation of time; yet Barth does not follow this method and believes that eternity is temporal, even though the moments of time are simultaneous and total in God's life. Indeed, according to Barth, if eternity denoted "abstract non-temporality" it would be too close to time in that it would "be only an image of time in the mirror of our reflection."⁴⁴³ Because it is not non-temporality proves it is God's eternity and not an anthropological construct.

Barth's consistency regarding this positive conception of God's relation to the world is also evident in his treatment of God's omnipresence. Everything external to God has presence only because of God's presence with it. God is sovereignly present to everything else, which is the ground of the creature's presence, or, *space*.⁴⁴⁴ In God's sovereign omnipresence he is both near and distant at the same time. That is, he is Creator and independent of the creation. This corresponds to Barth's assertion that God in his eternity is both temporal and timeless; he is immanent and economic; he is Creator and Creature.⁴⁴⁵ God's omnipresence, as far as a formal definition is concerned, is his distinction from everything else and his possession of his own place. He is present to himself and to everything else, though "presence does not

⁴⁴¹ *CD* II.1, 610. Though, interestingly, this is the only aspect to Augustine's concept of time that Barth criticizes here. In fact, later on page 614 he gratefully acknowledges the negativity of Augustine's view in that it cuts off the possibility of time being used as eternity's co-equal. Aside from emphasizing the positive aspect of God's relation to time Barth largely does not appear to be at odds with Augustine.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 611.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 612.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 461.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 462.

mean identity, but togetherness at a distance.”⁴⁴⁶ Togetherness includes the concept of distance, unlike “identity.”

Therefore, according to Barth, God cannot be described as non-spatial, if we want the Christian concept of God to stand, for non-spatial excludes distance, which then implies “identical to.” If God is identical to everything else, then we have pantheism, not the Christian God. God has his own place, which is space, though not a space that is absolute and limits him.⁴⁴⁷

God possesses His space. He is in Himself as in a space. He creates space. He is and does this so that, in virtue of His own spatiality, He can be Himself even in this created space without this limiting Him or causing Him to have something outside Himself, a place apart from Himself, a space which is not His space too in virtue of His spatiality, the space of His divine presence. Or, to express it more positively, God possesses space in Himself and in all other spaces. He does this as the being who is completely present in the spatiality that belongs to Him. There is no place where He is not present in His essence, which includes, of course, His knowledge and power. There is no place where He is less present than in all others. On the contrary, He is everywhere completely and undividedly the One He always is, even if in virtue of the freedom of His love he is this in continually differing and special ways.⁴⁴⁸

God’s omnipresence to everything external to itself is grounded in his omnipresence to himself. Omnipresence is not something that is only because the universe exists, but rather God is omnipresent, proximate and distant, in his triunity. In this way omnipresence is a perfection of divine freedom—he is present to another because he is free to be present to himself. The fact that he is free to be omnipresent to himself and possess his own space is the ground for his presence to all spatial things outside himself. Therefore, just as it is with time God possesses space, which makes possible his positive relation to our space.

Despite Barth’s consistency here he inexplicably argues against the idea that omnipresence and eternity should be treated as parallels as in the “older theology” on two counts: First, he believes that God’s omnipresence is a determination of his love, since he is present to himself and to all external to himself. However, according to Barth, the same cannot be said of his eternity. Though it is not disconnected from his love, but is unified with it, it is more properly understood as a determination of his freedom. “God’s love requires and possesses eternity both inwards and outwards for the sake of its divinity, its freedom. Correspondingly, it requires, creates and therefore possesses in its outward relations what we

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 468.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 470.

call time. Time is the form of creation in virtue of which it is definitely fitted to be a theatre for the acts of divine freedom.” Time is required, according to Barth, in order for God to act as the eternal, free, sovereign one. If creation was eternal, then he would be bound to creation’s eternity. “Thus God’s eternity is bound up both with His love and also with time as a determination of creation in the freedom in which both inwards and outwards He is always Himself, one and the same.”⁴⁴⁹ Yet, space is the requirement that God may be omnipresent to the creation, just as he is in himself. Barth acknowledges a similarity in the concepts, but maintains that we have overstepped boundaries when we make them parallels. The second reason he rejects this parallelism is because of their older grouping as the negatively connoted non-spatiality and timelessness.

Yet, as Colwell points out Barth’s disjunction between eternity and omnipresence is arbitrary and unnecessary. The desire to adhere to the actuality of God’s self-revelation, according to Barth, does not necessarily rule out the parallel nature of omnipresence and eternity. Further, Colwell thinks that to perceive eternity as a result of God’s freedom and omnipresence of his love “tends towards a conception of eternity other than in the context of His actual relatedness to man in Jesus Christ.”⁴⁵⁰ Everything in Barth’s method and material content points to a parallel, thus he may draw this unnecessary distinction for reasons of systematic precision. Additionally, I find puzzling the statement that time is necessary for God to act as eternal so that he is not bound to an eternal creation. If Barth means that our time is the matrix of our existence as God’s time (different as it is) is the matrix of his, and he is free, yet freely enters into ours because of his capacity for our time, then there is no objection. However, if he means that time is what constitutes the infinite qualitative difference between God and humanity, so that to be eternal = atemporal and to be temporal = not eternal, then not only would I object to this construal, but I would also question Barth’s own consistency. Later, as I will outline below, Barth is clear in affirming divine temporality, thus time cannot be the dividing point between the two realms. An additional problem for Barth is how this arrangement is manifested in the eschaton. At the end of the age when our time is overcome and we take up that eternal life prefigured in Jesus Christ, if our time is the distinction between the eternal God and the temporal world, then what happens to our existence? Are we simply assimilated into the Godhead and lose our identity, or do we go on maintaining our existence in the same kind of time as Jesus Christ? Barth, as we will discover, certainly wants to affirm the latter, but this distinction between

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 464-65

⁴⁵⁰ Colwell, 33.

omnipresence and eternity in regard to God's love and freedom is an example of Barth's *tendency* toward divine atemporality and the eternalizing of creation, which Jenson counters.

Up to this point we have hinted at Barth's relation to the tradition vis-à-vis divine temporality and it is interesting to note that Barth himself briefly reflects on it, as well. The question to be asked is whether this concept of eternity has any historical precedence. Barth quotes a brief section from Aquinas, then concludes that his position "clearly denotes a positive relation to time which is the special possession of eternity." How, then, does Barth believe he is improving on Aquinas? He goes on: "That it is this must be brought into greater prominence than in the older theology, without canceling or blurring the distinction between the two, or imposing upon eternity the limitations of time."⁴⁵¹ Thus, in Aquinas there is the impetus to articulate God's positive relation to time whilst retaining sovereignty over the temporal "instability" of our time—precisely Barth's *telos*, yet from the standpoint of the priority of revelation. That is, God, not our negation of time, dictates what eternity is. What, then, is the difference in saying God possesses his life in a simultaneous, total "now" and God is timeless? Well, I contend that there is little difference if by "timeless" you suggest: not subject to "the fleeting nature of the present, the separation between before and after."⁴⁵²

Yet if the definition is abruptly cut off at this juncture and "Barth agrees with Boethius"⁴⁵³ is allowed to stand on its own, confusion would be the result, not to mention that it would surely signify an inconsistency in Barth's methodology. God's eternity is temporal in that it possesses beginning, succession, and end in a simultaneous now, but this is merely Barth's first step (though it is in reality the conclusion of his actualism). He has begun with God's eternity to demonstrate how it is that God has capacity for what we know to be the case in revelation. That is, Barth's adherence to actualism forces him back to the question of the divine eternity and the answer is: Jesus Christ is God and man, temporal and eternal, *because* God is eternal and temporal in the manner described above. "God has time because and as He has eternity;" therefore, God has time *for us*. And the time he has for us is the time of Jesus Christ. "He Himself is time for us. For His revelation as Jesus Christ is really God Himself." Thus, Barth's definition of God's eternity in the Boethian sense serves the purpose

⁴⁵¹ CD II.1, 613. Nevertheless, it is difficult to escape Aquinas' insistence upon atemporality, regardless of any theological admission that God involves himself in our world. Thus, on the one hand, he is everything that we are not, and, on the other, he enters into the created order. Beyond this paradox Aquinas does not take us.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Indeed, Barth does not uncritically assimilate Boethius, but rather transforms his basic idea into a theological construct. Leftow notes that Boethius simply took this definition over from pagan Neoplatonist philosophers. He did nothing to integrate it with his Christian theology. It occurs, in fact, only in his *Consolation of Philosophy*, "a work whose Christian ties are so minimal that some have doubted that Boethius wrote it." Leftow, "Response," 194.

of demonstrating how it is that God can *take up* time in Jesus Christ.⁴⁵⁴ If Barth does not ascribe time in some fashion to God’s eternity, then there is no way to speak of Jesus Christ as human, and that would impinge upon Christology in a fatal fashion. “As the eternal One it is he who surrounds our time and rules it with all that it contains. How can He be and do all this if as the eternal One He does not Himself have His own time, superior to ours, undisturbed by the fleetingness and separations of our time, simultaneous with all our times, but in this way and for this reason absolutely real time?”⁴⁵⁵ If God is not temporal, then it is counterintuitive to say that he is present to our time and space, ruling and controlling it. And again: “...the fact that God has and is Himself time, and the extent to which this is so, is necessarily made clear to us in His essence as the triune God. This is His time, the absolutely real time, the form of the divine being in its triunity...” To be sure, however, Barth is not assigning our time to the *hypostases*, but only real time—God’s time—to each. There is an order, movement, and succession in God, but not one that loses or is constrained as in our time.⁴⁵⁶

Finally, then, the core assertion: Barth gathers his concept of time from the incarnation. “The fulfillment of (and within) the positive relation of God to the world established by the creation is the fact that God as the Creator and Lord of the world Himself becomes a creature, man, in His Word and His Son.”⁴⁵⁷ It is the theological reality of God’s self-revelation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ that educes Barth’s view of eternity as possessing time. Hence, God “raises time to a form of His own eternal being.” This is established in the very basic assertion that Jesus’ epiphany had a “not yet” and a “no more.”⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁴ CD II.1, 612.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 613.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 615-16.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 616.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 617-19. Hunsinger, “Mysterium Trinitatis,” 168, believes that Barth’s use of the word “time” encompasses at three classifications: 1) eternity in some sense is timeless, 2) eternity is God’s unique, real time, and 3) God’s eternity is the possibility of our time and time’s redemption. When Barth asserts here that God’s eternal being takes up time because of the before and after in the life of Jesus surely the only kind of time Barth can intend is created time (*die geschaffene Zeit*)—our time. However, according to Barth, it does not follow that created time can be co-equal or co-existent with God; therefore, God’s eternity is a *readiness (Bereitschaft)* for time, but can be nothing more because he is not obligated to take created time up into his being. If there is that obligation, then his eternity would necessarily be temporal, i.e. created time. In other words, created time is an act of God’s grace that is in no way an obligation. Thus, Barth rejects Ritschl’s view of eternity since it draws too close a connection between God’s eternity and his will in creation. Barth wants to insist that God is eternal in himself apart from his will regarding creation. Again, this is congruent with Barth’s distinction between immanent and economic Trinity. How is it, then, that God takes up our time into his being, yet remains timeless in the sense that Barth has already stated? Hopefully, the next section will sufficiently address that question.

The foregoing is a direct result of Barth's priority on actualism. What is actual in God is possible *for* God. Jesus Christ is God, thus revelation demands we acknowledge divine temporality, whilst at the same time acknowledging his lordship over time. Furthermore, Barth declares that if time is excluded from God's eternity, then assurance of faith in God is undermined, for the gospel is inextricably bound to time. This is the heart of the matter.

Barth insists that the Bible places time and eternity in a positive relationship, despite "the fact that this concept distinguishes God from the world and therefore also from time."⁴⁵⁹ The positive relationship of time and eternity—the union of them—is found, according to Barth, in eternity's temporality as pre-, supra-, and post-temporality. This threefold understanding of eternity's temporality illustrates exactly how God absolutely conditions time in his freedom. "He precedes its beginning, He accompanies its duration, and He exists after its end."⁴⁶⁰ He is before, above and after time, and Barth assigns this formula with great importance because "a great deal depends on this truth and on the legitimacy of these concepts."⁴⁶¹ Barth goes on to declare that the Christian gospel is nullified and useless if God does not possess the divine past, present and future, for the gospel "message depends on the fact that God was and is and is to be." That is, "the truth of God's Word depends on their truth, and they themselves are based on and preserved by the truth of God's Word."⁴⁶² I will take each in turn.

Pre-temporality (*Vorzeitlichkeit*) is the simple, yet profound assertion that God's existence precedes ours. "Always and everywhere and in every way God exists as the eternal One in the sense of this pre-temporality."⁴⁶³ Again, Barth's emphasis is the grace of God in creating and reconciling the world, and this was pre-temporal activity. Only as God pre-exists the world can he be understood as the One who freely loves and relates himself to humanity. Further, all three persons are active in this pre-temporality: "And in this pure divine time...there occurred the readiness of the Son to do the will of the eternal Father, and there ruled the peace of the eternal Spirit..."⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 619.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 620.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 621.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 622.

Additionally, Barth articulates a predestination whose *pre-* is not merely a logical one, but a chronological one.⁴⁶⁵ That is, predestination as God’s determination to reconcile the world to himself in Jesus is something that occurs in the divine pre-temporality. Our time is “foreseen and determined” in Jesus, by the will and gracious decision in Jesus Christ.⁴⁶⁶ Barth reveals his supralapsarianism and his affinity for the Reformers’ emphasis on God’s pre-creation decree to act in a particular way. Yet, he perceives that the Reformers placed undue weight upon pre-temporality, particularly in their doctrines of election and providence.⁴⁶⁷ Barth praises this perspective because of its emphasis on the gracious decision of God to save apart from any merit of our own. Still, according to Barth, the unwelcome result was that human life in our time was “a kind of appendix, though one that was expressed with force.”⁴⁶⁸ He claims that more emphasis on God’s supra- and post-temporalities is in order to balance this overemphasis.

Supra-temporality (*Überzeitlichkeit*) “consists in the fact that eternity does not will to be without time, but causes itself to be accompanied by time.”⁴⁶⁹ God’s knowledge of history and our present is determined and controlled by his supra-temporality. As noted above in the brief discussion of God’s assuming time in Jesus Christ Barth insists that even though God is timeless in a sense, he can and does know what occurs in time, and this is due to the fact that our time is not absolute.⁴⁷⁰ He can, according to Barth know what is temporal because he

⁴⁶⁵ Note Robert Jenson’s divergence here: The eternal decision of predestination is not a past one, but is one of past, present and future because the divine identity is real in each of those. Jenson rejects the idea of predestination as a decision before the temporal events of someone’s life, and here is the reason: “The eternal ‘pre’ of Christ’s existence, which is identical with the ‘pre’ of predestination, occurs also within time, as the Resurrection and as the contingency and divine agency of Israel’s and the church’s proclamation and prayer, visible and audible.” Jenson believes that Barth could not affirm the idea that predestination is what happens when people encounter the gospel—God’s eternal decision really happening in a temporal perspective—because of “his version of the fatal definition of time and eternity by mutual exclusion...” See his *ST II*, 177. Jenson’s perception is that Barth’s temporal structure is such that election is a pre-temporal activity, which, though the decision itself may not be governed by our temporal discontinuity, it nevertheless temporally precedes our time. Divine pre-temporality is still *distinct* from supra- and post-temporality. Thus, Jenson’s complaint that Barth places too great a weight on pre-temporality by locating election exclusively there finds some reasonable ground, and it may be the same sort of problem that Barth accuses the Reformers of having; yet, as I will argue in chapter six, this need not be the case. Moltmann has also charged (in a different way than Jenson) that Barth’s election demands a temporal “before” and “after,” only he intends that temporal structure (discontinuity) to be applied to the divine eternity. Colwell (228) notes that in this Moltmann “has failed to grasp Barth’s conception of God’s eternity as pure simultaneity...” It is important to understand that Barth and Jenson do not ascribe “our time” to God’s eternity.

⁴⁶⁶ *CD II.1*, 622.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 631-32.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 632.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 623.

⁴⁷⁰ Thus, to put it in terms of the contemporary discussion, immediate divine awareness of our temporal now does not necessarily eliminate the possibility of God existing above that time. On this see, Edward R. Wierenga, “Timelessness out of Mind: On the Alleged Incoherence of Divine Timelessness,” *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*, 153-64; though they share a similar conclusion Wierenga seems more to have a divine atemporal eternity in mind instead of Barth’s version. On the effect of the Special Theory of Relativity to

possesses supra-temporality—not atemporality, but an eternal “accompanying” of our present.

God’s eternity is so to speak the companion of time, or rather it is itself accompanied by time in such a way that in this occurrence time acquires its hidden centre, and therefore both backwards and forwards its significance, its content, its source and its goal, but also continually its significant present.... This means that in and with this present, eternity creates in time real past and real future, distinguishes between them, and is itself the bridge and way from the one to the other. Jesus Christ is this way.⁴⁷¹

Barth goes on to explicate how this is the case. Jesus differentiates between all that is alien to God and all that is truly God, including time and eternity. And the distinction is not one that sets one group on one side and one on the other. They do not exist side by side in parallel worlds, but, as Torrance puts it, the existence “is the place where the vertical and horizontal dimensionalities intersect.”⁴⁷² Furthermore, in doing this work Jesus is pressing one of these groups (all that is not God) into the past and welcoming all things that are new. It is “the tipping of the scales to the detriment of the first and the advantage of the second.”⁴⁷³

The import of time for this idea is that Jesus “makes the one really past and the other no less really future, constituting time itself the way from this past to this future.”⁴⁷⁴ Thus, time carries with it a soteriological necessity. In order for God to justify the ungodly, then there must be a real, genuine movement to the past and a continual arrival of the future. If God is not temporal, then how could we understand him to participate in this “making of all things new”?

Two important supporting ideas: first, as Jenson notes, it is important to understand Barth’s doctrine of God’s decision as it relates to Jesus Christ and the time God takes for us. God’s decision in predestination is to be God in Jesus Christ and to take time for all those in Christ. Therefore, *our time is grounded in the life of Jesus*, that is, time is what it is because of Jesus Christ.⁴⁷⁵ This is a snapshot of a central disagreement between Barth and Jenson to be examined in the next chapter: how is it that our time is like/unlike the time of Jesus Christ? God’s eternity *is* what God decides to be in Jesus Christ, but *our time* is *also* what God decides to be in Jesus Christ. Despite this alleged fatal overlap by Barth of God’s time and

the concept of absolute time see, William Lane Craig, “The Elimination of Absolute Time by the Special Theory of Relativity,” *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*, 129-52.

⁴⁷¹ CD II.1, 626. This is not unlike Garrett DeWeese’s version of omnitemporality discussed in chapter three.

⁴⁷² Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 75.

⁴⁷³ CD II.1, 626.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 627.

⁴⁷⁵ GAG, 129-31.

our time, Jenson does happily endorse Barth's liberation of the doctrine of God from the "straightjacket" of an immobile timelessness, or atemporality, who cannot overcome the past with the future.⁴⁷⁶

Second, this soteriological movement of overcoming the past with the future is the divine movement of Trinity. It is God as *event*. God is the happening of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and his determination to be God in Jesus Christ is equal to his determination to elect in time and overcome the "No" in favor of the "Yes." "The consequence is that the contemporaneity of our being in both spheres is always to be understood as non-contemporaneity, as the overcoming and dissolution of the past by the future, not as an equilibrium or see-saw between the right and validity of two realms."⁴⁷⁷ Thus, Barth goes on to say, if we understand Luther's *simul iustus et peccator* as meaning that we equally live in, and consequently act in, both realms, then we have missed the point. "God affirms our righteousness as He negates our sin." And this past and future are not empty and uncertain. Rather, they are filled because "Jesus Christ and His present are the turning from the one to the other."⁴⁷⁸

Therefore, supra-temporality is "the foundation of a real consciousness of time on our part...Everything depends on whether time has a different centre from the constantly disappearing and never coming 'now' of the pagan concept of time. But time really has this centre, and being related to eternity in this centre, it is accompanied and surrounded and secured by eternity."⁴⁷⁹ Hence, for Barth, understanding our time in its past, present and future depends on faith in Jesus Christ as the center point of that time. "True time-consciousness depends on a consciousness of this middle point. It stands or falls by the gift and decision of faith. And faith is faith in Jesus Christ or it is not faith at all."⁴⁸⁰ Yet Barth is not saying, as some would contend, that one cannot even be aware of temporality apart from faith in Christ; the theological has not swallowed up natural reality and made it something of an apparition. Rather, understanding the *function* of past, present, and future is a faith issue. This time-consciousness relates to "the content of time."⁴⁸¹ In sum, supra-temporality is God's eternity breaking into our time as the middle point that pushes all that is not-God and should pass away into the past, and bringing in all that is-God from the future. We live in this turning, this supra-temporality that accompanies our time and makes it have a real past

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 125-26.

⁴⁷⁷ CD II.1, 628.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 629.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

and a real future. Barth's understanding of time here has a distinctly theological nexus. The only explanation for the discontinuity of past and future is a theological one—Jesus Christ as the center of time's turning point. Supra-temporality is eternity accompanying time and making it past, present, and future.

Torrance's conceptual framework complements Barth's exposition of supra-temporality and may further illuminate it. If we think of human existence and our time as the horizontal plane and the time of Jesus Christ, which is the divine eternity, as the vertical plane, the relation of the two finds its place in their intersection—

...the place where human being is opened out to a transcendent ground in God and where the infinite Being of God penetrates into our existence and creates room for Himself without the horizontal dimensions of finite being in space and time. It is penetration of the horizontal by the vertical that gives man his true place, for it relates his place in space and time to its ultimate ontological ground so that it is not submerged in the endless relativities of what is merely horizontal. Without this vertical relation to God man has no authentic place on the earth, no meaning and no purpose, but with this vertical relation to God his place is given meaning and purpose.⁴⁸²

The problem, according to Torrance, is that because there is this intersection of eternity and time where the divine and human relate on the same plane we are tempted to force "the same language" on both. The impossibility of this should be immediately apparent in light of the Christian claims concerning incarnation and resurrection.⁴⁸³ Thus, for both Torrance and Barth, eternity enters time, yet the vertical plane does not rotate and merge into the horizontal so that our time is absolute. The vertical is truly there, and God's decision to be who he is in Jesus is also the decision to save humanity, thus Jesus was truly temporal in the sense that he experienced our time. Yet, the temporal intersection is one where God remains Lord whilst taking time for us. To borrow from Gregory of Nazianzus only that which is assumed can be healed, and in this case time is taken up for us in Jesus Christ, but its discontinuities (precisely parallel to human sinfulness) are overcome and healed—albeit a healing that awaits its consummation in the eschaton.

Taking up again with supra-temporality Barth maintains the perichoretic nature of the temporal moments against the historical overemphasis of each. Reacting against the Reformation's fixation on pre-temporality, according to Barth, was the eighteenth and

⁴⁸² Torrance, *Space, Time*, 75.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 76.

nineteenth centuries' overemphasis on supra-temporality. He contends that Schleiermacher and others posed a much greater threat with this stress than the Reformation fault could ever do. "...[I]t became little more than an exclamation mark which had no positive content, so that it could be placed not only behind the word 'God' but behind any word at all denoting supreme value..."⁴⁸⁴ Therefore, the weight here is laid on man's problems and possibilities.⁴⁸⁵

Yet, according to Barth, if we are to believe in the eternal God, he is not only supra-temporal, but he is also pre- and post-temporal. Post-temporality is God's embrace of time that also includes our future. He is ahead of us in his kingdom and we move toward him, fulfilling his purposes from the past, present and future. The future is not an empty one, but is filled with God's kingdom—more specifically, the person of Christ.⁴⁸⁶ However, some of Barth's own contemporaries, e.g. Blumhardt, Kutter, Ragaz, in his estimation, overemphasized post-temporality, primarily manifested in the combination of "the Christian expectation of the kingdom of God and the Socialist expectation for the future."⁴⁸⁷ Barth himself, heavily influenced by the Blumhardts, acknowledges how his earlier theology was an overemphasis on post-temporality and how as a result he unwittingly was allied with Bultmann and Tillich.

It was necessary and right in the face of the Immanentism of the preceding period to think with new seriousness about God's futurity. But it was neither right nor necessary to do this in such a way that this one matter was put at the head of all Christian teaching, just as the previous epoch had wanted to make what they claimed to be the knowledge of God's presence the chief point of Christian doctrine.⁴⁸⁸

His desired emphasis in *CD* is one of equal weight being placed on all three temporal moments where Trinity is fully and completely active in each.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 633.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 632.

⁴⁸⁶ Roberts accuses Barth of leaving us with an empty future with no hope since revelation is a non-temporal event, becoming "realised eschatology." That is, there is no future "time" because revelation is already "now." However, as McDowell notes, Roberts fails to appreciate the fact that Barth's eschatological Future is Christ's personal presence, not an emptying of time, but rather our reality finds its fulfilment in Christ's eschatological presence. Again, the decisive issue for Roberts is his objection to Barth's methodology—that he is unwilling to accept any theological framing of temporality. See John C. McDowell, *Hope in Barth's Eschatology: Interrogations and Transformations Beyond Tragedy* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 45, 55.

⁴⁸⁷ *CD* II.1, 634.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 636. Since futurity is Jenson's proposed solution to Barth's alleged ambiguities, we will forgo the anticipated discussion on post-temporality until the next chapter when Barth and Jenson engage in more explicit critical dialogue.

Naturally, one might wonder how it is Barth can maintain such a perichoretic unity without sliding into atemporality. In other words, to put equal weight on pre-, supra-, and post-temporality might easily be equal to saying that they are identical. To be sure, the tendency is there, and as Jenson believes, it is more than mere tendency. Therefore, to affirm that Father, Son, and Spirit all act in unity before, during, and after our time without any stronger sort of distinction is, for Jenson, to say “God is atemporal.”

The problem is perceived to be even more acute by highlighting Barth’s use of the temporal moments *in relation to our time*. That is, the pre-, supra-, and post- prefixes primarily signify God’s temporal relations *ad extra*, in spite of the fact that Barth has attempted to identify them as God’s eternity, i.e. God in himself. But how is it that God is pre-, supra-, and post-temporal in himself (Father, Son, and Spirit in unity) *apart* from his relations *ad extra*? Are not the terms even meaningless in Barth without a reference towards God’s relation to all that is not himself? The discussion of each in *CD* II.1 certainly frames the question this way and avoids any talk that God has a “before” and “after” like ours in his divine eternity. The divine readiness for time should be a function of God’s being-for-himself that demonstrates how his own temporality grounds ours. However, God’s temporality is held in simultaneity, thus Barth’s explanation of *how* God is temporal must, after all, center on his relation to the created order, and his answer is that God’s eternity is before our time, with our time, and in front of our time. Yet certainly this is an unintended consequence, for the aim of the section on the divine perfections is to identify who God is in himself, apart from any external necessity.

God lives His perfect life in the abundance of many individual and distinct perfections. Each of these is perfect in itself and in combination with all the others. For whether it is a form of love in which God is free, or a form of freedom in which God loves, it is nothing else but God Himself, His one, simple distinctive being.⁴⁸⁹

Thus, negatively, Barth does not explain how God’s eternity can be temporal in a sense that relates to the temporal, earthly process of the created order. Positively, Barth’s scheme establishes that God’s eternity intersects with our time (thus ascribing temporality to God), yet he is not overcome by the limitations of our time, but rather overcomes them by enveloping our time (before, with, and in front of our time).

We are back to the question of divine transcendence. Barth is grappling with a way to say that God is who he is in himself apart from the created order, but he is also fully and

⁴⁸⁹ *CD* II.1, 322.

completely who he is in his revelation in Jesus Christ. There is no god behind God. Accordingly, here Barth is expressing that God must be temporal because of what we know in revelation, but that temporality is of a radical type unique to God in himself. Nevertheless, Barth cannot even describe that radical temporality without specific reference to the created order. How, then, does Barth even identify this phenomenon as “time”? At the end of the day *he has not described divine temporality in himself*, but rather has attempted a description of *how God in his eternity relates to our time*.⁴⁹⁰ This is a common theme running throughout the debate on time and eternity, and can be observed in the thinkers discussed in this thesis. It appears that an account of what God *does* within time or *that* he is temporal is more possible than an actual description of the nature of his time. But this should not trouble us too badly, for a full and universally accepted description of our own time is still wanting; thus, how could we expect to reach a similar explanation for God? Additionally, the reality of God’s life with us and our own reality is not undermined by saying “God is temporal, though we do not know exactly how to describe his time.” *That* he is and that he is with us is the crucial matter, even though this fact does not hinder us from theologizing and getting as close to the truth as is possible.

The Time of Jesus Christ

Thus far we have established Barth’s foundational concept that any definition of time must flow from an actualistic understanding of revelation, of which we should only speak Christologically.⁴⁹¹ But to speak Christologically means to speak about history. Barth explains:

The fact that the Word became flesh undoubtedly means that, without ceasing to be eternity, in its very power as eternity, eternity became time. Yes, it became time. What happens in Jesus Christ is not simply that God gives us time, our created time, as the form of our own existence and world, as is the case in creation and in the whole ruling of the world by God as its Lord. In Jesus Christ it comes about that God takes time to Himself, that He Himself, the eternal One, becomes temporal, that He is present for us in the form of our own existence and our own world, not simply

⁴⁹⁰ *GAG*, 153: “But what can possibly be the content of saying that God in eternity is whatever is the prototype of his life in time? Either this sentence is perfectly empty; or the very form of the statement makes some sort of comparison between God’s own characteristics and his temporal characteristics. Such a comparison can only be between timelessness and time. Either the introduction of analogy adds nothing at all to the fundamental claim that God could have been God otherwise than as God in and for *our* time, or what it indicates as the condition of this freedom must be a mode of being other than temporality, radical or otherwise.”

⁴⁹¹ *CD* II.1., 616.

embracing our time and ruling it, but submitting Himself to it, and permitting created time to become and be the form of His eternity.⁴⁹²

But what is it about Jesus' life that determines our understanding of time and eternity?

According to Barth the time of Jesus' life between incarnation and death was temporal and, in this sense, just the same as any other historical human being. But God reveals in Jesus another time, a "third time,"⁴⁹³ or a "further history." In a general sense this "third," different time is revelation time, or, "God's time for us." "God's revelation is the event of Jesus Christ. We do not understand it as God's revelation, if we do not state unreservedly that it took place in 'our' time. But, conversely, if we understand it as God's revelation, we have to say that this event had its own time..."⁴⁹⁴ For Barth, revelation time is real time (*wirkliche Zeit*)⁴⁹⁵ because it is God's own time—the one that overcomes the questions and difficulties of our time because it is time without the contamination of the Fall. God reveals himself in Jesus without ceasing to be what he is in himself, and without succumbing to the effects of fallen time. To be clear, then, revelation time for Barth is the real time of Jesus Christ, yet fully present in our created time. The eternal Logos meets time in the person of Jesus. Barth notes this connection and draws the inevitable conclusion that time and eternity are not antithetical since the true God has taken up that time into his being. "So the time God has for us, as distinguished from our time that comes into being and passes away, is to be regarded as eternal time."⁴⁹⁶ However, to be eternal does not equal atemporality. By virtue of the incarnation it is right to say that the Word become time. His is the life of a man, thus is a life within created time.

It is also a section of what we call 'historical time'...Revelation...is an eternal, but not therefore a timeless reality. It is also a temporal reality. So it is not a sort of ideal, yet in itself timeless content of all or some times. It does not remain transcendent over time, it does not merely meet it at a point, but it enters time; nay, it assumes time; nay, it creates time for itself.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹² Ibid. Unfortunately, Barth often confuses the reader with his inconsistent usage of terminology. At times he uses "created time" as a synonym for "history" or "our time." At other times, "created time" specifically refers to time in pre-Fall creation. In this quotation, he uses *unsere Zeit* and *geschaffene Zeit* as synonyms.

⁴⁹³ "Third" after created time and fallen time.

⁴⁹⁴ *CD* I.2., 49.

⁴⁹⁵ Barth uses *wirkliche Zeit* in I.2 and II.1 to describe God's eternity and revelation. Thus, for Barth, "eternity," "revelation," and "real time" denote identical realities.

⁴⁹⁶ *CD* I.2., 50.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid. Of course, if Revelation is God's *wirkliche Zeit* as noted above, then in some sense it is timeless, as Barth affirms in II.1, 608. Revelation, then, is simultaneously timeless (or, better, eternal) and temporal in Jesus Christ.

As Barth himself acknowledges there is a shift from *Romans II* in that in *CD* he insists that revelation is a temporal, historical reality—the Christ event is within our time, but he is revelation time, which is this third time. Barth’s view of revelation time in Jesus Christ is joined to his view of His humanity. That is, just because Jesus was real human flesh it does not follow that he took on Adam’s propensity to sin. He was fully human and sinless. Likewise, the Word became time and God takes up time for us, but it does not follow that it is exactly like our time. It “became a different, a new time.”⁴⁹⁸

Revelation time is real, fulfilled time because it is the time of the Lord of time. Revelation time is superior to our time and we must say it is the time of Jesus Christ because revelation time gives us the genuine present that we cannot explain or identify within our time. Recall Augustine and how the present is virtually non-existent because of its flight into the past or anticipation in the future—both of which only exist in memory and expectation, i.e. the soul. The genuine present is real because the Word of God is real and “is never ‘not yet’ or ‘no longer.’ It is not exposed to any becoming or, therefore, to any passing away, or therefore, to any change.”⁴⁹⁹ Hence, Jesus’ time is taken “up into His own eternity as now His own time, and gives it part in the existence of God which is alone real, self-moved, self-dependent, self-sufficient.”⁵⁰⁰ Jesus perfects our time and demonstrates the genuinely real time that is taken up into the being of God. His present is not like ours that is fleeting, but establishes the genuine before and after. As Lord of time, according to Barth, God does not become subject to our time in its fleeting boundaries, but he masters and controls time to such an extent that he creates revelation time in Jesus Christ; which, incidentally, may not differ much from created time, but differs radically from our time.⁵⁰¹ And why, we might ask, could this not be the case? As noted before if Jesus can be “truly man,” yet without sin and can take up that humanity, heal it and restore ours to its original purpose, then can he not be “truly temporal,” yet without its limitations? Therefore, I would want to defend Barth to the extent that if Barth is criticized for disconnecting Jesus from our time, then we must also criticize him for disconnecting Jesus’ humanity from ours. I have yet to see this criticism, for I believe Barth’s Christology of fully God, fully human is well within the Nicean tradition. Rather, the typical refrain is that Barth endorses what the Christian faith at-large professes:

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 53.

that because of Jesus Christ's perfect humanity, he lifts our humanity to be what it was meant to be. So it is, according to Barth, with time. He lifts our time to what it is meant to be.

Thus far I have acknowledged that, according to Barth, since Jesus lived a true, historical life as a man, temporality belongs to God. But we have also heard Barth say that God's time is "revelation time," a third time that radically differs from our time, and even overcomes it because he fulfills what our broken, fallen time is intended to be. How and where do we see this third, revelation time in Jesus? What is the exact event(s) or location that demonstrates this so-called revelation time?

For Barth, it is the post-resurrection period of Jesus' presence on earth that is the determining factor in defining both our time and revelation time. To be sure, Jesus' time is time within history. He lived as a man with a temporal beginning and temporal end, but the unique occurrence of Jesus' time is his Easter time, the "further history" that begins on the third day after his death and we observe in the forty days prior to his ascension. This is the "key position for our whole understanding of the man Jesus in His time."⁵⁰² Nevertheless, this Easter history, or, resurrection time is an event that occurs within our time and space, and indeed the resurrection becomes for Barth the central assertion for the name Jesus, Son of God. "If Jesus Christ is not risen—bodily, visibly, audibly, perceptibly, in the same concrete sense in which He died, as the texts themselves have it—if He is not also risen, then our preaching and our faith are vain and futile; we are still in our sins."⁵⁰³ And again, "If Christ were not risen from the dead, our treatment of the whole subject [i.e. his temporality] would have no basis whatever in the Word and revelation of God."⁵⁰⁴

It is because of this fact that Barth rejects the demythologizing of the Easter event by Rudolf Bultmann, who claims that it was "the rise of faith in the risen Lord...which led to the apostolic preaching."⁵⁰⁵ Even though Bultmann acknowledges that the New Testament writers view the resurrection as an event within our space and time, he is unwilling to accept that "faith in the risen Lord springs from His historical manifestation, and from this as such, not from the rise of faith in Him."⁵⁰⁶ Cullman, too, falls short in this regard in two ways: 1)

⁵⁰² CD III.2, 441.

⁵⁰³ CD IV.1, 351.

⁵⁰⁴ CD III.2, 464.

⁵⁰⁵ CD III.2, 443. Barth is citing from Bultmann's *Kerygma and Myth*, 42.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid. Fergusson summarizes the conflict well: "At the root of this disagreement there are rival understandings of the relation of subject and object in knowledge, the meaning of revelation, and the nature of time. For Bultmann, the subject-object pattern of thought must be banished in a proper understanding of the historicity of human existence. For Barth, by contrast, the nature of God's revelation in Christ is such that its objectivity must be stressed and this may entail retaining subject-object forms of expression. For Bultmann,

the resurrection is an appendix in his discussion on the New Testament's view of time and hardly relates to it at all; and 2) the New Testament authors, according to Barth, were educated as to what time is by the fact that God confronted them in Jesus Christ, not as a result of their preconceptions of time, then fitting God into it. Barth then goes on to say that this is a good reason to take care in even trying to determine the early church's conception of time—there may not be a discernable one.⁵⁰⁷

It was this resurrection time that became the time through which the apostles recalled and discussed everything about their Lord. They did not have in mind an abstract, timeless reality that is other than historical, but Easter time, though it is his time, is real time.⁵⁰⁸ “What is the implication of the fact that after He had completed the span from birth to death He had this subsequent time? The answer is that the particular content of the particular recollection of this particular time of the apostolic community consisted in the fact that in this time the *man* Jesus was manifested among them in the mode of *God*.”⁵⁰⁹ His humanity was not abandoned, and the gospels labor this point, yet after the resurrection his deity was unveiled to them in such a way that it was previously hidden. For Barth, it is this resurrection time that reveals eternal time, and it is this eternal time that Jesus gives as a gift to his covenant people, but he can only do so if he truly takes up their condition, which is historical time—our time. Thus, he takes up our time in order to grant us his eternal time, and Colwell is correct to identify the connection between Barth's doctrines of eternity and election.⁵¹⁰

Furthermore, this time is unique even among Jesus' redemptive acts. The cross has both divine and human characteristics—it can be seen as the work of God and it is historical in the sense that it has the elements of human obedience and disobedience; however, the resurrection differs in that, like creation, it is solely a sovereign act of God.⁵¹¹ Barth does not simply arrive at the above conclusion because it is impossible for man to raise the dead, even though it is. Rather, this conclusion is “something which can be taken only from the divine revelation which has taken place in this event.”⁵¹² Resurrection is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It is not something that is purely “formal and noetic,” but it was “the true,

God's revelation occurs in the event of its appropriation and cannot find expression independently of this existential moment. For Barth, the time of Jesus Christ is determinative of all time and is therefore the locus of meaning for human existence everywhere.” See David Fergusson, *Rudolf Bultmann* (London: Continuum, 1992), 119.

⁵⁰⁷ CD III.2, 443–44. See, Oscar Cullman, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, Floyd V. Filson, trans. (London: SCM Press, 1951).

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 442.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 448

⁵¹⁰ Colwell, 93. Roberts recognizes this connection, as well, though he is highly critical of it.

⁵¹¹ CD IV.1, 300

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 301.

original, typical form of the revelation of God in Him...⁵¹³ This perception of God's revelation in Jesus was not something that was a given prior to the resurrection. Peter's confession was an anticipation of this fact, says Barth, but Jesus tells Peter that his confession is not a result of any immediate knowledge or perception on his part, but comes by the Father's gracious gift. Further, they walked and talked with Jesus for three years and still lacked understanding of who Jesus really was.⁵¹⁴ That ignorance was overcome in the light of the resurrection precisely because the sovereign eternity of God's revelation in Jesus Christ was fully unveiled to them.

Moreover, because of the resurrection we recognize Jesus, not bound by the limits of fallen time, but the Lord of time and, therefore, present in all time. "The removal of the limitations of its yesterday, today and tomorrow, of it once, now and then, is the distinctive feature of the time of the man Jesus."⁵¹⁵ To be sure, Jesus' time was historical in the sense that it had beginning, duration, and ending; but it remains true that his life (therefore, time, because of Barth's dictum that existence and time cannot be separated) is eternal and cannot be limited in the same sense that ours is by past, present, and future. Therefore (and here is the crucial point to bear in mind), *because Jesus is fully God and fully man his time is fully historical and fully eternal*. "Thus, as the title of this sub-section suggests, He not only is in time and has time like other men, but He is also Lord of time."⁵¹⁶ He is the Lord of time because he is the Son of God. Barth believes that the authors of scripture understand Jesus' being in time as a direct result of the resurrection, or, what he would also name, Easter time (*Osterzeit*).

Here again, Trinity is determining all forms of time—historical and real—rather than time as an absolute determining the divine life. *If* God can be man and *because* God is man, then God is temporal like man and Lord of time as God. The point distinguishes Barth's approach to time from every non-theological, non-trinitarian approach. However, I would also argue that while Barth's theology of time may be more explicitly trinitarian than others this Christological lens through which we affirm both temporality and sovereignty to it is a basic Christian assertion. No Christian theologian would or could deny Jesus' temporality and remain Christian. The question is not *that* he is God and man, temporal and sovereign over it, but rather, the question is *how* he is both and what that means for our time. For this

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 302.

⁵¹⁵ CD III.2, 464.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

reason, once again, I am suggesting in this thesis that the discussion on divine temporality carries a parallel significance that “human and divine” does in Christology.

Given the superiority of resurrection time, viz., one that is both eternal and human, Barth believes it should hold sway when defining what real time is. “It is in the power of the event of the third day that the event of the first day—as something that happened there and then—is not something which belong to the past, which can be present only by recollection, tradition and proclamation, but is as such a present event, the event which fills and determines the whole present.”⁵¹⁷ Resurrection history becomes the grounding for Jesus’ pre-Easter history and for all of history. His history is not past history that must be conjured up by means of resurrection. He is present to us now and represents us now and bears our sin now. “This temporal togetherness of the Jesus Christ of Good Friday and the Jesus Christ of Easter Day as created by the divine verdict is the basis of life for men of all ages.”⁵¹⁸ That is, Jesus’ history is the ground of all temporal history.

If that is true, we might wonder what becomes of our own time or history. Barth answers: “Since God in His Word had time for us, and at the heart of all other times there was this particular time, the eternal time of God, all other times are now controlled by this time, i.e., dominated, limited and determined by their proximity to it.” It is at this point that we might hear Roberts’ criticism ringing in our ears that Barth’s view of time ultimately swallows up our time.⁵¹⁹ Yet, we must continue to the very next sentence: “This means positively that they are shown not to be mere illusions.”⁵²⁰ Because God treats it as real, it is not illusory. At the same time, however, as a result of Easter time and Christ’s overcoming of time’s contingencies Barth can categorically state that our time is not absolute in any sense. Time cannot lord over God, but this does not mean that our time is destroyed or not real. “Relativised does not mean discarded.” Time is real and all times are set beside this Easter time, yet they are not obliterated.⁵²¹ Indeed, how could it not be so? If Jesus took on our time and lived a limited, historical life, then in what sense could eternal time render our time illusory? It would do just as well to say that Jesus’ life was illusory. We have already established that as representative for humankind Jesus had to be temporal as we are, else he could not represent us. Yet, he was God’s representative as well, and if the covenant was to

⁵¹⁷ *CD* IV.1, 313.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁹ Roberts, 35-6.

⁵²⁰ *CD* III.2, 455.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 456.

stand, he would have to overcome the limitations of our humanity by doing precisely what we cannot do—defeat sin and death. According to Barth, by doing this Jesus grants to his people the gift of eternal time, the time of Jesus Christ, the time of God. The reality of that time is manifested to the disciples and others in the post-resurrection appearances, for all such reality pertaining to their Lord had scurried by their eyes prior to that period, the eternal, Easter time. Hence, when we read the New Testament authors, according to Barth, they talk of Jesus and his work of salvation explicitly through the lens of the resurrection.⁵²²

Yet, here, just as in the debate on the meaning of “historical” critics charge that in Barth our time is eternalized and rendered illusory.⁵²³ Morrison, for example, believes that Barth’s Christological doctrine of time and history necessarily excludes our time.

The otherness of God, which must be set forth as present to us in Jesus Christ, remains outside “our” fallen times. This appears often to be an intrusion of an almost Platonic or neo-Platonic sense of difference regarding the relation of eternity to history. It finally excludes the necessary factuality of the *Deus praesens* and thereby distorts the existence of the existing believer in history... The outcome for Barth’s Christology is a redemptive-historical problem lying in his understanding of the nature of God and the relation of God to humanity and the historical process... While in one sense wanting to express the non-contradictory unity of God’s being and existence whereby we are actually confronted and grasped in existence here, Barth finally lets human, fallen history go as that which cannot be partaken of by the coming and self-giving God. God’s time for us is, like God’s otherness, that of which the human as human cannot partake of. *If God cannot, even as the Creator who comes in freedom to redeem, partake in human fallen time for our sake, how can one even by grace participate in God’s time?*⁵²⁴

The problem cannot be so easily dispensed with, for included in the time and history of Jesus Christ, which conditions God’s eternity,⁵²⁵ is his pre-history—all of his earthly life that was fully and completely within our time. Barth has already extensively argued for the spatiality and temporality of Christ’s life, death and resurrection. To be sure, he constantly qualifies himself that the resurrection and the forty days were the revelation of real time, God’s time—the time of his eternity. Hence, one must recognize, as Jenson does, the *tendency* towards eternalizing history, yet Barth does not do so in quite so obvious a way as Morrison suggests. He genuinely attempts to militate against this, and he does so by saying that Jesus Christ truly

⁵²² Ibid., 442.

⁵²³ Though he realizes Barth’s intent Jenson nevertheless suggests that this is the case (*GAG*, 152). However, Jenson remains more sympathetic to Barth and takes on more of his theology than other such critics. On Barth’s view of history and his concept of *Urgeschichte*, see chapter four of this thesis.

⁵²⁴ John Douglas Morrison, *Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 314-15 (emphasis mine).

⁵²⁵ *CD* II.1, 616.

did live in the bounded time of humanity, but he overcomes it and redeems it by the eschatological gift of eternal time. He has fully participated in our time, but he has redeemed both it and us. Therefore, salvation history (election) encompasses both God's eternity and the time of Christ's obedience (human response). Or another way of putting this is that God's being *ad extra* is identical to his being *ad intra*. God's decision to be for himself who he is in Jesus Christ is not separate from his decision of election, so that our time is not obliterated, but is taken up into the divine life, not swallowed or eliminated, but healed and recreated into what it was meant to be. In a passage on our history included in Christ's history, importantly, Jenson notes that for Barth "Christ's reality includes ours without swallowing it up, without abolishing us as persons, in that God *reveals* to us what has already happened to us."⁵²⁶ Morrison's perception of Barth and his zeal to maintain the autonomy of our time indicate a troubling pattern that has crept into trinitarian theology. To overcome this (as I believe we should) Barth's and Jenson's voices should be more prominent.

The resurrection and particularly the forty days is the revelation of God's eternity, and that divine, temporal eternity is his pre-, supra-, and post-temporality.

The life of Jesus comes to an end, and therefore there was a moment when His time became past. But its end is such that it is always present and still future. The man Jesus was as He is and will be. Even the time after His time, the time in which His time is already past time, because it is the time of His past, the time which derives from Him, is the time of His renewed presence, the time of His new coming, and therefore again His time.⁵²⁷

Therefore, according to Barth, Easter time is the key to unlocking the reality not only of created time but also of God's eternity.⁵²⁸

Easter time demonstrates that the man Jesus is *present*, which relates to God's supra-temporality. According to Barth, the New Testament writers considered the past history of Jesus not to be something relegated to the past, but rather is "transcendentally present."⁵²⁹

The yesterday of Jesus is also today. The fact that He lives at the right hand of God means that even now He is absolutely present temporally. And to His own on their further journey into time... He has given them His Spirit, the Holy Spirit. But where

⁵²⁶ Jenson, *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 135.

⁵²⁷ *CD* III.2, 464.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 467.

the Spirit is, there is more than a mere tradition or recollection of Jesus. Of course there is tradition and recollection as well. But the message of His past is proclaimed, heard and believed in order that it should no longer be past but present.⁵³⁰

Clearly, for Barth, Christ's presence to us is a real presence, but one that is wholly and completely dependent upon the Spirit. The sacraments, Barth claims, cannot be such "without His real presence as very God and very Man, both body and soul."⁵³¹ Yet, his presence is not "restricted" to them, but rather permeates each aspect of the Church precisely because that is where the Spirit is. It is important to note that, for Barth, Jesus is not merely present with us, but is *temporally* present to us. He still lives and operates within time. Though his earthly life is past his time is not past, for Easter time demonstrates the ongoing presence of that life with us. Two questions can be asked: 1) negatively, what does this exclude? 2) Positively, what does it imply?

Negatively, to say that Jesus Christ, the gendered Jew (to borrow Jenson's phrase), is really present with the world necessarily excludes divine atemporality. Again, I believe the questions have been confused in the time and eternity discussion. To say that God in Christ is temporally present to the world is necessarily to exclude atemporality; however, it does *not* necessarily exclude some sort of transcendence over time. To be transcendent over time is not the same as atemporality, but it *could* be taken to mean timelessness. Christ may be present and timeless, but he may not be present and atemporal. It may appear to be a terminological game, but taking into consideration the Barthian and Jensonian theological perspectives, the argument stands. God transcends time, but he is not without time or completely disconnected from it. Perhaps new terminology is in order. Nevertheless, Easter time, for Barth, demonstrates how Jesus can reveal his divine temporality *within* fallen time.

Positively, Christ's temporal presence prompts the question of his particular location (further demonstrating the close link between space and time even for God), i.e. what of the sacraments? Contrasting Barth and Jenson on this is roughly parallel to the Reformed and Lutheran conceptions of Eucharist. For Jenson, for one to be present and available to another there must be embodiment, else that person and that communication are both unidentifiable and enslaving. So, if the Christian community is going to address God and others, especially in terms of gospel proclamation, there must be embodiment of all participants. "The word in which God...communicates himself must be an embodied word, a word 'with' some visible reality, a grant of divine objectivity. We must be able to see and touch what we are to

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

apprehend from God; religion cannot do without sacrament.”⁵³² And this “seeing” and “touching” of God’s body is the church partaking in the elements of bread and wine in the Supper. For this to be the case, yet remain a non-biological reality, it is only necessary, according to Jenson, that Christ understand himself in this way, thus determining its reality.⁵³³ God identifies himself within the temporal reality that is Jesus, but now that Jesus is resurrected and not walking this earth, Jenson believes that God turns to himself in the bread and wine, for that is precisely the place where Jesus places his identity. Hence, the gravity of the doctrine for Jenson: “If the gospel is indeed gospel, its speaking is Jesus’ presence as *himself*: in the same body that Mary bore. Therefore, we must assert: the body Pilate hanged, and the embodiment of gospel-speaking among us, the ensemble of the gospel’s sacramental reality, *are one thing*.”⁵³⁴ But the question is, *how*? The answer is unclear. What *is* clear, at least to me, is that Jenson’s view of divine ontology pushes toward a biological presence of Christ, which elevates sacrament and is in effect detracting from the priority of the Word and the actualizing power of the Spirit.

In my estimation what is lacking in Jenson is a strong pneumatological activity in the Eucharist meal. If the Spirit is indeed future, is it not possible to say that in addition to bringing in God’s eschatological kingdom, he also brings to our present the eschatological presence of Christ? He has already given assent in this direction by speaking of the inexhaustibility of Jesus’ work since it is taken up by the Spirit who brings it from the future. Why not the reality of his presence in the bread and wine, as well?

Indeed, it is the Spirit who is the proof that Jesus does not leave his children as orphans, for Jesus’ own understanding of his presence with his disciples continued in an unbroken, albeit different form *because of the Spirit* (Luke 24:49). He is really present with us, though not in a way that we can reach out, grasp him, and embrace him in the same manner as the disciples did. Furthermore, his Spirit even took that role as making his presence real for his church to such an extent that this same embodied Jew of the first century could himself claim to be with two or three gathered in his name (Matthew 18:19). In his pre-resurrected state, it is difficult to imagine such a scenario on Jenson’s account of embodiment and temporal presence. This consideration brings to the fore the need for a stronger emphasis upon the role of the Spirit in bringing Christ’s presence to us. It is not merely Christ who is present to us, and the tendency in Jenson is to read “God with us” as

⁵³² Robert W. Jenson, *Visible Words: The Interpretation and Practice of Christian Sacraments* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 28.

⁵³³ *ST II*, 214. Another example of how Jenson follows Barth’s method of the theological priority of knowledge.

⁵³⁴ *Visible Words*, 44.

exclusively pertaining to Christ. Clearly, the Spirit is with us, too, and we detract from his person when he is marginalized in the worship of the Church, particular in the Eucharist. As Gunton writes, “Crucial here is an important distinction: that the presence of Christ is not *as* but *through* the Spirit, who is the mediator of both Christ’s presence and his (eschatological) otherness.”⁵³⁵ Therefore, Easter time, according to Barth, demonstrates that Christ’s presence with us is ongoing by means of the presence of the Spirit.

Easter time also illuminates the pre-Easter life of Jesus—it is pre-temporal. There is a unity in the person of the forty days and the pre-Easter days in that they hang on one another. There cannot be a distinction, as modernity would have it, between the “Jesus of history” and the “Christ of faith,” or, the pre-Easter and post-Easter life. The Easter time that unveils to his followers Jesus in the mode of God would be meaningless if it did not have an organic connection with the time of veiling between his birth and death. How could we know his presence today if he had not been and done all that he did previous to this post-Easter time? “He would not be if he had not previously been.”⁵³⁶ Jenson, Gunton and others charge Barth with a lack of interest in the historical life of Jesus, i.e. between birth and death, but the criticism from Jenson goes much deeper than a mere “you fail to write enough about it” sort of affair. For Jenson, it is a symptom of a greater problem, viz. that the eternal being of Jesus Christ is prior to his temporal obedience in reconciliation, and by doing so “he [Barth] puts himself in danger of removing reconciliation itself, the inner reality of Jesus’ life, from our history.”⁵³⁷ The possibility that this is a tendency in Barth and the consequent weaknesses of such a tendency must be reserved for the next chapter. What has to be noted here is that Barth is fully aware of the crucial reality of that pre-Easter life both for God’s being in himself and God’s being for us.

But Barth takes the pre-Easter time of Jesus back even further to the Old Testament time as also the time of Jesus Christ. He states:

Hence the references to the Old Testament which we find in the New tell us that the history and time of Israel were prophetic, their meaning and perfection consisting in the fact that they moved towards the history and time of the man Jesus. Prefiguring and expecting this history and time of the man Jesus, they belonged to His time. Indeed, no less really than they history and time of the apostles, although inversely, it *was* His time.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁵ Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (London: T&T Clark Ltd, 2003), 230.

⁵³⁶ *CD III.2*, 475.

⁵³⁷ *Alpha and Omega*, 163.

⁵³⁸ *CD III.2*, 481.

It is important to understand that Barth's conception of the prophetic history of Jesus is *real* history, not merely a prefiguring or pre-word about his coming history. It is that, to be sure, but it is more than that. Jesus Christ is the center of all time—time for God and time for humanity—thus, Barth asks, “Are we not forced to see it as the time which embraces and controls all time before and after Him?”⁵³⁹ That which is absolute is the sovereign intersection of divine revelation in Jesus Christ, not time. In this context Barth specifically identifies Cullmann as falling victim to an absolutizing of our time when he claims that the Old Testament could only be a prefiguring for Jesus, for the time of Jesus (that of birth to death) could not be identical to the prophetic times, else time is illusory and all is timeless. “To find the witness to Christ in the Old Testament does not mean, then, to find the incarnation of Jesus in the Old Testament. It means rather to learn, upon the basis of our knowledge concerning the incarnate and crucified Christ, how to understand the past events of redemptive history as preparation for the incarnation and the cross.”⁵⁴⁰ Additionally, under such a scheme the Old Testament would necessarily render the New irrelevant.⁵⁴¹

Barth's answer to Cullmann is instructive in that it parallels his overall perception of the divine eternity as in one sense timeless and in another temporal. He states:

The truth is that the contemporaneity in question here does not exclude a certain non-contemporaneity as well. After all, Abraham, Moses and the prophets, and all the other figures of the Old Testament, still remain what they are in their own right. They are clearly distinguished from Jesus, and there is no question of their being identical with Him... Yet it is none the less true that the non-contemporaneity in question does not exclude a certain contemporaneity... Speaking to their own age, the fathers do in fact speak of Jesus. And what about Israel, the people of the covenant, in whose history Jesus is certainly promised and expected but has not yet come, and yet is not simply absent, since in all its history He is promised and expected? Was not the time of Israel necessarily another time as the time when He was still far off, but also His own time as the time when He was promised and expected? Just as the tradition and recollection of Him make Him the Contemporary of the Church, so in the time of Israel the promised and expectation of His coming makes Him the Contemporary of Israel. In both cases it is a spiritual contemporaneity, perceptible only through Him, and only in faith.⁵⁴²

But surely Cullmann is not denying that Trinity is present with Israel only from the incarnation forward? That does not appear to be the case. Therefore, the radical declaration

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Cullmann, 135.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 133.

⁵⁴² CD III.2, 481-82.

here by Barth is that Jesus Christ, God and man, not some pre-existent, non-corporeal *Logos*, is present to the prophets and even extends to the *Urgeschichte* that is creation.⁵⁴³ The man who walked the earth and performed those miracles and died that death is the same one whose time includes Israel, creation, and *even prior to creation*. The time of Jesus Christ is temporal, but it includes our temporality, everything prior to our time, and everything in front of our time. Jesus Christ, the man, is *both* temporal and timeless.

Hence, Barth rejects out of hand the concept of the *λόγος ἄσαρκος* due to the fact that such an idea would be essentially tied to the *Deus absconditus*. God in his revelation demonstrates himself to be the one that he is in eternity, and the incarnation, rather than signaling a change in the divine being, is the actualization of the being of the eternal Son. There is no “Logos in itself” that lacks the form that is Jesus Christ, and to posit such is mere speculation and an invitation to wonder whether the *Deus pro nobis* is indeed the real God.⁵⁴⁴ Obviously, as McCormack notes, Barth is not saying that Jesus brought his body with him from eternity when he was born in Bethlehem, so in this sense and only this sense the Son is *ἄσαρκος*.⁵⁴⁵ What Barth was rejecting was “an indeterminate state of being in the life of the Logos above and prior to the determination to enter time and become human.”⁵⁴⁶ Therefore, the pre-existence of Christ and God’s predestination of humanity, eternity and election, are one.

Precisely at this point an interesting problem arises between Barth and Jenson that must be considered. Jenson recognizes the unity of pre-existence and predestination for Barth and assimilates that into his own theology. Indeed, his construal of the divine eternity as primally God’s futurity and only because of that, his anteriority, and the unity of both in Christ’s earthly act (both then and ongoing in the church), necessarily impacts his view of predestination. “Therefore it is not that God has *already* decided whether I am or am not of his community. He *will* decide and *so* has decided; and *has* decided and so *will* decide; and so *decides* also within created time.”⁵⁴⁷ The same applies, according to Jenson, to Christ’s existence in that it occurs in time, yet not apart from his futurity and his past. If Christ and election are one and the same, then Christ’s existence in time is essential to the eternal

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 483-84.

⁵⁴⁴ CD IV.1, 52.

⁵⁴⁵ This is probably the case, though it is not always so clear in Barth. For example, in an unqualified passage in CD III.2, 484 Barth states: “The *οὐτός* here refers to the incarnate Logos. It is He who was ‘in the beginning.’ And not only that, but even before this beginning He was with God and was Himself God, participating in the divine being and nature, before created time began, in the eternity of God. This eternity includes not only the present and future, but also the past.”

⁵⁴⁶ McCormack, “Grace and Being,” 97.

⁵⁴⁷ ST II, 177.

decision of election, and predestination cannot be relegated to God's pre-temporality. Thus, for Jenson, predestination is something that "happens to and for individuals when they encounter Christ in his gospel: that the judgment they then hear is nothing less than God's eternal act of decision."⁵⁴⁸ Then Jenson adds in a footnote that Barth "would not tolerate this consequence" because of his "fatal definition of time and eternity by mutual exclusion."⁵⁴⁹ But why must this be the case? Barth's very definition of election/predestination is the history of this man, Jesus Christ,⁵⁵⁰ whose time is pre-Easter (including pre-creation), Easter, and post-Easter. This formula is identical to Jenson's quoted above. Jesus Christ is what has happened in his pre-temporal eternity, is what happened in our time and *what continues to happen*, and is what will happen (parallel to and united with the divine eternity that is pre-, supra-, and post-temporal). Why could not the same be said of predestination? If Barth is truly guilty of this charge from Jenson, then he has separated God in himself from God for us in a manner inconsistent with his doctrine of time and eternity. But how could it be so? God's supra-temporality is our life being lived in the intrusion of eternity into time, pushing all that is not God into the past and bringing all that is future to the present. Another way of saying this, for Barth, is God justifying the ungodly. And there it is—an explicit unifying of the time of Jesus Christ with election. Election is what is happening now, for the time of Jesus Christ is ongoing and is not exclusively pre-temporal.

Wherever the alleged problem Jenson has with Barth is located, I find it difficult to believe that it is in time and eternity, especially in light of Jenson's own temporal formula (quoted above), which is nearly identical to Barth's. Since our history and election is the history and election of Jesus Christ Barth strives in his doctrine of time and eternity to give an account of how his life is contemporaneous with ours. Yes, the time of Jesus is past, but it is also contemporaneous with us. If the problem truly exists, then it is not because Barth has not given an account for Jesus' time and history with us now. It is possible, as I have already mentioned, that Barth may overemphasize God's pre-temporality in election so that he gives this impression that Jenson articulates, but if he does, he does so over against his own doctrine of time and eternity. This need not be the case and simple adjustments or a shift of emphasis could help.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ CD IV.1, 53.

Easter time dictates the reality that Jesus' time is also future—it is post-temporal—and it does so because the resurrection frees us from viewing Jesus as exclusively past. Due to his Easter time we anticipate that the future, our future, is united with his future. It is his future, but it is his future for us.⁵⁵¹

The unity of His glory and our glorification already achieved in His resurrection has again become the future, His future, for us. For us, therefore, the resurrection and the *parousia* are two separate events. But for Him they are a single event. The resurrection is the anticipation of His *parousia* as His *parousia* is the completion and fulfilment of the resurrection.⁵⁵²

Because of the centrality of the future for Jenson's divine ontology I will postpone any critical interaction with him until the next chapter, so at this point only a brief statement on Barth's view of the time of Jesus Christ as future is in order.

For Barth, there is no call for the primacy of the future dimension of the time of Jesus any more than on the Easter time (present) and the pre-Easter time (past). All three are equal “in substantiality, importance or urgency, in dignity or value.”⁵⁵³ The trinitarian background is again evident here, though no explicit link is made by Barth. Indeed, it may merely be the *idea* of God's Triunity that grounds this configuration of time, since the overarching emphasis is that this is Christological temporality. The Father is hardly mentioned in this section, if at all, and, though the Spirit gets some attention in the latter pages of “Jesus, Lord of Time,” it is only because the community “has the form of the Spirit means that the community not only derives temporally from the this commencement and moves towards this consummation, but that it is effectively established and gathered by the One who was and who comes, being not only ruled but continually nourished and quickened by Him.”⁵⁵⁴ It remains the time of Jesus Christ and not that of the Spirit, even though the Spirit is present. This threefold temporal dimension is equal in degree, emphasis, etc. because the one whose temporality it belongs to is one person.

There is no justification for trying to systematise the being of Jesus from this standpoint. The New Testament always thinks and speaks eschatologically, but never with full logical consistence. Its only logical consistence is to think and speak on all sides and in all dimensions and relationships christologically. And it is for this reason

⁵⁵¹ CD III.2, 486.

⁵⁵² Ibid., 490.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 485.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 505.

that with equal emphasis and seriousness it can always think and speak eschatologically as well.⁵⁵⁵

Thus, for Barth, God's being is not substantially a future being that somehow determines his past and present, but rather God is equally and fully God in Jesus Christ in all three temporalities.

Moreover, as I have already indicated, the future to which the community moves is not an empty one, but is the person of Jesus himself.

The last time which dawned with His appearance, and in which the community has its mission and task; and the conclusion of time, the judgment and the consummation which, corresponding to the time of creation, will form the content of this concluding time and of the ensuing time of the being of all things in God—this time too, as the New Testament sees it, is wholly and utterly His time, the time of Jesus, the time of His being.⁵⁵⁶

The God of the *parousia* is the same one that pre-existed our time and exists along with it.

The question of the exact nature of our future is not new and is a fundamental dimension of the time/eternity problem. Barth has been accused of rendering our future as unreal given his insistence that God's presence and knowledge fills our future, just as it does our present and past. The same charge could be laid at Jenson's door. How does that relate to his temporality? In other words how can Barth make such an assertion regarding pre-, supra-, and post-temporality and it relate in any way to temporal process. Barth's own theological answer will be fleshed out in the next chapter.

The precise nature of our time and God's eternity remains sketchy, but I believe that theology and philosophy are making strides here. We are certainly better off with accounts given by the chief interlocutors of this study than with atemporal accounts of the divine eternity from those who have gone before us (and some who remain with us!). Exactly what it means for God to be temporal yet transcend the limitations of time has not fully been explained, but it appears to me that this is a question that eludes a comprehensive answer. What is crucial is that theology carefully avoids stretching orthodoxy to accommodate the philosophical or scientific inclinations of the day, whilst at the same time giving it an attentive ear. To some extent, I believe, Barth and Jenson (particularly the latter) have done that, and offer us a way of speaking of God that is in concert with what we observe in our

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 485.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 486.

world—bearing in mind that our observations are finite and ever-changing! What we understand about time and creation may give us insight into the divine life, but it would be foolish to allow that to dictate a theology of it. “God reveals Godself” is Barth’s dictum and the one I have attempted to emulate; therefore, asserting that God is temporal is primarily a theological conclusion and one that the contemporary church must make if it is going to do justice to God’s free activity in this world.

Man’s Time

The structure of this chapter properly reflects Barth’s approach to time and eternity: there is God in his eternity where “in the uncreated self-subsistent time which is one of the perfections of His divine nature, present, past and future, yesterday, to-day and to-morrow, are not successive, but simultaneous;”⁵⁵⁷ there is humanity in its time “in which past, present and future follow one another in succession;”⁵⁵⁸ and between them as the fulcrum and determination both for the knowledge and condition of time is the man, Jesus Christ. For Barth, to say that Jesus has time is to say that 1) he was human and experienced time in succession just as we do, but notwithstanding this 2) his time is “real time,” God’s time, primarily perceived in the resurrection appearances. *Wirkliche Zeit* is God’s authentic temporality and is the ground for, yet is contrasted with, our fallen, successive time. Real time, then, is located in the event of Jesus Christ and not in our fallen time, and this is true not only based on the trinitarian and Christological arguments from Barth, but also because of the perpetual elusiveness of the nature of our time. Reminiscent of Augustine this elusiveness is most obvious in that “the present can be experienced only in the form of recollections and expectations.”⁵⁵⁹ According to Barth, there is no possibility of giving a genuine, certain picture of human temporality, because any “venture is nurtured either by illusions or by secret borrowings from theology.” The only conclusion about human temporality that we can come to is that it is a “riddle.”⁵⁶⁰ Yet, the riddle does not lead us to nihilism, but to faith. *The aim of this section is to describe how Barth conceives of our time in relation to Jesus Christ.*

⁵⁵⁷ CD III.2, 437.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., 438.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 514.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

That God's time is authentic and our time is inauthentic does not merely stem from the Creator/creature distinction, the infinite and finite, but rather this temporal discontinuity reflects God's judgment upon humanity. "What we have been describing is *sinful* man in time."⁵⁶¹ The desire to escape this situation is obvious, and by virtue of the desire itself, something tells us it is "abnormal and unnatural." Yet there is a positive side to this declaration of judgment in that the time of Jesus Christ not only demonstrates the inauthentic nature of our time because it is sinful, but it also demonstrates that time is "given" to us by God for our existence. An extended paragraph from Barth expresses the argument:

But the being of Jesus in time has this power to unmask and sober man, to recall him to the truth from every height and depth and reinterpretation and forgetfulness, because the monstrosity of general human being in time is overcome in Him. Thus the primary significance of His being is not critical. It is critical only as it actualises and reveals positively the real being of man in the time really created by God and given to man. It depicts our general being in time as the plunge into falsehood against which God protests. It allows us no rest in this falsehood, because it is itself the truth which confronts it; the truth of human nature as God created it; the truth of our being in our time.⁵⁶²

Further, according to Barth, Jesus "is temporal among us as we are. Yet He does this in a manner appropriate to himself."⁵⁶³ This "manner" is time as that which was created and only existed *before* the fall. Since Barth understands our fallen time as that which exists, then passes away—being which is gone—this is necessarily in conflict with the Easter time of Jesus, whose time is past, present and future. Hence, this, for Barth is how he unites his eternity as God and his temporality as human. The human side of Jesus' temporality is human time *as it should be*—authentic human time, rather than fallen time.

It is at this point that the question of the relationship of our temporality to the divine temporality becomes acute. Our time is fallen, inauthentic, sinful time. It is not the way God is, nor is it the way we are meant to be. But how is it, then, that Barth can maintain the positive nature of "given time"? Only in this sense: the temporality of Jesus guarantees that our time is given to us by God, and "if the gift is a gift of *God*, then it is indestructibly a *good* gift."⁵⁶⁴ "...The existence of the man Jesus in time is our guarantee that time as the form of human existence is in any case willed and created by God, is given by God to man, and is

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., 517.

⁵⁶² Ibid., 518.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 519.

⁵⁶⁴ Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 272. More on this point below.

therefore real.” To be human is to exist in time—“it is the form of our existence.”⁵⁶⁵ Eternal life even, says Barth, “will still be in his time.” As close as soul is to body, that is humanity in its time. Thus, just as eternal life will be humanity living out its authentic existence with soul and body, so it will live it out in authentic time.

The intimacy of the relation between God and humanity is reflected in the fact that there is nothing to know of God or fellow humanity apart from temporal, historical relations. How could we possibly assert anything disconnected from notions of time? Therefore, this is argument enough for the temporality of God in that, “God would not be my God if He were only eternal in Himself, if He had not time for me...all this is history, and has its time, and refers to me in this time of mine, even in God’s eternity before I was and when I shall have ceased to be.”⁵⁶⁶ Thus, humanity and time are inextricably united.

Yet this time is not intrinsic to humanity, but rather “man is in the time given to him...We have no control over time and our being in it...We do not have it in virtue of our being.”⁵⁶⁷ Time is a gift given to humanity it might be more proper to say, according to Barth, that time has us instead of we have time. Our temporal existence is not an autonomous one, but the very fact that we are in time and that time is a gift from God to us indicates that we are not in time alone, but rather with God. “To say, ‘man’ or ‘time’ is...to say ‘God.’”⁵⁶⁸

Though time is skewed or abused by sinful humanity, time cannot be destroyed because the “presence and gift” of God cannot be destroyed. Yet, the perplexing question is that the discontinuities of our time are viewed by Barth as “fallen,” not the way it is supposed to be. In what time does the presence and gift of God exist, real time or our time? He implies that it is the latter in that time is praise to God because “it is the dimension for the history of the covenant between God and man, thus making possible a history between man and his fellow-men, a history of humanity. If man were not in time there would be no dimension for this history, for the history of the divine covenant and his own salvation, and therefore for the history of humanity.”⁵⁶⁹ Initially Barth’s discussion seemed to point in the direction of something like “*our* time is inextricable to our humanity,” but then he moved beyond that to “our time is necessary for covenant history.” It seems to me that these are two very different notions in that the former is a mere observation and makes no value judgment on the situation, but the latter does indeed make a value judgment, and in this case a positive

⁵⁶⁵ *CD* III.2, 520-21.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 522.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 524.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 525.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 526.

one. If that is true, then how do we reconcile it with Barth's view that the discontinuities of our time are a result of sin that will and must pass away? The answer, I would suggest, is found in Barth's idea that humans having time depends upon the receiving of that time as gift. Clearly, then, Barth could not intend this to mean time that is common to humanity, for not everyone acknowledges the Creator's gift of time, yet all humanity has temporality. All times are given by God, but the time that gives humanity a real present that is different from the fallen, fleeting nature of our time is the gift from God that is also *received*. Let us think of it in slightly different terms. How do we overcome Augustine's dilemma of the existence of a "present"?

Because God's Now is not an abstract Now but is a Now *for us*, therefore our present is real because it is God's present. Were this not the case, according to Barth, we would be "sinking into nothingness." But as it is, by virtue of our temporality, we are assured of being in the present because that temporality is given and under the time of God. Indeed, it is what we need to be in relationship with him for, "only if I had to be a creature without God should I have to regard this transition as my destruction." "I am where I may live neither threatened by illusion nor enmeshed in falsehood, i.e., in real time [*wirkliche Zeit*], in the present of God."⁵⁷⁰ The use of this term and the tone of the passage indicate that Barth clearly views our history as within God's history and not one that stands on its own. He explicitly alludes to our time as *real time*, which is, in other sections of the *CD* God's time alone. But it must be quickly noted that Barth does not deny the reality of the discontinuity of our time, nor would he suggest that we are collapsing into the divine, but rather by calling the time under God as real time, he is merely demonstrating the ultimate meaning and significance of this time, and to the reality of *real time as gift*. Our time is an existential crisis apart from viewing it as resting in God's real time. Our Now is non-existent without the Now of God's time. Thus, they are both real, but as Creator he upholds the creature and the creature's time. If one wants to argue that our time has to be autonomous, then the corollary of autonomous being necessarily follows. Therefore, what we have within covenant relation to God is *real time*, which is God's time given to us. What we have outside of covenant relation to God is *fleeting time* and *nothingness*. True enough, even in covenant we experience "our time" in all its discontinuity, but we receive glimpses of God's real time during our time, which are proleptic of our eternity with him. When it comes to eschatology Barth may encounter certain difficulties, but that is a different question than the one we are pursuing here. Thus,

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 531.

thinking of humanity's time in soteriological terms (time is God's saving gift) enlightens Barth's intention.

Our transition from past to future in the present is "the invitation to be with God now, to be present with Him, to make this transition with Him, recognising that He always precedes us, not without us, but for us and on our behalf."⁵⁷¹ The movement that God makes is not an atemporal one because it accompanies our temporal movement. Literally, God is intimately moving our time through the present to the future. Thus, it is always a present to him, but it is a movement, just the same. When does God do this? He is always doing it in our present. "This then is how the present is filled. It is real. And from this we are entitled to conclude that all our time is real, that we are really in time, that we really have time. God's presence and gift creates, delivers and sustains this reality...But this means that though we are sinners who have forfeited our time, and indeed ourselves, we are not lost, but as we were created, so we are sustained and delivered."⁵⁷²

When we read Barth on our time in the present tense, as I have just described it, there is something in it that makes us doubt the certainty of what he calls "our time." *Our* time is sinful and is all that is passing away and all that is not God. *Real* time is that which is a gift of God, but is given *and* received by faith so that our present is real and is filled by God's present. But if God's present is his authentic time, his eternity, which is not successive but simultaneous, then it follows that the same should be said for us. A comparison with Jesus might help. Though he existed in our time his time was authentic and the post-resurrection appearances demonstrate this. After our resurrection and Christ's return we will fully realize the real time that we possessed all along, but only had glimpses of along the way. This idea is made more explicit in Barth's description of man's past time.

Just as is the case for our time in its present, our past is a reality, not because we maintain it in memory, but because God's eternity sustains it. But in order for God to maintain the reality of our past he must also do so for his past. But how does this happen so that it "is not subject to any 'no longer'" if he is temporal and not atemporal? And here is the problem: "For there is a Then, a genuine past, in God's eternity, as surely as it is the eternity of the living God. Of course, no lines are drawn there. The past is not left behind, nor does it fade."⁵⁷³ But the genuine past that Barth is referring to must be past *in relation to our past*. Thus, it is only past in the sense that he was in our past, but not in the sense that his eternity

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 531.

⁵⁷² Ibid., 532.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., 536.

has a past and present by mutual exclusion. To say with Barth that God's eternity has a past is not to say there is temporal succession in the divine eternity life Moltmann would, but rather it is to say that God's eternity has a past that was with our past. But how is that not equivalent to saying "God is always present in his eternity"? God's past, on this understanding is a present that was present with us. God's future is a present that will be with us when we get there. Thus, God is always present, no matter where we are on the temporal continuum, and this is essentially saying with Boethius, Aquinas, et al., that God is timeless. The difference is that Barth is saying timeless does not equal atemporal. Atemporal means that something cannot have anything to do with time. Timeless *should* mean that God is not subject to time's contingencies, but enters into time freely as its Creator and Lord.

Though our past is truly gone to us and is no longer our present, it still exists in God's love because he cannot lose any of our being. Thus, our past still exists in God's present, though it is irretrievable to us in our time.⁵⁷⁴ This makes perfect sense, though, since God's being is only present and his pre-, supra-, and post-temporality is so *only* in relation to our time. His eternity does not march, but simply is. It appears that this section (#47, Man in His Time) is the seal on Barth's stance when it comes to time. He definitely holds to a timeless God—one that exists in "Now" that is in our past, present, and future—but this does not mean he is atemporal.

The same can be said, perhaps surprisingly, of Wolfhart Pannenberg. He, too, embraces a timeless God who is not atemporal, and along with this affirmation he carries some of Barth's tendencies. I find in Pannenberg someone who, along with Jenson, stresses God's economic presence in history and his power and deity from the future. Yet, he does not go as far as Jenson does in identifying the *hypostases* with the temporal moments of past, present, and future, which, in the end pushes him more toward a position like Barth's. I include this discussion on Pannenberg not to exonerate nor to condemn either Barth or Jenson, but rather to demonstrate that similar refrains are being played in each that demand our attention. Furthermore, I do want to argue in favor of Pannenberg's disagreements with Jenson and his overlap with Barth.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 537.

Pannenberg on Time and Trinity

Like Jenson and Barth, Pannenberg represents an interesting effort to mediate between atemporality and process theism. As a thoroughly modern thinker⁵⁷⁵ he rejects the Augustinian account of eternity as timelessness,⁵⁷⁶ opting instead for a perspective that unifies time and eternity. Relying more on Plotinus than Plato Pannenberg believes that time and eternity are positively related because eternity is both everlastingness, unaffected by the march of time, and wholeness of life. That is to say, in time we experience a succession of moments that constitute past, present, and future, yet we can refer to them in totality in terms of eternity. Eternity is not opposed to time, but is the foundation for understanding it, because life is “the enduring self which always has the whole present to it.” Time, then, becomes a continuous sequence by the reference to eternity.⁵⁷⁷

Not a little confusion has persisted over the centuries concerning the “classical” definition of time and eternity. Perceiving this state of affairs Pannenberg criticizes Nelson Pike⁵⁷⁸ for assuming the unity of Plato and Plotinus on eternity. Pannenberg also praises Boethius’ dependence on Plotinus when he gave the definition of eternity as “that which grasps and possesses simultaneously the entire fullness of life without end; no part of the future is lacking to it, and no part of the past has escaped it.”⁵⁷⁹ Eternity is not always opposed to time and to assume so leads Pike to affirm complete divine temporality as the only possibility once one disposes of timelessness.⁵⁸⁰ Pannenberg rejects this idea of complete temporality as he carefully explains:

But this idea makes God into a finite being if it implies that like ourselves God at every moment of his life looks ahead to a future this is distinct from the present and sees the past fading away from him...If God is, then his whole life and all things created by him must be present to him at one and the same time. This is not to set aside the distinction of what is temporally different. On the contrary, differing

⁵⁷⁵ For a lucid account of Pannenberg’s theology in its sociological context see, Richard John Neuhaus, “Wolfhart Pannenberg: Profile of a Theologian,” in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 9-50.

⁵⁷⁶ For Pannenberg’s brief exposition of Augustine on time and why he rejects atemporality see his, “Eternity, Time and the Trinitarian God,” *TTC*, 62-5.

⁵⁷⁷ *ST I*, 403-4.

⁵⁷⁸ Pike, 8-14.

⁵⁷⁹ Boethius, 5.6, 111.

⁵⁸⁰ Pike may indeed overstate the failures of early Christian theology in relation to Platonism and Neoplatonism. That is, it may not be that Christian thinkers were merely Christianizing pagan philosophy, but Pike is correct to recognize a definite inclination toward such thought and the need to correct it. Incidentally, Pannenberg is not unaware of the same need.

precisely as regards its temporal position, it is present to the eternal God. In the same way it can be said to be affirmed, willed and created by him.⁵⁸¹

Pannenberg, contrary to thinkers such as Wolterstorff⁵⁸² and Swinburne,⁵⁸³ does not think a rejection of complete divine temporality eliminates the possibility that God knows what is temporally different, since God is not eternal in the sense of atemporal, but is eternal in the sense of possessing all distinctions of time at once.⁵⁸⁴

Plotinus provides the paradigm for Pannenberg's understanding of eternity as the totality of life,⁵⁸⁵ for which he also argues from an anthropological perspective. Pannenberg builds on Augustine's view that humans experience the present moment of time in the soul, inasmuch as it reaches out to remember the past and anticipate the future. Augustine understood this time-bridging present as illustrated in common speech and a piece of music. Both are comprehended and acted out only as they exist in their totality, i.e. an entire sentence or paragraph, and the entire piece of music.⁵⁸⁶ It is in the soul's giving "attention" to this time-bridging present that Augustine believes we experience duration—a concept fundamental to our existence. Hence, Pannenberg notes that living within time is only possible when considering it (time) in its totality, since that is what constitutes duration.⁵⁸⁷ Further, in recognizing our "Now" by remembering the past and anticipating the future, the latter should take precedence "for the totality of life is defined only by the future that completes it."⁵⁸⁸

Thus, in this fashion humans' experience of time compares to divine eternity in that it is a present only in view of the whole, but is contrasted to divine eternity due to its limitation of our life span and the fact that we only perceive this totality by remembering and expecting. God, says Pannenberg, has no need of recollecting or anticipating, rather he possesses his totality of life at once. For Augustine the idea of God's eternal present implied atemporality, but Pannenberg claims that this is an unnecessary move and prefers to "think of it as an

⁵⁸¹ *ST 1*, 405.

⁵⁸² Nicholas Wolterstorff, "God Everlasting," *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, eds., Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz, 77-98.

⁵⁸³ Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 220-21.

⁵⁸⁴ *ST 1*, 405.

⁵⁸⁵ Pannenberg does not assimilate Plotinus' theory *en toto*, but levels certain critiques against his anti-Christian elements. See especially, "Eternity, Time, and the Trinitarian God," 65.

⁵⁸⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.28.38.

⁵⁸⁷ *ST 3*, 597.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 597-98. Pannenberg notes Wilhelm Dilthey's influence on his thought in this regard in "An Autobiographical Sketch," *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response*, eds., Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 16. I have already noted this feature in Jenson's thought, as well.

identity that overarches time.”⁵⁸⁹ That is, since God has no future beyond himself, and is thereby not finite, then he is not subject to “the march of time,” but that does not imply that eternity and time are antithetical.⁵⁹⁰ Rather, eternity is the grounding of our time and God’s presence is the gift of our time.⁵⁹¹ Jenson believes that Pannenberg’s notion that God is his own future, *which is not distinct from his present*, slips back into an Augustinian timelessness.⁵⁹² Jenson agrees with Pannenberg that God is not subject to the march of time, hence Jenson’s description of him as “temporal infinity,” but he contends that “this is not because his eternity does not march.”⁵⁹³ Pannenberg’s response to Jenson on this score necessitates an understanding of his doctrine of the Trinity.

A fully trinitarian doctrine of God is the most crucial aspect of Pannenberg’s dogmatic program, grounding and integrating itself into every other aspect of his theology.⁵⁹⁴ Of central concern for Pannenberg as he develops his doctrine of God is to explain “the impact, if any, of temporal events and of the outcome of the process of history upon his eternal identity,” vis-à-vis the theological concepts of the kingdom of God and the incarnation.⁵⁹⁵ This section is an attempt to explicate the nature of the Triune identity and demonstrate how it is significant for Pannenberg’s related doctrine of time.

Pannenberg’s doctrine of God radically reorients the manner in which theology should speak of the Trinity. Traditionally, all efforts to identify and explicate the Trinity moved from the oneness of God to his threeness, exemplified in, among others, Hegel and Barth.⁵⁹⁶ Pannenberg criticizes this approach saying that for all the positive contributions to trinitarianism by Hegel and Protestant nineteenth century theology it could not overcome a serious defect. He explains: “To derive the trinitarian distinctions from the self-differentiation of the divine Spirit in its self-awareness is to subsume the threeness of the persons into the concept of a single personal God. This derivation, then, comes into conflict

⁵⁸⁹ *ST 3*, 597-98.

⁵⁹⁰ *ST 1*, 410.

⁵⁹¹ For a fuller discussion of eternity as the ground of time see, *ST 1*, 404-08; *ST 3*, 603-07.

⁵⁹² *ST 1*, 218.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁴ Pannenberg, “An Autobiographical Sketch,” 16.

⁵⁹⁵ Pannenberg, “Eternity, Time, and the Trinitarian God,” 66.

⁵⁹⁶ Notwithstanding his dependence on both Hegel and Barth Pannenberg critiques them in the process of formulating his own perspective. For his discussion of Hegel’s shortcomings see, *ST 1*, 294-95, and on Barth’s see, *ST 1*, 295-97. For a helpful discussion on the trinitarian similarities and differences between Pannenberg and Barth see, Timothy Bradshaw, *Trinity and Ontology: A Comparative Study of the Theologies of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1988), 345-401. Hegel’s influence on Pannenberg has been well documented and even attested to by Pannenberg himself. For example see, Roger Olson, “The Human Self-realization of God: Hegelian Elements in Pannenberg’s Christology,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 13 (1986); and “An Autobiographical Sketch,” 16. While he does not assume it uncritically he does appear to follow in the German Idealist tradition of which Hegel is so central.

with the doctrine of the Trinity itself.”⁵⁹⁷ For Pannenberg, this is tantamount to Sabellianism since it virtually interprets Father, Son, and Spirit as psychological “phases in the economy of salvation.” On such a scheme, God may be self-conscious of differentiation, yet he remains a single subject, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of three with their own subjectivity.⁵⁹⁸ Thus, the Trinity, Pannenberg believes, must be understood in the way that the three persons relate to one another, and that is the only means to an understanding of the oneness of God.⁵⁹⁹

Interestingly, in suggesting his own trinitarian perspective Pannenberg depends on Barth, especially as it relates to the idea that the ground and development of the doctrine of the identity of the Trinity is God’s revelation in Jesus Christ.⁶⁰⁰ From this starting point Pannenberg offers two crucial elements for his understanding of Trinity. The first is self-differentiation. Against the classical tradition and even much of twentieth century theology Pannenberg wants to construct a trinitarian doctrine “from below” instead of from a speculative, single-subject God then proceeding to threeness. In order to do this Pannenberg must ground the Trinity in the person of Jesus, specifically in his historical relationship to the Father. This self-distinction of the God-Man and the Father is the only way to refer to the threefold divine working, thus the only way to express the nature of the one God. Pannenberg graphically states the centrality of this relationship for his doctrine:

Precisely by distinguishing himself from the Father, by subjecting himself to his will as his creature, by thus giving place to the Father’s claim to deity as he asked other to do in his proclamation of the divine lordship, he showed himself to be the Son of God and one with the Father who sent him (John 10:30).⁶⁰¹

Pannenberg is saying, as Olson puts it, “...that Jesus’ sonship is established by his active self-differentiation from the Father whose lordship he proclaimed.”⁶⁰² Further it is not only the Son who receives his identification from his self-distinction, but the very deity of the Godhead is dependent upon this differentiation. Pannenberg explains that, “As Jesus glorifies the deity of the Father by his sending and in his own relation to the Father, he himself, in corresponding to the claim of the Father, is so at one with the Father *that God in eternity is*

⁵⁹⁷ *ST I*, 294.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 294-95.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 298-99.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 300.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 310.

⁶⁰² Roger Olson, “Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990), 186.

Father only in relation to him.”⁶⁰³ That is, the Father cannot be the Father apart from the historical work of the Son (especially the resurrection), which, incidentally, gives the Son the right to be of the eternal essence of God.⁶⁰⁴ Pannenberg is not saying that the Son begets the Father just as the Father does the Son. If that were the case, then distinction among the persons would collapse, removing trinitarianism entirely. What he *is* saying is that “the designation ‘Father’ might well involve a dependence of the Father on the Son and thus be the basis of true reciprocity in the trinitarian relations.”⁶⁰⁵ Grenz finds this latter statement crucial to Pannenberg’s overall understanding of Trinity because it sharpens the difference between him and a traditional belief in self-differentiation. Classical doctrine might think of this idea as “bringing forth of the second and third trinitarian persons through the Father;” whereas Pannenberg understands it to signify the essence of personhood as bound up with dependence.⁶⁰⁶ That is, to be a self-differentiated person from another is to be dependent upon that other person for one’s identity. Pannenberg finds an ally in Athanasius for he argued against the Arians that God’s fatherhood was dependent upon the Son, and, by consequence, the Son’s work as the God Man. This is vital for Pannenberg because, as Olson explains, “so long as the Son and Spirit are represented as dependent on the Father, but the Father is represented as possessing his deity independently of the Son and Spirit, Subordinationism is inescapable.”⁶⁰⁷

The second decisive element to consider as a foundation for Pannenberg’s trinitarian idea is the fact of God’s kingdom rule. That is, God’s being is intricately bound and inseparable from his rule. Drawing from Luther Pannenberg argues that to be God means to have power over all that is finite, else that god could not be considered God. Hence, God’s very being (deity) is his rule.⁶⁰⁸ The connection for the Trinity and kingdom rule is found in the handing of that rule to the Son from the Father and the future returning of that Lordship to the Father from the Son in the consummation. Since rule in the kingdom is this mutual interaction between Father and Son Pannenberg sees the dependence of the Father upon the Son for his own deity in the strongest ontological terms.

⁶⁰³ *ST I*, 310 (emphasis mine).

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 312.

⁶⁰⁶ Grenz, 49.

⁶⁰⁷ Olson, “Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” 181.

⁶⁰⁸ Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, 55. He also makes the connection here that because the kingdom is still future and God’s being is intrinsic to kingdom, then “God’s being is still in the process of coming to be” (56). This is to be understood in a Barthian sense, and not in a process sense, as he notes in *ST I*, 331. For a critique of Pannenberg’s idea in relation to this quote from a process perspective see, Lewis S. Ford, “The Nature of the Power of the Future,” *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, With an Autobiographical Essay and Response*, 85-9.

By handing over lordship to the Son the Father makes his kingship dependent on whether the Son glorifies him and fulfils his lordship by fulfilling his mission. The self-distinction of the Father from the Son is not just that he begets the Son but that he hands over all things to him, so that his kingdom and his own deity are now dependent upon the Son.⁶⁰⁹

In sum, Pannenberg is keen to dispel any idea that threeness is derived from a presupposed, single-subject and not from the differentiation and interdependence of the persons in the Trinity. Further, the Father does not bestow deity to the Son and Spirit, but is also dependent on the Son and Spirit for his very being. The divine essence does not exclusively flow from the Father, but is relationally oriented dependence involving all three persons, without removing distinctions.⁶¹⁰ The question of how these concepts relate to the world, i.e. time, centers around a discussion on the immanent and economic Trinity.

Olson argues that Pannenberg understands the early church's emphasis on the immanent Trinity as excessive, to the neglect of the economic Trinity in history.⁶¹¹ He goes on to say "this resulted from a misunderstanding of the concept of the eternity of God as timeless aseity. Thus the immanent Trinity tended to lose its historical basis and become unaffected by the process of history."⁶¹² In order to correct this state of affairs Karl Rahner has employed what is now known as "Rahner's Rule" or "Rahner's Axiom," which essentially unites the identity of the immanent and economic Trinity.⁶¹³ Pannenberg credits Rahner, Jüngel, Moltmann, and Jenson with refocusing theology on the centrality of the economic Trinity, yet he does not do so without objection. Such a strong identification by these theologians pushes us, Pannenberg believes, toward "the absorption of the immanent Trinity in the economic Trinity"⁶¹⁴ since it lacks any grid or structure through which one might even be able to conceive of the eternal, transcendent God with historical temporality.⁶¹⁵ Pannenberg clearly wants to avoid the problems brought on by the tradition's overemphasis, thus sympathizing with the current trends, yet he is hesitant to do so due to a fear that it leads to a

⁶⁰⁹ *ST I*, 3 13.

⁶¹⁰ Jenson critiques Pannenberg's trinitarian innovation concerning his application of the term "person" in the modern sense to the Father, Son, and Spirit and the problems that might create. Jenson is hesitant to apply this modern sense of the term to all three, preferring to side with the traditional formulation of God as *a* person. See his, "Jesus in the Trinity: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Christology and the Doctrine of the Trinity," *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response*, 196-202.

⁶¹¹ Olson, "Wolfhart Pannenberg's Doctrine of the Trinity," 197.

⁶¹² *Ibid.*

⁶¹³ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 22.

⁶¹⁴ *ST I*, 331.

⁶¹⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Problems of a Trinitarian Doctrine of God," *Dialog* 26: 4 (1987), 251.

God who is the result of the historical process in the process sense of becoming.⁶¹⁶ This would appear, at first glance, to conflict with Olson's claim that, based on Pannenberg's previously stated axiom that God's being is dependent upon his kingdom rule, he is "radically dependent on the creation and its history" for his deity.⁶¹⁷ A way forward in this apparent dilemma is to ask how Pannenberg attempts resolution of the perceived shortcomings in Rahner's Rule.

Pannenberg's trinitarianism finds itself fully rooted in the tradition and much of present-day theology (including Jenson) by exemplifying a dogged determination of maintaining God's sovereign, inaccessibility, while affirming his participation within history. The question is whether he is able to accomplish this with any sort of coherence. Note the tension Pannenberg endorses:

There has to be a distinction between immanent Trinity and economic Trinity, because Barth was correct in claiming that if God's revelation in Jesus Christ involves the trinitarian structure, then there must be a trinitarian structure in the eternal reality of God himself, prior to the existence of creation. On the other hand, the economic Trinity is not merely an image (in the Platonic sense) of the eternal trinitarian structure in the being of God. The immanent Trinity is dependent on the process of history (hence on the economic Trinity) not only in the *ordo cognoscendi*, but also in its very being as soon as there is a world.⁶¹⁸

Not surprisingly the key concept in this resolution is the future. Yet, if he is going to say, "the immanent Trinity is dependent on the process of history," is he not forced into a Whiteheadian view of God's development? We have already established that, for Pannenberg, "God's deity is his rule," and if God's rule is not explicitly and completely established until the eschaton, then his deity in an ontological sense hangs in the balance and may collapse if God's rule does not come to fruition. Pannenberg explicitly denies this possibility and explains how the future is constitutive for God.

But the eschatological consummation is only the locus of the decision that the trinitarian God is always the true God from eternity to eternity. The dependence of his existence on the eschatological consummation of the kingdom changes nothing in this regard. It is simply necessary to take into account the constitutive significance of this consummation for the eternity of God.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁶ Alas, the identical fear of every Jenson critic, as well.

⁶¹⁷ Olson, "Wolfhart Pannenberg's Doctrine of the Trinity," 199.

⁶¹⁸ Private correspondence from Pannenberg quoted in Bradshaw, 227.

⁶¹⁹ *ST I*, 331.

The “decision”⁶²⁰ in the future will evidence that it is has been true throughout history. Hence, crucial to understanding Pannenberg here is this concept of retroactivity and the reciprocal relationship between present and future. If we apply what has already been said concerning the self-differentiation and dependence of the Son to the Father and vice versa, then we might easily conceive of the same relationship on a broader scale. That is, Jesus’ resurrection *decided* (recall the “locus of the decision” in the above quote) *retroactively* that he was the eternal Son of God throughout his earthly life. Similarly, the completion of the work of the economic Trinity at the consummation will demonstrate the essential Trinity in all its fullness throughout history. Therefore, Pannenberg maintains the distinction of the immanent and economic Trinity without emphasizing one over the other, by appealing to the future consummation where salvation-history is completed and the three persons are shown to be one God.⁶²¹

Having discussed Pannenberg’s doctrine of the Trinity we must return to Jenson’s accusation from which this all began, viz., that Pannenberg was forced into an Augustinian timelessness by saying that God is his own future. It should be clear at this juncture that Pannenberg resists any dualism that posits the immutable God as completely detached from the necessary change of finitude. Yet, he carefully does not fall into an “either/or” dichotomy, but employs his concepts dialectically by means of retroactive validation in the future.⁶²² In view of the priority of God’s future for this program and the ontological dependence of the immanent (we might say, eternal) Trinity on the economic Trinity (and vice versa), Pannenberg is keen to demonstrate the unity of time and eternity over against any antithesis. Pannenberg is able to circumvent this antithesis of time and eternity “only if the reality of God is not understood as undifferentiated identity but as intrinsically differentiated unity. But this demands the doctrine of the Trinity.”⁶²³ Because of God’s self-differentiation and the work of the economic Trinity to include creatures in the life of God Pannenberg can say that God’s eternity embraces the time of the creatures, i.e., history. This is a result of his

⁶²⁰ This concept appears as early as 1964 in *Grundzüge der Christologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1964), 333, when noting how the being of Jesus as the God Man was not true from all eternity until his resurrection “weil noch nicht *endgültig* über sie entschieden war” (because the final decision had not yet been given).

⁶²¹ Olson questions whether Pannenberg really needs to insist on God’s provisional unity. He believes that in Pannenberg’s system, power and glory are lacking for God before the eschaton, but to make his unity provisional seems unnecessary, inviting the charge of Tritheism. See, Olson, “Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” 202-03.

⁶²² Braaten believes that in approaching the God-world relationship in this fashion Pannenberg is explicitly combining Hegelian and Kierkegaardian features. See, Carl E. Braaten, *History and Hermeneutics* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968), 30-31.

⁶²³ *ST 1*, 405.

effort to dispense with the presupposed, single-subject God and flows from the idea that it is only through his self-differentiation that we come to see his oneness.

Based on this trinitarian model time is differentiated in history (economy), but is unified at the eschaton (immanent). According to Pannenberg, this does not obliterate time any more than the economic Trinity becomes extinct at the consummation—the point where, as Pannenberg says, it accomplishes its purpose and retroactively shows the immanent Trinity to be the one God. By virtue of the economic Trinity working within time and its identity with the immanent Trinity historical time is appropriated and given its status as “time as it should be,” showing that our time is grounded in his eternity. That is why, as Pannenberg points out, that Barth “can say that his present as such is the *gift* of my time.”⁶²⁴ Further, this appropriation of time within eternity at the consummation is vital for Pannenberg because of his belief that true essence is derived from the end. That is, as we have already seen, in a very real sense the deity of God is dependent upon the future consummation.⁶²⁵ Likewise, real being in humans is only found at the resurrection, the guarantee of which is Jesus’ resurrection.⁶²⁶

For Pannenberg to say that God is his own future is to affirm in relation to time what he has already affirmed regarding the Trinity itself, that is, that the Son and Spirit (being self-differentiated) are the future consummation of the eternal Father who is prior to them. Pannenberg resolves any contradiction here by conceiving of God’s eternal identity as “the power of his future.”⁶²⁷ What he intends is to maintain the priority of the immanent Trinity that brings into time the events of the economic Trinity, yet without collapsing the latter into the former. Because of the incarnation God is truly present within history, and that history is not platonic or accidental, but is bound with his identity. Yet those historical events only come about because of the priority of the essential Trinity and its actualizing them by the power of his future.⁶²⁸

Thus, Son is the future of the Father because he establishes his kingdom on earth. The Spirit is the future of the Son because of his resurrection, and both are future of the Father because of the future acts of consummation in relation to the kingdom. Nevertheless, the Father is the future of both Son and Spirit because it is his kingdom they are establishing. “As they share in the communion of the one living God, however, they share in his eternal

⁶²⁴ Ibid., 406.

⁶²⁵ “Problems of a Trinitarian Doctrine of God,” 252.

⁶²⁶ See his discussion on this in *ST* 3, 595-607; and *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans., Matthew J. O’Connell (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 240-42.

⁶²⁷ “Eternity, Time, and the Trinitarian God,” 67.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 68.

life that has no future outside and beyond itself to occur to it. The trinitarian God has eternal life within himself.”⁶²⁹ Consequently, apart from a trinitarian viewpoint, time would be opposed to eternity and we would be left with atemporality. Within a trinitarian perspective, we understand Pannenberg to unite time and eternity, with the former being grounded in the latter because of the unity of the immanent and economic Trinity.

As should be obvious from the above discussion Pannenberg’s concept of time rests upon the Trinity and upon his method of anticipation, both of which have come under attack. Clayton contends that Pannenberg faces philosophical problems by integrating two very different concepts of anticipation into one, thus resting his theory of time on shaky ground.⁶³⁰ On one level Pannenberg is insisting that God is free from the constraints of time, which will end at a certain point when eternity breaks in and consummates the historical process. In this model time marches and history develops, yet God does not develop alongside it. On another level Pannenberg insists that God is dependent on the process of history, thus integrated into time, so much so that his very deity hangs in the balance—though he believes that all will be accomplished so that God’s deity will appear in the eschaton as it was in reality all along. If we combine this view of God and anticipation as Pannenberg wants us to do, according to Clayton, then we must also maintain a transcendence-yet-preservation view of time. “But if one rejects the Hegelian dialectic and its *Aufhebungen*, one must insist that time is either transcended or preserved.”⁶³¹

Bradshaw raises similar questions in regard to the end of time at the eschaton and the new status of the created order within eternity. “When time ends and God’s triune being is wholly consummated, when God is all in all and the whole creation is summed up as permeated by the Spirit, then is there a *hypostasis* of creation to be God’s partner?”⁶³² Since Pannenberg sees God as differentiated from and related to the world’s history, the problem enters when that history is complete. Is it possible for God to maintain this distinction from finitude, or would the finitude be integrated into the finitude of the Son?⁶³³

It appears that Pannenberg concludes that at the consummation it is God’s overarching of time that will win the day, for our time and the work of the economic Trinity has found its fulfillment in him. Thus, in spite of his efforts to avoid an eternal present,

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁶³⁰ Philip Clayton, “Anticipation and Theological Method,” *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response*, 139-40.

⁶³¹ Ibid., 140.

⁶³² Bradshaw, 341.

⁶³³ Ibid.

Pannenberg has the same difficulty that Barth has, namely, the ongoing distinction of our time (therefore, our existence) in the eschaton. Or, our time *tends* to get eternalized and God's time *tends* to get defined as an eternal present, bearing little resemblance to our earthly time. However, if we bear in mind that time and eternity are not opposed, but both are based on the interrelation of personhood, then problems diminish. Perhaps it is true that the eschaton presents a challenge to Barth and Pannenberg regarding the continuation of our time and existence in relation to God's, but it is not a fatal flaw in their theology. Recall that for both thinkers time is not defined by the discontinuity of past, present, and future, but by relation of being. For God, it is the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit overcoming our discontinuities. For humanity, it is God holding our being together, even though we lose it to the past and anticipate from the future. Therefore, within a trinitarian theology that highlights the relations of persons, time and eternity are not opposed, but can be united.

Pannenberg does not desire an eternalizing of his theology, thus he orients his theology strongly toward God's economy, just as Jenson does. Nevertheless, to stretch the persons out on the temporal continuum is, for Pannenberg, not the solution to the problem. I believe he is correct to insist upon the unity of the persons in each moment of our temporal history and to object to Jenson's theory. My reasons for this and my own proposals will emerge in the next chapter.

Conclusion

My efforts in this chapter have been centered on Barth's doctrine of time in the divine eternity, the time of Jesus Christ, and the time of humanity. I have tried to demonstrate that the divine eternity and human time are discovered in and determined by the time of Jesus Christ, which is real time (revelation time, authentic time), both on the divine and human sides. What Barth has done is to reject the idea that rationality and temporality are autonomous entities into which we must fit our conceptions of the divine being. Rather, what is truly rational is what God reveals, and what he reveals is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as God in himself *and* God for us. In this revelation we recognize Jesus as Lord, in particular, as Lord of time. Thus, time is what he determines it to be however counterintuitive it at first may appear. In this real time Jesus possesses authentic divine eternity and authentic human time, which is a gift to humanity and received by faith.

Thus, the conclusion of the first part of this thesis is that the question of time and eternity is a profoundly theological one. Similar to the impossibility of positing God's

trinity or his incarnation from a natural perspective, so, too, is it impossible to account for God's eternal relation to time merely by discerning the nature of our time. Approaching the question of time and eternity must be on terms of God's self-revelation. Therefore, Barth and Jenson speak to the current dialogue for they advocate the development of a trinitarian theology that interacts with the broader scientific and philosophical problems, rather than the reverse. The problem with the traditional view of atemporality was the tendency to project upon God a natural understanding of what he should look like. The problem in the current time/eternity discussion is not dissimilar in that the tendency is to avoid a trinitarian theology and appeal to natural possibilities regarding time. Barth and Jenson provide a better method and need to be heard if we will ever advance toward a resolution—exactly my aim for the remaining chapter. I shall proceed by comparing and contrasting Barth and Jenson in order to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. This, I argue, sheds light on what a theology of time and eternity should look like and how it would be integrated into the wider discussion—something I have already attempted.

Toward that end it is helpful to bear in mind that neither author's doctrine is flawless, and in Barth's case, his concept of fallen time raises significant questions:

- 1) Can it be said that Jesus participated in time just as we do, if our time is fallen? Barth never admits to such a concept, indeed, he claims the opposite. It may be that Barth recognizes his problem yet has nowhere to turn, given his insistence on the authentic, real time of Jesus Christ—a temporality which turns out to be strikingly reminiscent of eternity. Others have noted that as a consequence he has little interest in the humanity of the man Jesus.⁶³⁴ But clearly, Jesus does participate in our time. He matures physically and emotionally (Luke 2), and when he dies and is resurrected by the Father he is not the baby from the manger. Jesus has a history that can be narrated in the temporal terms of our past, present, and future. This does not seem to fit well in Barth's doctrine of time since his time is the simultaneity of pure duration, which may be equivalent to an eternal present.
- 2) Consequently, Barth's doctrine of God as the *electing* God is seen to shape everything about the divine being, so that each discussion of time and eternity is controlled by soteriology, election. Barth's concept of Jesus is skewed if we allege he genuinely participated in our time like we do, since that time represents sinful humanity, and Jesus was without sin.

⁶³⁴ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 185. This may be a slight overstatement, but nonetheless it is a perceptive comment that fits the dilemmas of fallen and real time.

- 3) If fallen time is that which is passing away and real time is God's authentic time that by grace he gives to us and we receive by faith, then when Barth says that time is proper to our being, what is he actually saying? Are we not in some sense already eternal?
- 4) What about our identity in the eschaton? How, on Barth's scheme, do we maintain our temporal identity without morphing into the divine?

CHAPTER SIX
TIME AND ETERNITY:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF BARTH AND JENSON

The previous chapters have served to demonstrate the following claims: 1) contemporary theology and philosophy of religion understand the Christian tradition as embracing and propagating a doctrine of divine atemporality that tends to minimize essential biblical teaching and undercuts theological assertions concerning God and his relation to the world; 2) Barth and Jenson reject divine atemporality, yet make every effort to demonstrate how their trinitarian modifications (upon which their views of time are based) are within the parameters of the tradition; 3) However, Jenson, while affirming much of Barth's theological enterprise, charges that he ultimately fails to overcome this theological impediment and offers his own solution to the dilemma.

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate that correction both from Barth's side and Jenson's, whether it is warranted, and whether it advances theology's conception of divine temporality in a helpful direction. Subsequently, I will offer my own suggestions regarding this issue, which (I hope) will build on Barth and Jenson's foundation, yet improve upon it.

The *analogia fidei* in Relation to Time and Eternity

Barth's doctrine of analogy draws most of his critics' attention partly because of his sustained and vehement attack upon natural theology and the *analogia entis*, and partly because that is the location of certain ambiguities.⁶³⁵ In light of these two perspectives two introductory qualifications are in order.

First, the term "analogy" is burdened with considerable historical weight that cannot be wholly dissected here, related in particular to the question of natural theology and the *analogia entis*. Rather than sift through all the arguments for one side or the other, I must focus on the latter of the two perspectives mentioned above, viz., Jenson's allegation that the *analogia fidei* produces ambiguity in relation to time and eternity.⁶³⁶

⁶³⁵ Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 171.

⁶³⁶ For the purposes of this thesis it is sufficient to ascertain Barth's use of *analogia fidei*, Jenson's understanding of it, and how it impacts time and eternity. On perspectives concerning Barth and the *analogia entis* the following are important: H. G. Pöhlmann, *Analogia entis oder Analogia fidei?: Die Frage der Analogie bei Karl Barth* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965); Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation with Special Reference to Volume One of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 120-212; G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in*

Second, it is important to note that Barth's assimilation of the *analogia fidei* was not as an *a priori* consideration from which dogmatic content flowed, but rather exactly the opposite is the case. That is, it is not a *method*, per se, but is an assertion that Barth concludes must be the case, given God's triune self-revelation in Jesus Christ.⁶³⁷ This fact does not elude Jenson and, indeed, it is the feature that distinguishes him from other critics of Barth's *analogia fidei*.⁶³⁸ If this is true (that the method is accidental to the material content), then it appears possible to be critical of the method without giving up on a trinitarianly-shaped eternity. The argument here will be that Jenson does precisely that, though his proposal does not escape dilemmas of its own.

McCormack gives a helpful definition of Barth's favored use of analogy:

The 'analogy of faith' refers most fundamentally to a relation of correspondence between an *act* of God and an *act* of a human subject; the act of divine Self-revelation and the human act of faith in which that revelation is acknowledged. More specifically, the analogy which is established in the revelation event is an analogy between God's knowledge of Himself and human knowledge of Him in and through human concepts and words.⁶³⁹

So, then, the relation between God and humanity is dependent not upon some prior capacity within humans to correspond to God, such as *being*, but solely upon divine grace received by faith alone. As Hunsinger has aptly put it, "Grace elicits faith, and faith corresponds analogically to grace, but no ontological commonality of any kind mediates between them... Faith is conceived as grounded in grace alone, and the mediating term with respect to the analogy is conceived not as 'being' but as 'miracle.'"⁶⁴⁰ Given the preceding two

the Theology of Karl Barth, trans. H. R. Boer (London: Paternoster Press, 1956), 179-93; Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming*, 13-53.

⁶³⁷ McCormack, *CRDT*, 19; Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 174.

⁶³⁸ This is one place Hunsinger's critique of Jenson goes awry. Jenson is also working within the framework of a Christologically/trinitarianly-determined time and eternity, unlike Roberts for sure, and maybe even Moltmann. Hunsinger is wrong to believe that Jenson's "metaphysical proclivities," i.e. an over-zealous rationalism, hinders him from embracing Barth's view of eternity. In other words, according to Hunsinger, Jenson is not willing to allow God to be hidden and revealed, conceivable and inconceivable, but rather he wants to turn Christology into a "metaphysic of the particular." To the contrary Jenson believes that Barth, rather than breaking with the traditional understanding of a timeless God, has perpetuated it, albeit in a much more profoundly trinitarian fashion, and Jenson wants to follow Barth's lead whilst correcting what he identifies as this one shortcoming. He is not driven by rationalism any more that Barth himself was in attempting to construct an ontology that avoids atemporality. The proof of this is perceived in his own proposals (see below), which, interestingly, Hunsinger admits he does not wish to examine or evaluate. See Hunsinger, *How To Read Karl Barth*, 19-22.

⁶³⁹ McCormack, *CRDT*, 16-17.

⁶⁴⁰ Hunsinger, *How To Read Karl Barth*, 283.

chapters, especially chapter four, this explicit definition of the *analogia fidei* should be expected. However, what I have not done in obvious terms up to this point is to draw a clearer connection between Barth's use of analogy and his doctrine of time and eternity. To this we now turn.

At the end of chapter five I identified some of the problems with Barth's use of fallen time in relation to Jesus' own history, our identity, and eschatology. Through each stage of Barth's doctrine of God (thus, time and eternity) it is the same issue that has continually been raising its ugly head, viz. how does Barth maintain the distinction between time and eternity so that God does not collapse into the man Jesus, or that our history does not disappear into his (Jesus') history?⁶⁴¹ As I have already alluded to, on the one hand Barth wants to distance himself from classic Protestant theology that draws too great a distinction between God and the world, and on the other hand from liberal theology that very nearly conflates the two, elevating existentialism to divine status. To accomplish this Barth has centered all his theological energy on Jesus Christ. He *is* God. We *are* his and our identity is in him.⁶⁴² But the "is" is intended as both proximity and distance.⁶⁴³ He is the mediation of God and creation, uniting them without losing the distinction. At the heart of this theological enterprise is the distinction of time and eternity, and the manner in which Barth discriminates between the two is by employing this concept of analogy. If time and eternity collapse, then the Christian claims and our history as part of those claims collapse. If the duality is too sharp, then time is a reality independent of Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus is the center point of analogy in that our relationship to God in Jesus *mirrors* Jesus' relationship to the Father. The following from Barth will illuminate the point:

God repeats in this relationship *ad extra* a relationship proper to Himself in His inner divine essence. Entering into this relationship, He makes a copy of Himself. Even in His inner divine being there is relationship. To be sure, God is One in Himself. But

⁶⁴¹ Just as we may ask whether Barth makes room for our time we could also ask whether there is room for human freedom. Webster explores this in *Barth's Moral Theology* and claims that indeed not only is this a chief concern of Barth's, but he succeeds in making this room. Though a full discussion exceeds the bounds of this thesis it is instructive to note Barth's consistent grounding of the attributes in Trinity, rather than speculating with regard to the given notion, then projecting that on God and humanity. Humanity is free, according to Barth, because God defines what that is and grounds our freedom in his. Likewise, God's self-determination delineates what real time is and grounds ours (see pp. 99-122). Jenson also wants to make that "room" and resist the urge both to radical transcendence and pantheism, only in a different way than Barth. More on this below.

⁶⁴² *GAG*, 74.

⁶⁴³ NB Barth's discussion on the divine omnipresence in *CD* II.1, 461-90 where he teases out this idea of proximity and distance in God.

He is not alone. There is in Him a co-existence, co-inherence and reciprocity...And it is this relationship in the inner divine being which is repeated [*wiederholt*] and reflected [*nachgebildet*] in God's eternal covenant with man as revealed and operative⁶⁴⁴ in time in the humanity of Jesus... We have seen that there is a factual, a materially necessary, and supremely, as the origin of the factual and materially necessary, an inner divine correspondence and similarity between the being of the man Jesus for God and His being for His fellows. This correspondence and similarity consists in the fact that the man Jesus in His being for man repeats and reflects the inner being or essence of God and this confirms His being for God.⁶⁴⁵

How does this concept of analogy differ from anything in the tradition? In one sense, i.e. in its use as a tool, it does not differ in the least. The idea of “resemblance,” “reflection,” “mirroring,” are all standard concepts in the traditional use of analogy,⁶⁴⁶ yet in another way Barth deviates from the tradition by replacing the locus of analogy from “being-as-such” with Christ. “Barth’s fundamental objection to the classical doctrine of the analogy of God and the world is that as the correspondence between them it puts being-in-general where Jesus Christ belongs.” “God’s reality is, by his choice, the occurrence of the life of this person; our lives are incidents in his life—and *so* we creatures are analogous to God.”⁶⁴⁷ It is only in Jesus Christ that we can speak of analogy between God and the creature. The creature still has no insight to offer in this regard, but the creature is not alone, but in Jesus Christ. Hence, the pattern of analogy remains the same in *CD* that it was in *Romans*, but “the moment” in the time-eternity dialectic is replaced with Jesus Christ. The intersection of time and eternity is not abstract, but is now a narrated history. “We have a *particular story* to tell about eternity.”⁶⁴⁸

Since Barth has replaced being in general with Christology as the analogical point, then our being is in his, and that is the reality of our identity as humans *and* of our

⁶⁴⁴ “Operative” is a strange translation for *kräftig*, which is normally translated “strong,” or “powerful.” Even if we do translate it that way, however, the relevance of it to the sentence is unclear. Jenson quotes this sentence in *GAG*, 74 and, interestingly, leaves this word out—the only such omission in that phrase on his part.

⁶⁴⁵ *CD* III.2, 218-19. This last phrase in German reads: “...und eben damit sein Sein für Gott wahr macht,” *KD* III.2, 261. It seems to me that “confirms” is ambiguous and does not reach the force of Barth’s statement—that the meaning of God’s very being *is* this copy of God’s being for us in Jesus. Jesus’ being for God *is made* in this analogous relation with us.

⁶⁴⁶ Jüngel’s work *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism*, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983), 261-98, though not without controversy, is a helpful perspective and interpretation of the traditional theological uses of analogy and why Barth’s (and his) Christological analogy is the way forward. Philip A. Rolnick outlines what he perceives as Jüngel’s shortcomings in *Analogical Possibilities: How Words Refer to God* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 243-84.

⁶⁴⁷ *GAG*, 77. Jüngel arrives at the same conclusion concerning Christ as the center point of analogy in his important article “Die Möglichkeit theologischer Anthropologie auf dem Grunde der Analogie: Eine Untersuchung zum Analogieverständnis Karl Barths,” *Evangelische Theologie*, 22 (1962): 535-57.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

relationship to God. *Being* is grounded and determined in Christ, not in some general concept. *Therefore, the same must be true of time.* Time, since it is essential to humanity, is grounded in, determined by, and gifted to us by grace in Jesus Christ alone, not in a reality independent of Christ.⁶⁴⁹ Thus, the being of Christ grounds, defines and gives us real humanity; nevertheless we lack the full realization of this because of sin. Likewise, Christ grounds and gives us real time, but fallen time persists due to our fallen condition.⁶⁵⁰

The other way Barth at least begins to deviate from the traditional understanding of analogy as illustrated in the above quotation is to posit analogy as *relations*, “rather than between substances with partly similar and partly dissimilar attributes.”⁶⁵¹ The eternal covenant that God establishes with humanity is a *relational event* that is a repetition of the trinitarian relations, primarily, between Father and Son.⁶⁵² This, of course, echoes the Cappadocians, Basil in particular, much more than it does Augustine,⁶⁵³ hence, we are not surprised to discover that Jenson finds hope in these advancements. As has been noted before, Barth was not interested in maintaining a metaphysics of substance⁶⁵⁴ so that eternity was perceived to be the static prototype of our dynamic temporality—this, of course, is the risk one runs using terms such as “grounds,” “prototype,” and “ectype,” and one that we could easily dispense with.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁴⁹ Hopefully the quotations from Barth in chapters four and five adequately demonstrate this.

⁶⁵⁰ Hunsinger contends that in Barth “time’s healing is distinct from salvation from sin. Time’s wounds, as here set forth, are inherent in the good creation. They may be exacerbated and corrupted by sin, but they are not identical with it, nor are they hostile to God. When measured by eternity, they are merely imperfections, not corruptions.” See his, “*Mysterium Trinitatis*,” 185. I recognize the concern and understand it by virtue of passages such as the one on “Allotted Time” in *CD* III.2, 553-72. Yet based on the distinction Barth draws between “created time” and “fallen time” and upon discussions such as that under “Given Time” in III.2, it is difficult to see how he does not consider the succession of past, present, and future in our time as directly parallel to our sinful state. True, past, present, and future in themselves are not, in Barth’s perspective, sinful or antithetical to God, but the fact that we lose the past and cannot anticipate the future is indeed something antithetical to God’s time. We have fallen time because of sin. Barth states in *CD* I.2, 47: “but the time we think we know and possess, ‘our’ time [*unsere Zeit*], is by no means the time God created. Between our time and God-created time as between our existence and the existence created by God there lies the Fall. ‘Our’ time...is the time produced by us, i.e., by fallen man...Our time, the time we know and possess, is and remains lost time, *even when we believe that God is the Creator of time*” (my emphasis).

⁶⁵¹ *GAG*, 155.

⁶⁵² *CD* III.2, 218-22. “Between these two relationships as such—and it is in this sense that the second is the image of the first—there is correspondence and similarity. There is an *analogia relationis*” (220).

⁶⁵³ The best article I have seen on this is Gunton’s essay entitled “Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West,” which is a chapter in his book, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 30-55.

⁶⁵⁴ But, of course, this does not mean that Barth (or Jenson, for that matter) reject a Trinity of substance in favor of a full-blown social trinitarianism; but rather their polemic is against the trappings that typically (but do not necessarily) accompany it—absolute simplicity, atemporality, absolute immutability, etc. For an interesting essay on this see, William P. Alston “Substance and the Trinity,” *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, 179-201.

⁶⁵⁵ Dropping such language would also soften one of Roberts’ key objections to Barth, viz., that the “tension between eternal work and temporal realization is still problematic...so long as all the interpretative categories are grounded in and derived from the divine and eternal being of God” *Theology on Its Way?*, 34. Roberts’

It follows from this particular aspect of analogy—that of *relations*—that I want to suggest what Barth might need in overcoming any weakness in his doctrine of time and eternity (I hinted at this in the previous chapter under the section on Pannenberg). I am simply enquiring into how Barth’s doctrine can be optimized, whilst remaining within the bounds of Christian theology and avoiding an excursion into unnecessary speculation. By way of introducing this section I will summarize some thoughts that have gone before.

It is important to distinguish between Barth’s essential proposals concerning time and eternity and the points of weakness to be shored up. What is wrong with an eternal present? If you mean by that that God exists atemporally, then everything is wrong with it, as we have repeatedly noted in this thesis. If you mean by eternal present that God is not hindered or overcome by time’s contingencies so that he interacts temporally with the created order in an absolute sense in its past, present, and future, then I fail to see its fault. The crucial point to be made is that Barth believes God has a *temporal* relation with creation;⁶⁵⁶ it is not an atemporal relation. God can have this temporal relation and still be God, i.e. the God the scriptures testify to that is Creator and Lord over his creation. Jenson offers the same theological proposal for the same reasons, only modifying the structure of the trinitarian relations and placing an accent on future. Furthermore, Barth doggedly insists that time, freedom, reality, etc. is not defined by human cognition, but rather by revelation alone. We may *think* true time is the everlasting separation of past, present, and future, but since, according to Barth, God’s time exhibits different qualities we must adjust our conceptions and language. So, to say “eternal present” does not necessarily equal “atemporality.” Eternal present for Barth is merely God’s ability to be in the past, present, and future without hindrance. There really is a past, and God has been there. There really is a present, and God is here now. There really is an as-of-yet-unrealized future and God is there, too, indeed, he *is* that future. Our time is not an illusion, though it is in need of healing.

Indeed, it is only the otherness or difference between God’s time and humanity’s that establishes our time, thus, it is my contention that Barth’s essential understanding of eternity and time is not unsalvageable, for he maintains this key feature. Furthermore, the distinction

objection to Barth is that his doctrine of time and revelation is so eternalized that it renders the created order as unreal. That is, the created order should possess autonomy and not derive its reality from God’s being and time. Surely this is an objection to Barth’s core conviction that God reveals Godself and would not be completely satisfied by dropping the “prototype” terminology. However, it does alleviate the eternalizing tendency without capitulating to Roberts’ rationalism and natural theology.

⁶⁵⁶ “...[W]e cannot understand God’s eternity to be pure timelessness. Since it became time, and God Himself, without ceasing to be the eternal God, took time and made it His own, we have to confess that He was able to do this. He was not only able to have and give time as Creator, but in Jesus Christ He was able Himself to be temporal” *CD* II.1, 617.

of immanent and economic is a good one, for it establishes the freedom of God and creates the necessary space for human freedom and time. However, Barth's tendency to eternalize our time in Jesus may stem from a conception of the triune relations as primarily *causal*, rather than *relational*.⁶⁵⁷ Or, to put it another way, "the immanent Trinity is in effect conceived in terms contradictory of the economy."⁶⁵⁸ If the persons are turned in on themselves as a closed circle, then the relationship of God to the world will not be one of freedom *in* relationality, but one of bondage and causality. If the immanent is set against the economic, then time and eternity are mutually exclusive and trinitarian talk is nothing more than paradox. Or we could say, if God is in his transcendence not precisely how he is revealed in the economy, then atemporality reigns, for how could the Transcendent be temporal? We might wonder if Barth's doctrine of time/eternity is very much like this, given the use of analogy and the talk of "prototype" and "ectype." Yet, this need not be the case, for immanent and economic does not necessarily lead to a mutually exclusive time and eternity. The central concept seems to be the role of the Spirit in the economy. Does he (the Spirit) close the trinitarian circle so that God in himself is entirely self-satisfied and whose otherness is the antithesis of the created order? Or, is the Spirit's role to free the Father and Son to love that which is not God, so that the relation to the created order—though not a necessary one—gives proper freedom and space to both sides? If this is the Spirit's eschatological role and it is given proper weight, then it is God's being to open himself to otherness. We may cite Gunton at length:

The third person of the Trinity is the one whose function is to make the love of God a love that is opened towards that which is not itself, to perfect it in otherness. Because God is not in himself a closed circle but is essentially the relatedness of community, there is within his eternal being that which freely and in love creates, reconciles and redeems that which is not himself. The relation of God to the creation, which is expressed in creation, reconciliation and redemption, is grounded in the other-related love of the Father, Son and Spirit to be the dynamic of that love, both in itself and towards the world...The difference [with Augustine] is that the introduction of the eschatological note changes radically the way in which the relationship is understood: not a closed circle, but a self-sufficient community of love freely opened outwards to embrace the other.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁷ I do not intend to suggest that Barth's doctrine of God lacks an understanding of relations between the persons. Hopefully, below the point will clearly become apparent.

⁶⁵⁸ Colin E. Gunton, *Theology Through the Theologians: Selected Essays, 1972-1995* (London: T & T Clark, 1996), 124.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Everything about Barth's theology endeavors to affirm this very fact. We know God to be in himself what he reveals himself to be in time, and the chief pointer to that being is the event of election. However, (despite the awkwardness of the question) *when* does election happen? Election happens in the eternal being of God in that he elects himself to be the electing God for humanity. It is not an election in eternity past and simply unfolds in time, but rather it embraces all time. God is who he is—Father, Son, and Spirit—in not only his pre-temporality, but also in his supra- and post-temporality. God is the electing God in all three temporal moments, as well.

Yet, Gunton, Jenson and others⁶⁶⁰ have pointed to Barth's weak pneumatology, though not making the same mistakes as Augustine, as nevertheless perpetuating some of his core problems. One of those is the relative isolation of the election event to the Father and Son, thus bringing into question the defining role of the Spirit for God and for the relation to the created order. The orientation of the theology inevitably becomes the past. There is something to their criticism and Barth's doctrine of time and eternity could be improved if he had placed greater weight on the eschatological action of the Spirit both for the Godhead and in our time. But it is also true, as I have continuously argued in this thesis, that the tools needed for such an emphasis are there in Barth—unity of act and being, the divine relations as the ground of being and time, eternity that embraces time—he only need fully avail himself of them. Again, we may turn to Colin Gunton for help. In a passage contrasting Edward Irving's emphasis on the work of the eschatological Spirit within the created order with Barth, he states:

That is Barth's teaching, too. Those who deny it have missed a real part of his theology. Barth's weakness is a weakness of balance; there is insufficient weight given to the distinctions between the three divine persons and, in particular, to the reality and distinctive functions of the Spirit, with the result that too much is thrown on to Christology, too much on to the immanent and eternal; and so too little on the particularities of history. But it is a weakness of *balance*, or rather of the way in which weight is placed in different areas of dogmatic importance.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁶⁰ Rowan Williams, "Barth on the Triune God," *Karl Barth: Studies of His Theological Method*, ed. S.W. Sykes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 147-93.

⁶⁶¹ "The Triune God and the Freedom of the Creature," *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, ed., S.W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 64. My emphasis added. As this chapter reflects this is Gunton's frequent criticism of Barth, and perhaps it sharpened over the years after this article was written in the late 1980s. However, I am yet to find in Gunton where the substance of the critique ever evolved toward something more serious, such as, Barth's complete failure to unite God with the world, or his inability to express any version of trinitarianism beyond that of Augustine. No matter where the appraisal appears, it seems to me that Gunton's thrust is always one of balancing Barth's rather large ship, and not advocating its permanent docking.

The key shift, according to Gunton, (and it is not a drastic one) would be not to understand immanent/economic (freedom/love) in terms of election alone, “but on the eternal love of Father, Son, and Spirit in eternity, based on the whole of the Father’s economic action through his two hands, not merely on one of them.”⁶⁶² The result would be a more all-encompassing divine action within the created order and the tendency to view God’s elective act in Jesus as something eternalized, disconnected from time, and already taken place would fade. God has acted in the past and is acting now by virtue of the Spirit’s personal work of bringing the kingdom “on earth as it is in heaven.” This is what theology needs to speak of a temporal God. The relation is not atemporal, mutually exclusive, lacking any sort of logical coherence. But rather it is a way to maintain divine sovereignty whilst creating the space needed for our temporal reality and freedom. God is perfectly free to be community in himself, and this is so by virtue of the Spirit’s role in the Godhead. Just so, the Spirit frees the persons to move outward and embrace the community of creation without that movement being a necessary one *or* one of mutual exclusivity. Put another way: eternity can embrace time without being subject to it.

Rowan Williams has expressed similar concerns not only with Barth, but with Christian theology as a whole, and has lucidly argued that if the Spirit’s role is simply one of a second mediator or merely of a “communicator” that “instructs and guides” concerning the Son, then there are serious consequences for the relation of God to the world and for the Christian life. If the Spirit bears an ontological role in the trinitarian life, then it is easier to make the God-world connection, for the Spirit is the one bringing life (and all it entails—freedom, time, etc.) to humanity and is not merely “an exercise designed simply to explain how we know what Christ does.”⁶⁶³ “[I]f the role of Spirit is *communication*, in a narrowly ‘linear’ sense, whether by ecstatic vision or noetic purity, an impoverished and abstract concept of the actual texture of Christian life and experience is likely to result.”⁶⁶⁴ The correction is away from the tendency toward “binitarianism” and “Christomonism,” which has resulted in the problematic, radical distinction of immanent/economic, atemporal/temporality in the God-world relation.

This modification or improvement is easily transferred into the specifics of the time/eternity discussion as illustrated, once again, by Padgett’s work and particularly by his objection to Barth’s construal of time and eternity. Padgett’s own conclusions, as articulated

⁶⁶² *Becoming and Being*, 240.

⁶⁶³ *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 118.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

in chapter four of this thesis, are so similar to Barth's that it is surprising to hear such strong objections from him. Why? And, more importantly, could his unease be alleviated?

Essentially, according to Padgett, Barth holds to a divine eternal Now that embraces all time and calls into question the reality of process.⁶⁶⁵ The reason for this assessment is what I have identified and discussed in detail as "real time," hence, I will forgo another summary of that here.⁶⁶⁶ Suffice it to say that I have acknowledged this tendency in Barth to eternalize the reality of time and history of Jesus and the subsequent questions that it raises for our time.⁶⁶⁷ However, my proposal for improvement upon Barth is exactly the place where Padgett is weakest—on a theology of trinitarian relations; the only location, I believe, where it is possible to approach the issue of God's "time." God's time is the relationality and otherness of the persons made so by the Spirit who frees the Father and Son to be truly other, and then frees the Godhead to be free and yet truly in relation to all that is other than himself. The process is that of the dynamic interrelation of the persons who "become" in eternal perfection.⁶⁶⁸ That same process of perichoretic perfection is what God gives to humanity in Jesus, to be fully realized in the eschaton. As long as Barth's immanent/economic scheme is held in similar fashion to Augustine and the tradition, then it is easy to see how that eternal present can be perceived as atemporality, for it is a relation that is opposed. However, if we articulate a sufficiently broad doctrine of the Spirit, then the God-world relation is not disparate, but is a united, though distinct reality.

Padgett's charges toward Barth result from his preoccupation with the nature of our time, whether process or stasis, then the resulting theological conclusions. However, that method, while beneficial toward a better understanding of our world is faulty on two counts:

⁶⁶⁵ *God, Eternity*, 143. Padgett's criticism of Barth is exactly what Leftow attempts to defend in "Response to *Mysterium Trinitatis*: Barth's Conception of Eternity," *For the Sake of the World*, 191-201. Given my inclination to view Trinity as dynamic and temporal (as Barth also does) and our time as dynamic and temporal, I cannot see how Leftow's defense is helpful. Hence, I have omitted from consideration those who might find Barth as an ally and also defend a B-series view of time and an atemporal view of God.

⁶⁶⁶ See chapter five.

⁶⁶⁷ I must again note how it is a *tendency* in Barth and certainly not a unified theme that he defends. As Jenson and Gunton have argued he inadvertently falls there at times but it is unquestionably not Barth's intention to do so. That he recognizes the tension and seeks to avoid those problems has repeatedly been highlighted. John Webster in his recent book *Barth's Earlier Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 88-89, has pointed out that even in Barth's very early writings, especially *The Resurrection of the Dead*, his accent "is not God's primal decision but the parousia as the full manifestation of the redeemer and his redeemed creation." Barth consistently worked to avoid an inadequate construal toward the past and the relativization of history. Incidentally, Webster cites Jenson as one who accuses Barth of allowing "creatureliness as moral *history*...to disappear." Technically, as I have already noted, this is not accurate, for Jenson's argument is that Barth's tendency has been to eternalize *Christ's* work who has taken the place of the old Protestant version of the divine decree. Those guilty of *this* particular charge from Webster would be, for example, Roberts and Boulliard. Carefully observe the footnote in this regard on page 162 of *Alpha and Omega*.

⁶⁶⁸ Incidentally, I believe this is Padgett's rationale for positing divine change and temporality, though, oddly, he does not develop it.

first, as persuasive as Padgett's arguments for a process theory of time are, they cannot be conclusive in any ultimate sense, for they are constituted only by finite observations of our natural world. Furthermore, they are heavily disputed among contemporary philosophers, thus, it seems counterintuitive for the theist to place such weight on them. Following from this, the irony of Padgett's entire work is this reliance on a process theory of time, whilst arguing for God's relative timelessness based on *theological* beliefs. Surely this lends credence to my thesis that understanding eternity and time is primarily a theological affair and only secondarily a scientific or philosophical one. Beginning with the latter cannot possibly lead us to the former, whilst beginning with the former may indeed tell us something about the latter. Once again, I must note much appreciation for and agreement with Padgett's thesis, yet in the end it fails to deliver on what it purports to, viz., the temporal nature of God's eternity. Here, a theological approach such as Barth's and Jenson's, though not comprehensive, is certainly superior, for it is walking down the only possible path.

Another way of clarifying this is that Padgett reads in Barth the elimination of anything that would resemble dynamism, history, or life in God. Clearly, this need not be, and the answer, as I have already argued above in chapter four, is not to revert to a natural understanding of time, but to reorient ourselves to God as he reveals himself in Jesus Christ. With a robust doctrine of the interrelations of the *hypostases* it is easy to see how *that* God could and does involve himself in a temporal world of process, for he has a history, the history of his own life.

The systematic unity of Barth's theology is striking in that everything follows a strict trinitarian/Christological (even Chalcedonian) pattern to the extent that each theological question at hand is answered merely by saying "Jesus Christ." Thus, if one is happy with this pattern, then it is perfectly understandable to interpret Barth's doctrine of God "in terms of [God's] radical temporality. But it can also be read as itself an interpretation of what makes God's temporality radical, and in terms reminiscent of timelessness. It all depends on which way you look at it."⁶⁶⁹ This is a remarkable admission, but reflects the fact that Barth's doctrine of God is a constant effort to maintain the unity and distinction of God's being for himself (eternity) and God's being for us (time). The bottom line in this controversy is that commentators such as Jenson, Gunton, Moltmann and others have claimed that at the end of the day, eternity trumps time and our time ends up looking like an-already-eternity. Others

⁶⁶⁹ *GAG*, 153.

such as Hunsinger and Jüngel claim that Barth is successful and that he clearly improves upon the tradition by positing a doctrine of God that is radically temporal and trinitarianly grounded. My contention is that Barth is successful in overcoming much of the tradition's metaphysic of atemporality, even though he does not present us with a model of divine temporality that *directly* explains how God can be temporal *in terms of the discontinuities of our time*,⁶⁷⁰ though I think he gets very close, perhaps as close as is theologically possible. Jenson takes a stab at doing just that. The argument here will be that he presents an alternative that falls essentially within a Barthian doctrine of God and ultimately does not accomplish anything beyond Barth's achievements. Moreover, the consequence is that his proposal raises a number of significant problems of its own—problems that I believe exceed any we might identify in Barth. Indeed it forces us to consider whether Jenson has even correctly diagnosed Barth's (and the tradition's) ills. That he reads Barth correctly is undisputed. Whether the totality of Barth's doctrine of time and eternity is the failure he claims it to be is quite another matter. Even so:

If we drop the notion of analogy, we must try to understand God's transcendence within the terms of time itself. We will have to understand the radicalness of God's temporality as a certain pattern of that temporality itself. It is clear how this is to be done. We will understand God's freedom over against what he is for and with us as his *futurity* to what he already is with and for us. And since Barth is indeed right in seeing God's freedom as one side of his deity, we will define God's deity as his futurity to himself and so to us.⁶⁷¹

I now turn to an examination of this complex, alternative proposal.⁶⁷²

⁶⁷⁰ But Barth probably does not feel compelled to come up with such an explanation, given that *God* is Lord, not time. Surely he perceives the faults of the old doctrine of timelessness, but the flipside of that coin is just as unwarranted—earthly time does not dictate the divine nature.

⁶⁷¹ *GAG*, 155.

⁶⁷² Given the density of Jenson's version of divine futurity it is no wonder that such erudite scholars as Hunsinger and Colwell have avoided a critique of it. Most have been content to criticize Jenson's theology proper as a potentially detrimental deviation from classical theology (describing it as panentheistic, or some other such label), without evaluating just how he thinks his model stays within the tradition, yet improves upon it. A recent PhD dissertation entirely on Jenson's project opens the penultimate chapter—one focused on critique—with a disclaimer as to why Jenson's proposal concerning God's identity was avoided—the “lack of space.” The thrust of the author's criticisms of Jenson centered on his divergence from the tradition of classical theism. See Swain, 271. This is not to cast judgment on the dissertation as a whole, but only to highlight the fact that Jenson's position in relation to the tradition is generally being evaluated apart from his own alternative proposals. One would think that whatever conclusions we might arrive at regarding his project they must be made whilst taking into account his version of divine futurity.

God's Temporality in Himself and With Us as His *Futurity*

In chapter five I outlined Barth's view of resurrection time (whose synonyms include Easter time, the time of Jesus Christ, real time, authentic time) and noted that it includes the pre-, supra-, and post-Easter time of Jesus Christ. That is, he *was* present in his pre-Easter life (which includes all of created time and even eternity prior to creation), he *is* present with us now, and he *will be* present in our future. As I argued there this amounts to an eternal present that is "pure duration" for God and is the real time that God gives to humanity in eternity.

Jenson agrees with Barth that the post-resurrection appearances "are the center of God's self-revelation, their time the time taken from our time to be God's eternity."⁶⁷³ Jesus does unite our time with God's eternity. Yet, he disagrees as to the appearances' referentiality. The risen Jesus, according to Jenson, is not about the *fulfillment* of the kingdom, but about the *promise* of the kingdom. That is, his identification as the kingdom of God is not in the resurrection appearances a present reality, but the promise of the future reality. The uniting of time and eternity that Jesus accomplished in that resurrection was not a present reality that the witnesses could point to and visually identify, but rather it was the hope and promise of the certain future reality. "We may put it so: promise is the ontological category for the reality of the risen Lord. Jesus appeared to the witnesses of the Resurrection as what he was not yet, but would be: the Lord of the End."⁶⁷⁴ Thus, according to Jenson, God's transcendence is not an eminent temporality that is both timeless and temporal in an eternal present, but rather God's transcendence "is his futurity to what already is."⁶⁷⁵ But it is a *transcendence*—an eternity that exceeds the boundaries humanity experiences in time. Thus, exactly how does Jenson's version of eternity differ from Barth's if both seek to overcome time's discontinuities? This is how he understands God's eternity to be truly temporal: his present is always opening itself up to a future that overcomes any temporal contingency. That is, the ultimate temporal boundary is death, thus, how is it that Jesus is both temporal and not bound by temporality? Jenson's answer is that the Spirit opens the future to his death and overcomes that contingency by resurrection. Moreover, the future he opens up is not an empty, abstract future, but his own future (as Barth would concur). "God is the futurity *of* the past event Jesus." Because God is the one who raised Jesus and did so within time, God's transcendence occurs in this act. Or, we might say that God overcomes

⁶⁷³ *GAG*, 157.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

time in this act, thus freeing us from and for time. It is God as future that gives us past and present, making our lives temporal. “God’s transcendence is the beyondness of a particular future; only because we live for a particular future do we have time.”⁶⁷⁶ Jesus’ resurrection is the guarantee that he is our future—a temporal, narrated future. So then, as I discussed in chapter two, Jenson claims that God is identified *by* and *with* the Exodus, but he overcomes the temporal necessity and contingency, not by being simultaneously timeless and temporal, but by always being ahead of that event, giving it its being and temporality. God’s ontology is not that he was in the beginning, established what will take place, then works in out in our time, but rather, God’s being is that he is already in our future giving being and time to us *now*. Thus, Jenson’s aim is to demonstrate that temporal events are not absolute and God transcends them, yet *a* temporal process is not absent from him. It is not that he is timeless and temporal, somehow here and not here, but rather he is temporal and here because he is always in front of us, moving us toward our future, which is God himself. His eternity is moving, not in exact temporal correspondence with us, but always ahead of ours, giving our time its reality.

Humans, Jenson argues, are incapable of overcoming “the contradiction between what I will to be and what I see I already am.”⁶⁷⁷ Humans only are what they are becoming, and what we do and who we are, are only relevant in that they result in something. Jenson contends that worship is all about throwing ourselves upon a God who promises the greatest of all futures, because he is always ahead of us, determining to overcome what we know ourselves now to be. Likewise, we are to understand God in terms of this *future determination*, though clearly he overcomes any contingency.⁶⁷⁸ Moltmann is similarly motivated and closely related to Jenson in that he desires to avoid the God of the past where everything is merely an unfolding of an already determined plan. The future must have priority over the past because of its wider range of possibilities and because it can transcend historical time. Moltmann distinguishes between what will happen in the future and what is coming, the latter being the divine transcendent possibility, the former being the events that occur then fade into the past. It is the transcendent future (God) that gives us historical time and not the past, thus, Moltmann believes that each present is genuinely open to the limitless possibilities, the unpredictable and genuinely new.⁶⁷⁹ But in Moltmann, just as in Jenson, the

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 162.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., 159.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ See, Richard Bauckham, “Time and Eternity,” *God Will Be All In All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 164-65; Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 132-35.

future that overcomes time's contingencies must be God himself and not some abstract concept—at least that is the intention.

If God's transcendence is his futurity and not his atemporality, then theological reformulations inevitably follow. Jenson immediately offers two: 1) God's nature is better understood as his acts within the plot of history, rather than a timeless set of attributes that he can always be expected to exhibit;⁶⁸⁰ 2) it calls into the question the value of speaking of an immanent and economic Trinity, and we should rather adopt Rahner's rule that the immanent is the economic Trinity. But the way in which Jenson challenges this concept is instructive for understanding his theology as a whole. It is not a rejection because God is not free in himself and is necessarily bound to the world, as would likely be the case with Moltmann.⁶⁸¹ The standard western interpretation of the immanent Trinity is that its freedom is one of "unaffectedness," immunity to the contingencies and deficiencies of time. That kind of freedom is not warranted, according to Jenson (and Barth), though there is a legitimate kind of freedom that the doctrine intends, which is that God is free in himself only to the extent that his identity is not determined *by* the creation. He is the self-determining God who in freedom and lordship loves the creation. How is it that Jenson can justify preserving the theology of God's freedom and abolish the tool of immanent and economic? He states: "The two rules are compatible, I propose, only if the identity of the 'economic' and 'immanent' Trinity is *eschatological*, if the 'immanent' Trinity is simply the eschatological reality of the 'economic.'"⁶⁸² God is free from his actualized life with us (i.e. time's contingencies) "because he is always ahead of them; he always can be otherwise triune than he has so far been." This is not something to fear, according to Jenson, because "we know that every new event of his eternal creativity will be seen, when it has occurred, as an inevitable step in the life of the good God we have known."⁶⁸³

The previous quotation is of particular import. To put it as plainly as possible: regarding the issue of God's freedom over the contingencies of time Jenson believes that a God who is bound by the past and simply persists subject to that decree is not the God who is the responsive, temporally active God of the Bible. *That* God, according to Jenson, must be "immanent and economic," "timeless and temporal." In order to maintain the proper Christian perspective that God is Lord over creation and not subject to any absolute view of time, and that when he acts he is doing so in a new way—one that was not previously

⁶⁸⁰ *GAG*, 171.

⁶⁸¹ See his *God in Creation*, 72-103. On panentheism, see the discussion in chapter two of this thesis.

⁶⁸² *TI*, 140.

⁶⁸³ *GAG*, 174.

settled—then Jenson believes we must posit God as primally future. But, as he admits in the above sentence there is a certain amount of determination (“an inevitable step”) even in this “creativity.” Thus, whether God gives time and being from the past, or whether he gives it from the future, it is God who is giving it and determining that his purposes for Christ and creation come to pass.⁶⁸⁴ The aims and overarching theology are identical with Barth: God is the sovereign Creator and Consummator of the world, whilst united with his creation in covenant. He is not necessarily bound to it for his own being, though he has willingly united himself to it, and there can be no talk of God in himself apart from God for us.

However, simply because Jenson adopts much of the contemporary concern for eschatology and owes at least something to theologians such as Pannenberg and Moltmann for their pioneering work in this field he stops short of embracing their version of futurity, but rather adapts it to his own purposes, not unlike what he does with aspects of Barth’s theology. Here is the reason: according to Jenson, Barth and Pannenberg have virtually the same problem in that both theologies take on a shape of determinism that at times portrays God as the sole actor in history and where that history appears to be an eternal one, rather than a historical one. For Barth, it is determinism from the past, and for Pannenberg it is determinism from the future. In both cases they are concerned to answer how it is that God can be sovereign and universal, yet be a particular being that acts in our history. Or, as Jenson puts it in another context, historical religion has the option of becoming a-historical or a-religious.⁶⁸⁵ We can opt for sovereignty or immanence, but not both. Barth and Pannenberg, according to Jenson, have opted for the universal at the expense of the historical, and Jenson wants to bring both together in a coherent fashion that avoids abstraction. Thus, he simply adopts much of what Pannenberg has to say on futurity, whilst striving to avoid his overemphasis on universality, or wholeness.⁶⁸⁶

A conclusion on the nature of our time and God’s time is the by-product of this desire, and Jenson’s verdict of sovereignty/universality in Barth and Pannenberg is confirmed by their endorsement of Boethius and (essentially) an eternal present—though, to be sure, both claim they are *not* endorsing timelessness, what we have called, atemporality. Moreover, Jenson’s efforts here can be highlighted by his consideration of A-series time as that which theology must endorse (what Jenson also calls “real” time, as opposed to “imaginary”—not imaginary in that it does not truly exist, but in that it is counter-intuitive and can only be

⁶⁸⁴ To the question of God’s determination for creation and salvation, Jenson is fully supralapsarian and fully Barthian. See his *Alpha and Omega*, 158-59.

⁶⁸⁵ *GAG*, 51.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 178-79.

appealed to by abstract reasoning). Both Barth and Pannenberg (along with Moltmann) have been charged with accepting B-series time as the only type of time appropriate to God, thus potentially undermining the possibility that God's being with us in Jesus Christ is truly a historical one.⁶⁸⁷ Hence, Jenson attempts to escape a similar eternal "abstraction" by explaining the support structures for his doctrine of God that endeavor to unite eternity and history in God's being. How can God be both infinite/sovereign and immanent/historical? This thesis has been an exposition of his answer to that question—one that determines speech about time and freedom in God and humanity.

Before moving on to assess Jenson's concept of divine futurity there is just one more matter to address and I will state it here with minimal comment. Jenson supports Barth's trinitarian formulation in that God himself is beginning, middle, and end of time, yet he insists that Barth's orientation in that formula is always toward the past—the Spirit and Son are from the Father (rightly so), but "nothing is said about the Beginning and Middle going toward the End."⁶⁸⁸ According to Jenson, a failure to develop a full doctrine of the Spirit's trinitarian identity is the source of Barth's inability to shape a fully temporal God. It is the driving cause behind his adoption of the *analogia fidei*. What must be done, he contends, is that the "formal pattern of the doctrine must be reversed, to give the 'Spirit' some of the formal role which the 'Father' has had... Instead of defining all three hypostases by their relation to origin, they must be defined by their relation to goal. The Spirit is the goal of the Trinity, and this doctrine must be given the function which has belonged to the doctrine that the Father is the 'fount of the Trinity.'"⁶⁸⁹ The diagnosis of a poor pneumatology, though groundbreaking for its time, is not extraordinary, as that has become a standard assessment among many of Barth's commentators.⁶⁹⁰ The solution *is* extraordinary in that it is nothing short of a reversal of trinitarian relations as understood in the vast majority of the tradition.

⁶⁸⁷ On Barth see, Padgett, 141-45; and on Pannenberg and Moltmann see, Luco J. Van den Brom, "Eschatology and Time: Reversal of the Time Direction?" *The Future as God's Gift: Explorations in Christian Eschatology*, eds., David Fergusson and Marcel Sarot (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 159-67.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁶⁹⁰ Chiefly see, Rowan Williams, "Barth on the Triune God," Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, 177-85, 233-40; P. D. Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord, the Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981); Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology* 2 (1993): 296-304, in which he states: "[p]recisely in that the inner-trinitarian relations do gloriously become concreted and alive in Barth, so that the Father and the Son *confront* one another, the actuality of a *vinculum* between the two parties Father and Son must be their I-thou relation itself. Thus the very reality of the Spirit excludes his appearance as a *party* in the triune actuality" (301).

The background of the disagreement between Barth and Jenson on this score is the long-standing division between East and West, the *Filioque*.⁶⁹¹

In chapter three I gave an extended discussion regarding Jenson's predisposition towards the Cappadocians, primarily Nyssa, which also gives insight into his disagreement with Augustine concerning his failure to give full personhood to the Spirit to which he directs the following: "The saving works of God, the 'works *ad extra*,' are works of the whole Trinity no longer can mean that each work is the joint work of Father, Son, and Spirit, in which each identity plays a distinct role, but that the saving works are *indifferently* the work of each person and all."⁶⁹² According to Jenson and others, the *Filioque* followed Augustine's lead, which resulted in a lack of reciprocity among the persons and essentially an inward-focused Trinity, not inclined to that which is other. How such a Trinity relates to time is more difficult to express and has traditionally been labeled as "paradox." Because of Barth's defense of the *Filioque* Jenson believes that he perpetuates this problem and his trouble with time and eternity will not be healed, lest we correct this trinitarian issue.⁶⁹³ The crucial feature to keep in mind is Jenson's conflation of Spirit and future, with "future" carrying the greater burden of the two. As explicated in chapter three of this thesis, Jenson assigns past, present, and future to Father, Son, and Spirit respectively, and the solution for Barth's *past*-oriented theology is primarily divine *futurity*, and not *pneumatology*. Jenson is abandoning analogy in order to posit a *temporal* God, and I would suggest that below we will discover how the unavoidable result is that temporal moments tend to carry more weight than the trinitarian persons, though, clearly, he does not wish for that to happen.⁶⁹⁴ I believe Jenson has correctly put his finger on a problem in Barth, but I also believe that his correction of the problem is an over-correction and introduces unnecessary complications. It is possible to maintain the idea of the immanent and economic Trinity, strengthen his doctrine of the

⁶⁹¹ One's perspective on Barth's success or failure of a doctrine of the Spirit may be directly related to one's view of the *Filioque*. It would be interesting to chronicle perspectives on time/eternity in relation to positions on the *Filioque*. My suspicion is that, generally speaking, those who defend the West would embrace Barth's view of time and eternity, while those with an eastern persuasion would view it as deficient. A contrast of Gunton and John Thompson may be evidence for this. See his, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1991), 29-33, 190. What one does after such an estimation with his theology as a whole is one of the points of this chapter.

⁶⁹² *TI*, 126.

⁶⁹³ As is now obvious Gunton shares Jenson's evaluation of Barth's weakness, but rejects his solution.

⁶⁹⁴ McDowell notes something similar in relation to Barth's personal response to Moltmann's theology, where he (Barth) labels it as "its own futurism," rather than *God's* future. Elsewhere, Barth refers to Moltmann's futurity in *Theology of Hope* as a reduction of all theology to an "eschatological principle," and his proposed solution to Moltmann is a rigorous doctrine of the immanent Trinity, with particular attention to the threefold time in *CD III.2* and the threefold parousia of Jesus Christ in *CD IV.3*. See *Karl Barth Letters 1961-1968*, eds., Jürgen Fangmeier and Hinrich Stoevesandt, trans., ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 175-76.

Spirit, and improve the time/eternity model without adopting Jenson's version of divine futurity. The concept of God's future is built into Barth's doctrine of God, though, to be sure, it needs to be given more weight.

God's Futurity: An Assessment of Jenson's Proposal

I have two aims in this section: to demonstrate that, 1) Jenson's position is unique in that the foundation of it is Barth's theology, whilst incorporating some insights from Pannenberg and others; 2) he overestimates Barth's problems, leading him toward revisions that are even more problematic. Hopefully, this assessment will reinforce exactly how Barth and Jenson converge and diverge, and lay the ground for the concluding section, which concerns my thoughts on the best theological path forward.

A careful read of Jenson's work makes it all the more surprising that he is accused of falling outside the bounds of Christian theology,⁶⁹⁵ especially given its proximity to Barth. Hopefully, the previous chapters have sufficiently demonstrated this even to the extent that Jenson adopts certain phrases from Barth, such as "God takes time for us," and where the phraseology is changed, the concept often has been maintained. In Jenson God is in himself who he is for us in Jesus Christ, so that the life of God *is* the historical life of the man.⁶⁹⁶ That God is the *event* that meets humanity, is related to but does not become his creation in Jesus is the heart of Jenson's theology, as it is for Barth. It is trinitarian, and throughout this thesis I have highlighted the priority that Jenson gives to Trinity as determining and shaping all that is other than God (and there *is* other than God!). Even Jenson's future-orientation is not absent in Barth, for Barth talks often of the God who makes all things new, justifies the ungodly, and is bringing the future in order to overcome the past.⁶⁹⁷ Moreover, his doctrine

⁶⁹⁵ George Hunsinger, "Robert Jenson's *Systematic Theology*: a review essay," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55 (2002), 161.

⁶⁹⁶ A more detailed account of some of his convergences with Barth is in his little known work, *Alpha and Omega*, 146-61.

⁶⁹⁷ See chapter five, especially the section on "supratemporality." There I noted that Jenson endorses "Barth's liberation of the doctrine of God from the 'straightjacket' of an immobile timelessness, or atemporality, who cannot overcome the past with the future." Moreover, that future is not an abstract one, but is God himself. If Barth accomplishes this, then why the vociferous protest? This gives me the long awaited opportunity of sharing my encounter with Jenson at a recent meeting in Philadelphia of the AAR. After informing the distinguished professor of my project and conversing for a moment, he turned to me and said, "I will tell you what Barth told me after he read my PhD dissertation." Then he proceeded to quote him (as best I recall): "Sie verstehen mich, wie konnten Sie mit mir anderer Meinung sein?" I would pose a similar question to Jenson. It appears to me that Jenson has carried through Barth's eschatological principles, only stretching the persons on a temporal continuum and placing the accent on future. The essentials are the same. Katherine Sonderegger discusses some of Jenson's overlap with Barth in her "Et Resurrexit Tertia Die: Jenson and Barth on Christ's

of time differs little in its foundational theological assertions. That is: God is triune and that determines the nature of time and eternity; time is not absolute and God is Lord over time in the sense that past, present, and future do not cause any loss in him, i.e. he transcends their limitations; our time is a slippery concept and cannot sustain a full-orbed definition of time, much less eternity.⁶⁹⁸ All these very Barthian ideas find their place in Jenson.

However, the center of the divergence from Barth must be Christology. That is, *that* God is who he is in Jesus is not a point of contention,⁶⁹⁹ but Jenson withdraws at Barth's tendency to view Jesus as *primally* the *eternal* decree of God and only secondarily the earthly history of Jesus of Nazareth. He puts it thus: "But we must still ask: Which is the prior definition? Barth defines the history in time as the revelation and analogy of eternal history and so gives his answer. And with this answer he puts himself in danger of removing reconciliation itself, the inner reality of Jesus' life, from our history."⁷⁰⁰ It is crucial to observe that Jenson's Christological objection does not take the form of merely a radical immanence as the antidote to Barth's allegedly radical transcendence. Such a simplistic solution does not do justice to Jenson's rich theology, nor does it understand his indebtedness to Barth. Jenson is *not* claiming that in Barth our activity is eliminated, but rather, that there is the tendency to view *Christ's* activity as eternal, rather than eternal *and* historical.⁷⁰¹ Nor is his solution that our history must be primal and God's eternity secondary.⁷⁰² Jenson is simply trying to express the unity, to use Barth's language, of God in himself and God for us without one overcoming the other,⁷⁰³ whilst maintaining the freedom of God from any kind

Resurrection," *Conversing with Barth*, eds., John C. McDowell and Mike Higon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 202-03.

⁶⁹⁸ *ST I*, 217.

⁶⁹⁹ *Alpha and Omega*, 161.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁷⁰² Though he rightly understands Jenson to hold both to God's transcendence and immanence as temporal, nonetheless, Hunsinger determines that Jenson's allegiance lies primarily with an inflated rationalism (immanence), finally causing his concept of the divine eternity to be fatally flawed. See his, *HTRKB*, 18-19, and "Robert Jenson's *Systematic Theology*: a review essay," 181, 199. Clearly, as has been stated in the above chapters and will become even more evident below, this is not the case for Jenson, for his objections to Barth are not on rationalistic grounds, but on gospel grounds. The Jesus of eternity must be the same Jesus of history, and if we are to think Christologically and trinitarianly, then we must include temporality in those concepts. The irony here is that Hunsinger's objections (a committed Barthian) seem to press toward the complete incompatibility of time and eternity, thus giving credence to Jenson's thesis that, for Barth, time and eternity are opposed. I contend that not only has Hunsinger misunderstood Jenson, but he has also undercut Barth's theology of time and eternity—a theology that also intends a specific unity of the two.

⁷⁰³ *Alpha and Omega*, 163-64. "If we thus fix our attention on temporal history we see how to understand the unity of God's decisions and works without collapsing them into one and without dividing them." Therefore, God's will is at once eternal and historical; not eternal and simply unrolled within history, but eternally one and constituted by his historical decisions, centrally, cross and resurrection. God's eternity, like his will, is not eternal in himself apart from the historical event of Jesus, but the historical life of Jesus constitutes God's eternity, as well as his will. Thus, there is the drive to hold together eternity and time, without one succumbing

of external necessity.⁷⁰⁴ It is here where Jenson's Lutheranism comes to the fore in that his solution to the (basically) Reformed Barth is the impetus behind the Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum*.⁷⁰⁵ In Lutheran Christology there is the insistence upon the unity of the human and divine attributes to such an extent that to say Jesus is the Son of God does not mean that two distinguishable natures constitute his being, but rather that there is a transferring of properties from one nature to the other, so that it is possible to say that even in his humanity Jesus is omnipresent and sovereign, albeit in a secret way.⁷⁰⁶ The natures do not exist side by side, but rather only *he* exists.⁷⁰⁷ This provides us with a grid for grasping the time/eternity relation in that Jenson is wary of Barth's timeless/temporal, immanent/economic juxtaposition for the same reasons that he is of the Reformed Christology. For Jenson, there should be no juxtaposing of the divine or human nature, but simply a priority on the person. Likewise, there should be no priority on the eternal or the temporal, but simply on Father, Son, and Spirit. The Christologies are different, hence, the resulting time/eternity relation is different.⁷⁰⁸ Therefore, in order to overcome what he perceives to be the central impediment

to the other. However, if, as Jenson intends, the will of God is eternally one and the work of God in Jesus Christ is united with that will, *yet* it is only united as it unfolds in history, then when it comes to trinitarian ontology it appears Jenson has a choice: something akin to process theology where the eternal will is a mere intention and God works it out in time not exactly assured himself how it will transpire; or an alternative form of transcendence that nevertheless involves divine determination such as, divine *futurity*. But how does futurity make better sense of the unity of God's will and work in Jesus than Barth does; or we could say, *how does it make better sense of time and eternity?* Both involve exhaustive knowledge of all time—past, present, and future. Both involve a type of divine determination. Both include a unity *and* distinction between time and eternity. More on this below.

⁷⁰⁴ Again, as explained in chapter two of this thesis, use of the term “pantheism” in reference to Jenson's theology is misleading and does not take into consideration his insistence upon divine freedom. Of course, as is the case with Barth, freedom does not connote absolute independence, but is a freedom to be relational with creation as he is relational in himself.

⁷⁰⁵ *Alpha and Omega*, 168. For a further discussion on Jenson's Lutheran perspective see, Gabriel Fakre, “The Lutheran *Capax* Lives,” *TTC*, 94-102.

⁷⁰⁶ This is most graphically illustrated in the Eucharist, briefly discussed in chapter five of this thesis.

⁷⁰⁷ See Colin E. Gunton, “Creation and Mediation,” 83-86; *CD* I.2, 161-71; H. R. Macintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1912), 230-46; Robert W. Jenson, “How Does Jesus Make a Difference? The Person and Work of Jesus Christ,” *Essentials of Christian Theology*, ed. William C. Placher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 201-05.

⁷⁰⁸ Gunton, “Creation and Mediation,” 85. Three concepts should be stressed here: first, this is the sharpest distinction I can find between Barth and Jenson, and it accounts for most all of the subsequent discrepancies between them; second, the distinction is not so sharp that we cannot decipher the unity between them. *If* the key divergence of Barth and Jenson is a difference between Lutheran and Reformed theology, then the fundamental overlap between those theologies has been well documented over the years, not least by Barth himself. See, *CD* I.2, 166-71, and T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, 30-37. One way of looking at this thesis is an effort to take on board the Lutheran concern in Christology and God's presence to the world, whilst avoiding the inevitable proximity to pantheism to which that theology leads us. That has been noted time and again here: Jenson is not pantheistic or panentheistic, but he *tends* in that direction and is really only a step away. I see that as a greater problem than Barth's so-called “eternalizing,” though certainly the latter needs support. Third, Calvinists recoiled at the Lutheran suggestion that the *Logos* was forever enclosed in a human body, if that meant to deny his eternal transcendence. The central reason for this was that such a concept *made him a prisoner of earthly time*. Once we dispense of such a boundary, as both Barth and Jenson do, then it becomes even more obvious how close these positions truly are.

to the Christian doctrine of God, atemporality, and to construct that doctrine in such a way that eternity and history have equal footing, Jenson proposes the concept of futurity.

But there must be questions to pose to Jenson. If the failure of the tradition's immanent/economic is perceived to be the perpetuation of an atemporal deity it is unclear to me in this regard how futurity succeeds where the tradition has failed. Both in *some* facet are "without time." The distinctive feature of Jenson's version of futurity is intended to be a more explicit placement of God's being within the historical process, without subjecting it to the power of that process. To accomplish this, God must simply overcome whatever it is that controls us, in this case, the discontinuities of time, or, death. Thus, God is transcendent because he overcomes history and immanent because he is within history. There is nothing particularly innovative in this approach, as that recalls much of standard Christian theology through the centuries.⁷⁰⁹ Moreover, Jenson's reading of Barth has him positing God as both disconnected from and connected to time; he is transcendent in that time is not lord over God and immanent in that he is temporal in Jesus. In this strict sense, then, *both* theologians embrace some version of timelessness, viz. that time lacks sovereignty over God. *Neither* theologian posits atemporality in that time has no part to play in God's being, which is the *real* enemy that Jenson wants to defeat. At its foundational core Jenson has not attempted anything with futurity that Barth did not attempt with his doctrine of time. Thus, if Jenson's purpose is to rid theology of a deity that is atemporal (in the sense that I intend), then he stands in the company of several others before him, in particular, Karl Barth. Timelessness, as I have defined it, is simply God's sovereignty over time's discontinuities, and clearly it has never been Jenson's purpose to overcome this.

Furthermore—and more importantly—if his purpose is to overcome the tendency to eternalize the work of Christ which risks his real involvement in history, then Jenson has not accomplished this either, for he maintains a doctrine of God that is essentially above historical time. Jenson may *claim* that Father, Son, and Spirit are more historically placed in his version, but they nevertheless *transcend* temporal barriers, and so in that sense, must be considered timeless. For this reason, I would ask how it is that futurity reveals a temporality in the divine eternity that is something other than an eternal present (Barth) if God is, at the same time, not subject to the historical temporal process? What kind of time is Jenson talking about that finds its place in God? He states that theologians are compelled to embrace A-theory of time for our universe, yet if we are to understand Jenson correctly that this time

⁷⁰⁹ One only need survey the Christological controversies for evidence to this fact.

is also the time of God, then how could it be that the Spirit is in the future if, as on the A-theory, the future does not yet exist? “God cannot be causing [future states] (even tenselessly) to exist; otherwise, they would in fact exist at their respective times.”⁷¹⁰ If A-theory is *not* to be applied to God, then B-theory is the alternative, one that accommodates itself nicely to an atemporal perspective, which, in turn, undermines a key intention in Jenson’s doctrine of God.

Perhaps eschatology would be the location of something novel from Jenson along these lines, for it is there that he explicitly claims deviation from the dialectical theologians of the early twentieth century, specifically naming Barth and Bultmann.⁷¹¹ Yet even there we are disappointed to discover he has reverted to a strange dialectic of his own: our time is A-theory time and God is united to it, yet our time is created time and “differs from God’s time in that the extent of the specious present is uncontrollable, in that pieces of temporal reality can get away from us, in that the future can be merely threatening and the past fixed and dead.”⁷¹² This, according to Jenson, is due to our fallen nature—the very infirmity that Barth ascribes to our created time. Hence, what can we expect in the parousia? Will we continue in some version of A-series time or is there a change that is congruent with the transformation of our fallen state? I must cite the entire paragraph:

On the other side of Judgment no such incurvature is any longer possible, and blessed creatures’ union with the Son will make their time congruent with the Trinity’s time. Then the alienation of past and present from the future, which in this life constitutes sight’s difference from hearing, will not obtain. Caught up in the infinitely swift triune *perichoresis*, the redeemed will see what they hear. The word will precisely *present* them with their futures.⁷¹³

It appears that Jenson wants to posit a divine eternity that is temporal in that there is a distinction between past, present, and future, without capitulating to the gods of religion that strip God’s universal sovereignty, i.e. time is not absolute, but rather God is. In the end he simply concludes that God has his own time that is analogous to ours, and what is the significance of this statement, if indeed it is something distinct from what Barth has said? This turns out to be the very simultaneity that Jenson eschews. Jenson is envisioning some

⁷¹⁰ William Lane Craig, “God and Real Time,” 336-37. I am not commenting on whether theologians should embrace an A-series view of time of this world. The question I am raising is whether Jenson is double-minded in that he recognizes the need for a process view of time, wants God to participate in that process, yet withdraws at the crucial uniting point.

⁷¹¹ *ST* II, 309.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, 345.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*, 346.

sort of temporal process in God that is actual, *exclusively* between the triune identities. If that is so, then what kind of time is it and how does this temporal configuration make more sense of God's relation to *our* time? The latter is the more important of the questions, simply because this is the theological platform on which Jenson is attempting to stand. To recapitulate: Jenson is objecting to Barth because of his tendency to perceive God's revelation in Jesus as essentially a timeless and eternalized act that is at crucial points disconnected from the Jesus of *our* history, or, *our time*. For Jenson, the correction needed is a trinitarian configuration of God and time that does not give priority to the eternal *or* to time, but equally embraces *and unites* both.⁷¹⁴ Therefore, Jenson's aim is to posit a theory of divine eternity that makes sense of what we know of God and what we know of our time. *However, he never in fact explains how it is that God's eternity transcends time and that same eternity is temporal like we are.* Instead, what he offers is a theory that God transcends the discontinuities of our time by *overcoming* them through the power of the Spirit in the future. If *futurity* is the only explanation Jenson can offer, then that time is *not* our time, but a time unique to the triune identities. Only Father, Son, and Spirit (if the theory is plausible) can exist asymmetrically in the temporal moments, yet be united as one God. This is certainly not a temporal option open for those existing in A-series time, for even Jenson admits that we who are in A-series time lose time and being. Moreover, apparently those divine temporal boundaries are regularly breached by the Spirit, if not all three persons, i.e. the Spirit transcends the boundaries of the future to encounter our present, making it also his present and the present of the Son. If the future is present, then how is this configuration more closely identified with our time than Barth's doctrine of time?

If we think in terms of A-series time where language is irreducibly tensed and time is a process, then there exists a barrier between the temporal moments, though, to be sure, existential identification of those barriers is impossible. Nevertheless, for anything or anyone to overcome that barrier, then that necessarily obliterates the distinction between the temporal moments. One cannot be in the present and the past and future at the same time. If one is, then it is no longer past or future, but simply present. If it is the future that overcomes the barrier of the present, then how could we possibly maintain a distinction between those two and avoid a collapse into a simple "present"? What gives "future" power to encroach upon these barriers, if we are to seeking to maintain the distinction of the three?

⁷¹⁴ For that is the Lutheran spirit of the *communicatio idiomatum*.

There are more questions regarding Jenson's use of futurity. First, his dichotomy between the present and future of the kingdom in the resurrection appearances is not convincing. According to Jenson, at the resurrection what Jesus does in uniting time and eternity (and in that much he agrees with Barth) is to give a promise of a certain future, but not to indicate that the kingdom was present. I agree with Jenson and all the evidence he offers for it that the promise of the kingdom *is* a future reality, as does Barth; but he offers no evidence that the reality of the kingdom is not *also* present. The result is a disproportionate weight placed on future and a marginalizing of present and past. Perhaps Jenson is correct that the tradition has focused on the divine past and present to the exclusion of the future and the twentieth century's recovery of eschatology is a welcomed correction. However, to place the kingdom in such an isolated position is to omit what is divinely ordained about the past and present. God is there, too. God, even on Jenson's system, must be past and present, as well as future.⁷¹⁵ Furthermore, if Spirit is future, then is Spirit determining and acting in a superior manner to Father and Son? This would almost appear an inevitable conclusion and Jenson gives good reason to make it.⁷¹⁶ Yet, because of his dependence upon Barth's Christocentrism, at times Jenson accentuates the present to the exclusion of past and future, as in the Eucharist.⁷¹⁷ How he resolves this is unclear, but what *is* clear to this writer is that Barth's structure of divine pre-temporality, supra-temporality, and post-temporality maintains a cohesion whose theological judgment surpasses Jenson's divine futurity. In Barth divine being and temporality is not determined by any one of the temporal moments above the others, but rather "God is identical to this event in His past, His present and His future..."⁷¹⁸

To state the matter in a slightly different way, both Jenson and Barth must conceive of the divine eternity in a way that distinguishes God's time and our time. To do otherwise is either to conflate the two, necessarily implying that God faces the same discontinuities and uncertainty of the future that we do, or to retreat into an atemporal abstraction where it is well nigh impossible to conceive of a divine relation to the created order. Based on God's pure simultaneity that is absolute past, absolute present, and absolute future Barth maintains the unity of the divine eternity with the divine event—this pure simultaneity or pure duration (*reine Dauer*) being the key dissimilarity between God's authentic temporality and our fallen temporality. Jenson, on the other hand, places inordinate stress on the future as the

⁷¹⁵ See the discussion in chapter five of this thesis on Barth's historical survey of unbalanced treatment of the three temporal moments.

⁷¹⁶ *GAG*, 174.

⁷¹⁷ See chapter five of this thesis.

⁷¹⁸ Colwell, 245.

determination of divine being and temporality calling into question the role of the triune identities' action in past and present. Given these theological risks we would expect the upshot to be persuasive and unavoidable; however, the outcome, whilst *appearing* to be radically different than Barth, in reality hardly diverges from him. Jenson has, at the same time, made a clear distinction between God's time and our time, whilst positing a unity between God's time and our time. God is temporal in that Father is past, Son is present, and Spirit is future (the accent being on the latter). However, this temporality is not disconnected (as in our time), but rather the disconnections are overcome (transcended) by the persons. That being the case, Jenson, *just like Barth*, has not conflated God's time and our time, nor has he reverted to atemporal abstraction. Instead, he has climbed and reached the peak of the same theological mountain Barth climbed, only he ascended from the other, more dangerous side. He has not led us to a *new* theological position, but the same one by a much riskier route. Both theologians keep divine temporality and human temporality in tension because at the same time God transcends the discontinuities of our time *and* acts within that time. Simply put, the question emerges as one centered on how to hold those two together. Jenson chooses the tension of futurity and Father, Son, and Spirit in asymmetry along a temporal continuum. Barth chooses the tension of divine authentic temporality as the ground of God's historical, temporal revelatory event. Futurity, then, does not accomplish anything that pure duration does not, but only leaves us with more theological questions and potential pitfalls. Moreover, as stated above, Barth saw the theological antidote to Jenson's tendency toward "futurism" (theology as an eschatological principle) as the immanent Trinity and the divine pre-, supra-, and post-temporality.

Second, if God (more specifically, the Spirit) really is the future that overcomes time's lack and not an abstract concept of future, then there is on some level necessarily a divine determination. One of his greatest objections to Barth was that his scheme retains the God who in eternity past has mapped the course of events, thus rendering the historical event of Jesus as at best, secondary or at worst, irrelevant. Additionally, there exists a deterministic flavor to such an arrangement. The divine futurity, on the other hand, is intended to open the door to a *spontaneous* (as opposed to random or deterministic⁷¹⁹) future where predestination is not something isolated to the past, but is something that happens now and will happen, by the action of the Spirit. But the future, in this proposal, is not the abstract, emptiness with any and every open possibility, but rather *only the possibility that the Spirit brings from the*

⁷¹⁹ See *ST II*, 38-45.

future to the present. Therefore, Jenson's doctrine of futurity is not an open-ended future that releases every human possibility at any moment.⁷²⁰ Rather than the past commissioning the present in terms of a settled plan, the future brings the divine will to the present. Neither Barth nor Jenson believes that humans possess libertarian freedom that necessarily competes with God's will at a zero-sum level, but rather, divine determination is to love and elect Jesus Christ and all that is other than him.⁷²¹ This is God's freedom; and our freedom is precisely grounded in this divine freedom and given by the Spirit. For both of them God's sovereignty is necessary if humans are to exercise true freedom.⁷²² But if Barth's tendency is toward the past, then Jenson's is toward the future, both retaining the same elements of divine determination. What Barth *has* done is constructed the possibility of future into his theology, however weak his stress of it. I noted in chapter five that Jenson's criticism of Barth regarding his doctrine of predestination as an exclusively past event could not be attributed to his "mutual exclusion of time and eternity," as Jenson suggests. On the contrary, Barth has integrated divine action and divine election with his doctrine of pure simultaneity, i.e. he acts in our past, present, and future in an absolute sense. Divine action is not a past event that is only *realized* as history unfolds, but is absolute in each epoch. In sum, both Jenson and Barth embrace God's absolute sovereignty as the ground and source of our freedom, only from distinct points of view. Second, Barth integrates the future into his divine ontology and our existence, whilst Jenson focuses almost exclusively on the future, and this unnecessarily so.

Has Barth failed so egregiously in developing the eschatological Trinity that he is guilty of perpetuating the perceived problem of God's boundness to the past and present? The answer is yes and no. Yes, in the sense that this is Barth's *tendency* and he needs a stronger pneumatology; no, in the sense that he has built into his trinitarian theology a

⁷²⁰ Jenson's view of human freedom is almost identical to Barth's given his acceptance of supralapsarianism and the divine freedom to elect Christ and that which is other than himself. To be sure, he believes his attempt is a more wide-ranging version of this freedom, but clearly he has not ventured into the realm of libertarian freedom. It is a version of voluntarism, double-agency, though not without its nuances. For a concise statement on Jenson's view of human freedom see his recent work *On Thinking the Human: Resolutions of Difficult Notions* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 32-45. For example, compare Jenson's theology of freedom with that of Vincent Brümmer in *What Are We Doing When We Pray? A Philosophical Inquiry* (London: SCM Press, 1984) on the one hand, and Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993) on the other. He fits nicely into neither. For more on Jenson's view of freedom see, Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 118-36.

⁷²¹ "Perhaps we may summarize: The Father commands, 'Let there be...' The Son, who is himself this commanding word insofar as the Father hears therein his own intention, is given to be the meaning of the creature; within creation he is the creature as intended by and for God. And the Spirit, as the intrusive liveliness of this exchange, intrudes also on the creature who is now an item in the exchange, so that the creature is not merely in fact and statically intended for God but lives for God" *ST II*, 27-28.

⁷²² For Barth's part: "Where the Word and Spirit are at work unconditionally and irresistibly, the effect of their operation is not bondage but freedom. We could almost put it this way, that the bondage which results from the operation of the Word and Spirit is itself true freedom." *CD III.3*, 150.

priority of the future as overcoming the past. Again, Barth's discussion of supra- and post-temporality included within it the idea that there is a non-illusory future that is yet to be realized, to which we are moving and genuinely await the *parousia* of Jesus Christ. God is making all things new, turning all that is not-God away and bringing in his kingdom from the future. The doctrine of the Trinity is an event whose trajectory is essentially eschatological in nature. That is, God has not already in eternity accomplished all that is to be done regarding election, but the consummation, though Jesus as our future is already there, awaits us. Speaking of Barth's eschatological Trinity Willis states:

If it is true that from the concrete basis of his revelation it can be determined that the work, the revelation, of Jesus Christ is not yet concluded, that it is "still" in process and "not yet" completed," and that it will not be until he comes again in a "universally perceived," "evident Lordship" which will usher in a "new age" and a new heaven and new earth, then following the logic associated with the doctrine of the Trinity, God's eternity is post-temporal and holds the future of all things and all times.⁷²³

Therefore, Jenson has committed two faults here: first, he has overestimated Barth's weakness as so tied to the past that it necessarily collapses into Augustine's commitment to atemporality; second, his correction is not really a correction, but rather a mere retention of much in Barth, together with an introduction of further problems. Futurity in Jenson has the consequence of overemphasizing the future to the detriment of the past and present, whilst at the same time failing to accomplish anything that Barth did not also accomplish.⁷²⁴ Barth is claiming that the future is overcoming the past and present. God is this future and is perichoretically united with past and present, so that future does not overcome past and present in the divine being as it does in the created order. Jenson also claims that the future is overcoming the past, though in structuring the divine persons on a horizontal, asymmetrical line, he introduces the problem of accounting for perichoretic unity in all divine action, despite the fact he does not wish for this consequence.

The result is that even though he correctly perceives the need for improvement in Barth Jenson fails to advance Barth's theology, for he has attempted a correction of the wrong issue. He knows there is a pneumatological problem in Barth, but apparently believes that alone will not solve the problem. Rather, a radical reformulating of Trinity and

⁷²³ W. Waite Willis, Jr., *Theism, Atheism and the Doctrine of the Trinity: The Trinitarian Theologies of Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann in Response to Protest Atheism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 158-59.

⁷²⁴ Willis' comparison of Barth and Moltmann as answering atheism with a proper divine eschatology is instructive for our thesis. That is, no matter the various nuances that the two theologians give to theology, their emphasis on divine futurity accomplishes the same goal. The same can be said of Barth and Jenson. See Willis, 153-79.

dispensing of Barth's understanding of immanent/economic is a better solution. But this ignores the fact that Barth has built into this system an allowance for divine temporality that overcomes contingencies in a similar way that Jenson has a divine temporality that overcomes contingencies. Jenson's effort to improve upon Barth's tendency to eternalize the revelation event has not resulted in a coherent assimilation of earthly time into that event. In fact, his only legitimate argument put forward in this regard is identical to Barth's—Jesus of Nazareth existed in our time and he is the Son.⁷²⁵ Instead of a radical alternative, then, he has maintained the essence of Barth's theology, whilst rearranging a few elements that, at the end of the day, unnecessarily complicate it.

In that connection one final critique is in order. Jenson regards Barth's immanent/economic/analogical scheme as having the tendency to eternalize and to disconnect our time from that of the divine event. I outlined in detail in chapters two and three of this thesis how Jenson's theology portrays the alternative tendency of pantheism. Aside from the fact that, all things considered, Jenson does not actually unite the divine being and event any closer to our time than Barth does, there remains the sustained effort in his theology to do so. God is identified by and *with* the events of Exodus and Resurrection. That is, God's very being is united with these events. I have argued that Jenson is not a pantheist and should not even be labeled a panentheist, but that the tendency toward it is there. This is a greater problem than any we might encounter in Barth.⁷²⁶ I will attempt to unpack this a bit.

One of Gunton's criticisms of Jenson's theology is that he does not allow for the personal space between God and humanity that enables freedom, chiefly due to a failure to carry through fully Barth's weakness: a strong pneumatology (Here again we are struck by the overlap between Barth and Jenson—theological elements are shuffled and restated in different ways; or, to use Jenson's metaphor of music, notes are moved around but the symphony is the same). That is, freedom, both divine and human, finds its source in the encounter with personal otherness: the Spirit as Jesus' other and our other who personally, rather than causally, brings us freedom and into relation with God. Without a strong pneumatology God's freedom becomes more difficult to decipher and the consequence, according to Gunton, is what we discover in Barth—the tendency to see time and eternity as opposed (I would reiterate that this does not have to be the case and with this renewed emphasis on pneumatology, then Barth's essential doctrine of time and eternity is salvaged).

⁷²⁵ *ST* II, 27. "The relation of the creature to the Creator, by which the creature is, holds in the present tense of created time without thereby being a timeless relation, in that one of the three, the Son, has his own individual entity *within* created time..."

⁷²⁶ To the following see, Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 118-36.

Therefore, one of Gunton's objections that we highlight here is that the personal role of the Spirit is lost with Jenson's overemphasis on future,⁷²⁷ and the result is the chorus we repeatedly hear in Jenson's work and the one critics often sing: the tip of the hat to pantheism.

Jenson is not interested in pantheism, even though it is the ever-present trap to his Lutheran theology. He indeed wants to provide the space between God and humanity that is necessary both for God's freedom and for ours, hence, he addresses the problem (and even specifically Gunton's challenge) in *ST II*, 46-48. There Jenson admits that the language used for time inescapably carries with it language of space, i.e. there is a unity between the two concepts that nevertheless should not become confused. Yet, Jenson has already defined creation as "time," God's "room" (space) in his life for us. So, for Jenson, *the space or distance between God and us is the difference between God's time and our time*. Thus, Jenson, like Barth, makes a distinction between the divine eternity (God's time) and our time—and the difference is absolute because the difference between Creator and creature is absolute. "Moreover, we now also see why we had to say that time was the 'room' God made for us in his life: did not God set us other than himself, did he not make space between him and us, all time would just be *his* time and there would be no 'accommodation' in him."⁷²⁸ Of course, depending on one's theology the reverse could be true: all time would be *our* time. But in order to maintain the *space* necessary to preserve *both* our freedom and God's a clear distinction in *time* is needed. Again, Jenson: "God is his own place."⁷²⁹ We could say, "God is his own time,"⁷³⁰ though certainly not absent from ours.

The criticism Gunton has made is that due to a weak pneumatology Jenson has risked swallowing otherness and freedom with immanence, but his response in *ST II* does not mention the Spirit, but rather is limited to a discussion of space. Moreover, Jenson's attempted clarification seems rather reminiscent of Barth's distinction of immanent and economic—the very thing, interestingly enough, that Gunton suggests as a remedy to Jenson's lack.⁷³¹ In essence, we have traced Jenson's theology from its earliest work⁷³² to its very latest⁷³³ and we have heard him repeatedly insist upon immanence between God and the created order. Here, however, is evidence that I believe calls nearly everything into question:

⁷²⁷ Ibid., 133.

⁷²⁸ *ST II*, 48.

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

⁷³⁰ And he has in *ST I*, 218.

⁷³¹ *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 134.

⁷³² *Alpha and Omega*

⁷³³ *On Thinking the Human*

when faced with the peril of losing divine and human freedom by means of an overemphasis on immanence, Jenson's solution is almost identical to Barth's. Time and space are sharply differentiated between God and his creation, though he is not absent from it. This is precisely Barth's conclusion on the matter, and the one that he was trying to attend to with immanent/economic and the *analogia fidei*. The irony of it all is that both theologians walk away with pneumatological needs.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

From Israel's earliest recorded history the most significant factor in her existence was the identity of her God and his identification *with them*. It is not an overstatement to say that the entire Christian faith hinges upon God's identity and his presence to his people, and the greater part of the tradition has been, in one fashion or another, a search for articulating that relationship in terms that are faithful to God's self-revelation. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have fostered—following the rise of modernity—a probing question pertaining to this relationship, one of God and time. This thesis has attempted two specific contributions to the current debate: 1) that the disciplines of philosophy and science, while necessary and profitable, must, for the Christian, be controlled or scrutinized with theology. A study of God and time whose guiding principle is something other than God's self-revelation in Jesus runs the risk of superimposing the natural upon the supernatural and arriving at dogmatic "God is..." statements by means other than God himself; 2) this thesis has explored two theological proposals concerning the nature of God's eternity and our time with the intention of moving Christian theology toward a more robust doctrine of God's relation to the created order—what we often refer to as providence. I have argued that Barth and Jenson share much more in common than Jenson would have us believe; that Barth has laid an advantageous foundation for our understanding of time and eternity; and that both Barth and Jenson maintain problematic elements that theology must address.

Chief among these problems is that Barth retains enough platonic tendencies from his *Römerbrief* period to call into question whether he indeed has dispensed with atemporality. Others have identified the culprit as simultaneity, i.e. time has no past, present, and future but is simply an eternal present. I have confirmed that this does appear to be the case in Barth, but that notwithstanding, his theology is broad and deep enough for improvements that could mitigate this tendency.⁷³⁴ Such improvements surround Barth's trinitarian formulation, specifically the ontology of the Holy Spirit in the God-world relation. If the Spirit is the one who brings life and time to us and in so doing unites us to the divine life (albeit presently in an incomplete way), then our time and God's time are not opposed, but the former is a gift of the latter and will be fully healed in the eschaton. That Jenson's intended corrections of Barth center on the Spirit's role and activity within and outwith the Trinity corroborate this

⁷³⁴ Again, it is a tendency, not a crippling malady for his theology as a whole.

point. The key feature to bear in mind here is that because of the Spirit the Father and Son have a dynamic life that is historical in the sense that God moves, works, did “this” for Israel in the past, and will do “that” for us in the future. God has a history. Yet, in so doing God does not lose being to the past or anticipate something outside himself since he is the giver of all life and time. This is very different than viewing God as a monad who stands over against a dynamic world. God is trinitarian/dynamic in himself; thus, he is able to enter into a dynamic relation with the world. Indeed, *because* God is in dynamic relation with himself *and* as a dynamic being he is in relation with the world, then it follows for the Christian theologian to conclude that we must be living in a dynamic world. That is, there is real movement as opposed to static simultaneity. Granted, this does not solve all the cognitive dissonance that one faces when contemplating the nature of our time, but I must simply refer the reader back to those cited in this thesis who have extensively argued for a dynamic view of time. I believe they are correct, not only because of the physical or philosophical reasons given, but because theologically this is God’s nature.

Barth lays a solid and appropriate foundation for Christian theology, one that rejects atemporality yet retains God as sovereign Lord over creation. He is aiming for the version of timelessness I have defined and indeed argued for in this thesis. Jenson recognizes Barth’s weaknesses, but offers a rather strange alternative that conceives of Father, Son, and Spirit each occupying one of the three temporal moments—past, present, and future, with the accent being on Spirit and future. As I have sought at length to demonstrate Jenson intends the same as Barth intends: God is temporal, but sovereign over our temporality. Yet by introducing this configuration of the *hypostases*, theology is at risk of overemphasizing the future to the detriment of past and present, which in turn prompts reservations regarding God’s relation to the world in general. That is, what are we to say regarding the presence of the Son and the Father to the world? Are they with us, too, or is it only the Spirit with whom we fellowship? Clearly Jenson does not believe this, nor does he indicate it is even an option for theology, yet these are the sort of problems that may arise from his formulation—a strange antidote to Barth’s pneumatology.

Where exactly does this leave the current debate on time and eternity, and has this thesis done anything to move it along in a useful direction? The discussion on the nature of our time should and will continue, but it will inevitably yield only partial results. Even if the future brings some overarching paradigmatic revolution, such as STR, it does not follow that all our questions regarding the nature of time and especially God’s relationship to it are

thereby answered. Thus, treating this shifting source as the core of the time-eternity question hardly seems appropriate. More suitable is that we follow Barth and Jenson who teach us that time-eternity is an issue of theology proper, which then must listen to and dialogue with the natural sciences. God does reveal himself and if we are to know anything about him and about our world, we must hearken to his self-revelation. The continuing question that Christian theology must address is exactly how God is dynamic in himself and how that dynamic life participates in our world.

The correlate to this is the areas of theology that flow from trinitarianism, e.g. anthropology (in particular, freedom), salvation, providence, eschatology, and prayer. By further developing a trinitarian theology of time and eternity I believe we make headway toward more coherent dogmatics. There are signs that the current theological climate holds promise, for most are not content to allow paradox to dominate Christianity's core claims. This is not to say that *mystery* is eradicated, for that must remain a central feature of the faith, and I am not so naïve as to think that if we can just answer the time/eternity question, then all other problems in theology will be solved. I am merely suggesting that issues such as freedom, Christology, sacraments, etc. are illumined and improved with a robust doctrine of time and eternity that articulates God's dynamic nature and his involvement with our dynamic world. I have done little in the way of fleshing out the implications for them; nevertheless, this thesis has accomplished its purpose in that it has demonstrated that the question of time and eternity is vital for theology's understanding of God and the created order, and that the way forward is by means of an improved trinitarian theology that appropriates the beneficial from Barth and Jenson and learns from their deficiencies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alston, William P. "Substance and the Trinity." *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, SJ, Gerald O'Collins, SJ, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- _____. "Divine Action: Shadow or Substance?" *The God Who Acts: Philosophical and Theological Explorations*. Thomas F. Tracy, ed. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.
- Anselm. *Proslogion*. Translated with an Introduction and Philosophical Commentary by M. J. Charlesworth. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Contra Gentiles, Book Two: Creation*. James F. Anderson, trans., ed. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975.
- _____. *Summa Theologica*. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, eds. Benziger Bros. edition, 1947.
- Augustine. *Confessions*. Henry Chadwick, trans. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- _____. *Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil*. Robert P. Russell, O. S. A., trans. Fathers of the Church, vol. 5. New York: CIMA Publishing Co., Inc., 1948.
- Ayres, Lewis. "On Not Three People: The Fundamental Themes of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology As Seen In *To Ablabius: On Not Three Gods*." *Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa*. Sarah Coakley, ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.
- Baelz, Peter. *Prayer and Providence: A Background Study*. London: SCM Press, 1968.
- Barr, James. *Biblical Words for Time*. Naperville: IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1969.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics, 4 volumes, 13 parts*. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, eds. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957-1973.
- _____. *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*. 4 vols. Zürich: Verlag der evangelischen Buchhandlung, 1932-1967.
- _____. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Edwyn C. Hoskins, trans. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- _____. *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963.
- _____. *God in Action*. E. G. Homrighausen and Karl J. Ernst, trans. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1938.
- _____. *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion, Volume I*.

- Hannelotte Reiffen, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991.
- _____. *The Humanity of God*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960.
- _____. *Karl Barth Letters 1961-1968*. Jürgen Fangmeier and Hinrich Stoevesandt, eds. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981.
- _____. *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*. Brian Cozens and John Bowden, trans. London: SCM Press, 2001.
- _____. *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. Douglas Horton, trans. London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1928.
- Bauckham, Richard. "Time and Eternity." *God Will Be All In All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*. Richard Bauckham, ed. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999.
- Beiser, Frederick. *Hegel*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Berkouwer, G. C. *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*. H. R. Boer, trans. London: Paternoster Press, 1956.
- Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. P. G. Walsh, trans. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Bouillard, Henri, *The Knowledge of God*. Samuel D. Femiano, trans. London: Herder and Herder, Inc., 1968.
- Bowie, Andrew. *Introduction to German Philosophy: From Kant to Habermas*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003.
- Braaten, Carl E. *History and Hermeneutics*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1968.
- Braaten, Carl E. and Philip Clayton, eds. *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988.
- Bradshaw, Timothy. *Trinity and Ontology: A Comparative Study of the Theologies of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg*. Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1988.
- Brümmer, Vincent. *What Are We Doing When We Pray?: A Philosophical Inquiry*. London: SCM Press, 1984.
- Brunner, Emil. *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption: Dogmatics Vol. II*. Olive Wyon, trans. London: Lutterworth Press, 1952.
- Buckley, James J. "Intimacy: The Character of Robert Jenson's Theology." *Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson*. Colin E. Gunton, ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.

Busch, Eberhard. *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology*. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004.

_____. *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Library of Christian Classics, vols. XX and XXI. John T. McNeill, ed., and Ford Lewis Battles, trans. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960.

Clausert, Dieter. *Theologischer Zeitbegriff und politisches Zeitbewußtsein in Karl Barths Dogmatik: dargestellt am Beispiel der Prolegomena*. München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1982.

Clayton, Philip. "Anticipation and Theological Method." *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response*. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton, eds. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988.

_____. "The Case for Christian Panentheism." *Dialog* 37 (1998): 201-08.

_____. *God and Contemporary Science*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997.

_____. "The Panentheistic Turn in Christian Theology." *Dialog* 38 (1999): 289-93.

Coakley, Sarah, ed. *Re-Thinking Gregory of Nyssa*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Colwell, John. *Actuality and Provisionality: Eternity and Election in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1989.

Craig, William Lane. *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991.

_____. "The Elimination of Absolute Time by the Special Theory of Relativity." *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*. Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

_____. "God and Real Time." *Religious Studies* 26 (1990): 335-47.

_____. *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987.

_____. "The Tensed vs. Tenseless Theory of Time: A Watershed for the Conception of Divine Eternity." *Questions of Time and Tense*. Robin Le Poidevin, ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1998.

Cullmann, Oscar. *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*. Floyd V. Filson, trans. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1951.

- Dalferth, Ingolf U. "Karl Barth's eschatological realism," *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*. S. W. Sykes, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Davies, Brian. *Aquinas*. Outstanding Christian Thinkers. London: Continuum, 2002.
- _____, ed. *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- _____. *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Davis, Stephen T., Daniel Kendall, SJ, Gerald O'Collins, SJ, eds. *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Desmond, William. *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double?* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.
- DeWeese, Garrett J. *God and the Nature of Time*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.
- Dorrien, Gary. *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology: Theology Without Weapons* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.
- Dorner, Isaak August. *Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration*. Robert R. Williams and Claude Welch, trans. Fortress Texts in Modern Theology. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.
- Duns Scotus, John. *A Treatise on God as First Principle*, 2nd ed. Allan B. Wolter, ed., trans. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966.
- Ebeling, Gerhard. "Time and Word." *The Future of Our Religious Past: Essays in Honour of Rudolf Bultmann*. James M. Robinson, ed. Charles E. Carlston and Robert P. Scharlemann, trans. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1971.
- Fackre, Gabriel. "The Lutheran *Capax* Lives." *Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson*. Colin E. Gunton, ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.
- _____. "Narrative Theology: An Overview." *Interpretation* (1983): 340-52.
- Farley, Benjamin Wirt. *The Providence of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988.
- Farmer, H. H. *The World and God: A Study of Prayer, Providence and Miracle in Christian Experience*. London: Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1935.
- Farrer, Austin. *Faith and Speculation: An Essay in Philosophical Theology*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988.
- Fergusson, David. *Rudolf Bultmann*. London: Continuum, 1992.
- Fergusson, David, Marcel Sarot, eds. *The Future as God's Gift: Explorations in Christian Eschatology*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.

- Ford, Lewis S. "The Nature of the Power of the Future." *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, With an Autobiographical Essay and Response*. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton, eds. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988.
- Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of God*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002.
- Frei, Hans. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
- _____. *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2000.
- Gamble, Richard C. *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism: An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*. London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992.
- Ganssle, Gregory E. *Four Views: God and Time*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001.
- Ganssle, Gregory E. and David M. Woodruff, eds. *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Gerson, L. P. *God and Greek Philosophy: Studies in the Early History of Natural Theology*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Gorringe, Timothy J. *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Reason For Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- _____. *Theology for the Community of God*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000.
- Gualtieri, Antonio R. "Time, Eternity and Contemporaneity with Christ." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17 (1964): 396-405.
- Gunton, Colin E. *Act and Being: Towards a Theology of Divine Attributes*. London: SCM Press, 2002.
- _____. "Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 33-58.
- _____. *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- _____. "Creation and Mediation in the Theology of Robert W. Jenson." *Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson*. Colin E. Gunton, ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.
- _____. *The Doctrine of Creation*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997.

- _____. *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology*. London: T&T Clark Ltd, 2003.
- _____. *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.
- _____. *Theology Through the Theologians: Selected Essays, 1972-1995*. London: T&T Clark, 1996.
- _____. "Time, Eternity and the Doctrine of the Incarnation." *Dialog* 21 (1982): 263-68.
- _____, ed. *Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.
- _____. "The Triune God and the Freedom of the Creature." *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*. S.W. Sykes, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- _____. *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983.
- Hafstad, Kjetil. *Wort und Geschichte: Das Geschichtsverständnis Karl Barths*. München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1985.
- Hasker, William. "The Absence of a Timeless God," *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature*. Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- _____. *God, Time, and Knowledge*. London: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Hawking, Stephen W. *A Brief History of Time*. New York: Bantam, 1988.
- Hawking, Stephen W. and Roger Penrose. *The Nature of Space and Time*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Hebblethwaite, Brian and Henderson, Edward, eds. *Divine Action: Studies Inspired by the Philosophical Theology of Austin Farrer*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990.
- Hector, Kevin W. "God's Trinity and Self-Determination: A Conversation with Karl Barth, Bruce McCormack and Paul Molnar." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7 (July 2005): 255-56.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume III: The Consummate Religion*. Peter C. Hodgson, ed. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, trans. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985.
- _____. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. A. V. Miller, trans. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- _____. *The Philosophy of Nature*. A. V. Miller, trans. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, trans. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1962.
- Helm, Paul, "Calvin (and Zwingli) on Divine Providence." *Calvin Theological Journal*, 29 (1994): 388-405.
- _____. "Divine Timeless Eternity." *Four Views: God and Time*. Gregory E. Ganssle, ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001.
- _____. *Eternal God: A Study of God Without Time*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- _____. *Faith and Understanding*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.
- _____. "God and Spacelessness." *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*. Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- _____. "The Impossibility of Divine Passibility." *The Power and Weakness of God: Impassibility and Orthodoxy*. Nigel M. De S. Cameron, ed. Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1990.
- _____. *The Providence of God*. Contours of Christian Theology. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Hodgson, Peter C. *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Horvath, Tibor. "Jesus Christ, the Eschatological Union of Time and Eternity." *Science et Esprit* 40 (May-September 1988): 179-92.
- Hughes, Christopher. "Matter and Actuality in Aquinas." *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*. Brian Davies, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Hunsinger, George, ed. *For the Sake of the World: Karl Barth and the Future of Ecclesial Theology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004.
- _____. *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- _____. "Mysterium Trinitatis: Barth's Conception of Eternity." *For the Sake of the World: Karl Barth and the Future of Ecclesial Theology*. George Hunsinger, ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004.
- _____. "Robert Jenson's *Systematic Theology*: a review essay." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55 (2002), 161-200.
- Irenaeus. *Against the Heresies*. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume I*. Alexander Roberts,

James Donaldson, eds. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985.

Ive, Jeremy. "Robert W. Jenson's Theology of History." *Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson*. Colin E. Gunton, ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.

Jenson, Robert W. *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002.

_____. *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

_____. "Creator and Creature." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 4: 2 (2002): 216-21.

_____. "Does God Have Time? The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Concept of Time in the Physical Sciences." *Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences Bulletin* 11 (Winter 1991): 1-6.

_____. *God After God: The God of the Past and the God of the Future, Seen in the Work of Karl Barth*. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969.

_____. "The Hidden and Triune God." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2:1 (2000): 5-12.

_____. "How Does Jesus Make a Difference? The Person and Work of Jesus Christ." *Essentials of Christian Theology*. William C. Placher, ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

_____. "Jesus in the Trinity: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Christology and the Doctrine of the Trinity." *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response*. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton, eds. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988.

_____. *The Knowledge of Things Hoped For: The Sense of Theological Discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.

_____. "The Logic of the Doctrine of the Trinity." *Dialog* 26:4 (1987): 245-49.

_____. *On Thinking the Human: Resolutions of Difficult Notions*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003.

_____. "Proclamation without Metaphysics." *Dialog* 1 (1962): 22-29.

_____. *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1: *The Triune God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

_____. *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2: *The Works of God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

- _____. *Triune Identity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.
- _____. "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went." *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology* 2:3 (1993): 296-304.
- _____. *Visible Words: The Interpretation and Practice of Christian Sacraments*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.
- Jenson, Robert W., Carl E. Braaten, eds. *The Futurist Option*. New York: Newman Press, 1970.
- John of Damascus. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. First Series, 14 vols. Second series, 14 vols. H. Wace and P. Schaff, eds. New York: Christian, 1887-1900.
- Jowers, Dennis. "The Reproach of Modalism: A Difficulty for Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Trinity." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003): 231-46.
- Jüngel, Eberhard. "Die Möglichkeit theologischer Anthropologie auf dem Grunde der Analogie: Eine Untersuchung zum Analogieverständnis Karl Barths." *Evangelische Theologie*, 22 (1962): 535-57.
- _____. *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism*. Darrell L. Guder, trans. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983.
- _____. *God's Being Is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth, A Paraphrase*. John Webster, trans. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001.
- _____. "Thesen zur Ewigkeit des ewigen Lebens." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 97:1 (2000): 80-87.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1966.
- Kirwan, Christopher. *Augustine*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Langford, Michael J. *Providence*. London: SCM Press, 1981.
- Lash, Nicholas. "Up and Down Christology." *New Studies in Theology*, 1. Stephen Sykes and Derek Holmes, eds. London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd.: 1980.
- Leftow, Brian. "Anti Social Trinitarianism." *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, SJ, Gerald O'Collins, SJ, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- _____. "Response to *Mysterium Trinitatis*: Barth's Conception of Eternity." *For the Sake of the World: Karl Barth and the Future of Ecclesial Theology*. George Hunsinger, ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004.

- _____. *Time and Eternity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Lucas, J. R. *The Future: An Essay on God, Temporality and Truth*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.
- Macken, John S. J. *The Autonomy Theme in the Church Dogmatics: Karl Barth and His Critics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Mackintosh, Hugh Ross. *The Person of Jesus Christ*. Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1912.
- _____. *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth*. London: Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1937.
- Marshall, Bruce D. "Review of Richard H. Roberts, *A Theology on Its Way? Essays on Karl Barth*." *Journal of Theological Studies* 44 (1983): 453-58.
- McCormack, Bruce L. "Grace and Being: the role of God's gracious election in Karl Barth's theological ontology." *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*. John Webster, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- _____. *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- _____. "Revelation and History in Transfoundationalist Perspective: Karl Barth's Theological Epistemology in Conversation with a Schleiermacherian Tradition." *The Journal of Religion* 78 (1998): 18-37.
- McDowell, John C. *Hope in Barth's Eschatology: Interrogations and Transformations Beyond Tragedy*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000.
- McDowell, John C., Mike Higton, eds. *Conversing with Barth*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.
- McTaggart, J. M. E. *The Nature of Existence*, vol.2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927.
- Mellor, D. H. *Real Time*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Molnar, Paul D. *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology*. London: T&T Clark Ltd., 2002.
- _____. "Robert W. Jenson's *Systematic Theology, Volume I: The Triune God*." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52 (1999): 119-23.
- _____. "Some Problems with Pannenberg's Solution to Barth's 'Faith Subjectivism'." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 48 (1995): 315-39.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. Margaret Kohl, trans. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

- _____. *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*. Margaret Kohl, trans. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1981.
- Morrison, John Douglas. *Knowledge of the Self-Revealing God in the Thought of Thomas Forsyth Torrance*. New York: Peter Lang, 1997.
- Muller, Richard A. *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Neuhaus, Richard John. "Wolfhart Pannenberg: Profile of a Theologian." Wolfhart Pannenberg. *Theology and the Kingdom of God*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969.
- Oden, Thomas C. *The Living God, Systematic Theology: Volume One*. Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1987.
- Olson, Roger. "The Human Self-realization of God: Hegelian Elements in Pannenberg's Christology." *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 13 (1986): 207-23.
- _____. "Wolfhart Pannenberg's Doctrine of the Trinity." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 175-206.
- Padgett, Alan G. "Eternity as Relative Timelessness." *God and Time: Four Views*. Gregory E. Ganssle, ed. London: Paternoster Press, 2002.
- _____. *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
- _____. "Response to Critics." *God and Time: Four Views*. Gregory E. Ganssle, ed. London: Paternoster Press, 2002.
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. "An Autobiographical Sketch." *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response*. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton, eds. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988.
- _____. *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*. Matthew J. O'Connell, trans. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985.
- _____. *Basic Questions in Theology, Vol 1*. George H. Kehm, trans. London: SCM Press, 1970.
- _____. "Eternity, Time, and the Trinitarian God," *Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson*. Colin E. Gunton, ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.
- _____. *Grundzüge der Christologie*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1964.

- _____. "Problems of a Trinitarian Doctrine of God." *Dialog* 26: 4 (1987): 250-57.
- _____. *Systematic Theology: Volume 1*. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991.
- _____. *Systematic Theology: Volume 2*. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.
- _____. *Systematic Theology: Volume 3*. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998.
- Peacocke, Arthur. *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming—Natural, Divine, and Human*, enlarged ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Peters, Ted. *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.
- Peterson, Gregory R. "Whither Panentheism?" *Zygon* 36 (2001): 395-405.
- Pike, Nelson. *God and Timelessness*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970.
- Pinnock, Clark. *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Pinnock, Clark, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker and David Basinger. *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994.
- Plantinga, Alvin. "God, Evil, and the Metaphysics of Freedom." *The Problem of Evil*. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- _____. *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.
- Plathow, Michael. "Zeit und Ewigkeit: ein Thema der christlichen Vorsehungslehre heute." *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 26:2 (1984): 95-115.
- Pöhlmann, H. G. *Analogia entis oder Analogia fidei?: Die Frage der Analogie bei Karl Barth*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965.
- Polkinghorne, John. *Science and Providence: God's Interaction with the World*. London: SPCK, 1989.
- Rahner, Karl. *The Trinity*. New York: Seabury Press, 1974.
- Reardon, P. H. "Calvin on Providence: the Development of an Insight." *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism: An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*. Richard C. Gamble, ed. London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992.

- Reichenbach, Hans. *The Direction of Time*. Maria Reichenbach, ed. Berkley: University of California Press, 1956.
- Roberts, Richard H. *A Theology on Its Way? Essays on Karl Barth*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.
- Rolnick, Philip A. *Analogical Possibilities: How Words Refer to God*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993.
- Rosato, P. D. *The Spirit as Lord, the Pneumatology of Karl Barth*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981.
- Sanders, John. *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- Sarot, Marcel. *God, Passibility and Corporeality*. Kempen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1992.
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith*. H. R. Mackintosh, J. S. Stewart, trans. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976.
- Schwöbel, Christoph. "Divine Agency and Providence." *Modern Theology* 3:3 (1987): 225-44.
- Seitz, Christopher R. "Handing Over the Name: Christian Reflection on the Divine name YHWH." *Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson*. Colin E. Gunton, ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.
- Sherover, Charles M. *Are We In Time?: And Other Essays on Time and Temporality*. Gregory R. Johnson, ed. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003.
- _____, ed. *The Human Experience of Time: The Development of Its Philosophic Meaning*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1975.
- Sholl, Brian K. "On Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Thought," *Modern Theology* 18 (2002): 27-36.
- Smart, J. C.C. *Language and Time*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Sonderegger, Katherine. "Et Resurrexit Tertia Die: Jenson and Barth on Christ's Resurrection." *Conversing with Barth*. John C. McDowell and Mike Higton, eds. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.
- Stinson, Charles H. "On the Time-Eternity "Link": Some Aspects of Recent Christian Eschatology." *Religious Studies* 13 (1977): 49-62.
- Stoeger, William R. S.J. "Faith Reflects on the Evolving Universe: Divine Action, the

Trinity, and Time.” *Finding God in All Things: Essays in Honor of Michael J. Buckley, S.J.* Michael J. Himes, Stephen J. Pope, eds. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996.

Stroup, George. *The Promise of Narrative Theology*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1984.

Stump, Eleonore. “Aquinas’s Account of Freedom: Intellect and Will.” *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*. Brian Davies, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Stump, Eleonore, Norman Kretzmann. “Eternity.” *Journal of Philosophy*, 78 (1981): 429-58.

Swain, Scott. *God according to the Gospel: A Critical Dialogue with Robert W. Jenson on the Hermeneutics of Trinitarian Identification*. Deerfield, IL: PhD. Dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2002.

Swinburne, Richard. *The Coherence of Theism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

_____. *The Christian God*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Sykes, S. W., ed. *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

_____. *Karl Barth: Studies of His Theological Method*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Sykes, Stephen, Derek Holmes, eds. *New Studies in Theology, 1*. London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd.: 1980.

Tanner, Kathryn. *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

Teske, Roland J., S.J. *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996.

Thomas, Owen C., ed. *God’s Activity in the World: The Contemporary Problem*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983.

_____. “Recent Thought on Divine Agency.” *Divine Action: Studies Inspired by the Philosophical Theology of Austin Farrer*. Brian Hebblethwaite and Edward Henderson, eds. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990.

Thompson, John. *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1991.

Torrance, Alan J. “*Creatio ex Nihilo* and the Spatio-Temporal Dimensions, with special reference to Jürgen Moltmann and D. C. Williams.” *The Doctrine of Creation*. Colin E. Gunton, ed. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997.

- _____. *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation with Special Reference to Volume One of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996.
- Torrance, T. F. *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology 1910-1931*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1962.
- _____. *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990.
- _____. *Space, Time and Incarnation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- _____. *Space, Time and Resurrection*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976.
- Van den Brom, Luco J. "Eschatology and Time: Reversal of the Time Direction?" *The Future as God's Gift: Explorations in Christian Eschatology*. David Fergusson and Marcel Sarot, eds. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. "The Case Remains Unproven." *Dialog* 38 (1999): 281-85.
- Watson, Gerard. *Greek Philosophy and the Christian Notion of God*. Dublin: The Columba Press, 1994.
- Webb, Clement C. J. *God and Personality: The Gifford Lectures*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1918.
- Weber, Otto. *Foundations of Dogmatics*, 2 vols. Darrell L. Guder, trans. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981.
- Webster, John. *Barth's Earlier Theology*. London: T&T Clark, 2005.
- _____. *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998.
- _____, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Welch, Claude. *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century: Volume 1, 1799-1870*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972.
- Welker, Michael. "God's Eternity, God's Temporality, and Trinitarian Theology." *Theology Today* 55:3 (1998): 317-28.
- Wierenga, Edward R. "Timelessness out of Mind: On the Alleged Incoherence of Divine Timelessness." *God and Time*. Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Wiles, Maurice. *God's Action in the World: The Bampton Lectures for 1986*. London: SCM Press, 1986.

William of Ockham. *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, 2nd ed. Marilyn Adams and Norman Kretzmann, trans. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1983.

Williams, Rowan. "Barth on the Triune God." *Karl Barth: Studies of His Theological Method*. S.W. Sykes, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

_____. *On Christian Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000.

Willis, Jr., W. Waite. *Theism, Atheism and the Doctrine of the Trinity: The Trinitarian Theologies of Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann in Response to Protest Atheism*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. "God Everlasting." *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*. Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

_____. "Response to Critics." *Four Views: God and Time*. Gregory E. Ganssle. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

_____. "Unqualified Divine Temporality." *Four Views: God and Time*. Gregory E. Ganssle, ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

Yeago, David S. "Catholicity, Nihilism, and the God of the Gospel: Reflections on the Theology of Robert W. Jenson." *Dialog* 31 (Spring 1992): 18-22.