

**Pre-existence Language and the Dynamic of Metaphorical  
Predication: The Christological Use of Pre-existence  
Language in the Light of Paul Ricoeur's Theory of  
Metaphor.**

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## Introduction

## Introduction

A learned, and partially domesticated, Jesuit colleague remarked to me that he thought that pre-existence was like the 'pre-wash' setting on a washing machine -- it was still a wash, whatever is meant by the prefix 'pre-'. This may be a small illustration of the bemusement which many people feel about pre-existence language: it does not lend itself easily to the creation of clear thinking. It is rather blurred at the edges -- inevitably so, given the connotations it implies and presents. In addition, the topic has been known to bring blank expressions to faces, and to freeze dinner conversations at which the wine is flowing freely.

I have been puzzled by two things, and this study is a partial attempt to find a way of relating them. The first is the capacity of pre-existence language to effect such a radical redescription of the identity of Jesus that, under the impetus of this Christological development, a new -- Trinitarian -- language about God is devised. Out of all the New Testament descriptions of Jesus, it is pre-existence language which sets up the categories which expand Jewish monotheism in the direction of Christian Trinitarian monotheism. The word itself, and its cognates, are absent from the New Testament writings; instead, there are ways of



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describing Jesus which are conveniently grouped under the general category of 'pre-existence language'. These texts, principally the Johannine Prologue, the opening verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Philippians hymn, have been the foundational documents for a sequence of Christological and theological conversations which continues to this day, both in a dominant orthodox form and in an accompanying, but no less important, heterodox form. Would the history of Christian thought have been different without this descriptive category of pre-existence language? Undoubtedly so. Our relations with our Jewish and Islamic co-worshippers still stumble over the implications which derive from this way of speaking about Jesus.

And yet -- and this is the second thing which has puzzled me -- there is a lack of an adequate interpretative category for Christological pre-existence language. The customary approach -- to regard it as 'mythical' -- falls into the swamps of this over-defined, and therefore imprecise, category. 'Myth' is used in so many different disciplines with different senses attached to it, that each individual author has, of necessity, to define it for his or her own purposes; this, in turn, only adds to the proliferation of definitions of 'myth'. A case can be made for declaring a moratorium on the use of 'myth' in

theological language for the foreseeable future: its value as a category is in inverse proportion to its occurrence. Not much good was done by applying it to the nature of Incarnational Christology in the collection entitled 'The Myth of God Incarnate': the response it provoked in a volume entitled 'The Truth of God Incarnate' indicates the confusion which the word currently breeds.

In addition, one must say that often 'myth' is used to cover aspects of literary work which require more precise delineation: there are aspects of metaphor, symbol, allegory and imaginative expression which perish when they are subsumed under the heading of 'myth'. Interpretative categories are instruments of understanding and clarification which should be abandoned when their edges are blunted. Such seems to be the case with the approach which would portray pre-existence language as 'mythical'. The power of pre-existence language to bring about such a radical and far-reaching redescription and evaluation of the identity of Jesus points in the direction of considering it as a form of predication which is that of a metaphorical statement. Paul Ricoeur's recent work on metaphor proposes an account of the nature and workings of metaphor which may be valuable in our consideration of pre-existence language. This study is an attempt to illuminate the Christological use of

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pre-existence language through his reflections on how metaphors work as heuristic devices which apply innovative predications to an already known subject, with the purpose of disclosing new ways of viewing that referent. Metaphor includes, as part of its working, an imaginative, or visual, element, in which the subject is seen as whatever is presented in the predication. At the same time, it requires, for the interpretation of how the subject is to be thought to be described as the predicate, that the reader construe the predication in a way which avoids nonsense, and which issues in the creation of a new way of looking at the subject. Ricoeur presents the power of metaphor as its capacity to generate insights and conceptual clarifications which form the basis of subsequent non-metaphorical statements -- precisely the phenomenon observed in the history of Christology. This leads us to think that it may be possible to consider pre-existence language as a form of metaphorical predication.

Guided by this approach, our study will differ from other treatments of pre-existence. R.G.

Hamerton-Kelly's work, Pre-existence, Wisdom and the Son of Man, is primarily an exegetical and taxonomic study of the various New Testament texts which apply this motif, both Christologically and ecclesiologically. His initial definition is descriptive:

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'"Pre-existence" is a mythological term which signifies that an entity had a real existence before its manifestation on earth, either in the mind of God or in heaven.' 1

This definition is then differentiated according to four different forms:

'1/ one in which an entity exists before its own manifestation but not before the creation; 2/ another in which an entity exists before its own manifestation and before the creation; 3/ a third in which an entity exists before the creation but is not necessarily manifested at all; and a fourth in which things simply exist in heaven, without reference to creation or manifestation.' 2

One has to ask about the value of this approach: in spite of its value as a comprehensive analysis of the relevant texts, Hamerton-Kelly's work lacks the means to go beyond the phenomenology and classification of the texts according to this guiding schema. In addition, he presents a questionable conclusion, in his desire to locate pre-existence as a theme within the Synoptic Gospels, and indeed, as an element in the self-consciousness of Jesus: he is of the opinion that 'when Jesus used the self-designation "Son of Man", he and his hearers understood it to imply his pre-existence.' 3 There is no justification for this view; continuity between Jesus and the Christology of the post-Resurrection Church is an important concern, but it is not to be achieved by proposals like this.



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Our own study will not treat of the varying 'degrees' of pre-existence -- whether 'ideal' or 'real' -- since this distinction, and this way of dealing with the theme, does not aid understanding, but rather presents a distinction that no one really knows what to do with. Instead, after expounding Ricoeur's analysis of metaphor, we shall take the discussion into four related but distinct areas in order to make a contribution to each of them. We have chosen this path, because one of our concerns will be the context of discussion which derives from pre-existence language -- both in Christology and in Trinity -- and the relationship between pre-existence language and other Christological concerns. Our first chapter will be an exposition of Ricoeur, but after that, we shall draw upon his theory as it seems appropriate. It is not our intention to make a point-by-point application of his whole theory to every detail of pre-existence language. Such an approach would be highly artificial, tedious, repetitive and, I suspect, too constricting to be valuable. We shall be guided by his approach; it is for Ricoeur himself to do it differently.

Our second chapter will examine the Christological use of pre-existence language, with the intention of bringing some clarity into how it should be viewed within the Christological sphere. Our third and fourth chapters will examine the use Barth makes of the theme

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of the pre-existence of the man Jesus, and the relationship between this theme and other concerns of the Church Dogmatics, and the place of pre-existence language in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Our choice of this New Testament text, rather than the obvious choice of the Fourth Gospel, is partially inspired by the neglect of this theme in the majority of works on the Epistle. Yet there is an integration of this Christological theme with the soteriological concerns of the Epistle which is worth pursuing. In addition, the absence of a separate 'pre-existence narrative', such as the Johannine Prologue, concentrates attention on the application of pre-existence language to the person of Jesus -- a point which links this chapter with our previous two studies of Christology and Barth. Our final chapter will consider the necessity for a formal distinction between Christological and Trinitarian languages: within the first, we shall propose that pre-existence language has, as its referent, the person of Jesus, but within the second, it is necessary to speak of another referent, the 'Eternal Son or Word', distinct from Jesus. We shall approach this through a consideration of the issues at stake in the contemporary discussion of the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinity. In conclusion, the chapter will turn to a way of proposing a more pneumatologically conceived view of the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinity, and of the relationship between the 'pre-existent' Son and the Incarnate Son.

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Each section is, to some extent, autonomous, but they are linked together by inter-related themes and questions. I have been aware of the ways in which the different areas of study chosen for examination have an organic unity which derives from the particular line of investigation I have chosen.

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Paul Ricoeur's Theory of Metaphor



Frequently, the examples chosen by writers on metaphor are banal. In particular, they can fail to bring out the organising power of metaphors as they are used in literature. We shall begin with some examples chosen in order to illustrate the themes we shall expound in Ricoeur's treatment of the character of metaphor. First of all, a poem by Emily Dickinson:

Crumbling is not an instant's Act  
A fundamental pause  
Dilapidation's processes  
Are organised Decays.

'Tis first a Cobweb on the Soul  
A Cuticle of Dust  
A Borer in the Axis  
An Elemental Rust

Ruin is formal -- Devil's work  
Consecutive and Slow --  
Fail in an instant, no man did  
Slipping -- is Crash's law. 1

Faced with a poem like this, one can make several choices, some of which will be misguided, and some of which will be correct. The first misguided approach might be to recapture the intention of Dickinson as she composed the poem. An appreciation in these terms would see its task as re-presenting or re-creating the 'mind' of the poet in the act of composition through some form of psychological and aesthetic empathy. Schleiermacher's proposal that we should try 'to

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understand an author as well as and even better than he understands himself<sup>2</sup> has as its foundation the belief that the more we enter into the poet's mind, the better our understanding of the poem. Northrop Frye formulates this approach in these terms: it is 'the notion that the poet has a primary intention of conveying meaning to a reader, and that the first duty of a critic is to recapture that intention.'<sup>3</sup> The main difficulty about this approach is that it identifies 'poetic meaning' with the psychological intentions of the poet. The meaning of a poem is sought in something external to itself, namely, in the personality of the poet, and, even if we leave aside the question of how we could possibly have access to the 'intention' of the writer, in such a way as to supersede it, this approach in effect searches for a meaning elsewhere: not in the poem itself but in the intention of the writer. Northrop Frye again:

'If intention is still thought to be apparent in the poem itself, the poem is being regarded as incomplete, like a freshman's essay where the reader has continually to speculate about what the author may have had in his head. If the author has been dead for centuries, such speculation cannot get us very far, however irresistibly it may suggest itself.'<sup>4</sup>

Another version of the attempt to find the 'meaning' of a poem in something external to the poem, is found in

the attempt to say 'what the poem means': the formulation of a paraphrase which grasps the 'point' of the poem and re-expresses, in a more accessible -- shorter! -- way, the inner conceptual core of the poem. This implies that there is a 'meaning' which is separable from the poem, and which can be adequately, and often more clearly expressed, though a 'non-poetic' re-statement of the 'idea' of the poem. So, Dickinson's poem might be re-expressed thus: 'A person's life is subject to minute adjustments which, eventually, can erode the quality of one's soul.' The poem is thus an ornamental embellishment of a simpler prose statement, and the metaphors used are a 'mask' for the real meaning. Northrop Frye again:

'...if a poem cannot be literally anything but a poem, then the literal basis of meaning in poetry can only be its letters, its inner structure of interlocking motifs. We are always wrong, in the context of criticism, when we say "this poem means literally" -- and then give a prose paraphrase of it. All paraphrases abstract a secondary of outward meaning.... a poem's meaning is literally its pattern or integrity as a verbal structure.' 5

The poem is a complex, inter-related verbal structure, whose 'meaning' is a function of its 'centripetal' or 'inward-directed' character as a self-contained verbal pattern.<sup>6</sup> The question about the 'meaning' of a poem is thus inseparable from the question of how the poem works: it cannot be ascertained without considering the

internal relationships among the various parts of the poem, the interaction between the individual elements and the total coherence of the work, and the structural features which combine to the expression of this verbal structure.

It is both a matter of experience and an axiom of poetic criticism that poems cannot be adequately paraphrased; Dickinson's poem is a case in point. The density of the composition and the tightly packed juxtaposition of the phrasing resists elaboration; equally, one would be hard put to preserve the tautness of structure, which is essential to her phrasing, in a less constrained form of expression. A complete analysis of this poem would take us away from the principal direction of our journey, namely the character of metaphor, but if we turn to the principal characteristic of the poem, the organising principle of the extended metaphor which generates the dominant theme and deploys its development throughout the three stanzas, we shall be right on target.

The poem refers to an elusive area, which it designates the 'soul', the field of the personal appropriation of the interaction of a person's spiritual, emotional and intellectual life: the particular aspect treated is the experience of inner 'crumbling', 'decay', 'ruin', 'dilapidation', seen not as an instantaneous event, but as the result of a slow, cumulative action usually

imperceptible in its effects. What is being described is the area of the 'inner atmosphere' of personal life; yet this intangible area is described by words which have a strong physical reference: 'crumbling', 'decay', 'dilapidation'. While retaining their original physical connotations, they are transferred to a distinctly non-physical context. The second stanza gives a series of physical images in which the only non-physical noun denotes the new context to which the other nouns are transferred metaphorically:

''Tis first a Cobweb on the Soul  
 A Cuticle of Dust  
 A Borer in the Axis  
 An Elemental Rust.'

The physical connotations of the images are applied to inner experiences which are viewed as though they were dependent on the functioning of machinery capable of decay and malfunction. To say this, in these terms, is to say something rather bizarre; but to create a poem, in which the imagery shapes and organises our whole perception of the character of inner experience, as Emily Dickinson does, is to use metaphors to provide a field of description which is remarkably effective. The original context of the imagery is brought into contact with a new field of reference in such a way that the new referent -- the inner experiences -- are seen in the light of the ~~connotations~~ connotations which the imagery brings. In this stanza, the personal experiences of



'decay' are 'seen as' the corrosion of a neglected machine. Although the two networks brought together here are radically different, the imagery of machinery is transferred to the soul in a way which shapes the reader's insights into an area which is inaccessible other than in metaphorical terms. (Consider, for example, the spatial and kinetic imagery used in Freudian and Jungian psychology.) The interaction between the two networks -- machinery and inner experience -- overcomes the incompatibility which initially exists between them, and a new perception of the soul's experiences, in terms of the transferred imagery, is offered to the reader. We might think of the imagery as a 'heuristic device' which discloses aspects which cannot be rendered accessible in other terms, except, perhaps, through the use of a different metaphoric network. We know that the soul cannot rust, but we gain from the poem a description of the 'soul rusting' which is experienced by us as a meaningful and effective description. We construe the imagery in a way which 'fictively' considers the soul as capable of the decay and rust known from a totally different, mechanical context, and we experience this as illuminating and truthful.

A second example, this time from the art criticism of Adrian Stokes: in this passage, he discusses the significance of the putto in Renaissance art, with

particular reference to Donatello's putti on the singing gallery of the Duomo in Florence:

'The putto makes the air move. Indeed he is associated with all the elements. He bursts stone like earth, at Rimini he rides the dolphin, his tempestuous energy enkindles a flame that withers tasteful ornamental foliage poor in sap, and heats the luscious growth to a vibrant tropical bulbosity. The putto is elemental force under the symbol of the infant's animal nature.' 7

Here the contrast is between the innocence of the image of the putto -- a dancing, playful child -- and the energy which he is seen to embody: the power of the natural forces of the world. We might say that here the tension is between his apparent weakness and innocence -- he is, after all, only a 'child' -- and the elemental energy which he symbolises; this tension reaches its high point in the description of the putto enkindling a flame strong enough to be that of the sun whose heat withers foliage and, at the same time, generates a tropical richness of growth. The putto is the sun, destructive and exuberantly creative at the same time. There is no need to specify what foliage it might be that 'withers', or what 'growth' it might be that flourishes 'to a vibrant, tropical bulbosity', since these terms do not refer to anything 'in' the putto: they are the images transferred from nature,

from the world under the sun's energy, to the putto. As with the poem by Emily Dickinson, where there was nothing 'in' the soul which can be corroded or rusted, yet, under the transfer of the connotation of the metaphor, the soul can be seen as capable of physical decay, so here the transposed imagery creates a fictive, heuristic account which enables the reader to consider the putto as though his energy were that of the sun. One may think here of Wallace Stevens' line, 'Description is revelation'<sup>8</sup> to summarise Stokes' technique in this passage: he views the putto as the symbol of the forces of the world, and his image of the putto as the sun is, within the conventions of natural symbolism, the highest metaphorical attribution he could make. The interaction between the referent and the hyperbolic imagery used to describe it effect a redescription of the putto through the 'filtering' effect of the new descriptive categories in which it is viewed.

Stokes may provide us with another example: the following aphorism occurs in the same volume:

'Pleasure is a lighthouse flash seen across empty wastes encompassed by a sense of loss.'<sup>9</sup>



Like all such aphorisms about human experience, the brevity of expression requires from the reader that he appropriate the insight thus formulated, and evaluate it against his own experience by comparison and judgment. It moves easily into the realm of ratiocinative discussion. One should note, first of all, that the opening phrase of the aphorism, 'Pleasure is a lighthouse flash seen across empty wastes' could well be expressed as a simile. The element of comparison would be the same; the only difference would be that, if 'like' were inserted, the illocutionary force of the metaphor, with its dramatic 'is', would be lacking, to the detriment of the aphorism. As we shall see later, although simile and metaphor are related, there is a distinct difference between them in the way they conjoin referent and predicate: to say that Margaret Thatcher is like the Iron Lady, and to say that she is the Iron Lady is to effect an assimilation between the two elements which is quite different in each case.

The tone of Stokes' aphorism is moral: it concerns the place of pleasure within a life, otherwise empty, in which the feeling of loss is the most enduring and significant experience, unrelieved by the occasional flash of pleasure. It achieves its force from the use of the metaphor of the flashing light across waste ground -- a highly visual image, in which pleasure is

'seen as' the brief, intermittent beam of light. The abstraction of the two referents, 'pleasure' and 'loss', is given visual form through the image: within the metaphor, there is a visual association between them which corresponds to the moral point about their relationship in terms of their duration and significance. The strong word 'encompassed' conveys the permanence and dominance of the sense of loss, which is only temporarily relieved by the moments of pleasure. The interpenetration of the moral, experiential dimension, evoked by the aphorism, and the visual dimension of the image, exemplifies the power of metaphor to bring together the pictorial element and the discursive element which arises out of the description: while functioning at a pictorial level, it shapes the discussion at a moral level, thus oscillating between the figurative and the conceptual dimensions of language.

In our analysis of these metaphors, we have anticipated many of the themes found in Ricoeur's treatment. We have indicated that the question about the meaning of a metaphor involves an examination of how the metaphor actually works. On the negative side, we have indicated that it is not sufficient to consider metaphors as simply 'one word' phenomena. The metaphors we have examined resist explanation in terms of a simple substitution theory whereby a metaphor is simply the insertion, from another context, of a word

transferred to a new setting. Nor is it sufficient to regard metaphors as ornaments: in our examples, the metaphors were central to the meaning of the statements being made. Moreover, they functioned, not as single words, but as parts of statements, integral to the semantic content of the poem or description. We indicated that the most satisfactory account of how they worked was one which considered an interaction between two networks, directed towards introducing the capacity for a new, and fruitful, description of a particular referent. We spoke of this as a process by which the referent was 'seen as' something else: the reader's perception of the referent was organised by the implications and connotations of the metaphorical predication. Finally, we indicated that, while functioning at the pictorial or figurative level, metaphors also had the power to initiate and provoke discussion at a conceptual or ratiocinative level. Part of their power and value lies in this ability to oscillate between the figurative and the conceptual, and it is this feature which is significant in the Christological use of the predication of pre-existence.

We shall turn now to an exposition of the main features of Ricoeur's analysis of metaphor. His principal work, The Rule of Metaphor is subtitled, Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language and this explains the presence in the work of wide-ranging

discussions of semiotics, semantics, psychology, literary criticism, linguistic philosophy and hermeneutics -- all of which have some part to play in Ricoeur's typically complex treatment of metaphor. Like Jacob, Ricoeur wrestles with angels, though he seems to prefer them to come at him in groups, rather than individually. It will not be possible to broach all these topics in our exposition. In addition, it should be said that we intend simply to provide a basis for the approach to pre-existence language which we shall adopt later. It is not our intention to work with his theory later in detail, taking point by point and applying it to pre-existence language. To do so would prevent us from considering the theological and Christological issues which are more our concern. However, it is important to provide an exposition here of the semantic importance of metaphorical predication, which can act as the supporting pillars of the later examination of how the dynamic of pre-existence language is to be characterised.

The Rule of Metaphor is a series of inter-related studies. Its structure is such that an exposition of Ricoeur's theory necessarily involves a presentation of the 'conversation partners he has chosen, since the qualifications, comments and criticisms he offers require contexts in which the nuances of his position can be appreciated. Therefore, something of the

'organic quality' of his work must be reflected in this exposition; this will not be a fruitless exercise, although it will be extremely wide-ranging, since in his discussion, the main points in the contemporary treatment of metaphor are raised. Our presentation, too, will consider a range of contemporary writers insofar as they contribute to the debate.

Ricoeur regards the history of the theory of metaphor as the history of interpretations of Aristotle's writings on the topic. The counter-positions which he rejects all have a common origin in the orientation given to the subject in Aristotle's Poetics. As we shall see later, the wheel comes full circle, when Ricoeur himself returns to Aristotle for his own evaluation of the semantic and referential importance of metaphor. Initially, he is concerned to highlight the features of Aristotle's approach which give rise to inadequate analyses of metaphahor.

#### ARISTOTLE AND THE RHETORICAL TRADITION

Aristotle gives the following definition of metaphor:

'Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy.' (Poetics 1457 b 6-9)



Ricoeur draws attention to the following features of this definition:

Firstly, the definition sees metaphor as 'something that happens to the noun'.<sup>10</sup> By connecting metaphor with the noun or word, and not with the wider context of 'discourse', Aristotle directs the interpretation of metaphor in the direction of a 'word-centred approach': 'Aristotle's definition contains in nuce the theory of tropes, or figures of speech that focus on the word.'<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, 'Metaphor is defined in terms of movement',<sup>12</sup> as a displacement of a word or name from one class to another, from one context to another.

Thirdly, Ricoeur notes that the transposed name belongs to something else. Aristotle also speaks of 'the alien name' (1457 b 31), which is opposed to the ordinary or customary usage. 'Metaphor accordingly is defined in terms of deviation.'<sup>13</sup>

Fourthly, the latter part of the definition outlines a typology of metaphor: '..from genus to species, etc.' The transference operates through some sort of transgression of the classification of words: 'Metaphor occurs in an order already constituted in terms of genus and species and in a game whose

relation-rules -- subordination, co-ordination, proportionality or equality of relationships -- are already given... Metaphor consists in a violation of this order and game.' 14

Several of the features of this definition gave rise to the view in the Rhetorical Tradition that metaphor is merely another trope, an ornamental device which carries no new information. Ricoeur blames this on the emphasis on 'the word', or more specifically, on the noun or name, and on the act of naming, in the theory of meaning. Instead, as he argues later, more attention should have been paid to the sentence as the primary unit of meaning. What he calls the 'tyranny of the word in the theory of meaning' reduces metaphor to the status of ornament, because it gives rise to a 'substitution theory' in which the metaphorical process is viewed as the substitution of a more common word by one drawn from another realm. The metaphor can be viewed, according to this theory, as an ornamental deviation from proper meaning in the interest of giving aesthetic pleasure.

The effect of this approach is to limit the appreciation of the semantic importance of metaphor:

1) It seems to imply that words are to be taken in isolation from one another, each one having within itself what Aristotle calls its 'current meaning'. It focuses on the word as the bearer of meaning, with little consideration of the fact that meaning is a function of a larger unit, namely, the sentence.

2) It fails to take seriously that it takes two ideas to make a metaphor; these two ideas must be present, in some form, if the sentence is to be recognised as requiring a metaphorical interpretation. This requires a consideration of metaphor as more than simply the substitution of one word for another.

3) It fails to see a positive value in metaphor's ability to create new meaning. Its preoccupation with deviation, substitution and paraphrase are negative concerns which inhibit a positive appreciation of the power of metaphor to say something new which cannot be adequately paraphrased in other terms. The relationship between deviation from customary meaning and the production of new meaning -- what Aristotle calls 'epiphora' (Poetics 1457 b 3) -- can only be dealt with by a theory of metaphor which considers its character as primarily predicative, since the new meaning which is created occurs at the level of the interaction of the elements of the metaphor. This



interaction is a particular, and indeed peculiar, instance of attribution or predication, which demands that the metaphorical statement, and not just the 'metaphorical word' be considered as the setting for the creation of new meanings.

The principal criticism to be levelled at the Rhetorical Tradition's approach concerns the inadequacy of the theory of meaning which it implies: it limits itself to a 'word-centred' theory of meaning, in which words, not sentences, are presumed to have an in-built meaning independently of their use in sentences. According to Rikhof, the word-centred approach views a sentence as an 'extra-long word':<sup>15</sup> the implication being that meaning is contained in discrete units, words, and that the formation of sentences does not alter their functioning in any significant way. It would seem impossible to have an adequate theory of metaphor which ignores the relationship and interaction between word and sentence. If our general theory of meaning is forced to attend to this relationship and to account for it in some way, then our theory of metaphorical meaning must be consonant with this wider theory. If meaning occurs at the level of a sentence, then metaphorical meaning cannot continue to be regarded as something that 'happens to a word'; there must be some consideration of metaphor as a statement, attribution or predication.

BETWEEN SENTENCE AND WORD: THE INTERPLAY OF MEANING

Ricoeur comments that in the traditional rhetorical view, 'metaphor belongs to the language game which governs naming.'<sup>16</sup> The Wittgensteinian characterisation of the rhetorical view can be amplified: what is wrong with 'the language game that governs naming'? Nothing, but you should not think that the naming game is the model for how language as a living reality works.

'"We name things and then we can talk about them: can refer to them in talk."  
-- As if what we did next were given with the mere act of naming. As if there were only one thing called "talking about a thing". Whereas in fact we do the most various things with our sentences.'<sup>17</sup>

A large part of the Philosophical Investigations is concerned with refuting the notion that words are essentially names, and that naming is the paradigmatic activity of language. Our use of language is a much more diverse activity in which there is a disjunction between the acts of naming something and making statements about it, involving predication and illocutionary aspects. This is the point Wittgenstein makes here: we presume without justification that the activities of 'naming' and 'talking about a thing' follow on from each other, as it were, in a straight line. In fact, the activity of 'talking about a thing'

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involves operations which cannot be adequately accounted for by the simple fact that we know the name of a thing. 'Naming' may be one aspect of linguistic usage, but language is much more than ostensive labelling. The central aspects of language -- predication, reference, illocutionary aspects, propositional content, communication -- require that we think of sentences as ways of using words in particular 'instances of discourse' or contexts, in order to express what we mean. The words themselves do not contain the meaning of a sentence, as though the sentence were a combination of the discrete units of meaning which each word brings, ready-made and complete, like units in a Leggo set. We might quote Frege:

'...we ought always to keep before our eyes a complete proposition. Only in a proposition do the words really have meaning.' 18

Ryle makes a similar clarification:

'Sentences are things we say. Words and phrases are what we say things with....It follows that there are some radical differences between what is meant by "the meaning of a word or phrase" and what is meant by "the meaning of a sentence". Understanding a word or phrase is knowing how to use it, i.e., make it perform its role in a wide range of sentences. But understanding a sentence is not knowing how to make it perform its role. The play has not got a role.' 19

The priority of sentence-meaning over word-meaning is something of an axiom in post-Fregean philosophy. The thesis that 'only in the context of a proposition do words have meaning' implies that we cannot begin with a theory of word-meaning and then construct a theory of sentence-meaning; the reverse direction must be chosen. Dummett makes the point clearly in his exposition of Frege's distinction between sense and reference:

'Frege's initial insight was that sentences play a primary role in the theory of meaning. A sentence is the smallest linguistic complex which one can use to say anything: hence the meaning of a word is to be given in terms of the contribution it makes to determining what may be said by means of a sentence containing it.'<sup>20</sup>

We might note in passing that the word-concept theory, criticised, indeed battered, by James Barr, is an instance of the notion that words have a whole range of concepts, implications, references, allusions within themselves, independently of the contexts in which they are used.<sup>21</sup> Hence, within this view, it is possible to import into any instance of a word's use all the connotations which it might have as a result of its use in other contexts: the word, like a Contac cold capsule, explodes with pre-determined meaning, irrespective of the restraints of the particular



sentence involved. Equally, one only has to think of the procedure adopted in Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament to find a theological exemplification of this position, and an illustration of how it can be used.

The relevance of this discussion of word meaning and sentence meaning goes beyond a concern to refute the views of the rhetorical tradition on metaphor: it raises the question of the relationship between langue and parole, between the code of language, available at any one time and modified through the diachronic changes of polysemy, shifts in meaning, figurative expressions, etc., and the instances of actual use of this code in living speech. We might make a comparison with chess: out of the possible moves controlled by the rules of the game, there is a selection made by each of the players on any one occasion. Similarly with language: the code might be recorded, however inadequately, by a dictionary, but the living use of language is both a selection of available words and phrases and an enrichment of that store through the use of language in a particular 'instance of discourse'. There are no metaphors in a dictionary other than those which have been used and codified according to their established use in certain contexts. The important factor is that in any instance of discourse, there is a determination of the sense of the words through their context in particular sentences.

It is this 'determinative' or 'sifting' action of a sentence on the polysemy of words, which constitutes the 'meaning' of a sentence. Ricoeur speaks of words having a potential meaning which is actualised in their use in sentences:

'Taken in isolation, the word still has only a potential meaning, made up of the sum of its partial meanings, themselves defined by the types of contexts in which they can participate. They have an actual meaning only in a given context, that is to say, in an instance of discourse...' <sup>22</sup>

As a result, discourse can be pictured as a 'reciprocal interplay between word and the sentence.' <sup>23</sup> The polysemy of words is the sum of the values which words derive from their contextual uses, and it is 'reduced' by the specification which a sentence brings to the functioning of a word.

If we return to the question of word meaning in the light of this approach, we find that it is impossible to separate the meaning of a word from the context in which it is used, and from which it derives specifications of its usage. The polysemy of words -- their ability to be used with different senses in different contexts -- testifies to the fact that word-meaning is irreducibly contextual. Clearly, some words will retain a wide range of senses in their contexts: in Wheelwright's terms, they have a

'tensive'<sup>24</sup> character which, to some extent, defies univocal determination of their sense. This should not be interpreted as an objection to the view that the action of a sentence is to bring out the 'semantic capital' of the words with specification and determination. Indeed, literature in particular, and one might add, theology, exploits particularly this quality, in enabling statements to carry a wide and profound depth of meaning. What characterises poetic language at its best, in whatever aesthetic mode the poet is working, is the ability of poetry to focus on the 'charged' quality of words more intensely than other uses of language permit. In this sense, it is in the reading of poetry that our reading is most literal, in that we are more attentive to the 'potential' meanings which each word carries. One can go further in this direction, and draw a parallel between the action of a sentence in determining the senses of the words used in it, and the action of a verbal structure, such as a poem, in shaping our interpretation of the senses to be drawn from the words it uses. Poetic form is simply an extension of the same principle as exists in every use of words, but more concentrated and potentially complex in its variety.

The advantage of this approach is that it avoids some of the knotty problems which surround the question of the relationship between 'literal' meaning and



metaphorical meaning. Much of the discussion of this distinction seems to ignore the metaphorical and symbolic character of all language.<sup>25</sup> Ricoeur's view of literal meaning avoids this purported opposition with metaphorical meaning, since it derives precisely from the 'word-centred' theory of meaning which he rejects. Instead, he views the 'literal' meaning of a word, not as the 'original' or 'proper' meaning of a word, but as the totality of potential meanings, the set of possible contextual meanings which constitutes the polysemy of a word. Every sentence is a specification of which of the meanings to be adduced for the words: it is an actualisation of the potential which words have, as a result of their use in other contexts. The process which takes place in sentences is the model for what takes place in a metaphorical statement:

'The contextual action which enables univocal discourse to be produced with polysemic words is the model for that other action whereby we draw genuinely novel metaphorical effects from words whose meaning is already codified in the vocabulary. We are thus prepared to allow that even if the meaningful effect which we call metaphor is inscribed in the word, nevertheless the origin of this effect lies in a contextual action which places the semantic fields of several words in interaction.'<sup>26</sup>

The Saussurean characterisation of 'parole', the living use of the code of 'langue', is constituted by the contextual use of words already codified in the language considered as a system; hence it becomes

difficult to oppose 'literal' and 'metaphorical' as simply as has often been supposed, since both 'literal' and 'metaphorical' meaning occurs through the contextual specification of the potential meanings of the words. Metaphor's character as a contextual change of meaning is thus to be viewed as a particular instance of the general process by which the determination and specification of the polysemic quality of words takes place within a sentence. In this sense, we can speak of metaphor as a semantic innovation arising out of the networks brought together in the predication, rather than an alteration of a single word in a sentence:

'Metaphorical attribution is essentially the construction of the network of interactions that causes a certain context to be one that is real and unique. Accordingly metaphor is a semantic event that takes place at the point where several semantic fields intersect. It is because of this construction that all the words, taken together, make sense.'<sup>27</sup>

#### METAPHOR AND DISCOURSE

We have distinguished several contrasting pairs in our exposition thus far: word-meaning and sentence meaning; metaphor as one-word trope and metaphor as predication; langue and parole; naming and talking about a thing; polysemy and contextual determination.

These distinctions correspond to the distinction between semiotics and semantics, between the science of signs and the science of sentences -- a distinction which Ricoeur regards as the key to the whole problem of language. As part of a general alignment of the theory of metaphor with a theory of meaning, Ricoeur assimilates the features of metaphor as closely as possible to the features of discourse: it is in discourse (or 'parole') that sense and reference become operative features of language, since it is only at this stage that language engages in a meaningful engagement with the world. By placing metaphor in this context, as a particular instance of the production of meaning, although by an unusual process, Ricoeur wants to affirm the role of metaphor in the production of new sense through the unusual attribution of the metaphorical predication. In turn, the creation of a new sense can be said to refer to the world in a way which is analogous to the 'indirect' reference of works of literature. It is therefore important for him to establish the common ground between discourse and metaphor, which will permit him to attribute to metaphor the capacity to engage in a redescriptive, and meaningful, relationship to the world: without this capacity, metaphor loses its status as the device by which reality is redescribed.

According to Ricoeur, 'parole' or discourse -- a term he prefers -- has several traits which are relevant to the discussion of metaphor.

Firstly, 'discourse always occurs as an event, but it is to be understood as meaning.'<sup>28</sup> By 'event', Ricoeur means the discrete and unique acts by which language is actualised by a speaker, the acts by which 'langue' passes into 'parole'. Although these events have a transitory character, in that they occur in speaking or writing, they can also be identified and re-identified, so that it is possible to repeat what was said, or to re-express it in a different way. We might compare this dialectic of event and meaning with Frege's discussion of the relationship of sense, reference and thought in a sentence:

'We now inquire concerning the sense and reference of an entire declarative sentence. Such a sentence contains a thought. (Footnote:) By a thought I understand not the subjective performance of thinking but its objective content, which is capable of being the common property of several thinkers.'<sup>29</sup>

Frege goes on to identify the 'thought' of the sentence with the sense, not the reference: it represents the content of the sentence, irrespective of its truth value, and can be shared by other people. We might

also think in terms of the propositional aspect of a sentence which can be identified in any illocutionary act. John Searle distinguishes, within the category of speech acts, propositional acts and illocutionary acts:

'...in performing an illocutionary act one characteristically performs propositional acts and utterance acts. Nor should it be thought from this that utterance acts and propositional acts stand to illocutionary acts in the way buying a ticket and getting on a train stand to a railroad trip. They are not means to ends; rather utterance acts stand to propositional and illocutionary acts in the way in which, e.g., making an "X" on a ballot paper stands to voting. ...the same propositional acts can be common to different illocutionary acts ... in performing different utterance acts, a speaker may perform the same propositional and illocutionary acts.'<sup>30</sup>

Propositional acts, which are characteristically reference and predication, always occur within an illocutionary act such as assertion, question, command, etc. The propositional aspect of sentences is always there, whenever one says something, and for this aspect to be present -- for there to be 'meaning' in Ricoeur's terms -- there must be an event which expresses it. Searle's presentation is similar:



'Propositional acts cannot occur alone; that is, one cannot just refer and predicate without making an assertion or asking a question or performing some other illocutionary act. The linguistic correlate of this point is that sentences, not words, are used to say things. This is also what Frege meant when he said that only in the context of a sentence do words have reference.' <sup>31</sup>

Ricoeur applies this dialectic of event and meaning in the following way: he speaks of metaphor as an event, an instance of discourse, in which there is a determination of the meaning of the sentence through the contextual interaction of the disparate networks which are brought together in the predication. Metaphor is a 'momentary creation of language, a semantic innovation which does not have a status in the language as something already established, whether as a designation or as a connotation.'<sup>32</sup> For example, in the Emily Dickinson poem we considered, the line 'A Cobweb on the Soul' is unknown in the code of language, but is a 'linguistic event', in that it is a new assimilation of words in a context which forces a particular interaction between what, originally, were disparate and previously unconnected words. The act of construing the metaphor, of determining the sense which is to be adduced from this linguistic event, is the creation of a new meaning which we call 'metaphorical meaning'. The consequence of this is that a new set of descriptions is liberated: a whole consideration of



the 'Soul' in the light of the image becomes possible as an explication of the interpretation of the metaphor. This can be designated as an event which enriches the semantic store by which new descriptive possibilities are disclosed. Or consider another example from Wallace Stevens: his poem 'A Weak Mind in the Mountains' begins:

'There was the butcher's hand.  
He squeezed it and the blood  
Spurting from between the fingers  
And fell to the floor.  
And then the body fell.

So afterward, at night,  
The wind of Iceland and  
The wind of Ceylon,  
Meeting, gripped my mind,  
Gripped it and grappled my thoughts....<sup>133</sup>

What is being described? It is only after reading the stanzas, and after noticing the clue contained in the words, 'So afterward, at night', that one realises that the first stanza is a metaphor for sunset. No clue is given in the elaboration of the metaphor that this is the referent; instead, there is only the gory picture of the butcher at work. But once the clue is perceived, we realise that sunset is described in an original and striking way: the disparate, and originally distinct, contexts of butchering and the act of the setting sun, are brought together in a way which invites the reader to engage in a new account of sunset

in quite different terms from what he is used to: new meaning, new descriptive possibilities, are made possible through the event of metaphor.

Ricoeur's view is that 'only authentic, living metaphors are at the same time "event" and "meaning".<sup>34</sup> This is to distinguish fresh and active metaphors from the phenomenon of 'collapsed' metaphors which have lost their tensional quality and entered the store of 'langue': consider, for example, the original figurative aspects of common words such as 'influence', 'tawdry', 'marzipan' or 'revelation'. But living metaphors retain the tension between the two networks which are brought together in the predication. Ricoeur uses the word 'explanation' to designate the action by which the living metaphor is construed by the reader:

'The decisive moment of explanation is the construction of networks of interactions which constitutes the context as actual and unique. In so doing, we direct our attention towards the semantic event which is produced at the point on intersection between several semantic fields. This construction is the means by which all of the words taken together make sense. Then and only then, the 'metaphorical twist' is both an event and a meaning, a meaningful event and an emergent meaning in language.'<sup>35</sup>

It is this feature of 'explanation' which makes metaphorical interpretation a paradigm for the activity of interpreting a literary work: 'We construct the

meaning of a text in a manner similar to the way in which we make sense of all the terms of a metaphorical statement.<sup>36</sup> Both the metaphor and the literary work are verbal structures which create a centripetal, inward-directed meaning in which all the elements of the structure contribute to the coherence and meaningfulness of what is being said. We shall return to this point later, when we discuss more fully the parallel between the referential quality of metaphors and the referential quality of a literary work: both, as we shall see, involve the articulation of an internal coherence which is indirectly referential: they provide the creation of a particular 'sense' by which reality is redescribed. They do not mimic reality -- in the strict sense of 'mimesis' -- but they provide a presentation of reality which is internally meaningful, in the light of which external reality is viewed differently.

The second trait of discourse which Ricoeur highlights involves the predicative function and the identifying function of 'parole'. Language works on the basis of the functions by which singular identification is linked with predications which are, in principle, universal. Thus a proposition can identify a particular subject, and predicate of that subject qualities, relations, actions and classes. This enables description, characterisation and predication

to be made of an identifiable individual. Ricoeur applies this to metaphor:

'A metaphor is said of a "principal subject"; as "modifier" of this subject, it works like a kind of 'attribution'.'<sup>37</sup>

It is a feature of discourse that this singularising function of universal qualities is possible; semiotics, which concerns the signs in themselves, cannot deal with the particular instance, since the verbal sign is considered irrespective of the circumstances of individual usage. But by placing metaphor within the context of semantics, Ricoeur locates it within the context of the discussion of predication:

'..the predicate, which in itself has a universalizing function, only has this circumstantial character to the extent that it determines a proper logical subject... it is the sentence taken as a whole, that which is intended by discourse, that carries with it a particular application, even when the predicate is generic.'<sup>38</sup>

The predicative character of metaphor will be considered later when we come to Ricoeur's account of the theories of Richards, Black and Beardsley. However, we would point to the fact that, in the predication of pre-existence, in the different figurative forms in which it is expressed in the New Testament, a predicate, or series of predicates, which

elsewhere in the writings of the period are applied to other referents, such as Wisdom or Torah, or Logos, are applied singularly to Jesus in Christological usage. Our interest will be in the character of this particularising Christological predication, in what is involved in applying terms which, in other contexts, were capable of varied application, to this particular existent.

A third pair of traits concerns the locutionary and illocutionary aspects of discourse. It concerns the way in which the propositional content of a sentence can be located within a range of different illocutionary modalities, such as question, command, promise, etc. The objective aspect of discourse, what we have called the propositional content, complements the subjective aspect in which the speaker or writer communicates to others. Another way of formulating the same distinction is that proposed by Grice, between utterance meaning and utterer's meaning,<sup>39</sup> or, in Searle's terms, between sentence meaning and speaker's meaning. Searle uses this distinction to try to describe 'metaphorical meaning':

'Strictly speaking, whenever we talk about the metaphorical meaning of a word, expression or sentence, we are talking about what a speaker might utter it to mean, in a way that departs from what the word, expression or sentence actually means. We are talking about possible speaker's intentions ... Metaphorical meaning is always speaker's utterance meaning.'<sup>40</sup>



Searle uses this distinction to distinguish literal utterances and metaphorical utterances: 'in literal utterance the speaker means what he says; that is, literal sentence meaning and speaker's utterance meaning are the same.'<sup>41</sup> In metaphorical utterance, however, there is a disjunction between sentence meaning and speaker's meaning; according to Searle, there is never a change of meaning in the expressions used:

'The metaphorical utterance does indeed mean something different from the meaning of the words and sentences but that is not because there has been any change in the meanings of the lexical elements, but because the speaker means something different by them; speaker meaning does not coincide with sentence or word meaning. It is essential to see this point, because the main problem of metaphor is to explain how speaker meaning and sentence meaning are different and how they are, nevertheless, related. Such an explanation is impossible if we suppose that sentence or word meaning has changed in the metaphorical utterance.'<sup>42</sup>

Searle views metaphor as an instance, like irony, of the disjunction between what the speaker says and what he means. The task, then, of the reader or hearer is to pass beyond the sentence meaning to arrive at the speaker's meaning. Certainly Searle is correct to say that the words in a metaphor retain their lexical denotation, but he is wrong to attribute to the distinction between sentence meaning and speaker's



meaning the clue to metaphor. The parallel with ironic statements is too strong to do justice to the character of metaphor, which works more on the basis of the interaction of the two fields brought together in the metaphorical statement, rather than on the basis of the 'unspoken' presence of the speaker's real intention. His approach would imply that the meaning of metaphor is detachable from the forms of metaphorical expression: again, we see the influence of the word-centred approach which would reduce metaphorical expression to an ornament which clothes, or according to Searle, 'conceals' the speaker's meaning. Metaphor's capacity to redescribe in a unique way is ignored, as is its capacity to generate a wider range of connotations than propositional content alone can provide.

But what Searle has uncovered, in his distinction, is an aspect of the strategy for explicating a metaphor: it highlights the fact that the work of explication is an essential element in the consideration of what a metaphor is. The tactic of understanding a metaphor cannot be ignored in the discussion of the character of metaphor. Searle's approach would seem to identify the meaning of the metaphor with the reader's being able to discern what the creator of the metaphor intended (the speaker's meaning). And here, we can point back to our discussion earlier of the possibility of entering into

the 'mind' of an author in order to understand a work. Just as we rejected this option with regard to literary works, so here, we must reject Searle's proposal which would limit the task of explicating a metaphor to that of identifying the speaker's meaning. There are no fixed limits to the range of connotations which can be created by a metaphorical statement, because the range of interpretations rests on the shifting platform of the individual reader's aesthetic response. In addition, we have to take into account the horizon of the interpreter of a metaphor, who across the centuries, no longer has access to the 'intention' of the author; yet, he is in a position to engage in an interpretative engagement which can go in quite a different direction from the original trajectory of a metaphorical expression or a literary work.

In the light of this discussion, which is relevant to the hermeneutical problem of reinterpreting figurative expressions such as those which predicate pre-existence of Christ, we might remark that it is difficult to identify uniquely, or de-limit exclusively, what in a metaphor would count as the 'propositional content' or 'thought' in Frege's sense, of a metaphor. The range of possibilities opened up by a metaphor cannot be easily reduced to a single 'meaning' identified in a reductionist manner. The variation, too, in diachronic interpretation across the centuries, because of the

different interpretative horizons brought to bear on the metaphor, means that there is constantly an open-ended quality in metaphor which must be respected. One might think, for example of the diversity of interpretations of central Christian metaphorical expressions, such as the Johannine Prologue, or the Pauline metaphor of justification, which have been formulated in Christian theology: the interpreters may have intended to uncover the 'speaker's meaning', but consciously or unconsciously, they also brought into play their own philosophical, theological and cultural horizons which shaped their handling of these central metaphors. Metaphors continue to live in contexts which are far from their original setting, and this is part of their vitality. In this respect, metaphor comes close to symbol, and Ricoeur makes the connection explicit:

'We readily concede that a symbol cannot be exhaustively treated by conceptual language, that there is more in a symbol; a trait which is eagerly embraced by the opponents of conceptual thinking. For them, one must choose: either the symbol or the concept. But metaphor theory leads us to a different conclusion. It shows how new possibilities for articulating and conceptualising reality can arise through an assimilation of hitherto separated semantic fields. Far from being a part of conceptual thinking, such semantic innovation marks the emergence of such thought... There is no need to deny the concept in order to admit that symbols give rise to an

endless exegesis. If no concept can exhaust the requirement of further thinking borne by symbols, this idea signifies only that no given characterization can embrace all the semantic possibilities of a symbol. But it is the work of the concept alone that can testify to this surplus of meaning.<sup>143</sup>

We need not enter further into the question of the relationship of symbol and metaphor, except to note that if one of the defining features of symbol is its capacity to focus and generate a range of secondary significations, equally metaphor generates a range of meanings through the interpretative response of the reader to the metaphorical expression. In Christology, the range of secondary meanings which derive from the implications of pre-existence language, form the body of Christological reflection and debate: they are the attempts to explicate satisfactorily and consistently how this predicative form is to be developed in more conceptual terms. It would be foolish to consider that this process has reached the limit of its development, since the horizons of subsequent interpretation will continue to shape the ways in which this predication is to be understood. The history of Christology is a confirmation of Ricoeur's point that metaphor is an endlessly generative way of articulating and conceptualising reality.



The fourth trait of discourse is the Fregean distinction between sense and reference. Frege was concerned with the relationship between a sign, its sense and its reference. This relationship is 'of such a kind that to the sign there corresponds a definite sense, and to that in turn a definite reference, while to a given reference (an object) there does not belong only a single sign.'<sup>44</sup> It is a characteristic of discourse that there is not a perfect one-to-one relationship between sense and reference: thus in Frege's classic example, a particular referent such as a star, can be referred to by two senses, 'the Morning Star' and 'the Evening Star'; these senses may, in turn, refer not to a star but to two different newspapers. Although this example is an example of the distinction applied to names or definite descriptions, Frege's concern was also with the application of the distinction to whole sentences. Hans Sluga has argued that the distinction has much more to do with the semantics of whole sentences, as this quotation from Frege himself shows:

'That we are concerned at all with the reference of a sentence part is an indication that, in general, we recognise and demand a reference for the sentence itself... Why do we require that every proper name should have a reference and not merely a sense? Why are we not satisfied with the thought? Because, and in so far as, we are concerned with its truth-value .... the striving for truth is therefore what drives us everywhere from a sense to a reference.'<sup>45</sup>



Frege's application of this distinction to sentences led him to view the sense of a sentence as a thought which can be shared by others. Its reference, on the other hand, is to its truth value. 'Truth and falsehood stand to sentences as objects do to names.' <sup>46</sup> Thus, one might say of the sentence 'Socrates is wise' that the sense provides the truth conditions, the satisfaction of which achieves the reference of the sentence. Michael Dummett argues that it would be a mistake to think of truth values as 'objects of the same "logical type" as names or definite descriptions'; the relation between a sentence and its truth value is only analogous to that between a proper name and its bearer:

'...proper names and sentences, although both complete expressions in Frege's sense, very obviously function in very different ways. Anyone, unless in the grip of a theory, would be disposed to say that they were linguistic expressions of quite different logical type; all the more should Frege have been ready to acknowledge this fact, when his whole account was based on the unique and central role which sentences play in our language.'<sup>47</sup>

Dummett clarifies the way in which sense and reference relate in the understanding of a sentence:

'According to Frege, when I grasp the way in which the reference, and thus the semantic role, of an expression, is to be determined, then I grasp its sense; in particular, when I grasp the way in which the truth-value of a sentence (as uttered on a particular occasion) is to be determined, then I grasp the thought which it expresses.' 48

Applying this to metaphor: it is when we are able to construe the statement correctly that the sense of the metaphor is grasped. The activity of construing the metaphor consists of grasping the ways in which the object is seen as the predicate, or the ways in which it is seen in the light of the predicate. If this is achieved, then there has been a 'semantic gain', the creation of a new sense which can be added to the already existing store of descriptive possibilities which can be used to describe the referent. It is important to relate the question of the truth value of metaphor to this process by which a new sense is disclosed applicable to the referent. Ricoeur insists:

'...one must adopt the point of view of the hearer or reader and treat the novelty of an emerging meaning as his work within the very act of reading or hearing. If we do not take this route, we do not really get rid of the theory of substitution... I would rather say that metaphorical attribution is essentially the construction of the network of interactions that causes a certain context to be one that is real and unique. Accordingly, metaphor is a semantic event that takes place at the point where several semantic fields intersect.' 49

What then of the truth of metaphors? To answer this question, we must broaden the discussion to include the parallel with aesthetic experience: the insight into how the metaphor is applicable to the referent is one which parallels the response associated with aesthetic experience, involving dimensions of insight, emotion, surprise and delight, all of which are part of genuine artistic experience. It is no accident that Aristotle included metaphor among the feature of Lexis, the stylistic means by which the Muthos of tragedy is created.

The parallel between metaphorical interpretation and aesthetic interpretation is a key notion in Ricoeur's theory: he sees the process of interpreting a metaphor as analogous to the process by which we make sense of a literary work:

'We construct the meaning of a text in a manner similar to the way in which we make sense of all the terms of a metaphorical statement...In both cases, it is a question of "making sense", of producing the best possible intelligibility from an apparently discordant diversity.'<sup>50</sup>

He formulates the distinction between sense and reference in terms of the immanent pattern of an artistic work and its capacity to create a 'world'

which is a particular redescription of reality, and which at this distance refers back to the familiar world. We might express the same distinction in Northrop Frye's terms: the sense of a literary work is its centripetal, inward-directed pattern, its verbal structure. But at the same time, this centripetal pattern relates to the world outside the text, and engages the reader in a 'fictive' redescription or mimesis of an aspect of the familiar world. While one aspect of the truth of an artistic work lies in its ability to give us insight into the world outside the text, at the same time, it should be recognised that this is achieved precisely by the work remaining within its own limits, within the internal coherence which it creates.

The action of King Lear happens nowhere outside the text, and more importantly outside the production of the play, yet it is the very coherence of the piece, the internally directed 'sense', which is redescriptive of the reality outside the work. Similarly, Emily Dickinson's poem, which we examined earlier, exists only in its verbal pattern, but a sensitive response to the internal cohesion of the poem cannot but resonate with, and illuminate, the reader's own experience, of the self. It is in this sense that the truth of metaphor retains the same distinction from the external world as does a poetic work, and, in the same way,

the world, which is analogous to that provided by an artistic work. Ricoeur quotes with approval Beardsley's dictum that metaphor is 'a poem in miniature', and sees in the power of metaphor to generate a fresh and significant vision of the referent, an instance of the wider power of aesthetic expression to engage in a redescriptive involvement with the world.

However, while adopting this perspective, there is also another aspect concerning the propositional truth of metaphors. Some metaphors do not raise the question of whether they are true or not. For example, Donne's metaphor of the sun as a 'busy old fool' is unlikely to provoke the reader to ask whether this is true or not, whereas the adage, homo homini lupus est is likely to stimulate agreement or disagreement over the truth of this assertion. Here, the truth or falsity of the metaphor is considered at the level of the proposition which the metaphor seems to imply: is man really as nasty as a wolf, cunning and voracious, a predatory creature who survives at the expense of his fellow men and women? In this case, the truth or falsity of the metaphor is conducted through an examination of the implications of the metaphorical predication, after it has been construed, and the senses to be derived from it are made explicit. At this level, there is likely to be agreement or disagreement with the propositional



aspect of the metaphor. Here we are involved in the relationship between metaphor and the more conceptual aspects of its dynamism: Ricoeur's insistence on the inter-relationship between figurative and symbolic expression, on the one hand, and the conceptual articulation arising out of such expression, on the other hand, points to the oscillation of metaphor and symbol between figurative and conceptual discourse. That metaphor can give rise to propositions which can be judged true or false is part of its contribution to our semantic store. So, for example, the predication of pre-existence has given rise, in the history of Christology, to propositions which were rejected by mainstream Christian tradition as wrong: the Arian option, for example of the Son as the highest created being, or the Ebionite view that the Son's status was angelic, were rejected on grounds of falsity. If metaphor provides a wide range of descriptive possibilities for articulate expression to use, then part of that process will be the critical judgment as to the truth or falsity of the propositional content to be retained as how the metaphor is to be understood. One must recognise this aspect, at the same time as one recognises the power of metaphor to set in motion new descriptions which otherwise would not come to light. An appreciation of the value of metaphor does not necessarily involve the suspension of critical activity associated with the activity of judging truth and falsity.

The metaphorical statement can be seen as offering a 'hypothetical'<sup>51</sup> world, to use Northrop Frye's phrase, a particular conjunction and interaction of two different sets of connotations. The interaction takes place through the response and interpretation of the reader who may, after he has come to an understanding of the sense of the metaphor, regard the propositional aspect (or 'thought', in Frege's sense of the word) as true, false, limited, banal, evocative -- a whole range of assessments of the value of the metaphor. But what is important is that the metaphor relates to the world in an 'indirect' way, just as the artistic work has a 'suspended' reference to the world outside the text. Ricoeur pursues the parallel between the issues raised in the interpretation of metaphor, and the issues raised in hermeneutics by the interpretation of a text:

'...to what extent can we treat the metaphor as a work in miniature? The answer to this question will then help us to pose the second: to what extent can the hermeneutical problems raised by the interpretation of texts be considered as a large-scale extension of the problems condensed in the explanation of a local metaphor in a given text?'<sup>52</sup>

This relationship becomes important because the meaning of a text has to be constructed in the context of the asymmetrical relationship between the text and the reader: in the absence of the dialogical relationship

characteristic of speech, the text is not addressed to a particular person, and the writing takes the place of speech:

'The relation between message and speaker at one end of the communication chain and the relation between message and hearer are together deeply transformed when the face-to-face relation is replaced by the more complex relation of reading to writing, resulting from the direct inscription of discourse in littera. The dialogical situation has been exploded. The relation writing-reading is no longer a particular case of the relation speaking-hearing.'<sup>53</sup>

Let us try to express this more simply: the use of language between two people engaged in dialogue is directed towards establishing clear and full communication between them. But once a text is written down, and once it passes into the hands of those who cannot engage in a face-to-face dialogue with the author, the relationship between the reader and the words of the text is not the same as that which exists in the context of direct dialogue. How are we to understand the activity of interpreting the text in a situation such as this? And how are we to understand the relationship of the text to the world, since the context in which it was written no longer exists? To clarify this hermeneutical problem, Ricoeur distinguishes, first of all, the ostensive character of spoken language:

'In spoken language, that to which a dialogue ultimately refers is the situation common to the interlocutors, that is, the aspects of reality which can be shown or pointed to; we then say the reference is ostensive.'<sup>54</sup>

Texts and literary works are also referential in that they are about the world, but the ostensive reference is suspended, and reference is freed from the confines of the particular situation. So, for example, the reading of John's Gospel by a member of the Johannine community at the time of the composition of the work, would be far closer to the 'dialogical' model of interpersonal communication, than would the reading of this Gospel in Edinburgh in 1985, because for the member of the community, the context of the work would be the context of his life, whereas for the inhabitant of Edinburgh, there is a disjunction between these two contexts which must affect his reading of the Gospel. Ricoeur, as does Northrop Frye whom we quoted earlier on this point, rejects the notion that the hermeneutical circle is to be viewed as the circle between two subjectivities, between that of the reader and that of the author, and that the act of interpretation is to be seen as the projection of the reader's subjectivity into that of the author. Instead the interpretation of the work must culminate in some form of appropriation, through 'a process by which one makes one's own what was initially other or alien.'<sup>55</sup>It



involves allowing the horizon and autonomy of the text to enlarge one's own understanding of oneself and of the world in which one lives:

'To understand oneself in front of a text is quite the contrary of projecting oneself and one's own beliefs and prejudices; it is to let the work and its world enlarge the horizon I have of myself ....The circle is between my mode of being -- beyond the knowledge I may have of it -- and the mode opened up and disclosed by the text as the world of the work.' 56

This model of interpretation is transferred by Ricoeur to metaphor: he draws the parallel between the way in which the text is appropriated through opening oneself to the 'alien' horizon of the text, and the way in which one construes the 'alienness' of the metaphor, by allowing the descriptive range at one's disposal to be enlarged and enriched by the possibilities of the metaphor. In the metaphor, something known and familiar in other terms is redescribed in an unfamiliar and surprising way, through a predication drawn from a quite different context; in the interpretation of the text, the horizon of the reader is brought into contact with a quite different horizon offered by the text. Metaphor is one of the non-ostensive procedures by which reality is redescribed: its meaning is not immediately obvious in all its fullness, and its sense is contained within the limits of the figurative



expression. The act of construing it requires from us that, after entering into the confines of the statement and making sense of it, we allow our vision of the reality outside the metaphorical expression to be altered by the categories offered in the metaphor. The indirectness of its reference to the world is shared by artistic works and by texts:

'...poetic language is no less about reality than any other use of language, but it refers to it by the means of a complex strategy which implies, as a necessary component, a suspension and seemingly an abolition of the ordinary reference attached to descriptive language...The suspension of the reference proper to ordinary descriptive language is the negative condition for the emergence of a more radical way of looking at things.'<sup>57</sup>

Ricoeur extends this parallel between metaphor and literary work through his consideration of Aristotle's analysis of Tragedy. He points out that Aristotle included metaphor as one of the parts of Lexis, as one of the discursive procedures by which the diction of the tragedy is composed. The various parts of Tragedy -- Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle and Melody -- 'form a network, as it were, in which everything centres on one dominant factor: the fable, the plot, the Muthos.'<sup>58</sup> The fundamental trait of Muthos is its power to organise the various constituent parts of the tragedy into a unified whole; the role of

Lexis, the stylistic characteristics and the constituent elements of the work, is to make explicit through the diction the coherent pattern of the Muthos:

'Tragedy, in the form of a poem, has sense and reference. In Aristotle's language, the "sense" of tragedy is secured by what he calls the "fable" (MUTHOS). We can understand the latter as the sense of tragedy because Aristotle constantly emphasises its structural characteristics. The MUTHOS must have unity and coherence; it must make of the represented actions something "whole and complete".... The MUTHOS is thus the principal "part" of tragedy, its "essence". All the other parts of tragedy -- the "characters", the "thoughts", the "delivery", the "production" -- are linked to the myth as the means or conditions, or as the performance of tragedy qua myth. We must draw the consequence that it is only in relation to the MUTHOS of tragedy that its LEXIS, and hence metaphor, make sense.'<sup>59</sup>

The MUTHOS, in turn, is subordinate to the aim of Tragedy, which Aristotle calls MIMESIS; Ricoeur insists that this is not to be interpreted in a naturalistic sense as though it meant 'imitation'. It is rather to be understood as 'redescription', as an account of reality which stands at a distance from it, but which is nevertheless directed towards describing it. Our discussion of the 'non-ostensive' reference of

literary works, and of the complex strategy which they use in order to create a particular internal meaning, or sense, has shown that they refer to the world precisely through their internal coherence or sense. We might tabulate the features which Ricoeur distinguishes as characteristics of literary works and of metaphor:

INTERNAL SENSE OF A WORK	REFERENTIAL QUALITY OF A WORK
MUTHOS	MIMESIS
HEURISTIC FICTION	REDESCRIPTION
METAPHORICAL SENSE	METAPHORICAL REFERENCE

The left hand column designates the features which are the internally-directed characteristics of works and metaphors, and the right hand column designates how these characteristics relate to the world outside the text. Thus, Ricoeur is able to present metaphor as a particular instance of the more general characteristic of literature, namely, that it creates its own 'space', in the creation of a particular sense or meaning, which then can be used to redescribe an aspect of reality. How a metaphor does this is our next concern.

THE WORKINGS OF METAPHORICAL PREDICATION

Ricoeur discusses the views of several major commentators on how metaphorical predication is to be understood. He begins with I.A. Richards whose work,

The Philosophy of Rhetoric firmly places metaphor in a contextual theory of meaning. He denies that words can be said to have a meaning independently of the context in which they are used. He regards 'word-meaning' as the abridgement of the meaning which words possess in particular contexts; in each new context they carry with them the meaning they acquire in other contexts, so that the creation of new meaning in a particular sentence can be viewed as the interaction of the contexts which each word brings; he speaks of the 'interanimation of words'<sup>60</sup> in a sentence. According to the language being used, the 'abridged contexts' interpenetrate in different ways: discourse can be regarded as a spectrum which ranges, on the one hand, from technical language, in which the words tend to have a stable meaning because of their limited range of uses, to poetic language in which the words interact with a richer depth of reference because of the wider range of contexts from which the words derive. Thus the univocal definitions, characteristic of technical language, contrast with the fluidity and allusiveness of poetic language.

Our interest in this lies in the way in which Richards' picture of the interaction of interpretative possibilities within a sentence is applied to metaphor, so that metaphor is seen as a 'transaction between contexts'. Ricoeur expounds the approach which Richards adopts:

'According to one elementary formulation, metaphor holds two thoughts of different things together in simultaneous performance upon the stage of a word or a simple expression, whose meaning is the result of their interaction. Or, to bring this description and the theorem of meaning into accord, we can say that the metaphor holds together within one simple meaning two different missing parts of different contexts of this meaning. Thus we are not dealing any longer with a simple transfer of words, but with a commerce between thoughts, that is, a transaction between contexts.<sup>61</sup>

Clearly, this particular description could be applied to any pair of thoughts which are brought together: for example, a simile or a paradox could be described in these terms. To clarify the distinctive quality of metaphor, Richards turns to the structure of metaphor: he uses the word 'tenor' to refer to the 'underlying idea or principal subject<sup>62</sup>' of the statement, and the word 'vehicle' to refer to the 'idea under whose sign the first idea is apprehended<sup>63</sup>'. So in the metaphor, 'man is a wolf', man is the tenor, and wolf the vehicle. The metaphor is constituted by the simultaneous presence and interaction of the tenor and vehicle. Ricoeur expresses justified reservations about the ability of Richards' theory to distinguish adequately between metaphorical meaning and what we could call 'literal' or non-metaphorical meaning. Moreover, it seems excessive to speak of words as abridgements of their contextual meaning, the full



weight of which is brought to bear on any subsequent use of the word: the process of diachronic change, with levels of 'stable meaning' in which the word is constant in its meaning, requires that we recognise limits to the degree to which previous contexts are brought into play. The word 'silly', for example, does not always bring with it the notion of 'saintly', nor does 'influence' require the reader to attend to the astrological connotations of the word.

Richards' description of a metaphor is:

'When we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single work, or phrase, whose meaning is the resultant of their interaction.'<sup>64</sup>

Rikhof comments that, although Richards' intention is to begin with discourse, and move from there to the meaning of words, he simply ends up with a theory of word-meaning in which words do not have any fixed meaning, 'but the meanings they have are the result of interanimation.'<sup>65</sup> In the definition quoted above, the resultant meaning can only be the change in the meaning of the word or phrase through the interaction of the 'thoughts of different things' -- a view which seems to repeat the view of the Rhetorical Tradition that

metaphor is primarily a change in the meaning of a word. As we have indicated, it is better to think of metaphor as a predicative operation, rather than as something that happens to a word.

Max Black develops Richards' concentration on the structural features of metaphor, and formulates what he calls an 'interaction' theory of metaphor. His starting point is that metaphors are sentences or expressions 'in which some words are used metaphorically while the remainder are used non-metaphorically'<sup>66</sup> The words used metaphorically are called by Black the 'focus' while the remainder of the sentence is called the 'frame'. In the metaphor, the focal word 'obtains a new meaning which is not quite its meaning in literal uses, not quite the meaning which any literal substitute would have'<sup>67</sup> The interaction is located in the focal word, and Black describes this as a 'change of meaning' for an 'extension of meaning'. However, there are difficulties about speaking of a 'change in meaning' of a word: it is not clear that one can speak other than diachronically of such a change. Nor is it much help to speak of a 'change of meaning' for an individual occasion; Rikhof comments:

'The assumption that a word receives a new meaning or acquires a special meaning in these cases is contrary to the observation that words retain their standard meaning when used in a metaphor. This observation corresponds to the points already mentioned with regard to the order of recognition: the ordinary senses of words, distilled from past use, are the only ones available. The assumption is also incoherent: a word does not lose its ordinary dictionary sense(s), nor does it exchange its sense(s) for another sense just for one occasion.'<sup>68</sup>

Moreover, as we saw in our discussion of metaphor and discourse, only sentences can be said to have meaning on particular occasions; words have meanings which are specified in particular instances of discourse. '...terms like "occasion" cannot be used in connection with word meaning. "Occasion" and "event" are terms that belong to sentence meaning.'<sup>69</sup>

Black develops an interaction theory which concentrates on the functioning of the metaphorical statement, on the action of the 'frame' on the 'focal' term. Ricoeur outlines Black's proposal:

'Let our metaphor be "Man is a wolf." The focus "wolf" operates not on the basis of its current lexical meaning, but by virtue of the 'system of associated commonplaces" -- that is, by virtue of the opinions and preconceptions to which a reader in a linguistic community, by the very fact that he speaks, finds himself committed.

This system of commonplaces, added to the literal uses of the word, which are governed by syntactic and semantic rules, forms a system of implications that lends itself to more or less easy and free invocation. To call a man a wolf is to evoke the lupine system of associated commonplaces. One speaks then of the man in "wolf-language". Acting as a filter or screen, "the wolf-metaphor suppresses some details, emphasises others -- in short, organizes our view of man." <sup>70</sup>

In Black's own words, 'the metaphor works by applying to the principal subject a system of "associated implications" characteristic of the subsidiary subject ... The metaphor selects, emphasises, suppresses, and organizes features of the principal subject by implying statements about it that normally apply to the subsidiary subject.' <sup>71</sup>

We have mentioned our reservations about the notion of applying the term 'change of meaning' to the focal word within a metaphorical statement; other features of Black's account give rise to a similar hesitation. For example, his account of the system of 'associated commonplaces', which organize our view of the principal subject, would seem to be applicable principally to trivial metaphors lacking in originality. It is not clear that Black's account can do justice to new metaphors in which there is an original transfer of meaning between the elements of the predication.

Ricoeur comments that Black's account seems inadequate when faced with the new configurations of meaning arising from metaphor. Black recognises this weakness, and in a later article, he speaks of the implicative complex of the secondary subject:

'The making of metaphorical statements selects, emphasises, suppresses and organizes features of the primary subject by applying to it statements isomorphic with the members of the secondary subject's implicative complex... In the context of a particular metaphorical statement, the two subjects "interact" in the following ways: 1) the presence of the primary subject incites the hearer to select some of the secondary subject's properties; and 2) invites him to construct a parallel "implicative complex" that can fit the primary subject; and 3) reciprocally indices parallel changes in the secondary subject.' 72

This is more satisfactory, since it envisages a greater degree of interaction between the elements in the creation of meaning. Philip Wheelwright's distinction between two aspects of metaphor is relevant here: he distinguishes between the 'epiphoric' and the 'diaphoric' dimensions of a metaphor. The epiphoric aspect is 'the outreach and extension of meaning through comparison'<sup>73</sup>. The comparison may be no more than what Black calls the 'accepted commonplaces' of the subsidiary subject which provide a basis of resemblance for the application to the principal subject



So, Blake's aphorism, 'Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by incapacity,' is partly founded on a comparison of the lack of opportunities of both the virtue and the old maid. The diaphoric dimension is 'the creation of new meaning by juxtaposition and synthesis.'<sup>74</sup> The insights into the moral life, provided by Blake's aphorism extend far beyond the simple similarity, into a whole analysis of what may lie behind the adoption of a prudential moral position. Black recognises this creative dimension of metaphor:

'...it would be more illuminating in some of these cases to say that the metaphor creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing.'<sup>75</sup>

But, how is this new meaning created? Ricoeur answers this by depending on Douglas Berggren's analysis of the tensional character of a metaphorical statement:

'...as a result of the process of metaphorical construing, both the principal and the subsidiary subjects are transformed and yet preserved. To construe life as a play or a dream is not only to organise or interpret life in different ways, but also to give plays and dreams a significance that they might otherwise not have. Or, as Black correctly argues, "if to call a man a wolf is to put him in a special light we must not forget that the metaphor makes the wolf seem more human than he otherwise would." Yet at the same time, if the initial differences between the two referents were not simultaneously preserved, even while the

referents are also being transformed into closer alignment, the metaphorical character of the construing process would be lost. The possibility or comprehension of metaphorical construing requires, therefore, a peculiar and rather sophisticated intellectual ability which W. Bedell Stanford metaphorically labels "stereoscopic vision": the ability to entertain two different points of view at the same time. That is to say, the perspectives prior to and subsequent to the transformation of the metaphor's principal and subsidiary subjects must both be conjointly maintained. It is precisely this transformation of both referents, moreover, interacting with their normal meanings, which makes it ultimately impossible to reduce completely the cognitive import of any vital metaphor to any set of univocal, literal, or non-tensional statements. For a special meaning, and in some cases a new sort of reality, is achieved which cannot survive except at the intersection of the two perspectives which produced it.' <sup>76</sup>

Berggren's criterion for a vital metaphor is that a 'reduction of the metaphor's cognitive import to non-tensional statements'<sup>77</sup> is impossible: the action of construing is necessary because of the interaction of what are, at first, incompatible elements brought together in the predication; the incompatibility is not removed -- there still exists a distinction between two elements, and each retains its own connotations and normal sense and reference. But for the space of the metaphor, the assimilation of the two elements suspends their incompatibility in such a way that one can be seen as the other. The dialectic of approximation and assimilation, on the one hand, and difference and

incompatibility, on the other, is constitutive of metaphor. Ricoeur uses the term 'logical contradiction' to point to what Berggren calls the 'tension' between the constitutive elements of a metaphor:

Now metaphor reveals the logical structure of "the similar" because, in the metaphorical statement, "the similar" is perceived despite difference, in spite of contradiction. Resemblance, therefore, is the logical category corresponding to the predicative operation in which "approximation" (bringing close) meets the resistance of "being distant". In other words, metaphor displays the work of resemblance because the logical contradiction preserves difference within the metaphorical statement.' 78

The incompatibility between the elements of the metaphor -- the 'semantic clash' -- is resolved through the emergence of an interpretation which makes sense of the sentence as a whole. This element of incompatibility acts as a signal to the reader that a metaphorical interpretation is called for, as Le Guern points out:

'Metaphor, on the other hand, on condition that it be a living and image-triggering metaphor, strikes one immediately as being foreign to the isotopy of the context in which it is inserted ...Semantic incompatibility plays the role of a signal that invites the receiver to select, among the constitutive meaning elements of the lexeme, those not incompatible with the context.' 79

But Ricoeur goes further than Le Guern and regards the tension within the metaphor as more than just a signal to the reader: it is the other side of the process by which the assimilation of the elements takes place. He makes a great deal of the idea of the 'logical absurdity' of interpreting the metaphor 'literally'. This discussion, common among many writers on metaphor, often centres on the way in which the metaphor, if taken 'literally', is nonsense. The discussion seems, however, to be needlessly complex, and to be something of a red herring. The point at stake here is that metaphor is, in Barfield's words, 'a deliberate yoking of unlikes'<sup>80</sup> The assimilation of the features of the statement cannot take place with the same ease as the interpretation of a more conventional sentence. But, it seems excessive to introduce notions of the 'logical absurdity' of a literal interpretation of a metaphor, since, in my experience, no one is likely to be deceived into taking the metaphor in this way. More to the point is the character of metaphor as the resolution of the task of bringing two disparate semantic areas into a relationship which is redescriptive, in a radically new way, of the principal referent:

'...metaphor is an instantaneous creation, a semantic innovation which has no status in already established language and which only exists because of the attribution of an unusual or an



unexpected predicate. Metaphor therefore is more like the resolution of an enigma than a simple association based on resemblance; it is constituted by the resolution of a semantic dissonance.' 81

The creation of metaphorical sense is the disclosure of the ways in which the referent can be viewed in the light of the associations and connotations of the network of signification offered by the predication. The internal sense arises out of the transfer of descriptive possibilities from one area, in which they are customarily employed, to another area where they provide a new range of expressive possibilities. What is strange about metaphor is its capacity to effect this redescription in a way which discloses, within the 'fictive' mode characteristic of metaphor, the referent as though it were the subsidiary subject or predicate: there is a form of 'iconic' representation. Paul Henle highlights this aspect: he takes an example from Keats' poetry:

'When by my solitary hearth I sit,  
And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in  
gloom...'

Henle comments:

'...there are two distinct situations evoked by the second line, the one of someone or something enveloping a person in something. It may be a cloak or blanket or something of the sort. It



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may be a net in which the person is caught or it may even be a monstrous web, but, at any rate, it is something concrete. The other situation is that of hateful thoughts making one gloomy. The second is presented in terms of the first and this metaphor is developed in terms of quite distinct situations.' <sup>82</sup>

The metaphorical expression 'functions iconically, by indirectly designating another similar situation ... the thing in focus is thought of as what the icon describes.'<sup>83</sup> It is this which distinguishes metaphor from simile, in which the parallelism operates by holding the two things separately; in metaphor, however, there is an iconic dimension which brings the two planes together so that one is seen as the other. The referent does not lose its characteristics in this process, but rather gains a new figurative sense which can be developed to provide an additional, and potentially rich, vocabulary about the referent. Ricoeur elaborates this iconic aspect, by introducing Hester's Wittgensteinian analysis of 'seeing as'. Hester draws an analogy between Wittgenstein's discussion of the duck-rabbit gestalt and the interpretation of metaphor. (This is only an analogy, since clearly the perceptual aspects of the gestalt and the semantic aspects of interpreting metaphor are only partially similar.) Hester labels the duck 'A', the gestalt 'B' and the rabbit 'C':

'In Wittgenstein's example, we are given B and the problem is to see A and C. In metaphor the problem is different though the act of seeing as is similar. In metaphor we are given A and C and the problem is to see B. B in the duck-rabbit is the common Gestalt form between ducks and rabbits. In the metaphor B is the relevant sense in which A is like C ... In reading metaphor with openness we let the image auras of A and C play against each other in order to discover B.' <sup>84</sup>

Even though this is only an analogy, it is a useful image which highlights the assimilation of two distinct semantic networks in the metaphor. 'Seeing as' designates the event in which the predicative assimilation issues in the insight that the 'tenor' can be seen as the 'vehicle': the incompatibility between the elements of the predication is overcome through their approximation in redescribing the referent as the predicate. The explication of a metaphor is then the enumeration of all the appropriate senses to be derived from this innovative, heuristic device. In this respect there is a parallel with the role of models in scientific thinking. Ricoeur draws on the work of Black and Hesse:

'The central argument is that, with respect to the relation to reality, metaphor is to poetic language what the model is to scientific language. Now in scientific language, the model is essentially a heuristic instrument that seeks, by means of fiction, to break down an inadequate interpretation and to lay the way for a new, more adequate interpretation.' <sup>85</sup>

The parallel can be permitted within certain limits, but since the status of models in scientific thinking is itself a controversial epistemological question, and since it is unwise to develop the comparison too strongly, because of the different categories of imaginative thought involved, we shall let it remain at the level of a parallel or comparison. As with Hester's use of the duck-rabbit gestalt, scientific models frequently involve a spatial or perceptual dimension: one can align this only partially with the semantic and verbal aspect of metaphorical predication. However, one can say that metaphors do permit a range of systematic observations, based on the transfer of connotations from the subsidiary to the principal subject, which is analogous to the role of scientific models; it may be doubted, however, whether metaphors can be said to have the explanatory and comprehensive role of models. Ricoeur relates scientific models to a 'metaphoric network', rather than to the isolated metaphorical statement:

'What on the poetic side corresponds exactly to the model is not precisely what we have called the "metaphorical statement", that is, a short bit of discourse reduced most often to a sentence. Rather, as the model consists in a complex network of statements, its exact analogue would be the extended metaphor -- tale, allegory. What Toulmin calls the "systematic deployability" of the model finds its equivalent in a metaphoric network and not in an isolated metaphor.' 86

We might think, for example, of the extended metaphorical scheme found in the poem by Emily Dickinson we discussed earlier, as an example of the deployability of the redescriptive metaphorical network, analogous to the organising ability of a scientific model. The capacity of metaphor to shape a range of systematic descriptions in a coherent developed manner is characteristic of what Ricoeur, following Pepper, calls a 'root metaphor':<sup>87</sup> a rich and generative metaphor which can be developed and extended in a controlled fashion, in a whole range of statements which proceed from the dynamic established by the initial image. We need look only at the Christological image of Jesus as 'Son', and at the theological image of 'begetting', to find an example of an image which shapes discussion in a developed and systematic manner, offering the capacity for ontological and philosophical clarification across the whole range of Christological and Trinitarian thought.

CONCLUSION

Our study of metaphor has presented metaphorical predication as a conjunction and interaction of two 'networks', brought together in such a way as to enable the reader to see the principal subject as the other subsidiary subject. It is one of the ways in which a new set of descriptions can be developed, in the light



of which the principal subject can be described in terms which otherwise would not have been used. In what way is this analysis applicable to Christological pre-existence language?

First of all, we should note the figurative basis of the predication. The term 'pre-existence' is a shorthand form, used to encapsulate a series of descriptions of Jesus, such as 'Wisdom', 'Logos', 'Son of Man', 'he who comes from above', and a series of things said about him in conjunction with these phrases, such as 'through him all things were made', or 'in him all things were created', or 'he is before all things'. These descriptions and phrases involve, in their application to Jesus, 'seeing him' in terms which are strangely 'different'. It is likely, for example, that before the notion of 'pre-existence' crystallised in Christological language, there were descriptive procedures employed which spoke of Jesus in these terms, inviting the hearer or reader, for example, to think of Jesus as Wisdom, as the one who had been present in the heavenly realm, as the Son of Man given authority in Daniel 7, as the one who had been with God until the appointed time. All of these involve a procedure which is analogous to that found in the structure of metaphor, in which a principal subject (Jesus) is seen as a subsidiary subject (concisely, a 'pre-existent' one, although covering a range of



hypostatic identities, such as angel, Wisdom, Word, mediator of creation). It is beyond the scope of our study to delineate the genesis and the variety of New Testament formulations; it is sufficient to point to the way in which these Christological expressions can be presented as metaphorical in character.

Secondly, we would point to the tension which exists between the connotations of Jesus as a particular temporal existent, and the connotations applied to him by a predication which considers him in pre- or supra-temporal terms. The transfer of the new set of predicates to the referent involves allowing them to shape the way in which we see Jesus: they become an additional and radically innovative descriptive network which can be developed in order to speak differently about him. The incompatibility of the predication with what would normally be considered readily acceptable language about a temporal existent, is analogous to the way in which, in metaphor, a quite different set of connotations are introduced as descriptive of the referent. The task of construing the metaphor involves the creation of a metaphorical sense in which the new connotations are taken to be redescriptive of the referent which, in this process, does not lose its already known characteristics, but rather gains a new set of predicates from the image.

Thirdly, metaphor involves both a figurative element -- that of 'fictive' portrayal -- and, as part of the process of specifying the senses to be drawn from the metaphor, a consequent determination of the redescriptive possibilities offered by the new predication. We saw the way in which, in Emily Dickinson's poem, and in Stokes' aphorism, the original metaphor can organise and stimulate discussion of the referent in terms drawn from the image: the soul can be discussed through a consideration of the images of decaying machinery in Dickinson's poem, and the moral experiences of emptiness and loss, in Stokes' aphorism, can be illuminated by the image of the lightning flash across the waste land. The reader is thus enabled to develop the implications of these metaphors in his appropriation of their application to the matters under discussion. Similarly, the consideration of pre-existence language, as we shall see, gives rise to an account of the identity of Jesus as 'eternal Son', which makes it possible to develop a Christology along these lines, in conjunction with a revision of theological language in Trinitarian terms. The figurative presentation is the occasion for the emergence of a consideration of the identity of Jesus in ontological terms: the capacity to oscillate between figurative and more conceptual reflection is part of the semantic contribution which metaphor makes to language.

It is, of course, possible to consider pre-existence language in other hermeneutical terms. Our choice of metaphor is guided by the presence within pre-existence language of a 'visual' or figurative dimension, which sees Jesus as a pre-existent One, by the tension between his status as a temporal existent, considered as a pre- or supra-temporal existent through the predication, and by the capacity of this way of speaking about him to generate a whole range of considerations about his identity arising out of this image. While other ways of viewing pre-existence language are possible, nevertheless, there are sufficient indications that this way of examining the character and dynamic of the language may be fruitful.

Pre-existence Language and Metaphorical Predication

Let us begin with a problem which occurs in the Gospel of Mark:

'And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? David himself inspired by the Holy Spirit, declared,

'The Lord said to my Lord,  
Sit at my right hand,  
till I put thy enemies under thy feet.'

David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?"' (Mk. 12.35-37)

The editorial redaction comments that the great throng heard him gladly, but does not indicate that the throng felt that the incompatibility of the two metaphors had been resolved for them. For indeed in the logion, the two metaphors are not taken to be compatible: one is taken to be more significant, to the exclusion of the other. The designation of Lord as the determinative interpretation of 'the Christ' is given priority over the less satisfactory designation Son of David. The logion suggests that the clash between the two metaphors, which is surely to be taken as a clash between Christologies with conflicting connotations, should be resolved through the affirmation of the priority of one, Lord, over the other, Son of David. The roots of the conflict in the Markan and pre-Markan communities are lost to us; the matter is further complicated by the fact that the Royal Davidic



character of Jesus is a major theme of the Markan Passion narrative which follows -- so it is not as though Mark eschews Davidic overtones in his presentation of Jesus. The problem, as posed by the logion and solved in its own cryptic way, concerns the hermeneutics of diverse metaphors applied to Jesus: how can they be harmonised in a way which allows some consistency in the interpretation of who Jesus is, if they present connotations both of inferiority and superiority to David? The solution offered is the choice of one in preference to the other.

This is not the end of the story, however: the same interpretative nexus of Christ, Son of David, Lord, and the person of David, occurs again in the sermon of Peter at Pentecost in Acts 2.29-36:

'Brethren, I may say to you confidently of the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear. For David himself did not ascend into the heavens; but he himself says,

"The Lord said to my Lord,  
 Sit at my right hand,  
 till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet."

Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

But this time, there is an acceptance of two different metaphors: the first, the Christ, is justified by an appeal to the prophecy of David that the statements of Psalm 16, which precedes our quotation, refer to a descendant of David, and not to David himself (v.29). The second metaphor, that of Lord, is justified by interpreting Psalm 110 with reference to the exaltation of Jesus in the resurrection. Thus descent from David and Lordship are not treated as mutually exclusive and competing predicates.<sup>2</sup>

The differences between the two treatments of metaphorical compatibility are worth pursuing: in the first instance, the Markan logion has no way of adjusting the perspective in which the metaphors are placed, but in the passage from Acts, the resurrection, with the contrasting death of the patriarch which proves that the quoted Psalms cannot refer to David himself, is used to validate the double designations of Christ and Lord: the rescuing of Jesus from corruption and his exaltation at the right hand of the Father -- two aspects of the resurrection kerygma -- are the instances which confirm the use of the two metaphors. The more sophisticated interpretation of the sermon in

Acts resolves the impasse disclosed in the simple opposition of the metaphors in the Markan logion. The difference clearly lies in the framework within which the relationship of the metaphors is considered: the simple contrast of the metaphors in the Markan logion allows no rapprochement at the level of a higher viewpoint, whereas in the treatment in Acts, the reference point of the resurrection, and the evaluation of the patriarch David as a prophet speaking, not of himself, but of one of his descendants, enables the double metaphor to be treated at a higher level of organised description.

Another example of contrasting NT passages can be found in the ways in which the Gospel of Luke establishes and values the Davidic Sonship of Jesus, while, on the other hand, the Gospel of John treats it as of no importance -- in fact the implication in the Fourth Gospel is that those who try to understand Jesus in this way are deluded. We shall take it that the Lucan treatment is well known and uncontroversial; John's treatment of the theologoumenon, however, requires from the reader that he read the signs, implicit in the narration, of the inability of the Jews to reach the required understanding of the origin and identity of Jesus. Only the person who knows that Jesus 'comes from above' can identify him: this is the ironical, unspoken theme of the Johannine pericope: 3

'When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This is really the prophet". Others said, "This is the Christ". But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" So there was a division among the people over him.' (Jn. 7.40-3)

These Christologoumena simply exhibit the confusion of the crowd in their directionless questioning about the identity of Jesus. He himself is absent from their discussion, and no resolution of the conflicting proof texts is offered -- a further indication of the futility of such 'searching of the scriptures' (5.39) unless one is given the gift of being born from above (3.3), and is thus able to interpret Jesus from the point of view of heavenly revelation. The Christologoumena are thus presented as counter-testimonies, to be contrasted with Jesus' own teaching about where he comes from and who he is (7.28-9). Here, too, as in our other example, the significance of the metaphors is dependent on the framework within which they are placed, and on the ability of the reader to evaluate individual metaphorical elements within the context of the work as a whole.

Our examples have raised the question of the ways in which, by an adjustment of the framework within which



metaphors are interpreted, their meaning is altered. More importantly for our purpose, compatibility between metaphors, or conversely, incompatibility between them, is dependent on the presence of a structure which permits or negates their simultaneous predication. In the contrast between Mark and Acts, the adoption of a higher viewpoint allows the simultaneous use of metaphors which, at a lower level, were felt to be incompatible; in the Johannine passage, the complex of the Davidic and Messianic significance of Jesus is presented as fruitless, unless one proceeds from the controlling testimony of the Johannine Jesus about himself -- then these other metaphors can be incorporated as significant, because they are subordinated to another explanatory Christological scheme.<sup>4</sup>

The question we have uncovered is the relationship between a metaphor and the framework within which it occurs. We can relate this to our discussion in the first chapter of the Aristotelian examination of the features of tragedy: the features of LEXIS contribute to the MYTHOS of the drama, which in turn is related to the MIMESIS at which it aims. There is an interdependence between aspects of a work, which requires that the workings of the individual features of a work be considered in the light of their contribution to the work as a whole; equally, and just



as importantly, the work as a whole acts as an interpretative framework within which the individual features gain a particular significance and meaning from the perspective of the total character of a work. Imagery in a tragedy can only be appreciated in the light of the whole complex of the MYTHOS of the work, and the differences between the same images in different plays results from the contexts in which they are used.

There is no need to rehearse in detail the arguments we produced earlier to show that the character of metaphor shares in this dependence on the wider context: we have shown that metaphor is not the use of one word to stand for another; nor is it to be thought of as a word-centred phenomenon. It exists in the wider context of a predication, in which the disposition of thought in a sentence is the requirement for metaphorical meaning to exist at all, and it involves the presentation of a particular description of a referent in the light of a particular predication which stands in tension with it. The dependence of metaphor on the wider context of the predication is the first instance of its dependence on context for its meaning. Its character as a 'context-centred' use of language requires that it be viewed in the light of the wider context in which it is placed, and to which it contributes its particular quality.

The dependence of metaphors, especially potentially competing metaphors, on the structure within which they operate, raises the question of the character of the structure and how it is to be viewed. At this point, we turn to a distinction made by Northrop Frye about the two different ways in which the totality of a work, its MYTHOS, can be handled. He points to two operations which are part of the art of reading a text: the first stage is that of sequential reading, in which the flow of the narrative is followed from the beginning, through the middle, right to the end, with attention being paid to the exposition or unfolding of the linear quality of a work. The second operation involves reading the text as a unit, as a composite whole, grasped in its totality. It is at this level that the process of considering the relationship of the individual elements of a text to the text as a whole takes place; simultaneously, there is a review of the quality of the individual elements in the light of the work as a whole -- thus, a two-way process takes place in this second operation:

'Once a verbal structure is read, and reread often enough to be possessed, it "freezes". It turns into a unity in which all parts exist at once, which we can then examine like a picture, without regard to the specific movement of the narrative...A great mass of additional detail that we missed in the sequential reading then becomes relevant, because all the images are metaphorically linked with all the other images, not merely with those that follow each other in the narrative.'<sup>5</sup>

Frye applies this to the Bible as a whole: the act of reading it sequentially, from the act of creation to the emergence of a new heaven and a new earth, is related to the 'mythical' character of narrative, while the act of reading it as a simultaneous unit, is related to its 'metaphorical' character, as the creation of a complex verbal structure whose inter-relationships within its text present a centripetally dynamic sense:

'If we read the Bible sequentially, the Bible becomes a myth, first by tautology, in the sense in which all myths are mythoi or narratives, and second in a more specific sense of being a narrative with the specially significant material that we find in all mythologies.....If we freeze the Bible into a simultaneous unit, it becomes a single, gigantic, complex metaphor, first by tautology, in the sense in which all verbal structures are metaphorical by juxtaposition, and second, in a more specific sense of containing a structure of significantly repeated images.'<sup>6</sup>

Our interest in this distinction between the sequential reading of a text and the reading of it as a simultaneous unit lies in its implications for the relationship between metaphors and the structure within which they operate. Frye characterises sequential reading as 'pre-critical',<sup>7</sup> as a form of reading in which the whole structure of a work has not yet been grasped in a way which permits the assessment of the

relationship of the part to the whole. The operation of reading the text as a unit, however, is precisely the means by which the appropriation of the influence of the part on the whole, and conversely, of the whole on the part, takes place: it is this operation which permits the evaluation of the significance of the metaphor in its particular structure, which enables the reader to determine the contribution, and the sense, of the metaphor. Prior to the grasp of the totality of the work, the evaluation of the individual elements which compose the work cannot be undertaken. Consequently, the evaluation of metaphor is dependent upon the contribution of the whole structure to the working of particular metaphorical predications within the structure. The consideration of an individual metaphor will be incomplete and inadequate as long as this task, the act of reading the whole structure as a unit, remains to be performed.

How do these comments relate to the use of pre-existence language? There is a parallel between the dilemma presented in the Markan logion between the compatibility of 'Son of David' and 'Lord', and the dilemma described by several critics with regard to the compatibility of pre-existence language and an affirmation of the full humanity of Jesus. The Markan logion suggested that you could have one of the predicates, and it prefers the use of 'Lord', but you



cannot have both, since they do not cohere with one another. Similarly, the criticism has been offered that you can have either pre-existence language or the full humanity of Jesus, but you cannot successfully have both. And so, our question will focus on the validity of these objections by considering the ways in which several commentators present this incompatibility. As we shall see, the problem in their objections is the absence of a structure within which both pre-existence language and an affirmation of the full humanity of Jesus can be maintained satisfactorily and complementarily. We shall suggest that the issue with regard to pre-existence language is incorrectly posed when it is framed in terms of an incompatibility between the predicates, in the absence of a structure which permits a coherent and discriminatory use of both predicates. The real point is not the conflict between the predicates, but the character of the structure which can be developed out of the pre-existence metaphor. As we shall see later, the structure which permits the predications to cohere involves a mutually reinforcing redescription of both God and Jesus, a circular process in which the features established in one area are brought to bear in the other area. But first of all, we shall consider the critics who block this process.



John Knox presents the case against pre-existence language with great clarity. He describes the development of New Testament Christology as a movement away from the most primitive, and, in his opinion, perfectly adequate adoptionism, in which the man Jesus is exalted to an exalted status of Lordship at the Resurrection. Out of this grew the second form of Christology, a kenotic Christology, in which 'a divine being empties himself of his divine nature and status and becomes a man, who then in virtue of some characteristic or achievement of his human career is exalted, just as in the earlier story, to the same high office.'<sup>8</sup> This Christology, however, although intended to be a prologue to the human story of Jesus, grounded in a desire to locate Jesus in God's eternal plan, is such a strong pattern that it reshapes the Christological field by threatening to undermine the reality of Jesus' humanity: kenoticism begets docetism.

'Once that ascription was made, however, it is clear that only two possibilities remained -- kenoticism and docetism. Either a divine being (called by whatever name), in an act of self-giving incomparably radical and complete, became a human being, one of us in all respects, or else he appeared to do so. There is no middle space.'<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, according to Knox, we cannot assert that this 'divine being' became one of us in all respects,

since the predication of pre-existence so qualifies the humanity of Jesus that it ceases to be recognizably a humanity which is ours:

'Manhood, to be sure, has been affirmed of him, but, generally speaking, it has been so amplified, supplemented, or otherwise altered as no longer to be recognizable as the manhood we know. In our formal christologies, however truly "human" Jesus is alleged to have been according to some chosen, and possibly defensible, definition of that term, he has not been regarded as human in the ordinarily accepted sense, as being a man "like his brethren in all respects".... If it is true that the belief in the pre-existence of Jesus is incompatible with a belief in his genuine normal humanity, then it is clear that an affirmative answer to our questions about the humanity will require some reassessment of that belief.' 10

A final quotation from Knox will complete our presentation of his case:

'...there is no way of distinguishing Jesus' humanity as different from ours, whether in its origins, its structure, or its quality, whether in virtue of something added to it or taken from it, whether as regards its actuality or its potentiality -- there is no way of distinguishing Jesus' humanity from ours which does not deny the reality of his manhood in every sense which makes the affirmation of it significant. But the idea that Jesus' existence as a man was in some self-conscious way continuous with his earlier existence as a heavenly being -- and this is surely what has usually been meant by "pre-existence" -- this idea does distinguish his humanity from ours... We can have the humanity

without the pre-existence and we can have the pre-existence without the humanity. There is absolutely no way of having both.'<sup>11</sup>

Let us identify the blockages in Knox's interpretation: first of all, the proposal that pre-existence language and the humanity of Jesus are mutually exclusive comes from his resistance to any qualification of the humanity of Jesus which might, in any sense, remove his humanity from the category of our humanity. As Stephen Sykes has shown, principally against John Robinson, the action of affirming the humanity of Jesus is not the assertion of an empirical fact, free from theological judgments.<sup>12</sup> The business of Christology requires some specification of the difference of Jesus. To assume, as Knox does, that, first of all, we know what we mean by 'humanity', and, secondly, that an unspecified descriptive term such as 'the humanity of Jesus' will suffice for Christological inquiry, is to betray considerable myopia. Even within his own terms, some understanding of what is meant by 'humanity', in its capacity to be 'exalted' at the resurrection, is required if he is to be able to speak of the humanity of Jesus becoming 'a divine and divinely redeeming thing'<sup>13</sup> at the resurrection. Knox's reluctance to postulate the divinity of Jesus prior to the resurrection leads him to redefine the divinity of Jesus as a 'transformed, a redeemed and redemptive,

humanity'<sup>14</sup> Such formulations, according to Knox, are 'not in the least incompatible with the acceptance of the full reality and normality of his earthly manhood', although to an untutored eye, they seem to pose as many problems as those he tries to avoid. One can only with difficulty collapse divinity-statements into humanity-statements, and, at the same time, avoid the Feuerbachian chasm.

Secondly, Knox cannot find a way of avoiding viewing the Incarnation either as a metamorphosis, which would defeat the purpose of Incarnational language, or as a synthesis of divine and human natures, which would compromise the integrity of Jesus' life as a man, or as a continuity of self-consciousness of a divine being, which would be logically impossible to reconcile with human growth. All of these options are mythological, and are excluded by the Chalcedonian definition. Knox's reading of orthodoxy is Apollinarian and Eutychean, and he would presumably share Schleiermacher's way of approaching the question:

'...how can the unity of life coexist with the duality of natures unless one gives way to the other, if the one exhibits a larger and the other a narrower range, or unless they melt into each other, both systems of ways of action and laws really becoming one in the one life? -- if indeed we are speaking of a person, i.e. of an Ego which is the same in all moments of its existence.'<sup>15</sup>



Thirdly, Knox works with an undefined notion of the Trinitarian character of God's being: he admits some 'complexity'<sup>16</sup>(!) in God, part of which complexity is the Logos, 'the self-expressive activity of God', 'God himself continuously and everywhere acting to create and redeem'<sup>17</sup> which was active in the human life of Jesus, but is not to be thought of as identical with Jesus in any hypostatic sense:

'..the reality of the Logos was fully present in the Event of which the human life of Jesus was the centre and therefore pre-eminently in that human life itself, but without being simply identical with Jesus.'<sup>18</sup>

Knox goes on to say that 'we cannot simply identify Jesus, for all his importance, with one of the "persons" of the Trinity', because 'that belief would be as formidable an obstacle to our acceptance of the full authenticity of his humanity on earth as the doctrine of his pre-existence can be.'<sup>19</sup> Knox works with a circle of interpretation which moves between the two poles of saying that the humanity of Jesus must be completely like us in all respects, and this excludes the notion that God, in the mode of being of the Son, can exist as a completely human person, and of saying that God is such that his relationship to creation precludes his capacity to enter into the conditions of his creation while remaining himself.



These three points are the staple diet of the opponents of pre-existence language: it is incompatible with the humanity of Jesus, resulting in docetism or monophysitism; the pattern of the union of the eternal Son with the human person Jesus is incoherent and logically unthinkable; it compromises monotheism, by which is usually meant Unitarianism. Geoffrey Lampe's attack on pre-existence language is based on these three points; his vigorous retrieval of the possibilities of a Spirit theology and a Spirit Christology is, however, marred by an impatience and tiredness with orthodox formulas. Arguing that 'God has always been incarnate in human creatures, forming their spirits from within and revealing himself in and through them,'<sup>20</sup> he presents Jesus as the highest actualisation of the communion of God as Spirit with the human spirit. With this model 'we do not need the model of a descent of a pre-existent divine person into the world.'<sup>21</sup>

'When Jesus is identified with the pre-existent Son, belief in a true incarnation of God in Jesus is weakened. Not only does it become harder, as we have said, to recognize that it is truly God himself, and not his partner (!) whom we encounter in Jesus; it also becomes more difficult to ascribe authentic humanity to the God-man.'<sup>22</sup>

Lampe argues that the human nature of a divine person 'can scarcely be human in the same sense in which the

human nature of a human person is human<sup>23</sup>-- the first point we highlighted in Knox's treatment. Moreover, according to Lampe, the concept of the pre-existent Son assuming human nature 'involves the idea that the will of this divine person is a divine will, but that he has assumed a second will belonging to his human nature and added this to his own personal pre-existent will.'<sup>24</sup> The logic, then, would be to change Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane from 'not my will, but thine' to 'not my human will, but my divine will.'<sup>25</sup> - the incoherence of the language of Incarnation, as in Knox. The root of the problem, according to Lampe, is the transposition of the human qualities of Jesus onto a hypostatized and anthropomorphically conceived Logos-Wisdom within the being of God, which vitiates monotheism:

'God the Son is conceptualised as Jesus the Son of God; the obedience of Jesus, the Servant and Son of God, the true Adam indwelt and inspired by God the Spirit, is attributed to God the Son; God the Son becomes eternally the subject of Jesus' self-dedication to his Father's will, and eternally the object of the Father's love which Jesus experienced so fully and communicated in turn to those who shared his own discipleship. This means in effect the abandonment of monotheism, for such a relation between God the Son and God the Father is incompatible with the requirement of monotheism that we predicate of God one mind, one will, and one single operation.'<sup>26</sup>

Such a transposition of the relationship of Jesus to the Father into an intra-Trinitarian relationship vitiates the significance of the prayer of the man Jesus in Gethsemane, which is 'a disclosure of God inspiring and moving and acting through the mind and will, the conscience and the resolution of a consecrated man in a human situation.'<sup>27</sup> To introduce this relationship into the being of God is to engage in inconsistency -- because the Son would have to be 'essentially other than the Father' -- and, at the same time, it is to remove from the human realm the 'archetypal revelation of the manner in which God acts in and through the spirit of man'<sup>28</sup> Lampe's conclusion is that the use of pre-existence language leads to an impenetrable complexity in God which cannot be reconciled with the requirements of a monotheistic faith, and, at the same time, it leads to an undermining of the humanity of Jesus, thus removing him from the realm of the recognisably human. The metaphor, therefore, gets out of control, and dictates an interpretation of the being of God which is destructive of his simplicity; secondly, it establishes a misleading pattern of the action of God by making God's action with regard to Jesus qualitatively different from his action in the rest of humanity; thirdly, it presents Jesus as 'a kind of invader from outer space.'<sup>29</sup>

Such an onslaught goes beyond the criticism Rahner levels at the ways in which Chalcedonian Christology fosters a monophysitism in Christian piety and attitudes: in Lampe's view, it is not that when it is badly understood, it is subversive of Christian belief, but that the pattern itself, speaking of Jesus as the incarnation of God in his mode of being as Son, is wrong, inconsistent, and should be abandoned. The implications of pre-existence language are too dangerous to be allowed any further life in the Christian community.

What has gone wrong with the handling of pre-existence language in Knox and Lampe? Firstly, both of them stumble over the Christological pattern in which a pre-existent referent, the Son or Logos, is brought into unity with a human being or a human nature. They read this pattern sequentially, 'from above to below', to use the much overrated distinction. Consequently, they balk at the difficulty of trying to make 'one plus one equal one.' Later we shall adopt a modified version of Pannenberg's proposals as a way of avoiding the logical and semantic impasses which face Knox and Lampe. It is not clear that the predication of pre-existence need follow this route within the Christological arena.

Secondly, both of them present highly distorted



versions of Incarnational Christology. It is remarkable how frequently in contemporary theology ancient heresies surface as expositions of the very doctrine which was intended to refute them. The mysterious margin between God's life and his creation is crossed by Knox and Lampe, in their interpretation of Incarnational doctrine, in the most crude fashion. They share this with the writers of 'The Myth of God Incarnate', whose interpretation of Incarnational language confounds their claim to be skilled readers, versed in metaphor and imagery. Lampe and Knox understand the images of 'taking', 'becoming', 'assuming', 'being united with', in the most crudely literalistic fashion, denoting actions which correspond to either a process of fusion (Eutyches), synthesis (Apollinaris) or metamorphosis (monophysitism). Both fail to take seriously the quadruple adverbs of the Chalcedonian definition -- 'without confusion, without change, without division, without separation' -- as regulative both of the Christological mystery and of the relationship of God to his creation. In Grillmeier's words:

'The Chalcedonian unity of person in the distinction of the natures provides the dogmatic basis for the preservation of the divine transcendence, which must always be a feature of the Christian concept of God. But it also shows the possibility of a complete immanence of God in our history, an immanence on which the biblical doctrine of the economy of salvation rests.'<sup>30</sup>



Thirdly, Trinitarian theology receives rough treatment from them for its incoherence and its violation of monotheism. Lampe, in particular, interprets Trinitarian thinking as polytheistic and misconceived, arising from an illegitimate transposition or projection of the distinctively human response of Jesus to God into an intra-divine realm, in which the human is lost from view.

'...the characteristic attitudes of Jesus to God are ascribed to the eternal Son. This concept of the Son is then read back again, by a reverse process, into the context of the Gospels and applied to the historical Jesus, so that his sonship comes to be understood as a reflection of the eternal sonship of the Logos-Son.'<sup>31</sup>

According to Lampe, Trinitarian language<sup>32</sup> relocates the human-divine interchange of Jesus and God within an intra-divine realm in which the human dimension of the relationship becomes lost from view. The higher modality of Trinitarian relationships undermines the original focus of the human-divine communication, which is located in the experience of Jesus; the result is that the descriptive categories of pre-existence language give rise to an account of a relationship between two divine beings, the Son and the Father, which cannot be maintained in conjunction with our account of the human-divine relationship of the historical Jesus and God. But if, in the above

quotation, we replace the phrase 'ascribed to the eternal Son', which implies that the eternal Son is a different referent from Jesus, by the phrase 'seen as those of the eternal Son', in which the introduction of the category of 'eternal Son' is the introduction of a different referring expression, rather than a different referent, then the perspective is altered. Trinitarian language is then less a matter of the introduction of a reality which 'reflects' that which takes place in the history of Jesus: it becomes, rather, a way of describing that which takes place there, by means of different referring expressions, rooted in the metaphorical character of pre-existence language. Language of eternal Sonship is more a matter of introducing different 'senses' or 'referring expressions' which refer to the communication between Jesus and the Father, than a matter of describing a different referent, to be distinguished from this communication. Lampe's interpretation, and rejection, of Trinitarian language derives from the 'reflection' model in which there are two distinct realities -- that which occurs between the eternal Son and the Father, and that which occurs between Jesus and the Father -- set side by side, in apparent competition with one another. But if, instead, the introduction of 'eternal sonship' language is regarded as a way of describing Jesus, as the introduction of a metaphorically based, referring expression, as the creation of a particular

'sense' to be applied to the single referent, Jesus, then the duality and 'reflection' pattern, criticised by Lampe, can be avoided.

Against the views of Knox and Lampe, we shall propose that pre-existence language is to be taken, within Christological speech, as descriptive of Jesus, as a predication which stands in a relationship to the referent, Jesus, which can be described as metaphorical. The predication of pre-existence does not establish a referent distinct from Jesus, such as eternal Son or Logos, who must then be brought into union with the historical existent, Jesus. Nor should it be used in a way which suggests that such a combination of referents is taking place. Schoonenberg sees this clearly; though we shall have reservations about his argument when he discusses the Trinitarian question, he is correct to insist Christologically that the referent cannot be other than Jesus:

'Consequently, everything that is said about his (Jesus') divinity in his pre-existence is done in connection with Jesus Christ, and nothing is said outside this connection... Thus we can say that everything about the Son, even in his pre-existence, must be interpreted only in connection with the concrete God-man.

It is now only a matter of drawing a conclusion from this association, namely, that what is contained in scripture, tradition and the teaching magisterium on the divine and pre-existent person of the Son can never

be in conflict with what is preached about Jesus Christ. Thus it cannot be in conflict with the most primary views on Christ, which we have previously stated, that he is one person and that he is a human person. What is said of the pre-existent person can never nullify this one and human person. We must then never conceive the divine person as added to the man Jesus in such a way that Christ would no longer be one, or no longer man.<sup>33</sup>

The simple Fregean distinction between sense and reference is as corrective to the misinterpretations which can arise in this context: language about the pre-existence of Jesus is the creation of a particular sense or meaning applied to the one referent Jesus, not the introduction of a new referent into the field of view. What of the Christological texts which speak of the Logos or Son 'assuming' flesh or human nature, or entering into unity with the humanity of Christ? This has been the dominant form in which pre-existence language has been given expression in Christology. Within the discussion of metaphorical language, we have proposed that the wider context of an individual 'stylistic' feature depends upon the interpretation of the text as a whole; applying this to the narrative patterns of Christological texts which move 'from above' to 'below', we might propose that it is not clear that such texts necessarily imply a distinction of referents, since narrative structures have their own stylistic features. This point should be seen in



connection with Northrop Frye's distinction between the two acts of reading: sequential reading, in which the text flows from one point to the next, and which is precritical in that the individual items are not yet seen in the light of the internal coherence and sense (MYTHOS) of the whole. This contrasts with the act of reading the text as a unit, in which the contribution of the individual items, and consequently their meaning as part of a unitary narrative, is evaluated in the light of the structure within which they are framed. Sequential reading is part of the second operation, and achieves its value only insofar as it contributes to the grasp of the text as a whole.<sup>34</sup>

Now, if we apply this distinction to the way in which pre-existence language functions, the suggestion may be made that the relationship between, for example, the first stage of a Christological pattern, e.g., the Eternal Son in his relationship to the Father, and the second stage, the Eternal Son in his incarnate human condition, will be inadequately treated as long as the reading of this narrative is an act of sequential reading. The handling of pre-existence language is bedevilled by the inherent tendency of the language to focus attention on the succession of steps between one stage and the other, with the result that attention is concentrated on the images such as 'assuming' or 'becoming', or 'entering into unity with', through



which the flow of the narrative is achieved. Now, the flow of the narrative is not to be taken as equivalent to the significance of the whole narrative which has its own coherence and meaning, in the light of which the individual items of the narration are to be interpreted. Unless the particular image, which connects the first and second stages of the narration, is interpreted in the light of the senses deriving from the whole narrative, i.e., from the redescription of both Jesus and God, it will become either incoherent or falsely mythological. In other words, unless the whole structure of the Christological and theological narration is brought to bear on the interpretation of particular elements of the narration, the reading will be incomplete. This brings us back to the point we raised earlier about the dependence of metaphors on the structure within which they are placed.

To some extent, then, the reading of a Christological narrative which moves sequentially from one stage, for example, from a pre-existent stage, to an incarnate stage cannot be read satisfactorily as long as the narrative is not read as a unit, as a revision of our accounts of God and Jesus which uses the genre of sequential narrative. If pre-existence language is used in a Christological narrative, then it will be inadequately dealt with as long as the sequence is followed, without the controlling influence of the

whole 'sense' which the narration creates. Can we identify the features of the structure which enables pre-existence language to be handled non-sequentially?

One of the points we shall establish in Barth's use of pre-existence language is the way in which it establishes a double hermeneutic moving from Jesus to God and back again. We describe it as a circle of mutual interpretation which facilitates the development of a language about God in the light of this particular image being used of Jesus, and this in turn shapes the way in which Jesus is to be viewed. It has a double focus: proceeding in one direction, it provides the basic image for describing Jesus as 'belonging to the being of God,' or 'one with God', inseparable from God's knowledge of himself, if it is in Jesus that God has revealed himself; proceeding in the other direction, as the other aspect of the revision, it establishes Jesus as the hermeneutic of God's being which must be described as differentiated in order to account for his self-revelation. This is a co-ordinated revision of language about Jesus and God, which requires that the language about one coheres with the language about the other.

The particular character of the image, placing Jesus in a pre- or supra-temporal relationship to God, with a consequent revision of our language about God, provides

the stimulus and the direction for a speculative and conceptual clarification of the implications of the metaphor: Ricoeur's dictum, 'The symbol gives rise to thought' expresses the relationship between the possibilities initiated by metaphor and the speculative discourse which emerges from the trajectory of the metaphorical redescription. Our interest in the controlling structure which permits the use of pre-existence language is advanced by Ricoeur's comments on the relationship between metaphor and the resulting speculative and conceptual framework which can arise from it:

'The particular intention that directs the system of language functioning in metaphorical utterances includes a demand for elucidation to which we can respond only by approaching the semantic possibilities of this discourse with a different range of articulation, the range of speculative discourse. It can be shown that, on the one hand, speculative discourse has its condition of possibility in the semantic dynamism of metaphorical utterance, and that, on the other hand, speculative discourse has its necessity in itself, in putting the resources of conceptual articulation to work....In other words, the speculative fulfils the semantic exigencies put to it by the metaphorical only when it establishes a break marking the irreducible difference between the two modes of discourse.'<sup>35</sup>

The relationship between the metaphor and the conceptual articulation which derives from it is, then, one of the metaphor providing the possibilities of

expression which enable a development in conceptual terms to take place: the process of explicating the senses and implications of a metaphor gives rise to a non-metaphorical form of discourse which is, nevertheless, dependent on the generative power of the metaphor:

'...the conceptual articulation proper to the speculative mode of discourse finds its condition of possibility in the semantic functioning of metaphorical utterance...The resultant gain in meaning is not yet a conceptual gain, to the extent that the semantic innovation is not separable from the switching back and forth between the two readings, from their tension and from the kind of stereoscopic vision this dynamism produces. We might say that the semantic shock produces a conceptual need, but not as yet any knowledge by means of concepts.' 36

The metaphor requires interpretation through the conceptual schemata which develop out of the dynamism of the metaphor; expressing this another way, we might say that the interpretation of a metaphor must involve consideration of the non-figurative statements which form part of the explication of metaphorical statements. The metaphorical predication of pre-existence sets up the conditions by which a particular way of describing Jesus, and a particular way of describing God, can be developed. The circularity of the procedure means that the metaphor can be handled correctly only when the conceptual



expression which arises out of the metaphor is used, in turn, to shape the way the metaphor is used. The failure of the approaches of Knox and Lampe lies in their inability to relate the oscillation between the figurative and conceptual aspects of the pre-existence predication. What Ricoeur calls the 'stereoscopic vision' -- the switching between the predication and the conceptual articulation which arises out of it -- is described in analogous terms by D.M. MacKinnon:

'The heart of the problem facing anyone who essays a treatise de verbo Incarnato is the oscillation, the alternation of language that is abstractly ontological with language that is mythological, crudely anthropomorphic. In part the former provides the means of disciplining the latter, or rendering its use aseptic, proof against the corruption of the imagination. But there is more to it than that: for the anthropomorphic is as it were penetrated by the ontological styles, bent and twisted till the very concept of God as he is in himself is suffused by its emphases.' 37

MacKinnon points to the way in which in the Nicene creed, the homoousion precedes the lapse into the mythological idiom of descent from heaven: 'the category of substance is invoked to insist that the faith of Trinity and of Incarnation is monotheistic.' 38 He speaks of the use of ontological categories to 'complement and discipline' the imaginative portrayal of the image, in a way which is parallel to our



proposal of the relationship between the predication of pre-existence and the conceptual controls which make it possible to use such language coherently.

The co-presence of the figurative and conceptual dimensions of the predication is part of the heuristic character of pre-existence language: it enables certain aspects of the significance of Jesus to be brought to expression, out of the dynamism of the metaphor. A way is provided by which statements bearing on the ontological identity of Jesus as the Son of the Father can find expression; within the tradition, this has issued in the accounts of Jesus as the eternal Son or Word. This designation of the ontological reality of Jesus' existence arises as an explication of the more figurative image which presents Jesus as the pre-existent Son or Word, which enables the hearer or listener to construe the predication coherently.

The coherence necessary to make the predication meaningful requires that the characteristics of Jesus as a temporal existent be affirmed, and that they be in no way undermined by the implications of the new predicate which is brought into a metaphorical tension with the already known referent. But at the same time, the predication offers a presentation which has a fictive character: presenting the reader with a

figurative portrayal of this temporal existent, asking him to think of Jesus in these unfamiliar terms, in order to open the way towards an account of the identity of Jesus which is derived from the descriptive possibilities offered by the image. One cannot remove the imaginative, figurative or metaphorical aspect of the predication of pre-existence, nor can one remove the tensional aspect between the implications of the referent as a temporal existent and the implications of the predication which posit a pre- or supra-temporal existence. But, as we have seen with metaphor, the tension is overcome or resolved through allowing the process of interpretation and conceptual formulation to occur. Unless the interpretation of a metaphorical statement passes beyond the level of tension and incompatibility between the referent and the predication, then the semantic process is blocked, and no coherent meaning can be given to the metaphor. With Lampe and Knox, we have seen that they remain at the level of incompatibility between the two sets of connotations which the predication of pre-existence initially presents. Yet if it is seen that the process of interpreting the metaphor includes the oscillation between the figurative and the conceptual, then the interpretation of the predication depends upon construing the implications of the description in non-metaphorical ways. In addition, the interpretation of the predication will depend upon the presence of a

co-ordinated revision of the theological language and the Christological language which arise out of the dynamism of the metaphor, for unless both poles are included within the scope of the semantic innovation of the language, then no coherent interpretation of pre-existence will be possible. Put simply, unless pre-existence language is allowed to propose a viewpoint which affects our language of God, at the same time as it proposes a view of the identity of Jesus, then the supporting framework necessary for its interpretation will be absent.

Thus the requirements for handling pre-existence language within the Christological area can be summarised:

1/ the predication should be seen as the introduction of a particular 'sense', in the light of which the referent Jesus is to be viewed.

2/ In common with metaphorical statements, the particular character of the referent is not abandoned or subverted in any way by its juxtaposition with the connotations of the predicate. The humanity of Jesus, then, is not threatened by its being viewed in a pre-existent context.

3/ In common with metaphorical statements, there will be an oscillation between the figurative and conceptual aspects of the predication. The predication must issue in some non-metaphorical statements which control the way in which the referent is to be construed in the light of the connotations of the predication -- otherwise the redescriptive power of the metaphor will be blunted.

4/ The scope of the dynamism of the metaphor, and the necessary conceptual structure for its coherent use, will include a co-ordinated revision of theological and Christological language. As we shall see in our study of Barth, the dynamism of pre-existence language in the theological area is that it enables an account of the orientation of God's being towards expression in the Incarnation of the Son to be affirmed. Without this corresponding dimension, the Christological affirmations become detached from their necessary context.

How are we to think of the relationship between the figurative and conceptual aspects of pre-existence language? This is an important question, since a failure to appreciate the movement between the two aspects deprives the language of its character as the figurative source of the ontological designation of Jesus as the eternal Son of the Father. It is beyond

the scope of our study to examine the genesis of the notion in the NT period, but it is instructive to note that commentators frequently fail to appreciate the interdependence of the two aspects in the account they give of the development of the notion in the NT. Part of the difficulty lies in the choice of 'myth' as the central interpretative category. The inherent difficulty with discussing pre-existence language as 'mythical' is the fluidity of the definition of 'myth'; a case can be made for saying that the meanings attributed to the category are so diverse that it has ceased to possess a precise, shared meaning for it to be an adequate hermeneutical instrument. The nuances it has acquired from its use in so many disciplines give it a particularly slippery quality, which can be countered only by each commentator taking the trouble at the outset to define the way in which he is going to use the term. This is admirable in itself, but it only increases the proliferation of definitions and usages, thus compounding the confusion. In addition, it is not clear that the category of 'myth' can do justice to the emergence of the conceptual designation of Jesus as the eternal Son. There is of course, in some NT expressions of pre-existence, a narrative structure such as is found in the Johannine Prologue<sup>39</sup> and the Philippians hymn<sup>40</sup> which is characteristic of mythical language, whatever more precise definition of myth one is using. But even here there is a dimension of



'literary composition' in which there is a careful delineation of the significance of Jesus with reference to certain established parallels, such as Wisdom or angelic obedience/disobedience<sup>41</sup>—or the Adamic parallel, which is not easily reduced to simply mythical expression: there are elements of poetic imagination, simile and metaphor which defy univocal categories. Even in the narrative expression of the pre-existence theme, and particularly in the doxological formulations of the Colossians hymn and the opening verses of Hebrews, what is central is the expectation that the reader will engage in an interpretation in which Jesus is seen as a pre-existent figure, whether this is directly predicated of him as the sole referent, such as in Philippians, Colossians or Hebrews, or whether there is the introduction of a hypostatic referent who from the eternal realm is brought into view in the historical realm as Jesus (Johannine Prologue). Even in the Prologue, however, and before the Incarnational formula of 1.14, there is an overlapping of the features of Christ and Wisdom in 1.10-11, which is characteristic of metaphorical expression. In an as yet unpublished paper, John Ashton writes:

'The hymn resonating as it does upon two registers, is asserting throughout, but subtly and implicitly, the identity of the Logos and the Revealer. But until v.14 there is no explicit statement to that effect...

In my view there can be no satisfactory interpretation of the Prologue that fails to recognize the author's double interest: it is a meditation on wisdom offering a variation on a traditional theme; it is also a hymn to the Incarnate Word.'

This is surely correct, and leads one to suggest that the Prologue must be considered to possess features of 'stereoscopic vision' in which Jesus and Wisdom are brought together so that one may be seen as the other; this can only with difficulty be included within the category of myth. At the very least, it points to the need to attend to the metaphorical element within the NT forms of expression.

If 'myth' is an unwieldy category which copes badly with the figurative dimension of NT pre-existence language, there is, at the other extreme of interpretation, a tendency to concentrate on the element of conceptual necessity which pushes Christology in the direction of pre-existence themes. H.M. Schenke portrays the development in a ratiocinative manner:

'Meines Erachtens dürfte nun der Ansatzpunkt für die neu entstehende Präexistenzchristologie innerhalb der bereits vorhandenen christologischen Konzeption die Vorstellung vom Erhöhten sein; und die Gedankenbewegung müsste gewesen sein: ein himmlisches Wesen kann man eigentlich nicht werden, sondern muss man immer schon sein. Der Gedanke bewegt sich sozusagen in gerader

Linie, oberhalb, unter Überspringung der irdischen Existenz, von der himmlischen Postexistenz auf eine himmlische Praexistenz zu.'<sup>42</sup>

Along similar lines, Martin Hengel gives the impression that the initial developments took place through a process of ratiocination, unrelated to, and indeed prior to, the figurative expressions of pre-existence:

'Thus there was an inner necessity about the introduction of pre-existence into christology... Once the idea of pre-existence had been introduced, it was obvious that the exalted Son of God would also attract to himself the functions of Jewish Wisdom as a mediator of creation and salvation.'<sup>43</sup>

Hengel's approach is to affirm Jüngel's statement made from the standpoint of systematic theology: 'It was more a matter of consistency than of mythology'<sup>44</sup> and it is the sign of a correct approach that Hengel eschews the view that pre-existence language is an alien accretion on the simple kerygma, in favour of thinking through the dynamism which lead towards these formulations of pre-existent status. However, one must ask whether he over-estimates the conceptual dimension of the language, and does not attend sufficiently to the ways in which the figuration of pre-existence provides the impetus for the development of the 'inner necessity' which Hengel detects in the development of

NT Christology. Because he opposes 'inner necessity' and 'mythology', he fails to take account of the fact that the figurative and the conceptual may be related in a way which is complementary rather than mutually exclusive. A more satisfactory approach would be to view the figurative expressions as the material through which the conceptual dynamism of Christology was worked out. Before the concept of pre-existence was reached, there were descriptive procedures analogous to metaphorical statements, which pointed towards, and impelled, the movement towards Christological pre-existence.

The relationship between the figurative and conceptual dimensions of pre-existence language may be clarified through the Hegelian treatment of the relationship between Vorstellung and Begriff which has been influential in Pannenberg's treatment of pre-existence language, and in Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory.

The Hegelian term Vorstellung designates a certain kind of reflective cognition characteristic, primarily, of religious expression, in which we think of the Absolute not in concepts but in images. We might think of Vorstellung as a representation of an object in mental activity, drawn from the world of sensible experience, and used in order to enable us to speak and think, albeit inadequately, about the Absolute. The religious



Vorstellung retains its reference back to the context in which it was first apprehended, but at the same time it provides the basis for a conceptual clarification and interpretation of the specifically transcendent referent which it is used to designate. Thus the Vorstellung characteristic of religion is figurative, while at the same time it provides a dynamism for conceptual development. In Charles Taylor's words,

'Religious thought is a representative mode of consciousness. It uses sensuous images, but not just to contemplate their sensuous referents, rather as symbols which strain to render a higher content...

Vorstellung is thus a mode of consciousness which is freeing itself, as it were, from the merely sensible in order to reach the universal. But it has not yet fully succeeded, it is still caught in the sensible, and must use sensible images.'<sup>45</sup>

The opacity of Vorstellung -- its inability to free itself from its sensible origin -- requires the activity of philosophy to move beyond the limitations of the image towards 'thought' and the 'concept': in Hegel's own words, 'Philosophy can be said to do nothing other than to transform Vorstellungen into thoughts (Gedanken) -- though indeed it transforms the bare thought into the concept (Begriff)'.<sup>46</sup> He speaks of the movement from the Vorstellung to the pure concept and back again: 'ein Herüber- und Hinübergehen..von der Vorstellung zum Begriffe und von dem Begriffe zum



Vorstellung..<sup>47</sup> The mediate position of Vorstellung -- between sense and thought -- is the necessary process, the necessary step by which the religious consciousness presents itself with the materials which enable it to rise to a purer and more adequate thinking 'on thinking itself', the characteristic activity of the philosopher. It is the whole purpose of The Phenomenology of Spirit to show the final growth of this process: a self-conscious reflection on the ontological status of our thinking reason in relation to the ontological status of the world and God. Vorstellung represents a stage in this process, a form of thought in which man 'is already reflectively a step above the deceptive presentational immediacy of sensuous perception, while yet still a step below the speculative world of pure thought.'<sup>48</sup>

Religious Vorstellungen provide the mind with objects of thought which, in Hegel's interpretation, enable the thinker to become aware of his activity of reflection -- to reflect upon reflection -- and thus to become aware of thought as thought.

'...Hegel clearly means to say that Vorstellung is that mode of consciousness in which man is universally -- albeit, from a speculative point of view, only implicitly -- "at home" with the reflective truth that the "rational is the actual". Vorstellung is a form of reflection in which this truth is latent, but it is not the highest or

purest form of such truth. Philosophy, moreover, begins with this conviction about Vorstellung. What it does in contrast to it, generally speaking, is to move further inward and upward toward the side of the constitutive power of thought in consciousness in order to discover by a more thorough reflective analysis the epistemological and ontological implication of that self-constitutive power. In this process it "transforms" Vorstellungen into Gedanken and the Begriff.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, the relationship of philosophy to Vorstellung is one of the completion of the truth inadequately expressed through the medium of Vorstellung, which is a proximate form of truth, and which provides the ground for the attainment of conceptual truth free from the mediate character of imagery. The range of meanings which Johnston and Struthers give to Vorstellung in Hegel's usage testifies to the figurative and fluid character of the term: 'sensuous representation, image, imagination, presentation, idea, general idea, ideation.'<sup>50</sup> The relationship of philosophy to Vorstellungen is one of completion of the truth inadequately expressed through the figurative medium: the mediate character of Vorstellung, involving both sense and understanding, as yet inadequately distinguished, means that it is a proximate form of truth which, nevertheless, provides the grounds for the attainment of speculative truth, free from the limitations of imagery. One need not subscribe entirely to Hegel's confidence in the capacity of

philosophy to effect an Aufhebung of figurative expressions at the level of concepts, to appreciate the point at issue: religious language begins with the use of images, metaphors, models, symbols, all drawn from the finite world and applied to the transcendent realm in an indirect analogous manner which continuously requires control and specification. In order to engage in a more accurate delineation of the meanings one wants to establish with regard to this transcendent realm, the figurative character of the language is accompanied by, not replaced by, a vocabulary which co-ordinates and controls the working of the Vorstellungen. The images set up the basis on which a speculative system can be developed; indeed, the images require conceptual clarification, if the process of understanding is to take place at all.

Although thought, at the level of Vorstellung, is inadequate, it is still a form of thinking which has a role in the whole process of attaining truth. Hegel's account of the oscillation between Vorstellung and Begriff, of the movement from the figurative expression to the concept and back again, is the basis of Ricoeur's discussion of the dynamism of religious and symbolic language, 'thanks to which all symbolic language calls for an interpretation.<sup>51</sup>' His dictum, 'the symbol gives rise to thought' is Hegelian in its estimate of the dependence of conceptual clarity on the figurative, metaphorical or symbolic expression:

'This dynamism is the primary condition for any move from figurative expression to conceptual expression. This process of interpretation is not something super-imposed from outside on a self-contained expression; it is motivated by the symbolic expression which gives rise to thought. It belongs to the essence of a figurative expression to stand for something else, to call for a new speech-act which would paraphrase the first one without exhausting its meaningful resources.' 52

The Hegelian legacy is also influential in Pannenberg's treatment of pre-existence language: he works with a distinction between the figurative character of pre-existence language and the higher viewpoint in conceptual terms of the revelatory unity of Jesus with God. As with Hegel, the Vorstellung is not dismissed as false or misleading, but rather it is the material expression of a formal concern which can be drawn from the image and which, in turn, shapes the interpretation of the image. The controlling conceptual formulation, which enables us to come afresh to the notion of pre-existence and find it possible to use pre-existence language comfortably, is the revelational unity of Jesus with God, as disclosed in the resurrection:

'From the idea of revelation (Offenbarungsgedanken) we attain access to the understanding of the old concept (Vorstellung) of Jesus' pre-existence. At least this concept appears as a meaningful expression (sinnvoller Ausdruck) that we, too, must retain, namely for Jesus' full and complete affiliation with the eternal God. Jesus' revelational unity with the God



who is from eternity to eternity forces us conceptually to the thought (Gedanken) that Jesus as the "Son of God" is pre-existent. This is true even if we must characterise the idea of pre-existence taken by itself as a mythical concept (eine mythische Vorstellung).<sup>53</sup>

In his brief account of the origin of Christological pre-existence<sup>54</sup> Pannenberg traces its development from the confession of the Resurrection, that Jesus is 'Son of God': it is from its subsequent relocation within the Baptismal tradition and the Annunciation tradition, and its further deployment in connection with the Christologoumenon of 'sending' (Gal. 4.4; Rom. 8.3), that the situation is created within early Christianity which requires the use of pre-existence language to account for the significance of Jesus as Son of God. His account of this development is far too linear to be a comprehensive delineation of the various figurative patterns which constitute the NT material, but his account is programmatically: he aligns the Traditionsgeschichte with the inner logic, or the conceptual necessity, which he posits as the core of the pre-existence Vorstellungen:

'In this process in the history of traditions the recognition of the fact that Jesus belongs to the sphere of God, which was established through the revelatory character of his resurrection, expresses itself. Viewed from the confirmation of Jesus' claim by his resurrection, the inner logic of the



matter dictates that Jesus was always one with God, not just after a certain date in his life. And in view of God's eternity, the revelatory character of Jesus' resurrection means that God was always one with Jesus, even before his earthly birth. Were it otherwise, Jesus would not be in person the one revelation of the eternal God.'<sup>55</sup>

Pannenberg here uses a Barthian argument -- from the form and character of the self-revelation of God, which leads to the articulation of the inseparability of the person of Jesus from God's being -- linked with his own view of the retroactive power of the future. He invokes an opaque ontology in which the truth is established teleologically, at the limits of universal history, and in which the reality of the present is determined by the future which is open to it. The end of history determines the truth of all that takes place within it, with retroactive power. The Christological variant on this is obvious: 'If Jesus as a person is "the Son of God", as becomes clear retroactively from the resurrection, then he has always been the Son of God.'<sup>56</sup> Thus the identity of Jesus as Son of God, eternally united with the Father, is established, not only noetically but also ontologically, from the event of the resurrection. In an important passage, he writes:

'What is true in God's eternity is decided with retroactive validity only from the perspective of what occurs temporarily with the import of the

ultimate. Thus Jesus' unity with God -- and the truth of the Incarnation -- is also decided only retroactively from the perspective of Jesus' resurrection for the whole of Jesus' existence on the one hand (as we have already seen) and thus also for God's eternity, on the other. Apart from Jesus' resurrection, it would not be true that from the very beginning of Jesus' earthly way God was one with this man. This is true from all eternity because of Jesus' resurrection.' 57

Thus the principle of the retroactive power of the future extends, not only to the being of Jesus which precedes the resurrection, but also to God: 'What turns out to be true in the future will then be evident as having been true all along. This applies to God as well as to every finite reality.<sup>58</sup>' The implication of this would seem to be that God's being seems to share the condition of temporal reality in being open to an ontological determination through the future: it is the resurrection which, Christologically, makes it true that Jesus has always been Son of God, and which, theologically, makes it true that God's being includes a differentiation between Father and Son. And it does this because the resurrection is the proleptic occurrence of the end of history, which Pannenberg equates with the self-revelation of God. Out of the nexus of the resurrection, then, proceeds the determining features which exercise an ontological effect on the being of Jesus -- making it true that he is the eternal Son of God.

There are considerable difficulties with the ontology which Pannenberg proposes.<sup>59</sup> In the first place, he is in danger of applying univocal metaphysical thought both to God and to created reality. Deus non est in genere -- this tag is contradicted by Pannenberg's application of a retroactive ontology both to God and to creation. Secondly, it is difficult to establish what sort of causality is envisaged in his description of the future affecting the past retroactively. The image would seem to be that of the future constantly making space for the present to come into existence and receive ontological determination. Pannenberg presents this as a principle applicable to all reality, and not just to the resurrection, but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there is an extension of a principle which belongs within the peculiar dialectic of Christological speech to cover the whole of reality -- in which case, it is the application of a Christological configuration to ontology, rather than the reverse. Thirdly, the principle of retroactive ontology seems to imply a Hegelian interdependence of infinite and created reality, located at the terminus of universal history at which point both the infinite and the finite receive their ontological determination.

Pannenberg seems to place process of God's becoming -- in particular, the process of 'becoming Trinitarian' through his union with the man Jesus -- within the limits of the process of the world's becoming: 'in a restricted but important sense God does not yet exist...God's being is still in the process of coming to be.'<sup>60</sup> By his insistence on futurity as the mode of God's being, Pannenberg is in danger of conceptualising the Trinitarian relations as achieved retroactively at the end of the process of universal history, and hence of making them dependent on history for their ontological grounding.

Finally, it is difficult to avoid the impression that Pannenberg's Christology is a form of eschatological adoptionism which, by the retroactive power of the future, is enabled to encompass statements about the divinity of Christ, while at the same time it permits him to assert the full humanity of Christ, untrammelled by what he sees as the distorting effects of beginning with a 'descending' Christology. The debate he presents about the comparative merits of Christology 'from above' and Christology 'from below' has been effectively undercut by Nicholas Lash's analysis of the spuriousness of the proposed opposition between these two procedures.<sup>61</sup> However, it is interesting to ask whether, if one rejects the ontology Pannenberg proposes as a means of holding together the



Christological and theological structure, one can still find value in the procedural steps he makes in the handling of pre-existence language.

For Pannenberg, the resurrection is the proper locus of Christological articulation. Consequently, Christological statements are derived from the nexus implied in the resurrection as the self-revelation of God, and they are to be controlled by the conceptual expression to which an analysis of the logic of self-revelation gives rise. He fully approves of Barth's 'demonstration of Jesus' divinity with the concept of revelation...Barth quite rightly has built the doctrine of Jesus' divinity and the doctrine of the Trinity on the concept of God's revelation in Jesus.'<sup>62</sup> Since the resurrection, which Pannenberg interprets in terms of its character as the self-revelation of God, plays this role as the centre and focus of the range of Christological statements, language of pre-existence is to be interpreted as an explication of what is involved in the event of the resurrection/revelation complex. Language of eternal Sonship, then, is to be taken as an account of the structural differentiation within God's act of self-revelation of the relationship of Father and Son. Expressed figuratively, this emerges in formulations about the pre-existence of Jesus; expressed at the higher level of Begriff, this emerges in statements which attempt to speak ontologically



about the identity of Jesus as the Son who is united with the Father in his revelation. The resurrection/self-revelation of God requires language to be found which expresses this; the figurative expression of what is involved is found in statements which speak of Jesus as pre-existent, and the conceptual, or ontological, expression of the same concern is found in statements about Jesus as the Eternal Son who is inseparable from God, if God has revealed himself.

Statements about the pre-existence of Jesus are thus figurative expressions of the truth which is appropriated more fully at the higher level of conceptual articulation: at this level, the Vorstellung of pre-existence issues in the concept of the 'unity of the divine essence with the man Jesus'<sup>63</sup> in the act of God's self-revelation. The difference between the two levels, and their patterns of expression, is brought out by Pannenberg: at the level of Vorstellung, pre-existence language can only establish a distinction 'between Jesus' community with God as something eternal, and his temporal and transitory human person.'<sup>64</sup> This distinction, operating at the level of figurative expression, can only create an Incarnational Christology with an insoluble problem:

'The concept of pre-existence stands under the suspicion of conceptually separating Jesus' community with God as a special being (the pre-existent Son of God) and his temporal appearance. The two distinct things are then reunited through the idea that the divine being has, in the incarnation, joined himself at a particular point in time with the earthly corporeality of the man Jesus. Thus the distinction between a pre-existent divine being and the man Jesus or his earthly appearance conceptually divides precisely that which belongs together in Jesus' existence. This constitutes the mythical element of the incarnational Christology: it conceptually divides the eternal Son of God and the earthly, human appearance of Jesus, which together constitute the concrete existence of Jesus, into two separate beings. Therefore, what is thus divided must be subsequently brought together again.'<sup>65</sup>

Pannenberg buttresses his argument with a spurious comment about the character of myth which 'separates the essence of reality as a special prototypal essence from the appearance in order to reunite the two through a dramatic process especially conceived for the purpose.'<sup>66</sup> He does not need such comments in order to substantiate his argument. The character of Vorstellung, of figurative description, is a sufficient support for the point he is making: the distinction between the eternal Son and the man Jesus, as long as it remains at the level of narrative, imaginative presentation, works as a distinction between two separate referents who, in the working of the narration, are brought together to constitute the

person of Jesus. This distinction, inherent in the flow of narration, creates an expression of Incarnational Christology in which the sequential ordering of the narration gives the impression that two separate referents are involved in the 'creation' of the person of Jesus. This poses a difficulty for a Christology which must resist dividing the person of Jesus, or of speaking of him as 'composed' of distinct principles. Pannenberg insists rightly that the distinction between the eternal Son and the man Jesus is inevitable: 'Christology involves precisely the conjunction of these two elements.'<sup>67</sup> But it is a distinction which must work at the level of the concepts which deal with the problematic of how to speak adequately of Jesus in the light of his revelatory unity with God. At this higher level of conceptual or ontological expression, it is a distinction not of referents, as in the mode of figurative or narrative expression, but of two aspects of a single concrete life. Through the controlling concept of the revelatory unity of Jesus with God, it is made clear that the figurative/narrative distinction between the eternal Son and Jesus is a distinction between aspects of the life of the one referent, Jesus:

'All Christology must keep in view that the two aspects distinguished here, the eternity of the Sonship and the earthly, human mode of Jesus' existence, are a part of a single concrete life.'<sup>68</sup>

The term 'aspects' requires some precision: I take it that what Pannenberg means by the term (Momente) is clarified later in the volume when he discusses the formula of the divinity and humanity of Jesus:

'The formula of the true divinity and true humanity of Jesus begins with the fact that one describes one and the same person, the man Jesus of Nazareth from different points of view. The unity of the concrete person Jesus of Nazareth is given, and both things are to be said about this one person: he is God and he is man.'<sup>69</sup>

Thus the distinction which, at the level of Vorstellung, suggested two referents, is relocated as a distinction of predicates made of the one referent, Jesus, as a distinction of what is to be said about him in the light of the revelatory unity of Jesus with God. This adjustment, made in the direction of clarifying the linguistic rules which are to operate in a Christology which has its point of departure in the nexus of the resurrection/self-revelation of God, enables one to avoid the 'mythical' suggestion that Jesus is composed of an eternal Son and a human reality. Eternal Sonship and the full humanity of Jesus are thus predicated of the historical referent, Jesus, as explications of the logic of God's self-revelation.



With this revisionary reading of the procedures for handling Incarnational Christology, Pannenberg intends to preserve the integrity of the humanity of Jesus, which functions untrammelled by the presence of a 'divine self-consciousness' which has to be brought into union with the humanity of Jesus -- a form of Unification Christology to which he is opposed<sup>70</sup> -- while at the same time, he is able to rework the Chalcedonian formulas as necessary explications of the resurrection/revelation nexus of God's action. The two state Christology of the Patristic period is modified in the direction of a two stage Christology which enables him to affirm the status of Jesus as vere Deus and vere homo: Jesus is confirmed in the resurrection as 'the one who had been wholly and completely obedient to the Father, as he also is henceforth.'<sup>71</sup>

'Just as the one completely obedient to the Father, he is the revealer of God's divinity and thus himself belongs inseparably to the essence of God. Thus is he the Son.'<sup>72</sup>

In this way, Pannenberg is able to develop the distinction between the use in the figurative/narrative mode of two referents, the Eternal Son and the human person of Jesus, and the use in the conceptual mode of Eternal Sonship and full humanity as predications and explications of God's self-revelation in the resurrection. The figurative/narrative mode, because



it involves speaking of an Eternal Son who then has to be united with the human existence of Jesus, suggests two referents, but this needs to be controlled, if a 'composite' picture of Jesus is to be avoided, by the affirmation that they are 'one and the same', in Chalcedon's terms.

We would not support Pannenberg's strictures on Patristic Christology, and on the pattern of 'descending' Christology: within the terms we have already proposed, narrative Christological patterns which begin, as does the Johannine Prologue, with the Logos, and then move on to an enfleshment of the Logos, have to be read as a unit, in a way which avoids the sequential reading of the narrative, as Northrop Frye has proposed. Nevertheless, the handling of a pattern involving a pre-existent Son who becomes incarnate is open to a variety of misinterpretations and confusions, as the history of the Patristic discussion shows. Pannenberg identifies the Achilles' heel of Christologies which follow this way of uniting the pre-existent Son and the human person Jesus:

'The question of the unity of the man Jesus with the eternal Son of God cannot be put and answered directly. That is the common mistake of all theories that attempt to conceive of the unity of God and man in Jesus on the basis of the concept of the Incarnation of the Logos...The unity of the man Jesus with the eternal Son of God results rather by way of a detour.'<sup>73</sup>

In contrast with these attempts, Pannenberg proposes that the most appropriate sequence and coherence of Christological language involves making a distinction between the relational dependence of Jesus on the Father, which was an experiential content and orientation of the consciousness of the man Jesus, and the ontological dependence of Jesus on the Son, which becomes operative retroactively at the resurrection. We have already expressed our reservations about Pannenberg's use of retroactive ontology, and indicated that we cannot support his view of the influence of the resurrection on the preceding identity of Jesus. But this distinction between the relational dependence of Jesus on the Father and his ontological dependence on the Son is a distinction which identifies what, in the human experience of Jesus, is to be taken as the communication between Father and Son, and how this is to be described.

Pannenberg's description of the indirect identity of Jesus and the eternal Son, established 'by way of a detour', has as its linguistic correlate, the tension which exists between the referent and the metaphorical predication in the structure of a metaphorical predication. The 'indirectness' or the 'detour' is the distance which exists between the subject and the innovative predication, in which there is a reinterpretation of the subject in the light of the

descriptive possibilities offered by the new framework. When we remove, as we must, the Hegelian retroactive ontology as the supporting ground offered by Pannenberg, we are, nevertheless, in the presence of a way of speaking of Jesus as the eternal Son which respects the metaphorical tension of the predication of pre-existence: Jesus is seen as the pre-existent Son or Word, and in the construing of the senses in which this is to be taken, there is a transfer of figurative attributes from the pre-existent Son or Word to Jesus. This does not take place in a way which destroys the characteristics of Jesus as a human referent, but it is to take place in a way which permits the humanity of Jesus to be seen in a different way.

We derive another point from Pannenberg: in order to avoid the impasses and confusions which can arise through the Patristic two natures Christology, pre-existence language should be handled in a way which respects its predicative character. In particular, since it has the open-ended quality of a metaphor, precision is required in order to determine the senses in which the predication is to be taken. We have identified, as part of the dynamism of metaphorical predication, the emergence of non-metaphorical statements from the initially figurative predication, and we have suggested that the Hegelian treatment of the relationship of Vorstellung and Begriff is to be

seen along these lines. In addition, we have distinguished the figurative treatment of Jesus as pre-existent from the ontological statement to which it gives rise, namely that Jesus is the eternal Son. From Pannenberg's discussion of the revision of pre-existence language as an explication of the self-revelation of God in the resurrection, we have identified a conceptual structure which can be used to control the interpretation of pre-existence language: the conceptual and ontological designation of Jesus as the eternal Son, which arises out of the figurative image, marks a shift towards a non-metaphorical modality in which the figurative character of pre-existence language is sublated and transformed: for example, the temporal or pre-temporal aspect of the predication gives way to a designation which links Jesus with the totality and finality of God's action towards the world. The dynamism from Vorstellung to Begriff, from figurative expression to ontological designation, is a shift away from the imagistic aspect of the predication towards an assessment of the identity of Jesus as the one who is inseparably united with the Father in his self-revelation. Wiederkehr touches on this in his excellent analysis of the eternal Sonship of Jesus; he identifies the figurative aspect of pre-existence language, and the modification which is to be made if such language is to be taken in a non-mythical way:



'Le terme "préexistence", avec le sens nettement temporel du "pré", n'est pas heureux. Il désigne plus un effet que le véritable fondement de la provenance divine du Christ, et il désigne cet effet conformément à la manière humaine de se représenter le temps. Quand on cède naïvement à la pente du mot "préexistence", l'éternité divine est représentée comme le prolongement du temps dans le passé. Dans une telle vision des choses, il est effectivement difficile d'échapper au soupçon de chute dans la mythologie. La préexistence est comprise de façon plus correcte quand elle est définie d'une façon personnelle et relationnelle...<sup>74</sup>

Instead, the concentration on the relationality of Jesus and the Father within the act of self-revelation, avoids the figurative suggestion of two sequential periods of time which flow into each other, and directs our attention towards the mission and communication between Father and Son, expressed in the event of salvation and grounded in the differentiation within the being of God.

The distinction between the 'personal community of Jesus with the Father and the identity of person with the Son' is a distinction between what is taken to be the central feature of the consciousness of Jesus -- his dedication and obedience to the Father -- and what is to be said about who he is on the basis of that relationship. In other words, Jesus' identity as the Son who belongs to God's essence is arrived at, not by considering how Jesus is to be related to a referent



known as the Son, but by considering the implications of the fact that within God's definitive act of salvation, there is a special communication of his love to Jesus and a corresponding response of Jesus to the Father. The proper order of Christological articulation, then, is to see language about Jesus as the Eternal Son who belongs to God's essence as an articulation of what is involved in the personal community of Jesus *with* the Father; language of pre-existent Sonship is a particular way of describing the relationality between Jesus and the Father which is grounded in the historical Jesus' experience of his mission. The ontological statements about the identity of Jesus as the Eternal Son are ways of characterising what is involved in the relationality which characterises God's saving and revelatory action in Jesus. Within the Christological area, this language about the eternal Sonship of Jesus, which is the principal conceptual clarification of the implications of the image of pre-existent status, functions as the development of a particular sense applied to the referent Jesus, as an interpretation of who he is, through the mediation of the image of pre-existent status.

Kasper, too, approaches the question of the identity of Jesus from the perspective of the relationality between Father and Son, which issues in the indirect expression of his identity with the Logos:

'...Jesus' dedication to the Father presupposes the Father's self-communication to Jesus. This self-communication, which constitutes the unity as well as the enduring distinction between Father and Son, is called by tradition the Logos, the second divine person... The unity of the man Jesus with the Logos is expressed in the New Testament only indirectly as the inner ground of the unity between the Father and Jesus. We shall therefore have to understand the personal communion between Jesus and the Father as a communion in essence but the community of essence as personal activity.' 75

He goes on to consider the Chalcedonian dogma 'as an interpretation of Jesus' historical reality and of his relation to the Father. For Jesus' human consciousness is turned not directly to the Logos, but to the Father.' 76 By interpreting pre-existence language as an explication of the relationship between Father and Son -- an explication which issues indirectly in statements about Jesus as the eternal Son -- we are following the direction given by the Fourth Gospel. The evangelist uses pre-existence language as a framework or descriptive network within which the relationship between the Father and Jesus is elaborated and expressed. The principal patterns used by the Fourth Gospel to describe the character and status of Jesus in his relationship to the Father, are those of the agent,<sup>77</sup> empowered by God to act with God's own authority, and the Son,<sup>78</sup> uniquely in the bosom of the Father, who alone has seen God and is able to speak of the things of God.

Von Balthasar is correct in presenting the referential focus of this descriptive network as the experience of Jesus in receiving the communication of the Father's love, and responding through his obedience:

'The statements concerning Jesus' experience of God, therefore, should not be understood in the sense that, in his "exegesis" of God (Jn. 1.18), Jesus makes utterance about what he saw and heard in God "before" his incarnation; rather he is speaking about what he, as the only one who comes from God, has experienced of God in his coming and in his going. These experiences, consequently, are inseparably divine and human. They are not first divine, only later to be translated into human terms: this would constitute the Platonic doctrine of pre-existence and anamnesis; but John comes from the Old Testament and not from Plato.' <sup>79</sup>

This is a correct emphasis. Bultmann's interpretation of the Gospel -- that the evangelist demythologises mythological themes<sup>80</sup>-- can be reformulated in our terms: the referential focus, Jesus, is subject to a revisionary description by being presented in a framework of descent-revelation-ascent. This framework stands as a figurative way of characterising Jesus in his relationship to the Father, which the evangelist highlights as the clue to the identity of Jesus. Bultmann's classic summary of the revelation given by Jesus -- that the revealer reveals only that he is the revealer<sup>81</sup>-- needs to be amplified: the revelation is that Jesus is the Son whose relationship with the

Father is inseparable from the whole history of God's dealings with creation and his revelation in history. The affirmation of the Prologue, which is a consonant expression of the Gospel's revelatory theme, interprets God's relationship to Jesus as eternally characteristic of God's whole action ad extra. Logos in the Prologue hypostatically presented as a Wisdom figure, also extends its meaning to cover the whole plan of God, closely related to, if not identical with Col. 1.26, where τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ stands in apposition to τὸ μυστήριον τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν.<sup>82</sup>

John Ashton notes that 'the meditation of the Prologue begins in heaven with the Logos at the side of God; that of the Gospel begins with Jesus. They reach the same point from different ends.'<sup>83</sup> We might also add that the insight which informs both perspectives centres on the inseparability of Jesus from God's action and revelation, both in what temporally precedes the lifetime of Jesus and what occurs during his lifetime. The Prologue and the Gospel, in their use of pre-existence, exemplify the double determination of the predication: the Gospel, centring on Jesus, expresses the belief that the identity of Jesus is illuminated only by the Father's communication to him of all that he has and is, and this evokes in return the corresponding obedience and dedication of Jesus to



the Father. The Prologue presents the obverse of this insight, centring on God, whose whole preceding and continuing action vis-à-vis his creation bears the stamp of his climactic action in Jesus.

There is, in both the Gospel and the Prologue, the figurative use of pre-existence in its temporal connotation, but what is central in both is the relationship between Jesus and the Father which is taken to be determinative of the identity of Jesus (Gospel) and of the identity of God (Prologue). In the Gospel, pre-existence language, with its accompanying structure of descent-return, is a figurative framework which describes what is an event in the experience of Jesus: his relationship to, and communication with, the Father; in the Prologue, there is a consonant and complementary figurative expression of the implication of this relationship for our treatment of the being of God, portraying God's eternal being as marked by the accompanying presence of that which has been revealed in Jesus, his Logos. The rich resonances of Wisdom speculation, bearing connotations of creation, salvation and revelation in God's preceding action,<sup>84</sup> are introduced in order to present the relationship between Jesus and the Father as constitutive of God's entire action towards the world.



At a figurative level, the pre-temporal aspect acts as an imaginative framework within which Jesus is viewed as pre-existent; this is still present in the Johannine Gospel and Prologue. But at the same time, there is also the crystallisation or Aufhebung of the figurative predication in the direction of a statement about the identity of Jesus as eternal Son. This takes place, as we have indicated, within both the theological and the Christological arenas. Later we will consider the necessity of making a formal distinction between these two interrelated discourses if the being of God is not to be dissolved within time or constituted out of the temporal process. The issue will centre on the question of whether it is necessary to posit a referent other than Jesus, the eternal Son, or whether all language about the eternal Son refers to Jesus alone. The difficulty is posed by the Johannine insight into the coinherence of the two realms of discourse, and by the presentation of the double perspective of the Prologue and the Gospel. Later we shall argue that it is necessary within the theological realm to speak of the eternal Son as a referent distinct from Jesus, but our concern at the moment is with the Christological realm, and we would argue that within Christological speech, language of eternal Sonship or pre-existence should be interpreted as a predication, made of the referent Jesus, which stands in a relationship to the referent which can be

illuminated by being viewed as a metaphorical predication. Pannenberg's proposal of the 'indirect' relationship of the eternal Son to Jesus is, if one removes it from his ontological context, indicative of the relationship between a referent and a metaphorical predication, which is exemplified in the relationship of Jesus to the pre-existent Son or Logos. We are dealing with the linguistic procedure which, frequently in the discussion of how Jesus and the pre-existent Son are related, is ignored or remains unexamined as a form of metaphor. The ontological difficulties experienced in Christology frequently relate to semantic confusion, and, in the case of pre-existence language, the confusion which is experienced when the matter is considered as an ontological difficulty may be partially removed by a consideration of the character of the language.

By our proposal, we are locating pre-existence language within the continuum of New Testament metaphorical Christology -- as part of the range of descriptive Christologies, such as Son of David, Son of Man etc. -- which form the basis of the subsequent tradition. What is unique about the pre-existence predication, however, is its capacity to extend the significance of Jesus in conjunction with a corresponding theological revision. However, this theological, as opposed to the Christological development, carries with it the danger

that the Christological use of the language tends to lose its identity as metaphorical speech, centred on Jesus as the referent. As many commentators have shown, the difficulty lies in the positing of two referents, the eternal Son and Jesus, and Patristic Christology shows the dilemma of avoiding the suggestion of two Sons (Nestorianism), on the one hand, and of avoiding a monophysitism which collapses the identity of Jesus, on the other hand. By restoring, within the Christological arena, the metaphorical character of pre-existence language, we suggest that the language can then be used with greater confidence and accuracy.

The question of referents is an elusive one, for a very simple reason: within a metaphor, there is an intention to view a referent differently as something else. What is being redescribed is viewed as the predicate: Jesus is viewed as the pre-existent One. This is part of the fictive, heuristic character of metaphor, to introduce a form of stereoscopic overlapping of two referents, only one of which is, within the intentionality of the metaphor, being redescribed. (There can be, of course, the reverse procedure, in which the connotations of the primary referent are transferred 'backwards', in such a way as to bring about a revision of the predicate. This corresponds to the hermeneutical question of how to

speak of the pre-existent Son within the theological arena. Barth, as we shall see, insists that, hermeneutically, we must not allow the pre-existent Logos asarkos to be viewed other than through the features of the person of Jesus.) We must distinguish the fictive, heuristic status of the pre-existent One within the Christological arena, from the referential status of the eternal Son, who is to be distinguished from Jesus, within the theological arena. We would endorse again Schoonenberg's insistence that 'everything that is said about his (Christ's) divinity in his pre-existence is done in connection with Jesus Christ, and nothing is said outside this connection.<sup>85</sup> However, the slide from the fictive referential treatment of the pre-existent One within the Christological arena to full referential status within the theological arena is easily achieved, and this is part of the difficulty of dealing with metaphorical language and its dynamism.

An additional elusive element concerns, as we have indicated, the oscillation between figurative and conceptual language, which is derived from the tendency of metaphorical statements to issue in non-metaphorical statements, and to move beyond the tension of metaphorical predication towards working with the appropriated designations which, although they begin as metaphors, are to be treated as identifying



designations. We have presented the statement 'Jesus is the eternal Son' as the principal clarificatory sense to be derived from the pre-existence predication, and we have suggested that this is to be developed as an explication of the logic of God's self-revelation. We should now address the question of how this statement is to be characterised: is 'Jesus is the eternal Son' a metaphorical statement? If we answer this in the affirmative, then the conclusion suggests itself that in reality, Jesus is not the eternal Son, but that he can be viewed in this way. This would correspond with Ricoeur's insistence on the presence of negation within the positive affirmation of metaphorical identity. Metaphors work because there is always a distinction between the referent and the predicate: man is not a wolf, and this makes it possible to engage in a metaphorical account of man as a wolf. On similar lines, would it be true to say that if 'Jesus is the eternal Son' is a metaphor, then the unstated implication is that he is not the eternal Son? In which case, is this not destructive of the whole weight of Christian tradition which has affirmed with Hilary of Poitiers, 'Non alius filius hominis, quam qui filius Dei est; neque alius in forma Dei, quam qui in forma servi perfectus homo natus est'?<sup>86</sup> By relating pre-existence language to the workings of metaphorical predication, are we able to secure what has been held to be essential in orthodox Christology, namely, that



'the one and the same' is καὶ ἐκ Μαρίας καὶ ἐκ θεοῦ? The Nicene creed, following the antithetical pattern of Ignatius, predicates of one and the same subject eternal procession from the Father and a birth in time from Mary. 'In the Nicene creed itself it is clear enough that there is "one and the same" subject to whom these sets of predicates refer.\* For this pattern of Christological reflection to be maintained, which asserts that we are speaking about the same referent, both in generation from the Father and in his birth from Mary, it is necessary that the statement 'Jesus is the eternal Son' be taken as an identity statement and not as an association of two referents. Otherwise, we would be countenancing a version of the 'two sons' problem which bedevilled Patristic Christology. †

There is no reason to think that a metaphor cannot function as an identity statement. If metaphor is one of the means by which the linguistic store is enriched through the creation of new epithets and expressions -- the phenomenon of 'collapsed metaphor' has made language a diachronic entity which continuously expands and contracts as words enter and depart from usage -- then what begins life as a metaphor, with all the tension between referent and predicate present in every new metaphor, can be used in a way in which the tension has given way to an identity and interchangeability †

\* A. Grillmeier, Christ in Christian tradition p 453.

between the referent and the predicate. The predicate, in this case 'the eternal Son', can function as a designation or referring expression which identifies a particular referent, in this case, Jesus, without there being the implication that we are dealing with two referents brought together in a particular speech act. Christology possesses the characteristics of what Saussure labelled 'parole', as opposed to 'langue', in that it has the linguistic fluidity to use metaphors in the same way as other aspects of 'parole' use them, namely, as referring expressions and identity statements. We might note Scipioni's interpretation of Nestorius' distinction between various Christological expressions: according to Grillmeier's account, Scipioni reads Nestorius in a way which avoids the suggestion of a referential distinction between 'Logos' and other designations as though different entities were spoken about:

'According to him, Nestorius does not want to make a real distinction between the "Logos" on the one hand and "Son", "Lord", "Christ" on the other. The Antiochene simply gives these words different terminological significances: "Logos" denotes the Son, considered in his divine nature; "Son" stands for the designation of the "person" of the Logos as distinct from that Father. "Christ" is the same person in the status of the incarnation.' 87

This attempt to introduce precision and differentiation among the designations is correct; at the same time, it refuses to countenance the view that a different logical subject is involved in each case. It still leaves, however, as Grillmeier points out, the ontological question of the unity of subject in Christ. This is a difficulty which arises in conjunction with certain ways of speaking about Christ as the eternal Son, in particular when there is a 'unification' pattern which attempts to unite the Logos and the humanity of Jesus. Heidegger's description of language as the house of being has a possible corollary in the ways in which certain linguistic usages evoke certain ontological implications. An alteration in the way of using language of eternal Sonship may not necessarily be confronted with the same ontological problem as Patristic Christology faced; it may, for example, evade the ontological problem which arises in other ways of proceeding, or it may simply admit an inability to come to any satisfactory answer about a question to which previous generations devoted considerable attention.

Our suggestion that 'Jesus' and 'eternal Son' be taken as referring expressions within an identity statement can be given support by an appeal to the Incarnational formula used by Augustine: ipsa assumptione creatur points to the fact that the humanity of Christ has no

hypostatic identity other than in its being the humanity of the Logos. In Rahner's formulation, God 'creates the human reality by the very fact that he assumes it as his own.' <sup>88</sup> The dialectic of the verbs, 'assuming' and 'creating', and the refusal to separate them in their application to the Incarnation, insists that the person of Jesus is the self-manifestation of the Logos within the created order, without the suggestion that there are two logical subjects involved. Rahner's examination of the hypostatic union as an 'original unity'<sup>89</sup> rather than a subsequent unity of two already constituted, and different, hypostases, can be aligned with our comments from a different perspective concerning the unity of reference between the designations 'Jesus' and 'the eternal Son' in Christological speech.

In support of this view, we point to a parallel between our proposal and the structure of the Chalcedonian definition. In metaphorical predication, the referent is described as the predicate, in order to effect a redescription of the referent in the light of the connotations which can be transferred to it from the predicate. The referent does not lose its characteristics, but simultaneously these characteristics are viewed 'through the filter' of the connotations offered by the predicate. It is a heuristic device, moving between the already known



referent and the 'newly known' or disclosed referent which is brought into view. Within the working of metaphorical predication, there is a tension between the referent and the predication which is resolved through construing the senses in which the metaphor 'makes sense', through identifying the ways in which the predication is a meaningful redescription of the referent, and through permitting the 'fictive' quality of the predication to shape our view of the referent.

Similarly, in the Chalcedonian definition, there is a 'deliberate yoking of unlikes', a conjunction of two sets of predicates which are brought together in order that their simultaneous presence should be descriptive of Jesus. In our chapter on metaphor, we spoke of the 'assimilation of words or phrases which are drawn from disparate semantic fields and are juxtaposed in order that the interpreter might be led to a new descriptive vision of some aspect of reality.' The construing of the metaphorical predication comes about by overcoming the distance which exists between the connotations of the referent and the predicate: the initial incongruence gives way to a perceived congruence between the sets of connotations insofar as they can be descriptive of the referent. In other words, it is through the referential focus that the incompatibility between the sets of predicates -- those which belong to the referent already, and those which are introduced in the metaphor -- is overcome.



As we said earlier, 'the new compatibility between the elements of the metaphor, which results from the construing of the metaphor, does not mean that the initial distance between the elements has been abolished: the words still retain their previous sense and reference, but at the level of the whole sentence there is the production of a meaning which we call the metaphorical sense.' If we recall the objections made by Lampe and Knox to the question of the compatibility of statements about Christ's humanity and his pre-existence, then we can suggest that it is precisely the function of metaphor to bring about a resolution of the cognitive dissonance between incompatible predicates. Where two sets of predicates are blocked at the level of mutually exclusive connotations, metaphor can, by organising their conjunction, make it possible for them to co-exist meaningfully. This is not to say that any combination of incompatible predicates can, by force of will, be reconciled, but it is to suggest that the working of metaphorical predication involves precisely such an opposition which, in the process of construing the metaphor, is the condition for semantic innovation and redescription. Part of the process of successfully construing a metaphor lies in so arranging the elements that the connotations of the predication can be the means by which the designated referent is reconsidered within a new perspective.

If we turn to the Chalcedonian definition,<sup>90</sup> we find that the structure inherent in metaphor is maintained. First of all, there is the designation of a referent of whom two sets of predications are made: the referent is pointed to, rather than explained by the phrase, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son'. This recurs later in an expanded form, 'One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only begotten', and by the appropriation of the terms *ἐν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν*, which designate the single referent who is being spoken about.

These phrases designate the one who is to be taken as the logical subject of the predications. The use of the phrase *εἷς καὶ ὁ αὐτός* twice, and the use of *αὐτός* four times in the formula, while they do not explain the ontological principle of unity in the person of Christ, nevertheless affirm that it is the same subject who is the bearer of the double predications which follow. The unity and singularity of the referent is stressed, while there is a strict distinction made between the predicates: the distinction between 'person' and 'nature' is a verbal expedient which locates the distinction at the level of the predications, and not at the level of the reference. Of the one prosopon or hypostasis, an antithetical set of predications are to be made at the level of physis: of the referent, two sets of predications are to be made:

Perfect in Godhead	Perfect in manhood
Truly God	Truly man
homoousios with	homoousios with us
the Father	(sin excepted)
begotten of the Father	born of Mary

The definition lays down rules for the use of these predications: they are to be made in a way which does not imply that the connotations of one set infringe on the connotations of the other set (ἁσυχουτως). We might paraphrase the linguistic rule in the following terms: 'what is said of Jesus in his relationship to the Father must not interfere in any way with what we say about him in his relationship to us, and vice versa.' The connotations associated with his divinity must not be thought to diminish in any way the full predication of human reality to Jesus (sin alone excepted), nor must we speak of the humanity of Christ in a way which undermines what we say about him in his eternal relationship to the Father.

The rejection of Monophysitism through this controlling negative principle has, as its linguistic correlate, the rejection of the mingling of the connotations of divine and human predicates, as though our language about Christ could avoid maintaining both affirmations in their fullness. The distinction, and we might say, tension, between the two sets of predicates, is not to

be diminished, since at an ontological level, this would imply a naturalistic fusion of natures,<sup>91</sup> with profound implications, both for our treatment of God's transcendence and for our evaluation of the soteriological significance of the humanity of Christ. The Apollinarian fusion of the distinction corresponds to a blending together of divinity and humanity as though they are distinct referents which required a mutual modification of the properties of each in order to constitute the person of Jesus. This is rejected by Chalcedon through its referential/predicative structure which maintains the distinction at the level of predicates, rather than referents.

The second controlling principle is given with the word ἀδιαίρετως : this affirms that the predications are not to be taken as implying two referents. The double set is jointly descriptive of the one person Jesus. We have insisted that the Christological use of 'eternal Son' is a referring designation applied to Jesus, and not to a hypostasis who is taken to be distinct from him. We might paraphrase the meaning of ἀδιαίρετως in the following terms: 'language about the divinity of Christ is not to be taken as referring to anything other than the person of Jesus; nor is language about his humanity to be taken as dealing with anything other than the divine person Jesus.' The connotations of the double predications -- in the terms of the definition,



'the properties of each nature' -- are to be maintained and applied fully to Jesus as descriptive of his identity. They are to be taken as 'concurring' in their application to the 'one person and hypostasis, one and the same Son and Only begotten, the divine Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ.'

The mono/dyo/thelite controversy which arose out of the Chalcedonian definition's insistence on the maintenance of the two natures in the one person of Christ exemplifies the danger of allowing the distinction between the natures to threaten the unity of the person of Christ. The logic of the Chalcedonian definition is that it is necessary to say, along with Leo the Great, 'agit enim utraque forma cum alterius communione quod proprium est,' (DS 294) and that it is necessary to concur with the Lateran Synod of 659 and Constantinople (680-1) in positing in Christ two wills and two operations. However, with our proposal that the distinction of the natures is not a distinction between distinct referents, but rather a distinction of predicates which must both be made about Jesus, the controversy can be avoided in the terms in which it was originally posed. Two wills were taken to imply two subjects, and one will was taken to vitiate the Chalcedonian distinction of natures. But if the distinction is taken to be a distinction of necessary and complementary predicates, then the proposal can be made that the orientation of



Jesus to the Father is to be described as both the orientation of the human person who stands at a created distance from God and as the orientation of the Son to the Father. The human self-consciousness of Jesus is not the double of the divine self-consciousness of the Logos, overlapping or tangentially related to a different divine relationship, but rather the human relationship of Jesus to the Father is to be taken as the expression of the Son's relationship to the Father within the divine being, now expressed in the economy. *Wiederkehr* corrects the inherent tendency of the terms of the discussion to focus attention on how the human nature relates to the divine nature: like Pannenberg, he insists that it is the relationship between Jesus and the Father which is the referential focus of the matter:

'Il ne s'agit donc pas de se demander comment connaissance et volonté humaines et divines se répartissent entre la nature humaine de Jésus et la nature divine du Fils, se distinguent, se relient, s'intègrent et se compenètrent, mais bien plutôt comment les actes tout entiers filiaux du Christ, sa connaissance et son vouloir, se situent par rapport à la connaissance et au vouloir originels du Père. C'est seulement à l'intérieur de cette perspective relationnelle et trinitaire que se pose ensuite la question de la distinction des natures et de leurs modes d'agir.' 92

We want to point to the continuity which exists between the figurative presentation of Jesus as pre-existent, the conceptual clarification of this metaphor expressed in the phrase 'Jesus is the eternal Son', and the structure of the Chalcedonian definition. In all three instances, there is a development of a structure which has its roots in the form of a metaphorical predication. We presented the pre-existence predication as metaphorical, in that it offers a descriptive framework within which the person of Jesus is viewed metaphorically and figuratively as the pre-existent One. There is a single referent, the person of Jesus, and a predication which stands in a certain tension with the attributes of Jesus as a particular temporal existent, because it offers a supra-temporal perspective. This requires a determination of the senses in which the predication is to be taken, and we have presented 'Jesus, is the eternal Son' as the conceptual clarification which issues from the figurative language of pre-existence; in this form of expression, the temporal element has given way to a concentration on the identity of Jesus as the Son who is inseparable from God in his act of self-revelation. Again, in this instance, there is only one referent, and the phrase 'eternal Son' is a metaphorical referring expression which designates Jesus. We insisted, through our formal distinction between Christology and theology, that language of

eternal Sonship is a qualification of the person of Jesus, which arises out of a consideration of what is implied in a revelatory model of God's action. We concurred with Pannenberg in his insistence that, within Christology, 'eternal Son' does not designate a distinct hypostasis other than Jesus.

Finally, we indicated that the Chalcedonian definition can be approached in a way which relates its linguistic procedures to the same structure of metaphorical predication. In our view, the definition is most successfully reinterpreted as providing the rules for Christological speech, for ensuring that our language about Jesus is both accurate and adequate. We showed that the referential focus of the pattern is, again, Jesus, and that a range of referring descriptions, including 'Son and Only-begotten, the divine Logos', are used to affirm the unity of the one referent. A double set of predications is made of this referent, covering his divinity and humanity, which are treated of, and distinguished, within the category of predications. Guidance is provided by means of the four adverbial insertions -- 'without confusion, without change, without division, without separation' -- which are intended to effect a conjunction between the predications, at the same time as they insist that the predications must not be interpreted in a way which damages the integrity of each set. This has its roots

in the form of metaphorical predication in which the known characteristics of the referent are not impaired by the 'new' characteristics which result from the construing of the referent as the predicate. The integrity of both is maintained, while they are brought together as descriptive of the referent.

We should also note that the Chalcedonian definition has the character of an explication of the senses which are derived, ultimately, from the figurative language of pre-existence, mediated by the conceptual Aufhebung which we have identified as 'Jesus is the eternal Son.' Pre-existence language, in itself, leaves open the question of what form of identity is to be attributed to Jesus: in itself, the predication is capable of being interpreted as, for example, attributing an angelic identity to Jesus, or an Arian identity as the highest member of the set of created reality. The Chalcedonian definition, while clarifying this point, provides direction for the ways in which this predication is to be made of Jesus, in conjunction with the affirmation of statements about the reality of his human existence.

Our quest, then, for an interpretative structure which would permit the affirmation of pre-existence, in conjunction with the affirmation of the full humanity of Christ, has moved from the proposal that



pre-existence language be taken as a metaphorical predication which redescribes Jesus, to an analysis of the linguistic controls proffered by Chalcedon. We detected a continuity of structure between the figurative language and the conceptual controls of the Chalcedonian definition, which suggests that our proposal about the metaphorical character of pre-existence language may illuminate the wider category of Christological language. At the same time, we suggest that by highlighting the metaphorical character of pre-existence language, a number of the difficulties and impasses experienced in Christology can perhaps be avoided.



Karl Barth's Treatment of the  
Pre-existence of the Man Jesus

Barth's treatment of the pre-existence of the man Jesus is a major theme in the Church Dogmatics, clearly expressed, but frustratingly elusive nevertheless. There is no doubt about what Barth says -- indeed he says it several times in different sections of the work. In this respect, the Church Dogmatics stand comparison with Ezra Pound's Cantos, with their repetitions, internal references and modulations of major themes. One may push the comparison further and suggest that, in the minds of many readers, the theme of the pre-existence of the man Jesus is as resistant to interpretation as the Chinese ideograms which leap out from the pages of the Cantos: what are we to make of these squiggles? There is no doubt about the seriousness of Barth's statements on this topic: one cannot say that they are instances where the preacher has escaped from the theologian's leash. His statements about the pre-existence of the man Jesus are central to the architectonic quality of the Church Dogmatics, integral to its central purposes and concerns: it is a theme which integrates his doctrine of God, his Christology and his treatment of the soteriological importance of the Election.

Yet, although his statements on this topic are clearly expressed, there is considerable difficulty about how they are to be understood. No less an authority than Eberhard Jüngel admits the difficulty of speaking of

the temporal existent, Jesus, in these terms. It is significant that he himself, as we shall see, resorts to an explanation in terms of anhypostasis and enhypostasis which Barth himself does not use.<sup>1</sup> This fact in itself encourages us to think that, if these statements are to be accurately understood, we shall have to go beyond Barth's own explanations and engage in a prior investigation into the character of these statements. Barth himself does not provide guidance on this matter, and none of his commentators address<sup>s</sup> themselves to the question, with the result that often discussion centres on the validity or invalidity of speaking in this way without a consideration of the nature of this form of predication. We shall propose that they may fruitfully be illuminated as a form of metaphorical statement.

Because of the mutually reinforcing quality of the sections of the Church Dogmatics, and the spiralling character of Barth's argumentation, it will be necessary at times to cast our net into deep waters, in order to bring to light the dynamism which prompts Barth's statements. A failure to do this would lead only to the bemusement expressed, for example, by A.T. Hanson who dismisses Barth's treatment of pre-existence with a wave of the hand:

'...we should note that Karl Barth's doctrine of pre-existence assumes not just the pre-existence of the divine Word, but of the Word existing in some (non-incarnate) mode as man and as therefore bearing the name Jesus Christ long before the historical character of Jesus of Nazareth appeared on the scene. This seems to me to have no necessary warrant in Scripture, and to add an unnecessary and incredible element to the doctrine of the Incarnation.'<sup>2</sup>

Barth deserves to be considered with more subtlety than this, and clearly Hanson has not addressed himself to the contexts in which Barth treats of the pre-existence of Jesus. He fails to point out that Barth's formal exposition of his Chalcedonian Christology is worked out without the use of this theme, and that the notion of the pre-existence of the man Jesus occurs in contexts where the focus of interest lies in soteriology and the Election, the hermeneutics of Logos-statements, and the time-eternity relationship. It is in the interest of developing these themes that this particular Christological notion is deployed. Consequently, attention must be paid to the role pre-existence statements are intended to play in their contexts if Barth's serious intentions are to be respected.

Barth's teaching about the Election contains his most extensive treatment of the pre-existence of Jesus. He regarded himself as responsible for a major



re-statement of the doctrine of the Election, as the first dogmatician to place the Election within the context of the doctrine of God. Calvin himself thought that such a location would be inopportune, and instead dealt with it in Book III of the Institutes in his exposition of the believer's appropriation of the grace of Christ.

The reasons for Barth's reinterpretation of the doctrine are well known: if all that we know about God is given in Jesus, then it is impossible that the Election should be considered outside the doctrine of God derived from his revelation in Jesus. Barth wants to avoid the implication that there was a 'prior' decree about salvation which 'preceded' the grace given in Jesus, and he wants to counter the suggestion that there was a decretum absolutum which could be invoked independently of God's saving action in Jesus. The Christological concentration required of all systematic theology leads to a revision of the Calvinist position: Barth insists that the doctrine of the Election be grounded in the revelation given in Jesus, and, as a further consequence, that it be located in the act by which God determines his being. According to Barth's interpretation, the soteriological character of the Election requires that it be placed in the free act of God by which he determines to be 'God-for-us', and nowhere else. The original and uniquely characteristic



act of God is to relate to that which is other than himself -- hence, every other aspect of God's action, the nexus of creation/ covenant/ redemption/ Election, has its source in the free act by which God expresses his being in love and freedom:

'...in the primal and basic decision in which He wills to be and actually is God, in the mystery of what takes place from and to all eternity within Himself, within His triune being, God is none other than the One who in His Son or Word elects Himself, and in and with Himself elects His people. In so far as God not only is love, but loves, in the act of love which determines His whole being God elects. And in so far as this act of love is an election, it is at the same time and as such the act of His freedom.' (CD II/2, p.76.)

John Thompson expresses it in these terms: 'It is a relationship in which God in activating himself ad extra determines and defines himself ad intra.'<sup>3</sup> Provided this is not understood as implying the succession of two separate 'events' in which the relationship ad extra leads to a self-determination ad intra, and provided this is seen more as a co-determinative relationship, this may be accepted. Colin Gunton, in a useful image, describes it as 'a single movement with two aspects, both "inside" the being of God and "outside", and they belong inseparably together.'<sup>4</sup> Thus the ground of what God does in his revelation and redemption is established in the act by

which God determines to be himself, the God of grace revealed in Jesus: 'God's Urentscheidng, his primary determination, is also the Urgeschichte, the primary history, of the act of grace.'<sup>5</sup> In Jenson's lucid formulation, 'the "decree of predestination" made in God about us is in fact identical with the decision in which God chooses to be God. What God chooses is to be God as Jesus Christ.'<sup>6</sup>

While there is a negative aspect here -- the denial of the decretum absolutum as an independent principle separable from God's revelation in Jesus -- the positive development and integration of the Election with the doctrine of God exhibits characteristically Barthian concerns: the correspondence of God's revealed being with what he is in himself; the impossibility of articulating a soteriology derived from a foundation other than that established by the implications of God's self-revelation in Jesus; the resistance to a consideration of the relationship of God and humanity which does not proceed from the concrete particularity of God's self-interpretation in Jesus:

'...before all created reality, before all being and becoming in time, before time itself, in the pre-temporal eternity of God, the eternal divine decision as such has as its object and content the existence of this one created being, the man Jesus of Nazareth, and the work of this man in

His life and death....In this function this man is the object of the eternal divine decision and foreordination. Jesus Christ, then, is not merely one of the elect but the elect of God....His election is the original and all-inclusive election.' (CD II/2, p.116-7.)

This election is 'the beginning of all the ways and works of God' (CD II/2, p.3), the foundational act in which God decides that he will be a God who relates, in freedom and love, to that which is other than himself:

'The Subject of this decision is the Triune God -- the Son of God no less than the Father and the Holy Spirit. And the specific object of it is the Son of God in His determination as the Son of Man, the pre-existing God-man, Jesus Christ, who is as such the eternal basis of the whole divine election.' (CD II/2, p.110.) 7

Not only is Jesus the pre-existing God-man insofar as he is the object of this election; he is also involved as the subject of the election -- he is 'the electing God' (CD II/2, p.103). As Jüngel points out, this is required by the perichoresis of God's three modes of being, in order to avoid suggestions of inferiority or tritheism.<sup>8</sup> God, in his triune being, determines himself to be in Jesus both the electing God and the elected man, both the subject and the object of the election:



'The choice or election of God is basically and properly God's decision as that described in Jn. 1.1-2 the Word which is the same and is called Jesus, should really be in the beginning with Himself, like Himself, one with Himself in His deity .... This choice was in the beginning. As the subject and object of this choice, Jesus Christ was at the beginning. He was not at the beginning of God, God indeed has no beginning. But He was at the beginning of all things, at the beginning of God's dealings with the reality which is distinct from Himself. Jesus Christ was the choice or election of God in respect of this reality.' (CD II/2, pp.102-3.)

Barth's programmatic insistence on Jesus being both the subject and the object of the election leads him to exclude certain ways in which this pre-existence is to be understood: for example, it cannot be treated within the general rubric of God's foreknowledge of all created reality. He rejects Aquinas' proposal that 'praedestinatio attribuat<sup>ur</sup> personae Christi non quidem secundum se vel secundum quod subsistit in divina natura, sed secundum quod subsistit in humana natura.'<sup>9</sup> The limitation of this view is that it cannot establish 'that the Son, too, is an active Subject of the aeterna Dei praedestinatio as Son of Man, that He is Himself the electing God ... that only in this way and for this reason is He the Son of Man establishing and fulfilling the will of God in the world' (CD II/2, p.107). If we restrict ourselves to Aquinas' proposal, 'then we have knowledge only of the election of the man Jesus as such, and not of the election and personal

electing of the Son of God which precedes this election. And once again we make the election of grace a divine mystery detached from the person of Jesus Christ' (ibid.). Barth insists that, although there is a way in which Jesus can be considered within God's foreknowledge, this must be supplemented by his unique status as the one in whom all creation and redemption takes place. The criterion is one of adequacy:

'Jesus Christ was in the beginning with God. He was so not merely in the sense that in view of God's eternal knowing and willing all things may be said to have been in the beginning with God, in His plan and decree. For these are two separate things: the Son of God in His oneness with the Son of Man, as foreordained from all eternity; and the universe which was created, and universal history which was willed for the sake of this oneness, in their communion with God, as foreordained from all eternity. On the one hand, there is the Word of God by which all things were made, and, on the other, the things fashioned by that Word.....We can and must say that Jesus Christ was in the beginning with God in the sense that all creation and its history was in God's plan and decree with God. But He was so not merely in that way. He was also in the beginning with God as "the first-born of every creature" (Col. 1.15), Himself the plan and decree of God, Himself the divine decision with respect to all creation and its history whose content is already determined.' (CD II/2, p.104.)

Just as Barth rejected the Thomist view of the inclusion of Christ's humanity within God's foreknowledge, because it could not establish the



positive role of Jesus as the electing God, so here he refuses to place it within the sphere of creation and the history of salvation, because the logic of God's revelation requires that Jesus be presented as the one in whom and for whom creation takes place. Therefore, Jesus must stand 'on the side of God' in relation to all created reality: he is the one through whom God wills to give himself to that which is other than himself. The requirement that our statements about Jesus be adequate expressions of this truth impels Barth to insist that

'the true humanity of Jesus Christ, as the humanity of the Son, was and is and will be the primary content of God's election of grace, i.e., of the divine decision and action which are not preceded by any higher, apart from the trinitarian, happening of the life of God, but which all other divine decisions and actions follow, and to which they are subordinated.' (CD IV/2, p.31; punctuation emended, and my emphasis.)

This is a clear statement of the logical form of Barth's argument concerning the Election. He begins with the datum established in God's self-revelation in Jesus, that Jesus is the full expression of God's being, and that therefore God's relationship to the whole of created reality -- in creation and salvation -- cannot be treated outside the initial determinative act in which he elects to be God-for-us. It is a form

of argumentation which is analogous to the Kantian transcendental deduction in which the conditions of possibility for a particular event or phenomenon are investigated. Barth moves from his starting-point -- God's self-revelation and self-interpretation in Jesus -- to a consideration of 'what must be the case?' if this has happened. As we have seen, the impetus of his argument leads him to reject descriptions or assessments of Jesus which do not encompass what must be said about him, if he is to occupy the central position in God's dealings with all reality other than himself; on the positive side, Barth is equally impelled to the use of assessments which express the priority of Jesus. His use of pre-existence language is justified, therefore, by its ability to delineate and characterise the unique and distinct role of the humanity of Jesus as the origin, focus and goal of God's whole action ad extra.

Jüngel struggles to express the logic of Barth's argument:

'But revelation is just that historical event in which God's being shows itself as a being which is not only able to bear historical predicates, but demands them! .... Barth's understanding of revelation as God's self-interpretation is the systematic attempt to think of God's being-in-itself as event in such a way that God's being is capable of possessing historical predicates, although these as such are not capable of predicating the being of God. In

that God in revelation interprets himself, God's being is reiterated with the help of historical predicates.' 10

Jüngel's use of the word 'predicates' is not easy to understand. I take him to mean that God's being is capable of being expressed fully in the historical person Jesus, and in that sense the 'subject', God, can properly be called the subject of the action constituting the person of Jesus. Since Jesus is 'historical', and is a 'temporal existent', one has to speak of God 'interpreting' or 'reiterating' himself in a historical mode. God, therefore, since he has expressed himself historically, must be a being who is capable of doing this, and one is led to consider, as Jüngel does with an unrivalled opacity, the conditions of the being of God which make this possible. Then the way is open for an examination of God's being as eminent historicity. A similar pattern of transcendental deduction can be conducted with regard to the self-relatedness of God's being, which is the condition for God's action in Jesus. In this way, the doctrine of the Trinity is the answer to the question 'Who is God?', which derives from his self-revelation in Jesus. We will not rehearse the whole Barthian scheme at this point, but what should be noted is the similarity of the pattern of argumentation Barth uses to work out the transcendental deduction of Trinitarian doctrine, with that which he uses to work out the



pre-existence of the man Jesus. It is as though the argument is reverse, or perhaps more accurately, the completion of the hermeneutical circle is achieved. If, in the articulation of Trinitarian doctrine, Barth works from the historicity of God's action in Jesus to an examination of the conditions which must obtain in the being of God to make this possible, here, in his articulation of the theme of the pre-existence of Jesus, he moves in the other direction: if Jesus is the original and central focus of God's relationship to all other reality which has time as the form of its existence, then Jesus must be related to God's eternity in a way which is not only different from other created reality, but actually makes them possible at all. If Barth's Trinitarian doctrine is a redescription of God in the light of his historical self-expression, then his pre-existence doctrine is a redescription of Jesus in the light of what has been established about God's relationship to time. If God elects to be himself the electing God and the elected man, in the determinative act of his being, and if it is as Jesus that he is the electing God and the elected man, then Jesus must be described in terms which denote this status: he must stand at the beginning of God's relationship to everything else; he must be the initial, central and complete focus of God's action ad extra.



If I may refer to an iconographical and mystical example, to illustrate what Barth is doing with his application of pre-existence language to the man Jesus: the German 12th century mystic, Hildegard of Bingen, describes her vision of the Trinity in her book Scivias, illustrated by an artist who painted her vision under her direction. It is a remarkably original image, in which she sees a bright circular light which represents the Father; there is a smaller circular shape, a fiery red flame, which moves in and out of the circular light, interpenetrating it (perichoretically), representing the Spirit. Within this movement -- it is a kinetic vision -- appears a human figure, the Son:

'Next I saw an exceedingly bright light and in it a human form which was glowing through and through with the soft red from a sparkling flame. The bright light streamed through the sparkling flame, and the sparkling flame through the bright light. And both suffused the human form, coloured in sapphire-blue -- all three as one light, being of one power and might.' 11

The brief commentary provided by Adelgundis Fuhrkotter explains:

'The white light in an enclosed circle is a symbol of God the Father, the unoriginated Origin. The human form flooded in this light is the image of the Son, procreated in the eternal Today within the bosom of the Father; that is

why the circle above the head of the human form is not closed. The Son became man within time, born of the Virgin Mary, who was overshadowed by the power of the Holy Spirit, represented by the fiery red circle. All three are one light, one single God.<sup>12</sup>

Out of the ineffability of God's own being comes God's expression of himself, the human person of Jesus proceeding directly from within the perichoresis of the Trinitarian life: he already bears the human features of Jesus of Nazareth as he emerges from the Trinity. God's complete expression of his being is an historical person. Jenson's summary of Barth's position, to which we shall return later for further comment, is admirably suited to Hildegard's vision: 'The historical event of Jesus' existence is the eternal event of the life of God.'<sup>13</sup> There is no other event, nothing prior, because the humanity of Jesus is the original and complete expression of the divine life, the beginning of all the ways and works of God.

The peculiarly Protestant genre of 'table talk' is fruitful in revealing another important aspect of this matter. Barth is recorded as saying, in answer to the question 'Does the Incarnation make a change in the Trinity?':

'No, the Incarnation makes no change in the Trinity. In the eternal decree of God, Christ is God and man. Do not ever think of the second Person of the

Trinity as only Logos. That is the mistake of Emil Brunner. There is no Logos asarkos but only ensarkos. Brunner thinks of an Logos asarkos and I think this is the reason for his natural theology. The Logos becomes an abstract principle. Since there is only and always a Logos ensarkos, there is no change in the Trinity, as if a fourth member comes in after the Incarnation.' <sup>14</sup>

Barth elsewhere admits the value of a Logos asarkos only in a very limited and functional context -- 'when we have to understand the revelation and dealings of God in the light of their free basis in the inner being and essence of God' (CD IV/1, p.52). But the limitation of the concept is that it does not designate the way in which God has revealed himself in Jesus: it does not derive from the particularity and character of God's self-revelation, and can therefore be used in an agnostic way to speak of God apart from the fullness of his own self-interpretation:

'...it is pointless, as it is impermissible, to return to the inner being and essence of God and especially to the second Person of the Trinity as such, in such a way that we ascribe to this person another form than that which God Himself has given in willing to reveal himself and to act outwards... We must not...imagine a "Logos in itself" which does not have this content and form, which is the eternal Word of God without this form and content. We could only imagine such a Logos. Like Godhead abstracted from its revelation and acts, it would necessarily be an empty concept which we would then, of course, feel obliged to fill with all kinds of contents of our own arbitrary



invention. Under the title of a λόγος ἄσαρκος we pay homage to a Deus absconditus and therefore to some image of God which we have made for ourselves.' (ibid.)

Barth's concern here is hermeneutical: how to ensure that our language about the Logos is correct. It can only be correct if we complete the circle and return to the Trinity with an understanding of the character of the Logos, derived from Jesus and from nowhere else, since Jesus is the only, and complete, expression of the being of the Father. The Logos cannot be considered in terms other than those manifest in the person of Jesus -- otherwise, we do not respect the correspondence of God's revelation with God's being in itself. Again, the familiar pattern of argument emerges as a factor motivating Barth's assumption of pre-existence language: if God has revealed himself fully in the person of Jesus, then the self-differentiation within the being of God enables us to bestow the characteristics of Jesus onto our account of the eternal Word. This is not a matter of 'projection', as Lampe suggests, but a matter of establishing the appropriate hermeneutical procedure for ensuring that we speak about the God who has expressed himself in the existence of Jesus. In Jüngel's account, the logic is as follows:



'If that primal history is real history between God and man, then the Son of God cannot be thought of in his history without the man Jesus, and the eternal Word (  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  ) cannot be thought of as the Word without flesh (  $\acute{\alpha}\sigma\alpha\rho\kappa\omicron\varsigma$  ). If God in this history is already with man, then this man on his part must already be with God.' 15

The structure of this argument is given exegetical support in Barth's interpretation of the Johannine Prologue: it is a notorious crux interpretum to establish at what point in the Prologue Jesus is spoken about. Barth cuts through the debate with the assertion that  $\text{o}\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omicron\varsigma$  of Jn. 1.2 refers to Jesus. He is emphatic that the designation 'logos' cannot be taken in a way which breaks or loosens its link to the referent Jesus. His discussion of  $\text{o}\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omicron\varsigma$   $\eta\acute{\nu}$   $\epsilon\nu$   $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\acute{\eta}$   $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$   $\tau\acute{o}\nu$   $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is as follows:

'And this reference in v.2 shows us that v.1 is meant as the marking off or reservation of a place, for it points to that which fills the place indicated by the concept Logos. The statement tells us, then, that "the same", the One who no more needs to be made known as a person than the One described as  $\delta$   $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ , the One whom we all know because He has come forth to all of us, "the same" was in the beginning with God, and "the same" was Jesus.... V.2 is, then, a part of the third assertion of v.1, but it is not a repetition of it. What v.2 does tell us, with backward reference to v.1, is that "the same", Jesus, is the Word which partakes of the divine essence. What it tells us is that "the same", Jesus, was in the beginning because as this same divine Word He belongs legitimately to God.' (CD II/2, p.98.)

The statement in v.2 is taken as answering the two questions, 'Who was in the beginning with God, sharing his divine nature?' and 'Is it true that there was anyone in the beginning with God, sharing the divine essence?' (ibid.), and the answer to both questions is unmistakably <sup>l</sup>Jesus. The Logos in the opening verses of the Prologue is compared by Barth to the unknown factor 'x' in an equation, which is identified only when the equation has been solved (ibid., p.97). The Logos is identified only by our taking the rest of the Prologue, and indeed the rest of the testimony of the Gospel with its assertions of the pre-existence of Jesus, as the means of identifying Jesus as the only interpretative key to the equation. 'He is the beginning of God before which there is no other beginning apart from that of God within himself....He, Jesus Christ, is the free grace of God as not content simply to remain identical with the inward and eternal being of God, but operating ad extra in the ways and works of God (CD II/2, pp.94-5).

Barth clearly interprets the Prologue through the prism of the Chalcedonian definition: the insistence on 'the same' echoes its central referential role in Chalcedon: '...the Same perfect in Godhead, the Same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the Same (consisting) of a rational soul and a body; homoousios with the Father as to his Godhead, and the Same homoousios with

us as to his manhood.<sup>16</sup> In chapter 2, we showed that the Chalcedonian formula can be analysed as a regulative guide for Christological language. Its referent is Jesus, 'our Lord Jesus Christ...one and the same Son and Only-begotten, the divine Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ.' To this referent two sets of predicates are to be applied, the first describing his Godhead, the second describing his humanity. The double predication must be made in ways which avoid the suggestion that the application of one set interferes with the application of the other set. The distinction between predicates is made at the same time as it is affirmed that there is only one referent of these predications. The definition thus establishes a controlling linguistic usage to be used when speaking about Jesus.

Barth's interpretation of the Prologue, on the other hand, is concerned with the establishment of rules for speaking about the Logos. We saw his concern to avoid the importation of notions about the Logos which do not derive from the only, and full, expression of the identity of the Logos, namely the person of Jesus. His concern is to avoid the autonomy of the Logos image, and to restrict the extent to which it becomes detached from Christological roots. It is strange to find Barth being accused by Pannenberg of a restoration of Logos Christology<sup>17</sup>— since he is emphatic that the only valid way of controlling this elusive concept is by letting



one's interpretation of the Logos be guided by the historical person of Jesus, and indeed, by treating the Logos in its 'pre-incarnate' state as 'christic'. God is as he has revealed himself, and therefore his revelation in Jesus requires that we speak about the Logos with predicates which bear the mark of Jesus, and no one else. If one of the hermeneutical concerns of Chalcedon was to establish how to speak of Jesus in terms of the Logos, Barth's concern here is how to speak of the Logos in terms of Jesus. It is the completion of the circle, consistently worked out, which is established by Barth's starting point in the character of revelation.

We are thus given a double hermeneutic, in which the person of Jesus must be described as the Logos, and the person of the Logos must be described as Jesus. Jesus, the referent, must be described with predicates which speak of him as pre-existent -- otherwise his status as electing God and elected man cannot be established -- and, as a consequence of this, whenever the eternal Word is the referent, he must be described with predicates derived from the human person Jesus. Both parts of the hermeneutical procedure create the conditions for the other part to be possible and accurate, through the creation of a circle of mutual interpretation. The conditions for any appropriate speech about Jesus and the Logos depend upon allowing



this circle to operate as an active principle in Christological discourse: being able to speak appropriately about Jesus depends upon starting from the principle that God has interpreted himself for us in the person of Jesus, and, as the second step in the procedure, being able to speak appropriately about the Logos depends upon working with the 'christic' character of his revelation as the interpretative key to the Logos 'in himself'. This is a method of doing theology and Christology which refuses to separate them, and which suggests that the purported distinction of 'Christology from above' and 'Christology from below' is misconceived: Christology must be done theologically, and theology must be done Christologically.

With this analysis, we have begun to answer the question about why Barth feels the need to go beyond the Chalcedonian Christology of an Alexandrian cast,<sup>18</sup> which he expounds in the Christological section of CD I/1, and develop the theme of the pre-existence of the man Jesus. The concerns which prompt this are soteriological and hermeneutical: how to establish the status of Jesus as electing God and elected man, and how to speak of the Logos. His treatment of the pre-existence of the man Jesus must be seen against this background. To return to the vision of the Trinity which Hildegard describes: Barth's picture of

the relationship of the humanity of Jesus to the intra-Trinitarian life is remarkably similar to this image. Out of the perichoretic life of the Trinity emerges first of all the person of Jesus, at the beginning of all God's dealings with created reality, a human person who is the fullness of God's self-giving, the first and complete point of outreach to the world which is made through him and for him.

To complete our examination of Barth's use of pre-existence language, we shall turn to his treatment of the relationship of time and eternity. One of the difficulties in reading Barth is that one readily assumes that, when he talks about time and eternity, he should be taken as meaning the same things as we might mean! In fact, the Barthian revolution involves re-casting the ways in which we use these terms in theological discourse, if theology is to maintain the method appropriate to its object. The process of 'nachdenken', characteristic of the Barthian way of proceeding, involves allowing our use of terms to be controlled by the act of God's self-revelation in Jesus, moving from the concrete act of Jesus' existence to the implications of this on our language about time and eternity. We saw an instance of this in his treatment of the Logos, where he places very strict controls on the centripetal tendencies of this designation. In a similar way, Barth rejects a

consideration of time and eternity which is based on generalised notions originating outside the circulum veritatis of God's self-revelation:

'There has been a failure to see that in answering this question we cannot start with the general phenomenon of time, or, as it has been called, history. We cannot assume that we know its normal structure on the basis of comparative observation, and then go on to ask whether and how far the phenomenon of revelation discloses itself, perhaps, to the said comparative observation at a specific point.' (CD I/2, p.56.)

Instead, Barth develops a view of time and eternity which derives from the implication of God's act in being Deus praesens et pro nobis in Jesus. Consequently, time and eternity must be construed in a way which respects this, and which enables us to speak about time and eternity consistently with this datum of revelation. His consideration of time and eternity begins from the established fact that they are related: we deduce this from the Incarnation, from the logic of God's self-revelation. According to the cardinal principle of Barthian hermeneutics, if God has revealed himself within the temporal sphere in the person of Jesus, then this temporal event must be made possible by qualities of God's being which 'permit' such a self-expression in time. The task, then, for Barth is to work out an understanding of time and eternity which can do justice to a theology with this starting point.



One can, of course object to the starting point which he chooses, but Barth's consistency on this issue of theological method has to be taken seriously if his views on, and use of, pre-existence language are to be properly understood -- otherwise they lend themselves to misunderstanding from critics who see here only an idiosyncratic, ruminative confusion. One cannot presume that one knows what Barth means by 'pre-existence' unless one considers the relationship of this language to his way of doing theology, any more than one can presume the same of his use of 'time' and 'eternity' without considering the revision of these terms which he offers. It is as though Barth is saying, 'If you want to know how to speak of time and eternity in a theology which is a consistently Christian theology, then you will be forced to speak in these terms and with this understanding of 'time and eternity'. Otherwise you will not be sure that your views of time and eternity are shaped by the fact of God's revelation, and you will most likely be importing into your use of these terms various notions which most properly belong outside the limits of valid Christian speech.'

How does Barth go about re-shaping our use of time and eternity in the light of Jesus? We have already pointed to the Christological focus which he works with, and to his starting point, God's revelation, from



which he deduces that they are related. We can be more specific and say that the heart of his teaching about the hermeneutics of time and eternity is in his treatment of the Resurrection. It is from his interpretation of the period of the 40 days between Easter and the Ascension that the core of his interpretation of the time-eternity axis develops. One can say with some justification that Barth's understanding of eternity arises from the quality of this period, from the implications of the open manifestation of Jesus which is given in the Resurrection appearances, and from the faith of the disciples which was generated through these events. It is part of Barth's method to move from the implications of the revelatory event of Jesus to a consideration of what 'there is in God' which must be spoken about as a consequence of the events of the life of Jesus. His rejection of the generalised considerations of the relationship of time and eternity is accompanied by a corresponding articulation of a theo-logy which is shaped by the character of God's action in time: if God has been fully present in our time, then that instance of his presence requires that certain descriptions be made of what we can call 'God's time' in order to express the unique quality which obtains since this has happened (since is used in a causal, not temporal sense). From the descriptions of the time 'assumed' by God in the event of Jesus there arise

implications for our language about God: our account of the quality of his life -- eternity -- is validated and required by the character of his revelation in time: this is a familiar Barthian move. And so one must also say that the account of God's eternity is made possible by the account of the particular instance when God was fully present in our temporal existence, namely in the person of Jesus who, in his risen manifestation, appears to the disciples 'in the mode of God' (CD III/2, p.448). In the resurrection appearances, there takes place the 'total, final, irrevocable and eternal manifestation of God Himself' (op.cit., p.449).

This manifestation must be treated as historical, as taking place in time -- hence, for Barth, the Bultmannian reduction of the resurrection to a parthenogenesis of faith, uncaused by events in time, must be rejected (op.cit., pp.442-7). But it is not simply a question of a confrontation between Barth and Bultmann about the 'literalness' or 'historicity' of the resurrection: Barth's affirmation of a 'real and therefore physical resurrection' is accompanied by an attempt to characterise the resurrection and the subsequent appearances as 'genuine history in its own particular time' (op.cit., p.447, my emphasis). The question, of course, concerns the quality of this time, 'the time in which God Himself was this man, and

therefore had time, a life-time' (op.cit., p.455), the time 'of the appearance and presence of God' who 'taking flesh of our flesh, also took time, at the heart of what we think we know as time' (ibid.).

The Christological derivation of theological truth, expounded and practised by Barth, enables him to establish this time as the truth about all time: the concentration on the particularity of God's action in Jesus, on the quality of time manifest in 'God's time for us' provides a way of understanding the truth about time. The correct theological method must be to move from the time of Jesus to our time, because the time of Jesus is the revelation of the true character of time, 'because what God does in it is the goal of creation and therefore of all created time' (ibid.). Using his familiar opposition between natural truth and revealed truth, Barth insists that it is only by considering the time of Jesus that we are able to evaluate correctly our time: Chronos is dethroned as a figure set in opposition to the God who has time for us in Jesus and who shows us that time is a 'dimension of a life in communion with Himself' (CD III/2, p.526), a dimension which is capable of expressing the full presence of the divine eternal life:



'There is no time in itself, rivalling God and imposing conditions on Him. There is no God called Chronos. And it is better to avoid conceptions of time which might suggest that there is. On the other hand, we need not be surprised if the nature and laws of all other times, and all that we think we know as time, are seen to be illuminated and relativised by this time....But as all creation has its goal in what God purposes and will do and does within it for man, for us, so time as its historical form has its meaning in the particular time which God once took for establishing His covenant with man. This is the hidden meaning of all time, even of all other time.' (CD III/2, p.456)

Because this time of Jesus is the time in which God's plan for creation is realised, it stands against the rest of time as having a completeness and a fulfilment lacking in the other instances of created time: it is time brought to perfection, since in the existence of Jesus there is the unique historical event 'in which 'God is Himself, God is alone, God is directly the Subject, the temporal reality of which is not only called forth, created, conditioned and supported by the eternal reality of God, but is identical with it'. (CD I/2, p.182). Consequently, this time must be spoken about in ways which affirm that it takes place in our time, but also in ways which designate it as unique:

'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; in



this event it happened that whereas we had our own time for ourselves as always, God had time for us, His own time for us -- time, in the most positive sense, i.e., present with past and future, fulfilled time with expectation and recollection of its fulfilment, revelation time and the time of the Old Testament and New Testament witness to revelation -- but withal, His own time, God's time; and therefore real time.' (CD I/2, p.49.)

Barth's statements on the quality of this 'time of revelation' are justified by the parallel between God's assumption of human nature in the Incarnation and his assumption of time in order to make it a mode of divine self-expression. In the section of CD II/1 dealing with God's eternity, after indicating the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity in enabling us to work with a positive understanding of God's eternity as 'eminent temporality' in which there is order, succession and relatedness, he turns to the value of the doctrine of the Incarnation in re-casting our notions of time and eternity:

'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 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 embracing our time and ruling it, but submitting himself to it, and permitting created time to become and be the form of his eternity.....

He was not only able to have and give time as the Creator, but in Jesus Christ He was able Himself to be temporal... True eternity has the power to take time to itself, this time, the time of the Word and Son of God. It has the power itself to be temporal in Him.' (CD II/1, pp.616-7.)

This time is the goal of the whole of creation, since it is the sole purpose of there being anything at all that God should enter into a relationship with his creation in this temporal way; time, the form of our existence, becomes the form of existence of the God 'whose will and resolve it is to give man a share in this time of His, in His eternity' (CD III/2, p.451). One of the consequences of this datum of revelation is that 'the myth of infinite or endless time is shattered by revelation' (CD I/2, p.69); in its place Barth proposes a view of eternity interpreted, in the only way we are entitled to interpret it, as the fulfilled time of Jesus. We have already seen the circle of mutual interpretation which Barth proposes between the Logos and the person of Jesus. In a parallel way, he proposes that eternity be interpreted and spoken about by the only hermeneutical key we possess, namely, the fulfilled time of Jesus, and that the time of Jesus be spoken about as the time of the eternal God. Thus the

relation of the time of Jesus to 'lost time' is developed in terms of a relationship which, in Christian tradition, is that of eternity itself to time:

'It is a life lived for God, and therefore for men. And as He lives this life in His time, it ceases to be exclusively His time. His time becomes time for God, and therefore for all men. The question which God addresses to all men, and the question which they address to God, finds its conclusive answer in the life which Jesus lived in the service of God and man... The answers given by the life of Jesus to the questions of God and man make His time the time which always was when men lived, which always is when they live, and which always will be when they will live.... The man Jesus has therefore His time, but He has more than just His own time. He lives in His time, and while it does not cease to be His time, and the times of other men do not cease to be their times, His time acquires in relation to their times the character of God's time, of eternity, in which present, past and future are simultaneous. (CD III/2, pp.439-40.)

The life of Jesus is 'at once the centre and the beginning and end of all the times of all the lifetimes of all men' (ibid.), and this triple characterisation corresponds to the dimensions of present, past and future whose divisions mark the incompleteness of 'lost time': the time of Jesus is thus portrayed as the 'fulfilled time' in which these divisions are overcome, because it is the time in which eminent temporality, characterised by a simultaneous possession of present,



past and future, takes the form of our time, without ceasing to be itself. Barth interprets eternity in a way which presents it as fulfilled time:

'Eternity does not lack absolutely what we know as present, as before and after, and therefore as time. Rather this has its ultimate and real being in the simul of eternity. Eternity simply lacks the fleeting nature of the present, the separation between before and after.'  
(CD II/1, p.613.)

And this, in turn, through the circular form of Barth's argumentation, becomes the way in which the time of Jesus is described. We saw earlier that Barth feels compelled to say that the time of Jesus is to be regarded as historical, unreservedly temporal in the way in which all other time is temporal: 'Only a docetic attitude to Jesus can deny that His being in time also means what being in time means for us all' (CD III/2, p.463). But at the same time, it is to be distinguished from all other time. The distinguishing characteristic of this time is that it carries predications which denote it in terms appropriate to eternity's simultaneous grasp of the three dimensions of time:

'The Word spoken from eternity raises the time into which it is uttered (without dissolving it as time), 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. It is spoken by God, a perfect without peer (not in our time, but in God's time created by the Word in the flesh, there is a genuine, proper, indissoluble, primal perfect), and for that reason there is coming into the world a future without peer (for not in our time, but rather in this God's time created by the Word in the flesh there is a genuine, proper, indissoluble, primal future). And so it is a present that is not a present without also being a genuine perfect; and a perfect and a future, the mean of which constitutes a genuine indestructible present.' (CD I/2, p.52; my emphases.)

Thus one of the implications to be drawn from the Incarnation is that the time of Jesus must be described in a way which permits us to understand it as the time of the eternal God, who, while remaining himself, 'became temporal and had time' (CD III/2, p.455). It must therefore be understood as having a status which differentiates it from 'lost time' which is marked by the effects of the Fall (CD I/2, p.47). Does Barth then collapse the distinction between time and eternity through the descriptions he offers of the time of Jesus? Does it stand centaur-like, as a peculiar combination of the features of its parents? Certainly some of his statements about the time of Jesus appear to isolate it from any comprehensible relationship with 'our time' -- Roberts points to this as a major defect in Barth's treatment of the reality of the Incarnation.<sup>19</sup> However, the matter is not so simple. We have already mentioned that Barth begins his revision of the

theological use of 'time' and 'eternity' from the datum of revelation that they are related. He then develops his account of time and eternity in a way which co-ordinates them, rather than collapses them, in order to articulate the doctrine of the Incarnation. He sets out to renew our language about time and eternity, negatively, by rejecting a distinction between them in terms of eternity being a 'negation of time' or a 'timelessness', and positively, by distinguishing between them in terms of their capacity to encompass the three dimensions of past, present and future:

'The being is eternal in whose duration beginning, succession and end are not three but one, not separate as a first, a second and a third occasion, but one simultaneous occasion as beginning, middle and end. Eternity is the simultaneity of beginning, middle and end, and to that extent it is pure duration. Eternity is God in the sense in which in Himself and in all things God is simultaneous, i.e., beginning, middle and end, without separation, distance or contradiction. Eternity is not, therefore, time, although time is certainly God's creation or, more correctly, a form of God's creation. Time is distinguished from eternity by the fact that in it beginning, middle and end are distinct and even opposed as past, present and future. Eternity is just the duration which is lacking to time.' (CD II/1, p.608.)

The Trinitarian basis of Barth's description of eternity is clear: the perichoretic life of the Trinity is the unique instance of the overcoming of the

division of temporal duration -- the three modes of being -- in an uncompromised simultaneity of divine life. The repetitio aeternitatis in aeternitate, the relatedness of God in the begetting and the procession of Son and Spirit, is grounded in the unity of the divine nature which expresses itself in a distinction of modes of being (CD I/1. pp.348-75). The Trinitarian basis for Barth's use of the opposites 'simultaneity' and 'duration' seems to have eluded Colin Gunton in his comments on this passage; his question, 'But what, conceivably, is simultaneity that is pure duration?'<sup>20</sup> can be answered only with the help of an articulated Trinitarian doctrine:

'It is this "all", this God, who is the eternal God, really the eternal God. For this "all" is pure duration, free from all the fleetingness and the separations of what we call time, the nunc aeternitatis which cannot come into being or pass away, which is conditioned by no distinctions, which is not disturbed and interrupted but established and confirmed in its unity by its trinity, by the inner movement of the begetting of the Father, the being begotten of the Son and the procession of the Spirit from both. Yet in it there is order and succession. The unity is in movement. There is a before and an after. God is once and again and a third time....This is His time, the absolutely real time, the form of the divine being in its triunity, the beginning and ending which do not mean the limitation of Him who begins and ends, a juxtaposition which does not mean any exclusion, a movement which does not signify the passing away of anything, a succession which in itself is also beginning and end.' (CD II/1, p.615)

This account of God's eternity, 'the absolutely real time, the form of the divine being in its triunity' (ibid.), can then be brought into conjunction with the account he offers of our time, 'lost time', in which the divisions of past, present and future mark the incompleteness of our existence. Thus a co-ordinated description of time and eternity in terms of their respective capacity to cope with the structural divisions of time can be offered, which enables the truth of the Incarnation to be articulated. The criterion Barth works with here is that a concept of time must treat it, not merely as 'the product of man's existence interpreted as a distentio' -- the Augustinian approach (Conf. XI, 23) -- but as a 'proper reality, as accessible to God as is human existence' (CD I/2, p.46). In Barth's revision of the theological use of the concepts of time and eternity, they are co-ordinated in a way which allows a comparison and a contrast to be developed: they can be compared insofar as they are the same sort of reality -- a form of existence characteristic of God's 'being and our being -- and they are then contrasted in their respective ability to achieve a simultaneity in relationship to duration. In spite of Barth's celebrated protests that he rejects analogical language, his treatment of the relationship of time and eternity seems to be pre-eminently analogical, but it is an analogy which is grounded in the Incarnation;



nevertheless, from this starting point he goes on to develop a view of time and eternity which is analogical in character.

We have spoken of the 'co-ordination' of time and eternity in Barth's revision of the concepts: this is a more satisfactory way of describing what Barth is doing than other characterisations since it takes account of the double hermeneutic Barth uses -- the circularity between our language of time and eternity, the correspondence of God-in-his-revelation with God-in-himself, and the requirement that we work from the starting point of the Incarnation which means that we must recognise that time and eternity are related and modify our concepts accordingly.

This is much more a matter of co-ordinating our language of time and eternity, than of collapsing the distinction between them. The point is hermeneutical: how to find a language which is appropriate to the Incarnation and to the implications of the Incarnation on our language about God's time and our time. What Barth does, with the co-ordination of our account of God's time and our time, is to describe the time of Jesus in terms which characterise God's time in his triune being: the time of Jesus is a time which overcomes the divisions of past, present and future in the way in which God's eternity is said to do. It

acquires, in relation to other time, 'the character of God's time, of eternity, in which present, past and future are simultaneous' (CD III/2, p.440). It is the time in which 'God had time for us, His own time for us -- time in the most positive sense, i.e., present with past and future, fulfilled time with expectation and recollection of its fulfilment, revelation time and the time of the Old Testament witness to revelation -- but withal, His own time, God's time; and therefore real time' (CD I/2, p.49).

This whole network of designations is applied to this new referent, the time of Jesus, quite validly because of the mutual interpretation which exists between God-in-his revelation and God-in-himself. Once this circle is established, a sharing of predicates between God's time in his triune being -- eternity -- and the time of Jesus, can be developed. It is important to remember that Barth is using 'time' and 'eternity' in the light of their revision by the datum of revelation: the time of Jesus is our key to God's time, since it is a time in which there takes place the 'total, final, irrevocable and eternal manifestation of God Himself (CD III/2, p.449). Consequently, the time of Jesus is open to a revision in terms of the eminent and perfected temporality of God's eternity:

'We have called this time of His at the heart of other times the time of God: eternal time; the time which God assumed for us, and thus granted to us, the men of all times; the time of His covenant; or, as the Bible sees it, the great Sabbath; the year of salvation; fulfilled time' (CD III/2, p462).

This does not mean that Barth identifies the time of Jesus with the life of the Trinity: this would be an illegitimate confusion of referents, and he retains a doctrine of the Immanent Trinity which prevents the divine life necessarily possessing our temporality as the mode of its being. Moreover, such an identification would ignore the hermeneutical nature of Barth's procedure which concerns the development of a language about each referent in the light of the other, without collapsing or identifying them. The time of Jesus continues to be temporal and historical within the bounds of human existence -- it is not wafted away to a timeless realm. It remains itself, and the designations appropriate to its historical character continue to apply: this is required by the character of revelation: 'He not only is in time and has time like other men, but He is also Lord of time' (CD III/2, p.464). A similar pattern of double predicataion occurs elsewhere:

'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.' (CD I/2, p.49.)

Again, it is the pressure of what must be said that generates the need for a double description of the time of Jesus in terms of its being unmistakably 'in our time', and equally, it has its own character which must be expressed in terms of the quality of God's time. If we ask about the character of a statement in which the referent retains its own characteristics, while receiving predicates which were originally applied to another reality; which requires the interpreter to construe the statement intelligibly as a valid description of the referent; which invites him to see the referent as having the characteristics of the other reality involved -- if we ask these questions, which are all applicable to Barth's presentation of the time of Jesus as God's time, then we are in the area of the logic and workings of a metaphorical predication. Barth's combination of descriptions which must, in his view, be applied to the time of Jesus, is a combination which makes sense only as a form of metaphorical predication in which the time of Jesus, while continuing to be regarded as 'time' in our temporal continuum, is described as another form of temporal - existence, namely, the eminent temporality of God's eternity.



Is this a correct interpretation of what Barth is doing? We should note, first of all, that he himself does not explain his procedure in terms of the logic of a metaphorical predication; his lack of explanation, in fact, has given rise to the criticism that his treatment of the time-eternity relationship evacuates history of its intrinsic significance, since he seems to be imposing 'eternal' categories in a way which overwhelms the historical particularity of the temporal referent, Jesus. Roberts is particularly vehement: he presents the 'negative' influence of eternal categories, portrayed first of all in Barth's commentary on Romans, as still colouring the treatment of the Incarnation in the Church Dogmatics:

'Eternity still annihilates time, but now instead of explosive demolition, a vast and "unnatural" theological growth chokes and smothers the natural order and its reality, for grace consumes nature in putative, but merely apparent recreation...Like some cancerous Doppelganger, theological reality appears to inflate itself, drawing life from the reality it condemns, perfecting in exquisite form what could be seen as the most profound and systematically consistent theological alienation of the natural order ever achieved.' 21

Rhetoric here appears to have blunted understanding. On similar, but better controlled lines, we might cite the earlier criticism of the encyclopaedic Bouillard that Barth tends towards a monophysitism, in which the

time of Jesus is 'eternalised at the expense of the historicity which is essential to it':

'Mais, quand Barth expose que le temps de Jesus-Christ, "ce temps d'un homme, est également (zugleich) temps de Dieu, temps éternel", nous reconnaissons là des traits qui nous ont déjà mainte fois laissés perplexes. L'ambiguïté du temps éternel de Dieu. Celle de la préexistence de l'homme Jesus (quand on nous dit que cet homme était déjà avant sa vie terrestre). Enfin une apparence de monophysisme... La foi chrétienne tient assurément que Jesus-Christ, temporel en sa qualité d'homme, est éternel en sa qualité de Dieu, et que son existence terrestre est présence du Verbe éternel au sein de notre temps. Mais en lui, de même qu'humanité et divinité ne fusionnent pas dans un terme mixte, temps et éternité ne fusionnent pas dans un temps éternel. Ne risque-t-on pas d'induire l'esprit à opérer ce mélange, quand on déclare que le temps de l'homme Jesus, sans cesser d'être le temps de sa vie, revêt la caractère de l'éternité, ou passé, présent et avenir sont intérieurs les uns aux autres?'

This is a perceptive criticism which highlights the originality of what Barth is doing. Bouillard's reservation comes from the point of view of a Christology which affirms a relationship between, on the one hand, the 'divinity' of Jesus and his 'eternity', and on the other hand, his 'temporal existence' and his 'humanity'. The Chalcedonian bi-polarity of predicates corresponds to the 'temporality' and the 'supra-temporality' of Jesus. Bouillard is correct to point out that Barth goes beyond this way of handling the matter: as we noted at

the beginning of this chapter, Barth goes beyond the limits of what would be the familiar way of relating the predicates of pre-existence to Jesus. He affirms clearly that the predicates of pre-existence are to be taken as referring to the human person Jesus, and not to a prior divine 'Logos asarkos'. Barth makes the puzzling step of speaking of the human, and therefore temporal, existence of Jesus in ways which seem to violate the temporal limitations of his existence. Thus he can say with startling conciseness:

'1. The life of Jesus begins, and therefore it was once future. But the man Jesus already was even before he was...

2. The life of Jesus has duration, and therefore it was once present. But for all its singularity this present reaches back to His past when His time was still future, and forward to His future when His time will be past. The man Jesus is as He was and will be...

3. 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...

This means, however, that from the standpoint of the three dimensions of every conception of time, His time is not only the time of a man, but the time of God, eternal time.' (CD III/2,p.464.)

Although this passage moves from the three paradoxical statements covering the relationship of Jesus to past,

present and future, ending with the conclusion that his time is a human time and eternal time, the argument really goes the other way: it is because the time of Jesus must be described with the help of a double predication which affirms both that this is a time which is 'the time of a man', and that it is a time which is 'the time of God, eternal time', that the previous statements have a validity. The focus of our interest, the pre-existence statements, are intelligible only in the light of the requirement that the time of Jesus be described in a way which affirms unequivocally that, while it is a human time, it must also be described as 'eternal time'.

Bouillard's criticism of a 'monophysitism of history' would be valid only if the tension between the connotations of the referent, the actual human existence of Jesus, and the connotations of its predicates of eternity, is allowed to collapse. We propose that an understanding of the working of a metaphorical statement precisely allows this tension to be maintained -- indeed, it requires that it be maintained in order to bring about a redescription of the referent in which it is seen as the reality denoted by the predicate. The criticism voiced by Roberts is countered by pointing out that attention must be paid to the double predication as a structural feature of Barth's Incarnational Christology, which requires that



both predicates be affirmed without the distortion of one overwhelming the other -- a similar point to that which we make against Bouillard. Roberts' interest in the 'inner logic'<sup>23</sup> of Barth's theology is not developed in terms of the way in which complementary predicates are thought to refer to the person of Jesus: where Roberts sees ambiguity in Barth's treatment of the relationship of time and eternity, we are more inclined to see complementary predications in the interest of establishing a revision of our concepts of time and eternity in the light of their relationship in the Incarnation. His criticism is worth pursuing:

'The tension between eternal work and temporal realization is still problematic, however, so long as all the interpretative categories are grounded in and derived from the divine and eternal being of God. Thus a great deal depends upon the adequacy of Barth's conceptual distinction of, and relation between, eternity and time...'<sup>24</sup>

But is it clear that there is such a tension between eternal work and temporal realization in Barth? The difficulty lies in the fact that when we speak in two different ways about Jesus, we are sometimes led to think that we are speaking about two different referents -- Barth's refusal to consider a Logos asarkos is a counter to such confusion. The difficulty arises in particular when we speak about Jesus being in the beginning with God, and then speak of him as having

a life in our time: our language tends to lead us to think that we are talking about two different referents -- one an 'eternal' referent and the other a 'temporal' referent.

Heinz Zahrnt exemplifies the confusion perfectly: he interprets Barth as a Platonist who locates reality first of all in the eternal realm, in a world, or a theatre, where things happen before being manifest in the lower world of time:

'Consequently everything is anticipated, has already happened in this original perfect tense, which one is tempted to call a pluperfect tense. Everything is not merely decreed in eternity, but already perfected; what takes place in time is merely the carrying out of the original divine decree, a repetition of the original and eternal pattern. Reduced to a formula, we might say that the divine Trinity devised a drama in eternity, and gave its first performance within itself, played by the three divine persons. Now this drama is to be re-enacted on earth, as it has been in heaven.' 25

Applying this criticism in particular to Barth's treatment of pre-existence and Incarnation, Zahrnt continues:

'Since, unlike the New Testament, he does not begin in history, with the event of the incarnation itself, going back from there to the pre-existence of Christ as something perfected at the beginning of time, deriving from it everything that has followed after, he

sees Christ as equally and permanently present at every stage of the history of redemption, so that for him the incarnation is not a really new event, a new intervention of God, the turning point of history, but only a new mode of something that had been permanently present....The incarnation of Christ merely recapitulates, clarifies and reveals what has always been.' <sup>26</sup>

The frequency with which one encounters this opinion should alert us to the possibility that we may be dealing with a received opinion and a presumed judgement, rather than a careful analysis of what Barth is doing. Such an interpretation seems to go counter to the impetus of Barth's theology which is to take the historicity of God's action in Jesus so seriously that it requires a revision of our language about God's eternity. It is crucial for Barth to remove the antithesis of time and eternity, to abolish the notion that there is any 'prior' event in the life of God other than the reality of Jesus. It is Jenson who has seen this most clearly: the eternal act of the divine life is directed towards the historical person, Jesus.

'In all eternity, before -- and for Barth, the "before" is decisive -- all time, God chose to be one with man in the existence of Jesus Christ. But just this act of choice closed the covenant with man; and since the existence of Jesus Christ and the subsistence of the covenant are the same thing, God's eternal act of choice and the existence of Jesus Christ are the same event.' <sup>27</sup>

How then are we to think of the relationship of time and eternity? How does our language about God's eternal decision and our language about the revelation of that decision, the existence of Jesus, cohere? Zahrnt says that Barth resorts to a Platonic model, in which, by implication, the pre-existent Jesus has the status of an eternal Form. Jenson highlights the radical strand in Barth's theology, on the other hand, and interprets the relationship of time and eternity not against the background of Plato, but against a Bultmannian starkness of the 'dass' which echoes through the following passage:

'It is true that reconciliation happens in eternity before time, so that what happens in time can only be the revelation of what is eternally accomplished; but what eternal reconciliation achieves materially, is precisely that its temporal revelation shall occur. Jesus' temporal life is only the mirror of his eternal being in God's act of choice; but what is in eternity chosen is that there would be such a mirroring. Temporal history's reality is communication of eternal history; but that God communicates himself is what eternal history achieves.' 28

This is surely the correct way to interpret Barth's treatment of the relationship of time and eternity. God's temporal revelation of himself in Jesus requires us to say certain things about God's being which must be said if this revelation has taken place, and the



doctrine of the Trinity is a way of revising our language about God, and of controlling it, in order to preserve the Christological character of our theology. Hence the importance for Barth of establishing which God we are speaking about, of identifying which being we are speaking about when we are doing theology; this leads him to place the doctrine in the prolegomena, in the discussion of revelation. Moreover, as we have seen, our language about God's eternity is shaped in the light of the Incarnation. Barth's language about God's eternity, and indeed his language about the Triune differentiation within God's being through a process of investigating how we must speak about God if he has revealed himself in this way.

The statements we make about God's eternity are similar to transcendental deductions which portray the conditions which must obtain if God's temporal revelation has taken place; they are means of ensuring that our language of God is adjusted in the light of his revelation in Jesus, and that God's being is described in a way which is consistent with his revelation. From the event of Jesus certain implications follow for our language about God's being, and equally, certain implications follow for our language about Jesus: our language about God's eternal decision can only be the establishment of ways of speaking consistently with his temporal revelation, and

our language about Jesus must involve a process by which Jesus is described in the light of what we have established about God's being. This circularity is a denial of a form of Platonic division of eternity and time as proposed by Zahrnt. Barth is more correctly interpreted in Jenson's terms: 'The historical event of Jesus' existence is, he teaches, the eternal event of the life of God.'<sup>29</sup> We cannot take this as an identity statement -- Jesus cannot be the Triune God -- but it expresses the rule we must follow if we are to ensure that we are speaking correctly about the eternity of God: our only key to it is the event of Jesus' existence.

The next step in this process validates the transfer of -- qualities, which have been established with regard to God's eternity, to the time of Jesus. What controls are there on this transfer? Can we simply predicate anything, established as a valid way of designating God's eternity, of Jesus? To some extent we have already answered this question: predicates can be applied provided they are taken to be in a particular metaphorical tension with the historical referent Jesus who must be regarded as still possessing the qualities associated with our humanity. Thus, for example, the quality of 'perfected time' can be attributed as a characterisation of the time of Jesus, provided we realise that we are still talking about this particular

human life which retains its character of human temporality. A redescription of this life can take place in ways which require us to see this life in terms of the qualities of God's eternity. This is justified by the Barthian principle enunciated by Jenson: 'God's eternal act of choice and the existence of Jesus are the same event.'<sup>30</sup> Consequently, Jesus can be described through the use of predicates which foster a redescription of his time in terms of the 'supra-temporality' of God's eternity; and all this must be done with an understanding that the time of Jesus continues to be a human time, described in a radical and original way, but is now seen as a time with the characteristics of God's time. Using Frege's distinction of sense and reference, we can say that the descriptions of Jesus as 'pre- and post-existent' are the developments of new senses, new meanings, which are to be taken as qualifying the referent, Jesus. They are not characterisations of a different referent -- we recall Barth's insistence that the notion of a Logos asarkos is a misleading fiction: our statements about the pre-existent Jesus are statements about Jesus in his time. This is reinforced by the way in which Barth recasts our uses of the concepts of time and eternity, and by the circular hermeneutic he establishes between God-in-his-revelation and God-in-himself. Thus our investigation proposes that the confusion about how to understand the character of Barth's pre-existence



statements can be solved through viewing them as metaphorical descriptions of Jesus which express what needs to be expressed if he is the full self-expression of God. They are best understood as the creation of new, and intelligible, senses, in which the mutual interaction of God's time and our time are expressed -- senses which are to be taken as redescriptions of the person of Jesus.

The question which must be answered, after we have given some account of the theological and Christological concerns which underlie Barth's reworking of the notion, is, of course, the question of the character of these statements. One cannot presuppose that this point is obvious. Jüngel, for example, in the magisterially obscure interpretation he provides of how these statements are to be understood, omits such a consideration and launches immediately into an explanation of the intelligibility of the statements in terms of the patristic notions of ANHYPOSTASIS and ENHYPOSTASIS. A consideration of intelligibility requires, first of all, that you establish the sort of statement you are dealing with, and the lack of such reflection leads to an ever-spiralling opacity:

'But if the being of the man Jesus in the beginning with God is not to be understood in the sense of a projection of a temporal existence into eternity,



then we must speak of this temporal existence of Jesus in the sense of the anhypostasis. Jesus' existence would not be what it is if it were not already in the "eternal decision of God which is the basis and governor of time". But it is precisely in the eternal decision of God in the sense of the enhypostasis that this existence is really temporal existence. As he who "by nature is God", the man Jesus is in the beginning with God. In this way he corresponds as elected man to the electing God and in oneness with the Son of God "not in abstracto,<sup>31</sup> but in concreto, he is Jesus Christ".'

Jüngel's interpretation revives the patristic notion of the human nature of Jesus lacking an identity of its own independently of the Logos; thus, the logic goes, we can speak of the humanity of Jesus pre-existing 'anhypostatically' in the hypostasis of the Logos. The difficulty about this proposal is that the concepts of anhypostasis and enhypostasis only make sense within a certain way of speaking about the unity of the incarnate Logos: they are a way of ensuring the unity of the person under the hegemony of the Logos, and thereby avoiding the implication of a duality of independent realities (hypostases) in the Incarnate One. They are categories which depend upon an initial conceptual distinction between the Logos and the person of Jesus, and which attempt to avoid the misunderstanding of a duality within the person of Jesus. But can they be used in the way Jüngel proposes, to deal with the relationship of the humanity

of Jesus, considered as pre-existent, to the pre-temporal Logos? The function of these concepts is to deal with misunderstandings about the Incarnate Logos, and it is not clear that they solve the question of how you can speak of the temporal Jesus in terms which consider him in pre-temporal ways. The question still remains of the nature of this predication. Jüngel's proposal looks respectable, but it is an evasion of the central difficulty. A similar lacuna is found in the interpretation offered by John Thompson who invokes a principle of Christological grammar to cope with Barth's statements:

'It has, of course, always been an accepted rule in Christology that what one can affirm of either "nature" or "mode of being" of the person of Christ can be affirmed of the God-man in his unity. Hence we can say that Jesus Christ is with the Father from the beginning since he is the eternal Son. Barth, however, takes this a stage further and says (correctly, I believe) that, since in the light of the incarnation we cannot think of God at all apart from man, this man is at the beginning of God's ways and works ad extra.' 32

There is some confusion here in Thompson's application of this Christological rule: his statement applies to the Incarnate Word, thus enabling us to predicate of the person of Jesus what we would want to predicate of one of the 'natures'. In this way, the identity of Jesus as the Incarnate Word, in himself, is maintained;

to refuse to do this would be to withhold assent to the integrity of the Incarnation. But can this rule be applied to the man Jesus when he is being considered in pre-temporal terms? Can one say that, since we consider the eternal presence of the Word within the being of God before time began, we are thus entitled to affirm that his incarnate existence can also be spoken of in this way? The question which must be faced first of all is what we think we're doing when we make statements about the temporal existent Jesus which predicate a pre-temporality in some form.

Moreover, from the logic of Thompson's subsequent statement that 'we cannot think of God at all apart from man', we are surely entitled to affirm the pre-existence of all humanity just as strongly as he affirms the pre-existence of the man Jesus. In which case we return to the notion which Barth himself rejected, that the humanity of Jesus can be considered within the general foreknowledge of God of created reality. Thompson himself would reject this as an insufficient interpretation of Barth's meaning, but he does not provide a way of distinguishing the inevitability of statements about the pre-existence of Jesus from statements about the pre-existence of all created reality in the mind of God. One cannot move from a hermeneutical statement about how we know God to an affirmation of the pre-existence of the man Jesus,



as Thompson, does, although, as we have seen, the hermeneutical concern is central to Barth's treatment of pre-existence.

Both Jüngel's and Thompson's solutions are unsatisfactory, since they do not address themselves to the character of the predication involved. R.D. Williams, whose article on Barth's doctrine of the Trinity is exemplary, nevertheless confesses bemusement as to how the pre-existence statements are to be taken. The root of his difficulty, and the difficulty of this whole matter of the predication of pre-existence, consists in the incompatibility of the predication with the features of the referent, the historically contingent life of Jesus. Against Barth's discussion of the eternal election of the man Jesus, he raises the following objection:

'Nor, it seems, does it cope fully with the problems raised by the fact that the existence of Jesus is historically contingent, a point in the interrelated, interdependent system of worldly events, from which it can in no way be abstracted. It is an existence of a certain character, with its own historical singleness, because of its occupation of a certain point of convergence for innumerable systems of worldly causality.' <sup>33</sup>

Williams' point here is not contradicted by Barth's own treatment, as he seems to think; Barth has no interest



in 'abstracting' Jesus from the particularity of his historical context. Indeed Barth makes a point of highlighting the 'secularity' of God's Word in its revelatory function. In a remarkable passage, Barth expounds the importance of the historical contingency of Jesus as required by the character of God's revelation which is mysterious in its secularity:

'The speech of God is and remains the mystery of God supremely in its secularity. When God speaks to man, this event never demarcates itself from other events in such a way that it might not be interpreted at once as part of these other events. The Church is also in fact a sociological entity with definite historical and structural features. Preaching is also in fact an address. The sacrament is also a symbol in compromising proximity to all other possible symbols. The Bible is also in fact the historical record of a Near Eastern tribal religion and its Hellenistic offshoot. Jesus Christ is also in fact the Rabbi of Nazareth who is hard to know historically and whose work, when He is known, might seem to be a little commonplace compared to more than one of the other founders of religions and even compared to some of the later representatives of His own religion....We do not have the Word of God otherwise than in the mystery of its secularity.

This means, however, that we have it in a form which as such is not the Word of God and which as such does not even give evidence that it is the form of the Word of God. In other words the self-presentation of God in His Word is not direct, nor is it indirect in the way in which a man's face seen in a mirror can be called an indirect self-presentation of this man.' (CD I/1, p.165, my emphasis.)

If we ask what is being referred to in Barth's pre-existence statements, it is clearly the human person Jesus, who is the self-presentation of God in a form distinct from himself, and who is not transparently the Word of God because of the mystery of the secularity of human existence. 'Revelation means the incarnation of the Word of God. But incarnation means entry into this secularity' (CD I/1, p.166). The objection raised by Williams that the eternal election of the man Jesus, and consequently his pre-existence, vitiates the historical contingency of Jesus' life, does not take account of the fact that Barth's use of pre-existence language is deliberately applied to the Word in its secularity. It is deliberately used to describe Jesus, the person in whom God gives himself to be known 'in an objectivity different from His own, in a creaturely objectivity (CD II/1, p.52). A failure to take seriously that it is the Incarnate Word who is spoken of as pre-existent, leads to a misunderstanding of what Barth is doing with this language. Our study of metaphor has shown that in a metaphorical predication there is a tension which is maintained, not undermined, between the characteristics of the referent, and the characteristics of the predication made of the referent: the referent retains its characteristics, but it is seen in a different light, as something else. The characteristics of the human person Jesus, as a historically contingent individual,

are not dissolved by the predication of pre-existence, but they are portrayed in a different way. The point can be clarified if we examine Barth's presentation of the referent of the predication, the Word of God, who, in the secularity of our existence and time, is the revelation of God 'in a creaturely objectivity' (CD II/1, p.52).

It is essential to Barth's rebuttal of the viability of the analogia entis, and of the shifting sands of Liberal Protestantism, that God be portrayed as making himself objectively known: our human incapacity to deal with the mystery of God's being means that our efforts to use our language to speak of God are shapeless. Yet, the mystery to which Barth returns again and again, in his discussion of revelation, is that we are able to speak of God because God has interpreted himself for us, and enables us to interpret this self-revelation. Theology has the character of a Nachdenken, a 'thinking after' the order and structure of the character of the revelation in which God makes himself known to us in his 'taking form' as Jesus; the doctrine of the Trinity is the specification of the nature of God who can reveal himself in this way, in the 'reiteration' of his being in a 'form distinct from himself' (CD II/1, p.52).



'Since the One who unveils Himself is the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to men, self-unveiling means that God does what men cannot do in any sense or in any way: He makes Himself present, known and significant to them as God. In the historical life of men He takes up a place, and a very specific place at that, and makes himself the object of human contemplation, human experience, human thought and human speech... The God who reveals Himself here can reveal Himself. The very fact of revelation 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.'

(CD I/1, pp.315-6; my emphasis.)

The actuality of this revelation is that God makes himself 'mediately objective to us in His revelation,' in which he meets us 'under the sign and veil of objects different from Himself' (CD II/1, p. 16). In the early volumes of the Church Dogmatics, Barth's discussion of the objectivity of the revelation given in Jesus concentrates on the creaturely 'form' which God takes to himself, namely, the humanity of Jesus, in order to make himself 'mediately objective' through the medium of the created humanity of Jesus in which he can be known:

'When God gives Himself to us to be known in the truth of His self-knowledge, He permits some one of His creatures or a happening in the sphere and time of the world created by Him to speak for Him. The basic reality and substance of the creatureliness which He has commissioned and empowered



to speak of Him, the basic reality and substance of the sacramental reality of His revelation, is the existence of the human nature of Jesus Christ....

The humanity of Jesus Christ as such is the first sacrament, the foundation of everything that God instituted and used in His revelation as a secondary objectivity both before and after the epiphany of Jesus Christ.' (CD II/1, pp.53-4.)

The key notions in this presentation in the early volumes of the Church Dogmatics, dealing with the revelation in Jesus, are those of the mediate objectivity of God's self-interpretation in the creaturely form of the humanity of Jesus, and of the secondary objectivity of this revelation. By the first notion, Barth intends to characterise revelation in a form different from God's own being, which, while it unveils him, still does not remove the hiddenness of his inexhaustible mystery. The Lutheran dialectic of the Deus revelatus and the Deus absconditus receives full approval in Barth's exposition:

'When the creature in its objectivity becomes the representative of the objectivity of God Himself, it hides it. When God makes Himself visible for us through it, He accepts the fact that He will remain invisible as the One He is in Himself and as He knows Himself. He makes Himself known to us, but in the means and sign which He uses to be known by us, He makes Himself foreign and improper to Himself...In revealing Himself in this way, He also conceals Himself.' (CD II/1, p.55.)

Because of this objectification in a form different from his own, does God's revelation lack veracity? No, according to Barth, because it is grounded in the primary objectivity of God's own knowledge of himself in the Trinity. God can make himself known in the medium of a creature, because first of all, he is objective to himself in his own being: the eternal presence of the Son to the Father is a self-knowledge in the relationality of the Triune life, which can then be posited 'in a very different way, namely, in manifestation, i.e., in the form of something He Himself is not' (CD I/1, p.316). Jüngel correctly characterises this as a process of 'intratrinitarian inference',<sup>34</sup> by which we move from the actuality of God's self-reiteration in the person of Jesus to the inference that this is grounded in the fact that God is an object-to-himself in the relationality of the Trinity. The secondary objectivity of the knowledge God gives us, by becoming an object of our knowledge in Jesus, 'is distinguished from the primary objectivity, not by a lesser degree of truth, but by its particular form suitable for us, the creature. God is objectively immediate to Himself, but to us He is objectively mediate' (CD II/1, p.16). Thus by the act of God's self-revelation in Jesus, we share indirectly in God's knowledge of himself. In Jüngel's words:

'That God gives himself sub contraria specie to be known in his work is, for Barth, a sacramental subject matter...In so far as God reiterates his "actual objectivity" in the objectivity -- which is strange to him -- of his creature, God's being-as-object is sacramental reality...

The sacramental priority of the man Jesus consists in the fact that God is objective in the existence of this man uniquely. But the uniqueness of God's being-as-object in the humanity of Jesus Christ "means God's self-humiliation and self-alienation" and therewith "the concealment of his objectivity by the quite different objectivity of the creature".' 35

The somewhat constricted framework in which this self-objectification of God in the humanity of Jesus is discussed in the earlier volumes of the Church Dogmatics, is removed when Barth gives himself the narrative space to develop the theme in Volume IV through the image of the way of the Son of God into the far country. The differences between the treatments are clear: Volume I works with an interpretative model of the Trinity, in which revelation is considered as the self-utterance of a single subjectivity. Volume IV, on the other hand, considers the Trinity more as a system of relations involved in the journey of the Son into the far country where 'He takes into unity with His divine being a quite different, a creaturely and indeed a sinful being' (CD IV, p.203). The narrative mode allows a greater expansiveness in the development of the theme of the 'otherness' of the Incarnate Word,



than was possible within the limitations of the interpretative model of the early volumes. The ideas tersely expressed in terms of the 'mystery of the secularity' of the Word are better treated in the narration of the journey of the Son of God. In particular, it allows Barth to present the self-humiliation and condescension of God, manifested in Jesus, as 'the dominating moment in our conception of God' (CD IV/1, p.199):

'It corresponds to and is grounded in His divine nature that in free grace He should be faithful to the unfaithful creature who has not deserved it and who would inevitably perish without it, that in relation to it He should establish that communion between His own form and cause and that of the creature, that He should make His own its being in contradiction and under the consequences of that contradiction, that He should maintain His covenant to sinful man (not surrendering His deity, for how could that help? but giving up and sacrificing Himself) and in that way supremely asserting Himself and His deity.' (CD IV/1, p.187.)

We move even further away from the Trinitarian model of Volume I with Barth's account of the impact of the suffering of the Son on the Trinitarian relations between Father and Son:

'It is not at all the case that God has no part in the suffering of Jesus Christ even in His mode of being as the Father. No, there is a particula veri in the teaching of the early Patripassians. This is that primarily it is God the



Father who suffers in the offering and sending of His Son, in His abasement. The suffering is not His own, but the alien suffering of the creature, of man, which He takes to Himself in Him. But He does suffer it in the humiliation of His Son with a depth with which it never was or will be suffered by any man -- apart from the One who is His Son... This fatherly fellow-suffering of God is the mystery, the basis, of the humiliation of His Son; the truth of that which takes place historically in His crucifixion.' (CD IV/2, p.357.)

The Trinitarian narratives of Volume IV constitute the most profound and influential doctrine of God in contemporary theology: they provide a line of investigation, and a point of departure, for the work of von Balthasar and Moltmann, in the way that Beethoven's late piano sonatas inspire the most significant musical innovations of the 19th century. The radical characteristic of Volume IV is the exploration of the Trinitarian implications of the history of Jesus. This is the full flowering of Barth's initial method, which in Volume I was conceived in terms of the relationship of the Trinity to the structure of the act of revelation; in Volume IV, however, the pattern of investigation is a narrative base which enables Barth to co-ordinate the narration of the history of Jesus with the history of the Trinitarian relations expressed and affected by that temporal event. The historical experiences of the Son are taken seriously as events which affect the

intra-Trinitarian relations of Father, Son and Spirit, as events which do not simply 'reflect' or 'mirror' the condition of the immanent Trinity, but involve the Trinitarian God in the time which he takes to himself in the life of Jesus. Von Balthasar's statements show the potential of this co-ordination:

'God causes God to go into abandonment by God while accompanying him on the way with his Spirit. The Son can go into the estrangement from God of hell, because he understands his way as an expression of his love for the Father and he can give to his love the character of obedience to such a degree that in it he experiences the complete godlessness of lost man.'<sup>36</sup>

The model of the self-reiteration and self-objectification of God in the act of revelation, conceived as the utterance of a single subject, gives way to a model of Trinitarian experience in the history of the Incarnate Son. We have seen several themes in the Church Dogmatics which prepare the way for this development: the refusal to consider a Logos asarkos, the insistence that God's determinative act of being is the determination towards being God-for-us as Jesus, the refusal to contrast time and eternity in a Platonic way, and the attempt to co-ordinate them in terms of comparative perfection of simultaneity and comprehensive grasp of the dimensions of past, present and future. Especially, we noted Barth's insistence

that the time of Jesus is the dimension, within our created temporal existence, in which God takes a part of our time as the centre of all time and bestows on it the perfection of his own eminent temporality: the existence of Jesus is not a mirror of an eternal existence, reflecting and manifesting something else -- it is the working out of the deepest instincts of the God who loves freely to the extent of making himself fully present and active in the humiliation of the Cross. Jenson's formulation, which we have approved before, is exact: 'the historical event of Jesus' existence is the eternal event of the life of God.' 37

It is in the light of these concerns that the theme of the pre-existence of the man Jesus is to be viewed: it is an image which presents the man Jesus at the beginning of God's whole relationship to that which is outside himself, and which speaks of the significance of the humanity of Jesus, and the history involved in the life of Jesus, for the revelation of the character of the Triune God:

'It is essential and integral to this event that it is not only the act of God but that as such it includes a human history, the history of the true man, which means the existence of the man Jesus. This is what we learn from our glance back at God's eternal election of grace. It shows us that there can be no dissolving of the unity of this human history with the act of God with which we have to do in the Christ-event. This human history is not merely a mode or



vehicle of revelation, as against which that which is revealed is something higher, non-worldly, purely divine and eternal and spiritual, so that the human history can and must be distinguished and even separated from it, withdrawing and finally disappearing as a mere economy of only provisional and practical significance.....

The truth is that this human history, "the earthly life of Jesus", belongs with the act of God to that which is revealed.' (CD IV/2, p.35.)

The metaphorical description of the pre-existence of the man Jesus brings a visual, or pictorial, dimension in which, as in Hildegard's vision, the human person of Jesus stands as the first visible expression of the being of God, as the focus, then, of everything else which is created -- the world itself, and the history of salvation enacted therein. God reconciles the world to himself in himself, in the election of Jesus as the Son of God who goes into the far country in order to return to his exaltation as the Son of Man: Jesus as the electing God and elected man, the Son of God who will manifest the condescension of the Triune God, and the Son of Man who will lead an exalted humanity into union with the divine life, stands in the image of pre-existence as the literal embodiment of both God's divine kenosis and humanity's exaltation. He is the one who as Son of God reconciles, and as Son of Man is reconciled on behalf of his brothers and sisters.



The image presents the existence of this man as integral to the character of God: Jesus' history is inseparable from the existence of God himself, since it is an aspect of God's self-determination to be God as Jesus, in the humanity of this man, and in the history which will be enacted through him: 'At no level or time can we have to do with God without also having also to do with this man' (CD IV/2, p.33). We have insisted throughout this chapter on the presence in Barth's writings of a 'double hermeneutic' which moves — from the man Jesus to the Triune God and back again: a circle of mutual interpretation, which facilitates the development of a language about the being of God, which, in turn, is used to make the necessary statements about the person of Jesus. The pre-existence of the man Jesus is not only a characterisation of the status of this man in the plan of God: it is also a statement about the orientation of God 'towards' this man and towards the history which will express the Trinitarian life. The Triune relationality will be deployed and expressed in the history of Jesus; Barth's insistence that the Incarnation makes no change in the Trinity, is an expression of his view that the identity of Jesus is eternally involved in the being of God. There is no God whose whole orientation is not to be God as Jesus, and so the humanity of Jesus is portrayed as 'pre-existent', figuratively portrayed thus in order to

express the hermeneutical principle that the process of divine becoming in the Incarnation is not a secondary or incidental moment in the event of God's life. The image of the pre-existent humanity of Christ expresses the truth that the event of the existence of Jesus is the definitive and characteristic event of Trinitarian life. Williams struggles to find adequate expressions for this truth:

'He wills freely to elect Jesus; but this is no arbitrary act, accidental to his nature. He is eternally -- how might it be said? -- "liable" to elect, "tending" or "intending" to elect, and so, in some sense, externally exposed to the suffering of his creature Jesus, to the "negation" involved in his own judgment upon the fallen creation. Eternally and in himself he meets and contains and overcomes the possibility of negation.' 38

Williams' struggle here is precisely the struggle to paraphrase a metaphor which expresses more succinctly and pregnantly what needs to be said than can a non-metaphorical statement. The image of the pre-existence of the man Jesus is a metaphorical description of the referent whose history is particular and contingent, but whose existence is inseparable from the being of God in its Trinitarian mode. God is oriented towards a kenotic expression of his being in the Incarnation; the image provided by Hildegard's vision of the Trinity is an imaginative correlative to

the verbal and metaphorical account of the pre-existent man Jesus in Barth's writings, and both the visual and the metaphorical portrayals open the way towards a Trinitarian theology deeply appreciative of the significance of the history of Jesus for the history of the Trinitarian relations. Far from removing the person of Jesus from the arena of humanity, pre-existence language in fact has the opposite effect of inviting us to consider the openness of divine life towards expression in our time. The range of concerns which the image touches cover Barth's central themes: the revision of the doctrine of the Election as part of the doctrine of God; the soteriological status of Jesus as electing God and elected man; the hermeneutics of Logos-statements and the necessity of interpreting God through his self-revelation in Jesus; the revision of the theological concepts of time and eternity in the light of their given relationship in the time of Jesus. These are all involved in the deployment of the pre-existence theme. In particular, the image enables us to articulate a Trinitarian doctrine in which the history of Jesus is the form of God's self-expression, chosen in the very act by which he is himself. He is, in his Triune being, as an expression of his freely chosen love, 'oriented towards' this self-expression and involvement in the world of created existence. Barth's Trinitarian narratives in Volume IV show the implications which can



be derived from the history of the death and resurrection of the Son for the Triune God:

'...in the mercy in which the Father has known and anticipated and Himself suffered even the most impotent sighing and most foolish weeping of the most useless creature in His eternal decree and its execution on the cross of Golgotha in the determination of his Son to humiliation for the sake of its exaltation, transcending it by the agony which He Himself feels at it, and taking it wholly and unreservedly to Himself; and in the majesty in which the Son in His humiliation, Himself becoming a groaning creature, has exalted and magnified the creature in Himself, investing it with the reflection of His glory, which is also that of the Father. The deepest divine mercy and loftiest divine majesty coincide exactly at the basis of the existence of Jesus Christ.'  
(CD IV/2, p.358.)

The image of the pre-existent Christ, towards whom the whole being of God is eternally oriented and determined, is developed in the direction of the involvement of the Trinitarian relationships in the experience of the death of the Son as the high point of the selflessness of the divine love. The way is prepared for the subsequent reflections of von Balthasar, Jüngel and Moltmann, whose writings on this theme are elaborations of the sketches provided by Barth in Volume IV. It is important to note this development, and to see the place of the theme of the pre-existent Christ in permitting the formulation of narrative Trinitarian theologies which focus on the



significance of the death of Christ for our concept of God. All too often, the theme of pre-existence is treated as inherently docetic in its tendency, and as destructive of the reality of Christ's humanity. Yet, within Barth's treatment, its value is to intensify the Trinitarian significance of the humanity, history and death and resurrection of Christ, opening the way, in conjunction with other themes, for a revised understanding of the Trinitarian life as directed towards expression in the Incarnation. We might point to Jüngel's line of questioning as indicative of the value of this approach: he presents the subsistence of God as 'self-movement', a process of 'becoming' whose goal is the Son's identification with those who are perishing:

'In the affirmation of his creature, as this affirmation becomes event in the incarnation of God, God reiterates his self-relatedness in his relation to the creature, as revealer, as becoming revealed, and as being revealed. The Christological relation to the creature is also a becoming in which God's being is. But in that God in Jesus Christ became man, he is as creature exposed to perishing. Is God's being in becoming, here, a being unto death?'<sup>39</sup>

Jüngel's answer, and Barth's too, is that God's being becomes involved in the perishing of the crucifixion in a way which shatters the Greek notions of the impassibility of God:

'God's existence as man is not only God's existence as creature, but at the same time God's surrender of himself to the opposition to God which characterises human existence. The consequence of this self-surrender of God is God's suffering of his opposition which is directed against human existence in opposition to God -- a suffering even to death on the Cross.' 40

Clearly, the process of 'reiteration' of God in the person of Jesus is not to be interpreted in Hegelian terms, although Hegel is much more of a shadowy presence in Barth than he acknowledged: the 'object' whom he posits at a distance from himself is not the world, but the Son as Jesus, destined to be a temporal existent in the world and identified with humanity in its distance from God. It is in the Son that the world is reconciled through the obedience of the One who takes on himself the judgment of God on the world. Barth distances himself from Hegel and insists that this is not to be taken as implying a 'contradiction and conflict in God Himself' (CD IV/1, p.185), but rather it is the expression of 'the freedom of His divine love' (ibid., p.187). It is in the free self-determination of God that the Hegelian option is avoided: the freely chosen orientation of the Triune God towards expression in the man Jesus is grounded in the freedom in which God loves, not in an ontic necessity required by the structure of reality. The history of the Son, designated by the image of the

pre-existence of the man Jesus, which takes place in our time, belongs inseparably to the character of God's being as the dimension of created temporality in which he freely elects to bestow himself:

'There is no divine, eternal, spiritual level at which the Christ-event is not also "worldly" and therefore this human history... The humanity of Jesus Christ is not a secondary moment in the Christ-event. It is not something which happens later, and later again it will pass and disappear. It is not merely for the purpose of mediation. Like His deity, it is integral to the whole event.' (CD IV/2, p.35.)

It is so integral to the character of God, too, who in his Son 'descends so deep down to man in order to lift him up so high' (ibid., p.43), that this movement into created time must stand as characteristic of God's being, and fully expressive of whatever is meant by God's 'eternity'. This is what the metaphorical description of the pre-existent man Jesus establishes and signifies. By its assertion of the eternal presence before God of the man Jesus, the metaphor, far from undermining either the status of history or the humanity of Christ, in fact breaks through the dualism which can affect the account of the relationship between the being of God and our history. It goes as far as possible, while avoiding Hegel's determinism, towards inserting the historical dimension into the divine life, by presenting the history of Jesus as eternally the goal of the divine becoming.



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Colin Gunton's unacknowledgedly Barthian expression 'Something happens in time (compels interpretation as the actuality of the eternal<sup>41</sup>) describes the Christological component, which then enables Barth to portray the history of Jesus as the event towards which the Triune relationships are directed: 'The truth is that this human history, "the earthly life of Jesus," belongs with the act of God to that which is revealed. It is manifest with it in time,... but it is also with it as the content of the eternal decree and will of God' (CD IV/2, p.35). The predication of the pre-existence of Jesus enables Barth to present the humanity of Jesus as the indispensable expression of the relatedness of the Triune life. The visual image of Jesus standing at the beginning of all things, as their origin, focus and goal, and as the temporal form through whom the Trinitarian life will be made present within creation, is thus a double image: it speaks of Jesus as electing God and elected man, and it speaks of God as the Triune relatedness oriented towards historical expression in the events of the life of Jesus. The double focus of the description -- working Christologically and theologically -- receives a particularly Barthian treatment, in which it is integrated into the central concerns of the Church Dogmatics, providing a focus for a range of inter-dependent themes, and bringing them together in a coherent relationship. It is in the light of these



themes that the Barthian treatment of pre-existence should be viewed, since, as with any metaphor, its interpretation depends upon the validity of the conceptual and non-metaphorical statements which accompany its interpretation, and upon the surrounding context in which the description is placed.

### Conclusion

The remarkable feature of Barth's use of the pre-existence theme is that it is a retrieval and rehabilitation of a New Testament Christological motif which, at first sight, seems to offer little of value: its supposedly 'mythical' character and its origin in a world-view more characteristic of late antiquity's religious patterns of 'descending redeemers' who enter an alien world, would seem to preclude its being significant in the present century. But, in fact, as we have seen, Barth uses the motif boldly: he is not content simply to repeat the assertion of the pre-existence of Christ, but engages in a creative use of the theme. He 'works with' the theme, thinks it through with a characteristic originality and respect for the expressions of the Christian theological tradition, and, most remarkably of all, uses it as a central motif which acts as an integrating expression uniting a range of theological concerns. We have noted the place of the theme in his revision of the doctrine

of the election, in his formulation of the soteriological status of Jesus as electing God and elected man, in his concern for the correct treatment of the pre-incarnate Logos, in his re-working of the theological concepts of time and eternity, and in the relationship of the Triune God to human history. In all these concerns, the pre-existence of the man Jesus occurs as a theme or a harmony accompanying the development of articulated expression. The thoroughly incarnational character of Christian theology is reinforced by his insistence that this predication must be made of the person of Jesus Christ, as part of the necessary statements we have to make in order to characterise Jesus adequately in the light of God's self-revelation; and, in turn, the pre-existence of Jesus also functions as a motif which lays a foundation for re-thinking the character of God's being in the light of God's eternal orientation towards the history of the man Jesus.

The metaphorical character of the predication is seen through the tension between the denotation of the referent, the temporal existent Jesus, and the connotations of the predicate, the pre- and supra-temporal status of this man as the centre of God's relationship to everything else. It is also manifest in the visual image which is an indispensable part of the predication: the picture of Jesus standing

at the beginning of the visibility of the invisible God, as in the vision of the Trinity described by Hildegard of Bingen. Like all good images and metaphors, it is able to express concisely a range of non-metaphorical statements. Far from being an ornamental device, the use of the pre-existence motif in the Church Dogmatics is an integral and integrating expression of surprising value.

Pre-existence Language in the Epistle to the Hebrews



Erich Grässer's compendious review of the history of the interpretation of the Epistle<sup>1</sup> witnesses to the difficulty and complexity of situating Hebrews within the world of Late Antiquity and Early Christianity. What milieu provides the best setting for the assumptions and pattern of argumentation of the Epistle? The uniqueness, within the NT, of the dualism of heaven and earth, the notion of pilgrimage on earth, and the highly developed imagery of High Priesthood, point towards a shared background with a range of non-Christian writings, but there is disagreement about how specific such an attribution can be. The two options are personified in the approaches of Käsemann and Spicq: Käsemann<sup>2</sup> posits a Gnostic background for the themes of *κατάταυσις* and *κατάπετασμα* and for the High Priestly Christology of the Epistle; he concludes 'dass sowohl die Konzeption des Gesamtthemas wie insbesondere die Christologie unseres Briefes nur auf einem von Gnosis vorbereiteten Boden möglich war.'<sup>3</sup> Although recent studies have questioned the simplicity of Käsemann's identification of Gnosticism, which is shown to be a more diffuse, and later, phenomenon, than the Religionsgeschichte school supposed,<sup>4</sup> Grässer points to the Nag Hammadi texts as evidence that Käsemann's hypothesis is correct: the presence there of themes of wandering, rest, Himmelsreise and perfection, with

close parallels to Hebrews' Christological schema, are not easily discounted. Theissen<sup>5</sup> too, accepts a modified version of Käsemann's hypothesis, concentrating on the Epistle's dualism with regard to creation, but the difficulty, as always, is that of distinguishing Gnosticism from currents on which it is dependent, and other currents with which it shares certain themes almost by osmosis. Thompson points, for example, to the difficulty of distinguishing Gnostic and Platonic dualism, which makes a simple appeal to Gnosticism less convincing as the dominant influence on Hebrews.<sup>6</sup> Where there is fluidity and shared language, the attribution of direct dependence, as opposed to common background, becomes more problematic.

Spicq,<sup>7</sup> on the other hand, posits a dependence on the Alexandrian Judaism of Philo, because of the range of parallels he presents to the style, vocabulary, exegetical techniques and themes of Hebrews. The extent of the comparison may not be sufficient to demonstrate, as Spicq claims, that the author of Hebrews was a Philonian convert to Christianity,<sup>8</sup> yet there is sufficient evidence of a common intellectual background to warrant a strong case to be made for this milieu as the setting for Hebrews, as Williamson shows.<sup>9</sup> This line of inquiry into the milieu of the Epistle is more productive than the problematic investigation into the Gnostic background; for our purposes, the

Christological concerns of the Epistle need little explanation beyond what can be found within the religious world of Hellenistic Judaism, as exemplified in the work of Philo. Lala Dey has presented a convincing demonstration of an 'analogous frame of religious thought in Hebrews and Philo',<sup>10</sup> his interest is centred on the conceptual framework of both writers, and he avoids the question of literary dependence or direct literary influence. He argues that the recipients of the letter were familiar with a religious thought world in which speculation about a heavenly figure or figures presented problems about the relationship of Jesus to these other intermediaries. He describes the imaginative world thus:

'Here angels, logos, heavenly man, wisdom, etc. have to a large degree synonymous titles and interchangeable functions and they constitute the intermediary world between God and man. As intermediaries they are the agencies of creation and revelation. To this correspond two levels of religious existence. The intermediary world (logos-wisdom-archangel-heavenly man - son) mediates an inferior revelation and religious status of a secondary order. The higher level or perfection is characterized by unmediated and direct access to God and participation in the primary gifts. The supreme exemplars of this perfection were Moses who communicated with God face to face, Aaron who as high priest divests himself of the robe (= universe) and enters the Holy of Holies, the upper limits of heaven where God dwells (i.e., allegorically understood), Isaac who typified self-learnt and self-taught wisdom (automathēs and autodidaktos), as did the priesthood of Melchizedek.'<sup>11</sup>



If Hebrews is composed against this background, then the points at issue in the Epistle are the relationship of Jesus to these other figures -- is he identical with them, or superior or inferior to them? -- and the status of the salvation which he has effected -- how can it be superior to that of other intermediaries, since it involves suffering and the abandonment of death? These problems arise, according to Dey, because of the acceptance of pre-existence language in the Christology known to the community: it is because Jesus has been presented as pre-existent Wisdom and Word that the question of his relationship to these other figures becomes acute:

'In primitive Christianity the identification of Jesus with wisdom and logos provided the basis for the conception of his pre-existence, agency in creation and divinity (Phil.2.6-11; 1 Cor.8.6; Col.1.15-16; Jn.1.1-18). To those addressed in Hebrews, however, this would mean that Jesus was a representative figure of the intermediary world and could easily be identified with any one of them. Therefore, the revelation and salvation he mediates would be inferior and a lower stage which could be surpassed on the path to perfection.' <sup>12</sup>

The threat then to the community's faith comes from both a reduction of the uniqueness of Jesus, placing him lower than these other heavenly or intermediary figures on account of his involvement in suffering, and from a tendency to minimise the particularity of Jesus,



perhaps fusing his identity with these others in a syncretistic amalgam of the various nomenclatures associated with a heavenly agent. Philo's treatment of the names of the Logos in Conf 146<sup>13</sup> would be an illustration of this latter tendency, in which several historical and heavenly figures are seen as the various manifestation of a heavenly being under different guises. The issues at stake are solved by the author's exegetically based proof of the superiority of Jesus to the angels, Moses and Aaron, since Jesus alone is the Son, and, as part of the same programme, by the author's proof of the superiority of the salvation effected by Jesus, since he alone is the High Priest who has entered the presence of God, and is capable of making the perfect offering for the sins of others.

The problem of the relationship of Jesus to other intermediaries who threaten the Christian claim for the uniqueness and superiority of Jesus is also a feature of the Fourth Gospel: there the predication of pre-existence is the motif which validates the revelation given by Jesus, and, at the level of the community-synagogue debate, distinguishes, as does a shibboleth, those within the community of believers from those who are incapable of belief (Jn. 12.37-41). This form of argument is missing from Hebrews, perhaps, if Dey's proposal is correct, because the affirmation of the pre-existence of Jesus, rather than resolving

the difficulty, as in the Johannine treatment, gives rise to further problems which have to be addressed in a different way.

The author of the Epistle gives a brief assessment of the needs of his recipients: he distinguishes between what is already known and appropriated, and what they must learn in order to be brought ἐπὶ τῆν τελειότητα. In the former category he includes τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον (6.2). Rather than understanding this as 'the rudiments about Christ', it is possible to see here a reference to teaching about 'the beginning or origin of Christ': the phrase may well express the author's judgment that a familiarity with pre-existence Christology can be presumed among his readers. Confirmation of this is found in the formulaic and lapidary presentation of Wisdom predications in 1.2-3b, combined with a confessional statement, a 'Weglied' similar to that given in Phil 2.6-11 (1.3c-4).<sup>14</sup> Certainly the absence of a systematic presentation of pre-existence themes, combined with a way of handling them which presumes that these points do not have to be developed for the benefit of his readers, indicates that the author is working at the level of a second stage following the introduction of pre-existence themes. Erich Grässer characterises 1.3 as 'ein vorformuliertes Bekenntnis', and notes that 'die christologischen Prädikationen von V.3a.b im

späterem Brief nirgendwo thematisiert werden, sondern allein die in V.3c.d gemachten Aussagen, bleiben davon unberührt.<sup>15</sup> Exactly so: the author, like the characters in John Le Carré's novels, works on the basis of 'need to know', and briefings are referred to, never repeated.

Grässer sees the content of 1.3c as exercising 'eine Schlüsselfunktion' for the rest of the Epistle<sup>16</sup> This is correct, but there is a teasing question, which has fascinated commentators, about the relationship of the high Wisdom Christology of 1.2-3b to the dominant pattern of the Epistle's argumentation. The retrospective horizon of pre-existence Christology, pointing towards what precedes his earthly life, locates his identity as Son in God's address to the world (1.2a), while the orientation of the pattern in 1.3c-4 is prospective, focusing on his status as Son in the exaltation. Given that the dominant soteriological pattern of the Epistle -- the association of the images of Sonship and High Priesthood, with its associated descriptions of Jesus as ἀρχηγόν (2.9) and πρόδρομος (6.20) --- is prospective, -- is there a tension between the two patterns in the hands of the author? This is the opinion of Hans Windisch:



'Die Christologie des Hb beruht auf der Zusammenschau zweier Wesen: 1/ des himmlischen Gottessohnes ... 2/ eines Menschen, der (etwa wie Herakles) auf Erden ein Werk verrichtet hat und zum Lohn dafür über die Engel erhoben worden ist.' 17

As we shall see, it is the function of the midrash on Melchizedek (7.1-3) to mediate between the potentially conflicting implications of the two patterns, but the Christological tension has a soteriological counterpart, as Loader points out:

'Einerseits musste Jesus gerettet, auferweckt, erhöht und als Sohn eingesetzt werden. Andererseits ist er der unsterbliche Sohn göttlichen Ursprunges, der gekommen ist, um ein Opfer für die Sünde darzubringen, und nach dem Tode in den Himmel zurückgekehrt ist.' 18

Loader's delineation of these patterns is valuable, but he ignores an important feature of the Epistle's integration of the different images: the author nowhere presents the entry of Jesus into the heavens as a return to where he was before. Indeed, if such a statement were made, it would conflict with the implications of the High Priestly image which is central to the author's validation of the superior salvation wrought by Christ: the salvific value of the death of Christ, and his entry into the presence of God, consists in the fact that it is only through his suffering that this access is gained. Jesus the High



Priest makes this offering once for all and because of this sacrifice on the Cross, a stable and trustworthy salvation is achieved (4.14-16; 7.26-28; 9.14,24-26). The constraints imposed by the author's soteriological images distinguish his treatment of the relationship of pre-existence and exaltation from that of the Fourth Gospel: in the Johannine figuration, there is a circular pattern of descent and subsequent return to heaven: 'I came from the Father and have come into the world;' again, 'I am leaving the world and going to the Father.' (16.28) 'And now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory I had with thee before the world was made.' (17.5) Hebrews, on the other hand, cannot use the circular figuration without infringing the connotations of its principal soteriological image: the right of Christ to enter into the presence of God on our behalf (9.24) is justified, not by his prior presence there before 'the days of his flesh' (5.7), but by his qualification as a holy High Priest who sacrifices himself (7.26; 9.26) and thus opens the way for his followers (6.20) to join the ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων (12.23).

The absence of a circular descent-return pattern as a thematic development within the Epistle raises questions about the accuracy of Grasser's confident appeal to a Gnostic pattern in 1.3: 'der gnostische Erlöser hat mit seiner Rückkehr zum Vater sein

Erlösungswerk vollbracht.<sup>19</sup> Apart from the difficulty of establishing such a Gnostic pattern earlier than the NT -- a difficulty which vitiates Käsemann's over-ambitious proposals too -- such a view ignores the distinctly un-Johannine justification for the entry of Christ into the true sanctuary: the vocational qualification -- ΤΕΛΕΙΩΤΙΣ -- for such an entry is found in the words of the oath in Ps. 110.4 (5.5) and in the experience of flesh and blood (2.14), culminating in the school of suffering (5.8-9)<sup>20</sup> The Johannine validation of the exaltation of Jesus with reference to his descent (3.13) proves his superiority to other ascending figures such as Moses; Hebrews neglects this argumentation in favour of the strength of its soteriological images, although the author has at his disposal all the elements of a Johannine scheme: pre-existent Sonship and Wisdom Christology (1.2-3), the taking of flesh and blood (2.14; 5.7) and the eternal attributes of having neither beginning of days nor end of life (7.3).

We have indicated that the place of the pre-existence-exaltation scheme in the Fourth Gospel is a more dominant, structural feature of the Johannine presentation than it is in Hebrews, where the same pattern although present, plays a more muted role because of its association with soteriological themes which evoke different connotations. If we take as a

summarising statement of the MYTHOS of Hebrews, that Christ alone gives access to the heavenly world through his death, then this shapes the handling of the pre-existence predication in the Epistle: the image is developed only insofar as it contributes to the author's argument. Its contribution is carefully gauged to provide support for the dominant soteriological and exaltation patterns which are the central concerns of the author.

#### 1.1-14: ESTABLISHING THE REFERENT

We shall take it that the purpose of this section is to establish Jesus as the only one who is to be spoken of in certain ways: the concern is to appropriate to Jesus as the referent, a range of predications and designations which, in other circles, were being used of other figures. In this, we are following Dey's assessment of the issue: in a Hellenistic Jewish environment, similar to that found in Philo, the question of which intermediary merits these descriptions attracts the attention of the author:

'...the author has to argue the case for the superiority of Jesus over against the world of angels, logos, wisdom, etc. with whom Jesus was identified and especially Moses who was the supreme exemplar of perfection...(the author) attempts to prove that Jesus is uniquely the one who has these attributes and titles.'<sup>21</sup>



The affirmations of the author, and the arguments he adduces from the Scriptures (v.5-13), are a way of appropriating this range of 'floating' predicates as valid designations of 'the Son' through whom God has spoken: it is to this Son that both the triple Wisdom predications and the Weglied are applied, which the author derives from his traditions. The trajectory of Wisdom speculation, applied to Jesus in Jn. 1.1, Col. 1.15f, provide the hapax legomena ἀπαύγασμα and χαρακτήρ. ἀπαύγασμα, deriving from Wis. 7.26, belongs within the NT tradition of Christ as the εἰκὼν of God (Col. 1.15; 2 Cor. 4.4): the Son is 'le reflet lumineux' of the divine being<sup>22</sup> Philo's use of this term describes human reason as a reflection of divine Reason (De opificio mundi 146), the physical world as a reflection of the archetypal world (De plantatione 50), and the human spirit as a reflection of the Spirit which emanates from God's nature (De Specialibus legibus, IV, 123). χαρακτήρ is also found within Philo's scheme of archetype-copy: the rational soul is signed with God's seal whose stamp (χαρακτήρ) is the Logos (De plantatione 18); the human spirit created in the image of God is a stamp (χαρακτήρ) of divine power (Quod deterius 83). Hebrews' use of these terms, which show parallels to the Philonic meaning, is a simple Christological metaphor, employing philosophical terms in a metaphorical way. One should be careful not to press



the distinction between philosophy and metaphor too far, especially in this genre of Wisdom speculation which delights in the poetic treatment of terms which have philosophical connotations. To say, as does Ronald Williamson, that the term *χαρακτήρ* 'has been pressed into the service of a wholly unphilosophical presentation of the doctrine of the Incarnation'<sup>23</sup> by the author of the Epistle, is to be blind to the capacity of philosophical metaphors both to function metaphorically, and to open up the topic in the direction of philosophical discourse. The philosophical categories of Platonism, for example, depend upon images and metaphors which 'give rise to thought', in Ricoeur's words: it is not clear that philosophical discourse and metaphorical discourse are such incompatible bed-fellows as Williamson seems to think.

But what of the fact that these terms are predicated of the Son, who is then taken as the subject of the saving action of making atonement for sins, and as the one who is subsequently exalted? One could say, in the language of later theology, that the Son is considered within the economy of salvation, and not as an immanent divine hypostasis: so, the application of the 'Wisdom categories is focused on the Son in his role within the economy. The absence of a developed narrative exposition of the hypostasis of Wisdom, eternally with

God, such as is found in the Johannine Prologue, would confirm that the author's attention is economically orientated, and that these Wisdom predicates are metaphorical descriptions of the Son through whom God's address to the world is given. If we bear in mind the later theological axiom which validates the identity of the economic and immanent Trinity, then we can say that it is the metaphorical descriptions of the Son in the economy which provide the basis for a consideration of the pre-existent hypostasis of the Son within the immanent Trinity: within the economy, language of pre-existence is metaphorical; in its application to the immanent Trinity, it designates a referent other than the person of Jesus. The author of Hebrews, in his handling of pre-existence language, works within the framework of the economy, and provides no examination of the relationship of the Son to God before the economy; Loader suggests that he may have envisaged this relationship as that of Wisdom to God as in the Sapiential works known to him<sup>24</sup> but he is more concerned to deal with the economy, than to ground the economy in a narration deriving from pre-existence predications such as is found in the Hypostatic treatment of the Logos in the Johannine Prologue.

In support of this view, we may draw upon a distinction made by Aelred Cody in his study of the heavenly sanctuary and liturgy in the Epistle. When 'heaven' is

opposed to 'earth' in the Epistle, the primary analogate for the distinction is, obviously, the visible heaven and the visible earth, the division of 'above' and 'below'; but the distinction is developed, through the influence of Platonic dualism, to characterise an 'axiological' distinction -- a distinction of value: 'the axiological heaven is a heaven whose perfection is distinguished against the relative imperfection of the earth.' 25 'Heaven' used axiologically, designates the status of reality, permanence, truth and value, in contrast with 'earth' which denotes an imperfect approximation to what is 'real'. Cody adds:

'...it is important to note here that the range of subjects of which "heavenly" can be predicated axiologically is not necessarily coextensive with those of which "heavenly" can be predicated cosmologically. A person, object, or action that is cosmologically "earthly" can be axiologically "celestial" -- Christ on earth, for instance, or the sacraments, or the Christian life and the earthly life of Christ Himself.' 26

Cody goes on to apply this distinction with reference to the Epistle's treatment of the divine and human natures of Christ (the anachronistic flaws in his approach prevent us from following him in this respect, but his application of the axiological distinction to the Christological realm encourages us in the use we will make of the distinction):



'...the divine nature and divine Person of Our Lord are axiologically heavenly, and His human nature is axiologically earthly until it enters heaven at the term of the Ascension.....the historical actions and sentiments of Our Lord on earth are already axiologically heavenly in that they are the acts and sentiments of a divine Person who sits at the right hand of the Father in all eternity.'<sup>27</sup>

The axiological contrast of heaven and earth uses the primary analogate of the physical heaven and earth as an image for a conceptual distinction, as a framework for comparisons and contrasts which are intellectual and philosophical: this procedure is clearly metaphorical in character. Cody's statement that a cosmologically 'earthly' person can be described as axiologically 'heavenly' is another way of saying that the imagery of heavenly status can be used to speak metaphorically of the person in a way which carries some conceptual implications concerning his identity. The metaphor of axiological 'heavenly status', applied to the earthly Jesus, is a way of speaking figuratively about his identity.

If we return to the application of the Wisdom predicates to the Son in 1.3, they can be seen as examples of this procedure, involving the attribution of axiological 'heavenly' status to the Son in whom God has spoken in these last days -- the Son in the economy of salvation. The predicates are ways of speaking figuratively about the superiority of Jesus' revelation to the imperfection ( πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως [1.1]) of God's communication through the prophets and



angels. We shall see later that Hebrews uses language of incarnation (2.14; 10.5) as a way of supporting the requirements of the soteriological imagery of the Epistle; what is noticeable in the opening section of the Epistle is the absence of such language between the affirmation of Wisdom predications and the Weglied of his death and exaltation, where, logically, it should be placed. The entire complex of Christologoumena is set within the context of God's eschatological speech  $\epsilon\upsilon\ \sigma\iota\omega\tilde{\nu}$ ; this has the effect of intensifying the referential status of Jesus as the sole bearer of this range of predicates, and of insisting that he alone, as Son, is the one to whom the double perspective of pre-existence and exaltation predications can be fittingly attributed. Loader sees this clearly and says succinctly, 'Diese Traditionen reden schliesslich alle von derselben Person!'<sup>28</sup> Precisely so: both pre-existence and exaltation traditions are predicated of the one referent.

Within this proemium, there is a fusion of pre-existence and exaltation traditions; strangely, it seems that the superiority of Jesus to Moses is affirmed with particular reference to pre-existence, and his superiority to the angels is expressed with particular reference to the exaltation, although, as we shall see, the author uses pre-existence language as a support for the superiority of the exalted Christ over

the angels. In Philo, Moses rules the world as heir (Mos. 1,155) and receives as his portion (κληρός) the whole world (op.cit., 157); his partnership with God delegates to him a share in God's authority, so that he can rightly be called Θεός (op.cit., 158-9; cf., Heb. 1.8 where Θεός is reserved for Christ); he is regarded as the maker of the archetypes (Leg.All. iii, 102), and has the divine character (χαρακτήρ) imprinted on his soul. These traditions are in view in v. 2b-c: ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμων πάντων, δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας ; although Moses is not mentioned by name, his presence as an inferior comparison is evident. When the author turns in 3.2-6 to contrast explicitly Moses and Jesus, he relies upon the tradition of Jesus as 'the son of the house', entitled to exercise his inherited authority over the creation. This theme, found too in the Fourth Gospel, as is the affirmation of pre-existence as designating the superiority of Jesus to Moses, is built upon the foundation laid in the opening section of the Epistle.

The integration of pre-existence and exaltation traditions in the opening section of the Epistle highlights the contrast with the Johannine scheme: in the Fourth Gospel, pre-existent Sonship is the determinative focus for the interpretation of the exaltation. The exaltation is explained from the perspective offered by Jesus' prior presence in the

heavens. In Hebrews, however, the exaltation is the determinative focus, and pre-existence language is used as a consonant affirmation of the significance of the exaltation. Thus, the superiority of the Son to the angels is developed in the catena with particular reference to the exaltation, and in the course of the argumentation, pre-existence themes provide a support and confirmation of what is asserted of the exalted Son. The catena is to be understood as an explication of the confessional formula of v.3, which refers to the exaltation by its allusion to Ps. 110.1, to which the author has added the spatial image ἐν ὑψηλοῖς. This motif is used elsewhere in the Epistle to express Christ's heavenly exalted status (8.1; 10.12; 12.2). The significance of the exaltation is interpreted in v.4 as the reception of a name and simultaneous superiority to the angels.

The name bestowed on him, justified by an appeal to the Resurrection testimonium, Ps. 2.7 (cf Acts 13.33), is identified as υἱός; clearly the exaltation is in view as the moment when this dignity is conferred. Are we to take it then that the author's extension of this title to the pre-existent Schöpfungsmittler (1.2) and to the earthly Jesus (5.8) is a proleptic use in which the significance of the exaltation is extended retrospectively over the preceding life, as Käsemann suggests?<sup>29</sup> Such a view may form part of a



traditionsgeschichte well before the writing of the Epistle; the author is writing at a time when the image of Sonship has acquired a range of connotations over the dimensions of pre-existence, earthly life and exalted status, and he is able to be creative in his use of Sonship as implying neither 'beginning of days nor end of life', in his comparison of Christ and Melchizedek (7.3). Moreover, the two activities of investigating the development of traditions -- showing, for example, the association of Sonship with the exaltation -- and examining how the metaphor of Sonship is applied to Jesus in NT texts are not the same thing: the aetiology of a title does not determine or limit the scope of the connotations it acquires.<sup>30</sup>

Within the catena of quotations, there is a pattern of nomenclatures appropriated to Jesus alone: Son (v.5), God (v.8) and Lord (v.10), and although the exaltation is in view, the catena also introduces, as a concomitant perspective, that of pre-existence: both exaltation traditions and pre-existence traditions are presented as descriptive frameworks which establish these designations as belonging to Jesus alone, and provide some indication as to the clarificatory implications to be derived from these titles. The conjunction of the two perspectives is seen in v.6, where the quotation 'Let all God's angels worship him' is introduced by the phrase,

ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν



οἰκουμένην. Thompson argues that οἰκουμένην should be taken to refer to the heavenly world, making it equivalent to τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν in 2.5.<sup>31</sup> This would interpret the angelic worship as a feature of the exaltation of the Son. In support of this, the designation πρωτότοκος is used of Jesus in a resurrection context in Col. 1.18 (cf Heb. 12.23: ἐκκλησία πρωτότοκων).

Yet, if Thompson's own correctly judged principle for the interpretation of the catena is adopted -- that the quotations be understood 'against the background of the argumentation of the entire epistle'<sup>32</sup>-- then a reference to the entry of Christ into the world cannot be avoided as part of the evocation of the phrase from Deut. 32.43 (LXX): to deny this would be to deny one of the obvious meanings of οἰκουμένην: the inhabited world, corresponding to κόσμον (10.5). The overlapping of the two perspectives, the entry of Christ into the world at the Incarnation, and his entry into the heavenly world at the Exaltation, affirms the superiority of the Son over the 'sons of God' (Gen. 6.2; Ps. 29.1; 89.7; Job 1.6).

If the exaltation is the dominant perspective of the first half of the catena, with the pre-existence perspective playing a consonant, but subordinate, role,

in the second half (v. 7-12) the affirmations of the role of the Son as Schöpfungsmittler (v.2) establish the theme of the permanence of the Son in contrast with the transitoriness of the creation of which the angels form part. Ps. 104.4 was used in Rabbinic writings to affirm either the transcendence of God or the power of the angels<sup>33</sup> but in our text, it is quoted to show the mutability and hence imperfection of the angels. ὁ ποιῶν refers back to the agency of the Son in creating the aeons (1.2; cf 12.27). The angels 'do not stand above the created order, as does the exalted son. As objects of God's creative activity, being made into πνεύματα and πυρὸς φλόγα they belong to the created order.'<sup>34</sup> Thompson points to the phrase κεκαυμένον πύρ in 12.18, with its negative connotation 'as representative of the material world (ψηλαφημένον) and is contrasted with the heavenly, non-material and non-transitory world.'<sup>35</sup> Contrasted with the transitory and material angels is the Son who, as θεός, possesses a throne εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος. This phrase is of central importance for the argument of Hebrews, especially with reference to its occurrence in Ps. 110.4, the confirmation of the priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek (5.5; 6.20; 7.17,21,24,28). The contrast between the unchangeable Son and the changeable angels has a counterpart in the contrast between the unchangeable Priest and the earthly and imperfect priests of the

Aaronic order: the presumption for both contrasts lies in the quality of permanence which is attributed to the Son alone, and, by extension, to Melchizedek who bears the lineaments of the Son of God (7.3).

Thus there is a parallel between the soteriological argument of the Epistle which affirms the abidingness of the salvation effected by Christ through his death, and the Christological argument which affirms his abidingness through pre-existence terminology. The permanence of the throne of the Son (v.8) is echoed in the affirmation of Ps. 102.25-27 in v.10-12: the transitoriness of the earth and the heavens belongs to the physical world -- a theme which is picked up and developed in the treatment of the earthly tent (χειροποιήτου, 9.11,24) into which the Aaronic priests enter. The destiny of the earthly world is described as μεταθεσις, in contrast with the stability of what cannot be shaken (12.27). The presence of Platonic dualistic assumptions, which assert a metaphysical contrast between the stability of the intelligible world and the mutability of the created world, here provide a philosophical support for the author's argument which has been predominantly 'literary' in character: he works primarily with patterns of contrasting features between Christ and the priests of the Aaronic order, based on the ability of Christ to fulfil the requirements of the priestly



function better than the Levitical priesthood. This argumentation is given philosophical support through a dualistic contrast of the comparative metaphysical status of what is achieved in the present age (9.9), within the order of creation (9.11) by the repeated sacrifices of the Aaronic priesthood (10.11), and the achievement of Christ in entering the heavenly sanctuary not made with hands and therefore permanent (9.24), to make a single sacrifice for sins (10.12; 9.26).

From a different perspective, this contrast is presented in the application of Ps. 102.25-27 in 1.10-12: the earth and the heavens, the places of angelic mutation (1.7) are contrasted with the Son: αὐτοὶ ἀπολοῦνται, σὺ δὲ διαμένεις... σὺ δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ.

The quotation of the psalm thus establishes the permanence of the exalted Son by invoking the earlier description of the Son as Schöpfungsmittler: the pre-existence theme is recalled here in order to support the author's treatment of the exalted Son by providing a Scriptural and figurative image for the theme of the permanence of the Son, which will be central to the author's soteriological argument in the body of the Epistle. The stability of the Son contrasts with the order of creation which ὡς ἑμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται (v.11). The same verb is



used in 8.13 to affirm the inferiority and obsolescence of the old covenant and its dispensation. Thompson rightly comments that the author has read Ps. 102 'with Platonic assumptions in order to interpret the exaltation'<sup>36</sup> but he minimises the significance of the appeal to the theme of pre-existence which distinguishes the 'heavenly' character of the Son, and his consequent permanence, from the 'earthly', and evanescent, status of the created order in which are included angels and the physical world. The affirmation of the permanence of the Son in his exalted status is justified by the supporting motif of the pre-existence of the Son, and the metaphysical argument, which is used later in the Epistle to contrast the priesthood of Jesus and the Aaronic priesthood, is here given a figurative expression in the portrayal of the Son as the addressee of God's words in the Psalm. What we see in both the exaltation and pre-existence traditions is the author's concern to use their formulations in order to provide a source of imagery which can stand as a support for the metaphysical argument he adduces in the Epistle. In turn, this metaphysical dimension is rooted in the figurative expressions of the permanence of Christ, both as pre-existent Son and as priest according to the perpetual order of Melchizedek. The catena of quotations in 1.5-13 is presented with an eye on the philosophical argumentation in the body of the Epistle

which centres on the abidingness of Christ in his exalted status as Son and High Priest and which is developed in conjunction with a form of Platonic dualism.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, unlike the Fourth Gospel, which in the Prologue provides a presentation of the prior presence of the Word in heaven, thereby enabling the exaltation to be presented as a return to the heavenly realm, Hebrews uses pre-existence predications in the opening chapter as a consonant affirmation of a principle which is developed philosophically in the central argument of the Epistle, namely the abidingness of the Son. Significantly, the author's formula for the permanence of Christ in 13.8 picks up the phrase from Ps. 102.27, quoted in 1.12:  $\sigma\upsilon\ \delta\epsilon\ \delta\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ ; but in the summarising formula, the theme of divine mutability from Middle Platonism is Christologically developed over the three dimensions of temporality. The two horizons enclosing the earthly life of Christ, pre-existence and the exaltation, are aspects of the metaphysical permanence in which he is  $\delta\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ . This phrase surely evokes the perspective of the supra-mundane stability of the Son offered in the opening chapter, and  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\iota\nu$  has been a refrain throughout the Epistle characterising the permanence of Christ's exaltation and intercession in heaven. Both figurative patterns are brought together to frame a philosophical and

ontological designation of Christ as ὁ αὐτός. Thus the combination of the figurative patterns of pre-existence and exaltation -- both involving images of Jesus as Son-Wisdom, on the one hand, and as Son-High Priest, on the other, support the author's philosophical assertion of the permanence of Jesus as the divine One who abides. In this respect, pre-existence language is the figurative expression of the philosophical idea which it suggests and supports: in Ricoeur's words, it is an expression which 'gives rise to thought', and issues in a primarily conceptual articulation of the permanence of Christ through the author's integration of the notion with Hellenistic philosophy.

#### The Figure of Melchizedek

The Christological pattern we have identified in the Epistle is a concentration on the Exaltation, which then finds support in the implications of pre-existence statements; the resultant pattern then centres on the metaphysical permanence of Christ as the one who abides and whose salvation is trustworthy and stable. If we take this as a pattern which describes the author's reshaping of the Christological traditions he inherits, then his treatment of the figure of Melchizedek becomes more intelligible. One of the puzzles concerning the midrash in 7.1-3 is why the author introduces such a



positive assessment of this shadowy figure, in terms which approximate him to Christ almost exactly, when he already has a convincing argument about the superiority of Christ to the Levitical priesthood: why does he then conflate the features of Christ and Melchizedek, when in other parts of the Epistle he goes to great lengths to distinguish Christ from other figures? Moreover, there are questions about the author's understanding of the identity of Melchizedek which centre on the possibility that he regarded Melchizedek as an angelic or heavenly figure, made manifest in the Old Testament, as a forerunner of the Son of God. In the last century, Franz Bleek took the series of expressions in 7.3 -- ἀπαύτως, ἀμήτως, etc. -- as a plain indication of the heavenly status of Melchizedek:

'We propose that Melchizedek was placed on earth and later removed directly by divine omnipotence, as an incarnation of a divine spirit or, at least, of a heavenly being.'<sup>38</sup>

Tholuck raises the objection to this approach which would present the author of the Epistle as affirming the eternal existence of a figure alongside Christ: 'Who is able to believe that a Christian apostle would attribute an eternal existence to Melchizedek in the same way as to God's only begotten Son?'<sup>39</sup>



This discussion has been revived in the present century through the discovery of the Qumran texts, in which Melchizedek appears to be an angelic figure who engages in eschatological conflict with the forces of Belial. M. de Jonge and A.S. van der Woude have proposed that 11 QMelch cast light upon the author's statements about Melchizedek:

'It seems much easier to assume that the author really meant what he wrote. On the evidence of 11 QMelch, the most plausible inference is that he regarded Melchizedek as an (arch-)angel, who appeared to Abraham long ago.'<sup>40</sup>

In order to dissuade his readers from elevating Melchizedek above Christ, the author subordinates the OT figure to Christ with the phrase ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ. The difficulty about the coherence of this opinion is that it would seem that the author's right hand does not know what his left is doing: in the opening chapter of the Epistle, he distances Jesus from the status of the angels, and refuses to allow any similarities, whereas in the Melchizedek midrash, he deliberately approximates Jesus and the angel Melchizedek. Horton's judgment is accurate on this point, to the effect that if the author had known of the sort of Melchizedek speculation found at Qumran, 'he might well have rejected Melchizedek as a type of the Christ.'<sup>41</sup> However, the

Qumran text shows evidence of a speculation about Melchizedek as a heavenly figure in Jewish circles distinct from the Hellenistic treatment of Philo and Josephus; it does not seem possible, however, to be more specific about a relationship between Qumran and Hebrews, since attempts to assimilate the two texts come up against the rampart of the author's explicit denial of angelic comparison in Chapter 1. 42

Nor are the attempts to establish a pre-Christian Vorlage any more convincing: Theissen's reconstruction involves the replacement of ἀφωμοιωμένους δὲ τῷ ὄντι τοῦ θεοῦ by κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου from v.16, the elimination of the etymologies of v.2, and the addition of sections from vv.25-26. 43 Such an explanation may be ingenious, but the complexity of the solution is forced, especially when simpler explanations are possible. The midrash is more easily explained as a composite mosaic, from different backgrounds, constructed by the author himself as part of his interpretation of the Scriptural texts.

The midrash develops two principal characteristics of Melchizedek: his priesthood and his 'eternity': attempts to relate Hebrews to Qumran focus on the second of these at the expense of the former -- hence the hypothesis that the author was familiar with a non-Christian tradition which had already developed a

thematic Vorlage similar to that used in 7.1-3. The difficulty of identifying such a foundation, and the equally daunting task of explaining how the author could tolerate such a positive comparison of Jesus with a, presumably competing, figure, point in the direction of regarding the author's account of Melchizedek's eternity as an explication of the similarity between Jesus and Melchizedek which is initially focused on the theme of priesthood. Once Jesus' priesthood is explained in terms of Melchizedek's priesthood, then the description of Melchizedek can be construed through a transfer of the lineaments of Christ to the figure of Melchizedek: a double pattern, then, in which the image of Jesus' priesthood takes on the features of Melchizedek's priesthood, and the image of the person of Melchizedek takes on the features of the person of the Son of God. The hapax legomenon in the phrase ἀφωμοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ (v.3), if taken in an active sense ('made like'), records the process by which the second stage of the approximation of Jesus and Melchizedek occurs. The author sees the priesthood of Christ as best described as a Melchizedekian τάξις which continues for ever (μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ δληνεκές [v.3]), and as part of the same process, the metaphor can be developed further by developing the similarity so that Melchizedek's sudden appearance in the Scriptures can permit the transfer of predicates from the Son of God to the figure of Melchizedek.



The most obvious point de départ for such a treatment is in the Hellenistic Jewish tradition exemplified in Philo and Josephus: Philo, in Leg.All. III, 79-82, allegorises on Melchizedek's name and office: he is 'king of peace' and 'the righteous king'. The presence of similar etymologising in Heb. 7.2 indicates the likelihood of the author's dependence on a Philonic tradition -- elsewhere in the Epistle, he shows no interest in this form of etymological interpretation, so he is likely to be dependent on others for this unique instance<sup>44</sup> Philo takes Melchizedek to be a representation of the Logos, and in Leg.All. 79-82 subjects him to an allegorical interpretation in which, as Williamson points out, he moves 'a very long way from the thought of the historical or legendary figure of Melchizedek; Melchizedek is not even an example of a certain type of conduct, for he is no more than a symbol.' What lies behind Philo's and Josephus' interpretation of Melchizedek is their interest in him as the first priest mentioned in the Scriptures: it is this which enables Philo to present him as the exemplar of an 'unlearned and untutored priesthood' (De Cong, 99), and therefore as the image of the Logos whose knowledge is given directly from God, independently of human agency. Horton comments that the silence of Scripture about the origin of Melchizedek's ministry enables Josephus to present him as 'the first to do priestly service to God' (War vi, 438), and Philo to



develop his allegorising Logos-interpretation, and it is this same silence about the life and parentage of Melchizedek which gives the author of Hebrews the scope to develop the similarity with the Son of God.

Significantly, however, the author goes beyond Philo's interpretation of the Genesis text by reading it in conjunction with Ps. 110.4, and it is in this verse that the author's interest lies: τὸ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ. The quality of the priesthood lies in its permanence: in 7.3, Melchizedek μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές.

In the light of the circularity between the stage of describing the priesthood of Jesus as having the features of Melchizedek's priesthood, particularly its permanence, and the stage of describing Melchizedek as having the features of the Son of God, the discussion about the author's understanding of the status of Melchizedek gains some badly needed clarity. In Thompson's opinion, the author brings together those features of Gen. 14.18-20 and Ps. 110.4 'which are useful for his claim that Melchizedek is a divine figure'<sup>45</sup> Because of the use of the 'divine predicates ἀπάτωρ and ἀμήτωρ,' in both Hebrews and Philo, he argues that 'for both Hebrews and Philo, Melchizedek is a heavenly being'<sup>46</sup> This approach, which ignores the metaphorical basis of the comparison in which Jesus is

seen in his priesthood as Melchizedekian, and, in turn, Melchizedek is seen as the eternal Son of God in his 'power of indissoluble life' (cf, 7.16), implies that we are dealing with a straightforward and unmixed comparison between two individuals who, even before the comparison is developed, possess the features which justify the simile. In which case, the theological problem posed by Tholuck in the last century remains untouched by considerations of the literary devices at work in the midrash: Tholuck asks, 'Is Melchizedek, for the author of Hebrews, alongside Christ or subordinate to him?'<sup>47</sup> We would reject such a question, for it ignores the transference of the features of the Son of God to the figure of Melchizedek as part of the descriptive process glimpsed through the hermeneutical clues the author offers concerning what he is doing: Ἰσχυρωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ (7.3) and κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα μελχισέδεκ ἀνίσταται ἱερεὺς ἕτερος (7.15), expressly state the approximation of Melchizedek to Christ and the approximation of Christ to Melchizedek -- the double description of each in terms of the other.

The exchange of features between Melchizedek and Christ is dissolved by Hanson who regards the author as deliberately withholding from his readers the truth of what he 'really' wants to say to them, namely that Melchizedech is identical with Christ:

'The author believed that Melchizedech was the pre-existent Christ, (but) did not say so...because he did not quite have the courage to do so. It was too strong meat for his hearers...He would perhaps prefer his readers to draw for themselves the conclusion that he was aiming at.' <sup>48</sup>

There are no controls on such an interpretation: if what the author means to say contradicts what he actually does say, how can one distinguish his intended meaning from his explicit statements? But Hanson, although he takes the argument too far, has identified, perhaps without intending it, the character of the metaphorical procedure involved in the author's midrash: Melchizedek is portrayed as having the features of the Son of God, and the most striking of these features is the assertion that he is without beginning or end of days. The basis for this assertion is clearly the presence of εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα in Ps. 110.4, evoked in 7.3d. Elsewhere in the Epistle, this is the controlling philosophical notion applied to the status of Christ, as we have seen. Here, too, in parallel with the Christological figurative predication of pre-existence, there is a figurative treatment of the permanence of Melchizedek in terms of pre-existence predication. This is done through a transfer of an aspect from Jesus to Melchizedek, so that for the purposes of the author's midrash, Melchizedek is seen as Christ, in order to support the dominant theme of Christ being seen as Melchizedekian in his priestly ministry.



The phrases ἀπάτωρ, ἀμήτωρ, ἀγενεαλόγητος apply first of all to the author's argument for the non-genealogical basis of Melchizedek's priesthood, which coheres with the author's assertion of Jesus' descent from a non-priestly family (7.14): negatively, there is no necessary connection between priestly status and physical lineage. Positively, the absence of priestly genealogical descent opens the way to considering the status of priesthood in relation to a permanent form of life<sup>49</sup> The author develops this implication in 7.3b, and returns to it in 7.8: in contrast with the Levitical priests, described here as ἀποθυήσκοντες ἄνθρωποι, it is said of Melchizedek ὅτι ζῆ. The contrast is repeated in 7.16, where the Levitical priests are appointed κατὰ νόμον ἐντολῆς σαρκίνης and Jesus who is κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ is established κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκατάλυτου. This distinction is yet another instance of the contrast the author uses between the transitoriness, and imperfection, of the material order, and the permanence of the divine order. The repetition of this contrast, which elsewhere in the Epistle involves the contrast between Jesus and the lower order of created reality, here involves Melchizedek, on the side of Christ, as it were, contrasted with an earthly (σαρκίνη, 7.16) world. It is precisely the transfer of the features of Christ on to Melchizedek which accounts for the author's argument



here: Melchizedek is metaphorically seen as Christ -- he is not seen as an angel, since if this were the comparison at stake, the angelic Melchizedek would be relegated to the sphere of imperfect and transtitory reality, which would contradict the Psalmist's attribution of permanence to his priesthood. Thus it is less likely that the author develops a comparison based on an already formulated account of the angelic status of Melchizedek, than that he has developed an account of Melchizedek based on the transfer of attributes from Christ to him: this process is inherently metaphorical, involving the redescription of a referent by viewing him as another referent. This approach is to be preferred to Horton's explanation, in which Christ is the type and Melchizedek the antitype:

'The 'antitypology' of the author involves taking an earthly entity and contrasting it or connecting it to its heavenly counterpart or type.... We gain an understanding of Christ's priesthood, the eternal priesthood, by understanding the features of the earthly perpetual priesthood of Melchizedek. Each significant feature of the antitype is to be found in its true form in the type.'<sup>50</sup>

This is true as far as it goes, but Horton does not consider sufficiently the second part of the process, the way in which the account of Melchizedek is shaped by the author's view of Christ: he fails, for example, to consider the implications of the transfer of

'neither beginning of days nor end of life (7.3), and of the assertion 'that he lives' (7.8) to Melchizedek. The interaction and dependence of the two descriptive schemes -- from Melchizedek to Jesus, and from Jesus to Melchizedek -- must be acknowledged and characterised as metaphorical. It is a feature of metaphorical predication to bring together two distinct subjects, and to engage in a description in which there is a tension between identity and difference: the two are not fused, as Hanson proposes for this midrash, nor are they juxtaposed as in a simile, as Horton suggests, with his view of 'antitypology'; rather, one is seen as the other for the purposes of the descriptive possibilities which ensue.

The conceptual basis for the approximation of Christ and Melchizedek is the presence of the theme of permanence in Ps. 110.4, which can be associated with the permanence of Christ as Son (5.5-6). The midrash develops a figurative expression of this theme, as in the rest of the Epistle, by bringing together the two horizons of pre-existence and exaltation (7.3), and applying them to Melchizedek, thus intensifying the strength of the primary Christological concern of the author, namely, the possibility of associating Christ's priesthood with a non-genealogical and permanent priesthood associated with Melchizedek. By a 'Christological' description of Melchizedek, the author gives himself greater justification for his 'Melchizedekian' description of Christ.

The potentially confusing elevation of Melchizedek to the eternal level of the Son of God -- raising the question about whether there are two such figures -- can be defused only by appreciating the metaphorical exchange of attributes between the two figures. What is the role of the midrash in the Epistle? We have indicated that it prepares and establishes the ground for the treatment of Jesus as High Priest, and this point is well known among the commentators. An additional point can be made: the midrash exhibits in miniature the pattern of Christological argument expressed in the Epistle:

1/ the controlling conceptual and metaphysical notion of permanence is here given figurative expression: the phrase is linked with a permanence of life, described in v.3b, and Melchizedek is portrayed with reference to the horizons of pre-existence and exaltation, just as in the Christology of the Epistle, Christ's 'abidingness' is grounded in the same figurative patterns.

2/ the midrash exhibits the same conjunction of pre-existence and exaltation patterns as the Epistle's Christology: permanence of priesthood (an exaltation image) is clarified and developed by an appeal to pre-existence patterns ('neither beginning of days..'). This mirrors the treatment in the opening



chapter of the use of pre-existence language to support the treatment of the dominant theme of the exaltation. Confirmation of permanence in priesthood (exaltation) is given in the deployment of pre-existence categories.

3/ The communicatio idiomatum between Christ and Melchizedek is a metaphorical interchange which reflects the Christological interchange of pre-existence and exaltation perspectives. Just as Christ is viewed within the double perspectives of pre-existence and exaltation, so this pattern permits Melchizedek to be viewed in the same way. In this sense, the figure of Melchizedek in the midrash is the metaphorical embodiment of the Christology of the Epistle: his permanence of priesthood can be figuratively expressed through the use of pre-existence predications, since the Christology of the Epistle works in this way too. The midrash is the symbolic mediation of the perspectives of pre-existence and exaltation which characterise the Christology of the Epistle.

There remains one final piece of the jigsaw to be put in place: the passages where incarnational, or quasi-incarnational, language is used to describe the significance of the humanity of Christ (2.10ff; 5.7-10; 10.5ff). These sections of the Epistle are among the most profoundly appreciative reflections on



this theme in the NT. As before, our contrast will be with tendencies within the Fourth Gospel, where there is an incipient docetism as a result of the tension between 'heavenly status' and enfleshment, which threatens the integrity of the Incarnation. The Gospel itself is not docetic, but it is no accident that it gave rise to conflict within the Johannine community between those who affirmed the reality of the enfleshment of the Son of God, and those who denied that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (1 Jn.4.2).

The Gospel invests the humanity of the Christ with the glory of the pre-existent Son: the translucently glorious character of the epiphany of the Logos-made-flesh is affirmed after the Incarnational formula of 1.14a: 'we beheld his glory'. Käsemann is right to say that the emphasis within the Gospel is on this theme rather than on the implied lowliness of the Logos' fleshly 'becoming'.<sup>51</sup> The verb ἐγένετο is to be taken as denoting, not a kenotic assumption of a condition of humiliation, but rather a manifestation as flesh, without diminishment of glory in any way. The evangelist does not need an episode of transfiguration in his narrative, since the Johannine Jesus is semper transfiguratus.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, the eschatological vision of God is anticipated in the humanity of Christ: 'whoever sees me, sees the Father' (14.8). Isaiah's testimony about the unbelief of the people can be

justified 'because he saw his (Christ's) glory and spoke of him' (12.41), with the suggestion that whenever God's glory was seen in his revelation to the OT visionaries, it was the same glory of Christ that was seen then, that is now witnessed by his disciples.

Hebrews, on the other hand, follows the pattern of the Philippians hymn, in which the human experience of Jesus is an abasement of the one who 'was in the form of God', but who is now 'in the form of a slave', obedient even unto death on a cross, and it is because of this obedience that he is exalted (  $\delta\iota\omicron\kappa\alpha\iota\ \delta\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\nu\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\epsilon\rho\acute{\upsilon}\psi\omega\sigma\epsilon\nu$ , Phil. 2.9). The presence of a causal element, expressed by the word  $\delta\iota\omicron$ , establishes the exaltation as dependent, not upon the prior presence in the heavenly realm, but upon the character of the intervening earthly life. The events of the earthly life are morally and soteriologically significant events which effect the subsequent exalted status of Jesus: his self-sacrifice and obedience in this kenotic mode bring about his exaltation above the angels. In this pattern it is the moral acts of Jesus during his earthly life which establish the character of his exaltation, rather than his initial possession of this dignity: indeed the soteriological value of his exaltation is dependent upon the decision of the one 'who is in the form of God' not to cling to this status, but to take the path of becoming  $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\eta\kappa\omicron\omicron\varsigma\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\chi\rho\iota\ \theta\alpha\nu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron\upsilon$ .

We have already indicated the dependence on the Philippians pattern of the opening summary in Heb. 1.3-4, but the pattern is also the basis of the Epistle's High Priestly Christology, in that the earthly life of Jesus is the period of preparation in which Jesus acquires the qualities associated with an efficacious ministry of intercession. Consequently, in accordance with the demands of this soteriological scheme, in which the exaltation is considered primarily with regard to the earthly life, the use of pre-existence language is different from the Johannine presentation: in the Epistle, the act of Incarnation is considered in relation to the features of the earthly life which validate the efficacy of his exalted ministry. There is an explicit emphasis on the way in which the act of taking flesh and blood (2.14), the entry of Christ into the world (10.5) establishes the conditions for an effective High Priestly ministry at the exaltation. Far from the Incarnation being an event of inherent glory, it is rather the way by which the pre-existent Son qualifies himself to exercise a High Priestly ministry on behalf of those who follow him into the sanctuary (10.19).

One can view this formulation as the resolution of the problem of how to integrate the two descriptive accounts inherited by the author -- the pattern of pre-existence-incarnation, and the Philippians-like



pattern of obedience rewarded by exaltation. Each pattern has its own particular range of connotations and implications: for example, as we have indicated, the pre-existence-incarnation pattern is capable of being specified in two ways, the epiphanic and the kenotic. The author of the Epistle chooses the latter in order to achieve an integration of this pattern with the requirements of the High Priestly soteriology he proposes. Thus his treatment of the Incarnation is orientated towards Jesus' qualification ( *τελείωσις* ) to exercise the High Priestly sacrificial and intercessory role.

Earlier in our study, we pointed to the distinction between the Johannine interpretation of the exaltation as a return to the pre-existent heavenly union with the Father, and Hebrews' use of pre-existence as a consonant affirmation which supports the affirmation of the exaltation and permanence of Christ. We must also point to the un-Johannine way in which the events of Christ's earthly life are taken as determinative of the character of the exaltation of Jesus as compassionate High Priest. Käsemann's trenchant observation that in the Fourth Gospel, the Logos changes, not his condition, but only his location<sup>53</sup> with the consequence that the exaltation is, again, a change of location, cannot be laid at the feet of the author of Hebrews, for whom Jesus' identification with his brothers (2.12) is invested with consequences for the exalted ministry of Jesus the High Priest (2.17-18).



The process of cohering two distinct descriptive schemes, and of making explicit the implications to be drawn from the integrated picture, requires that features be highlighted in one scheme which are capable of contributing to the requirements of the other scheme. In our chapter on metaphor, we introduced the notion of a 'root metaphor': an organising metaphorical scheme which shapes the perception of a particular matter, by drawing out certain features, and ignoring others. The author's High Priestly image, in its relationship to pre-existence-Incarnation, acts in this way, in that it determines the interpretative connotations to be derived from pre-existence-Incarnation. The initial choice of the kenotic, rather than the epiphanic, treatment of pre-existence-Incarnation, is followed by an explicit presentation of the Incarnation as facilitative of the process by which Jesus becomes a compassionate High Priest.

Thus, in 10.5ff, the intention of Christ, εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον is expressed in the words of Ps. 40.6-8: God's refusal of sacrificial animals, and hence the inadequacy of Levitical sacrifices (10.4), is linked with his pleasure in accepting the offering of a σῶμα, sacrificed in obedience to his will. The entry of Christ into the world is seen as the preparation of a body which can be offered in obedience by Christ to

the Father (9.14,28). The conditions of such a sacrifice are given in the Incarnation: it is in order to make this offering for sins, that the Incarnation occurs, characterised ab initio by the obedient self-sacrifice of Christ. The redundant discussion of when Christ became High Priest, is undercut by the assertion that the Incarnation is directed towards this end: the intentionality of the Incarnation is the intentionality of Priesthood. Cody's comment is accurate: 'The Incarnation has taken place that the Son of God may have a humanity with which to begin the climactic sacrifice on Calvary...'<sup>54</sup>

The organising power of the High Priestly image, in its relationship to the pre-existence-Incarnation scheme, is shown in the influence of the two characteristics of High Priesthood which the author adduces in 5.2-3: the capacity to offer sacrifice for sin, and since he himself has known weakness, he is compassionate on those who are weak. These characteristics are used to interpret the Incarnation of Christ: the first characteristic of High Priesthood is presented as the reason for the Incarnation in 10.5ff, and the second characteristic is the dominant concern in the interpretation of the Incarnation in 2.10ff and 5.7-10.

The latter passage has been shown to belong to a chiastic structure within 5.1-10, in which the 'necessary quality' of a High Priest in vv.2-3 corresponds to the acquisition of this quality by Jesus in vv.7-8: he is able to be compassionate to the weak, as a High Priest, and the evidence for this is given in the cameo of vv.7-8.<sup>55</sup> These verses are an exegetically complex unit, with considerable disagreement about the original unity of the section. Brandenburger draws a sharp line between v.7 and vv.8-9, and argues that v.7 was formulated, not on the basis of a Gethsemane tradition -- the most obvious historical basis for its statements -- but as a confession of a Hellenistic Jewish community, proclaiming God's action in rescuing Jesus from death, based on the terminology of Ps. 116 (LXX 114).<sup>56</sup> The author then brought it into contact with vv.8-9, whose structure follows that of the Philippians hymn: 'Son though he was' corresponds to 'though he was in the form of God'.

Jeremias, on the other hand, argues that v.8 is a parenthesis introduced as a clarification of the difficult phrase, εἰσακουσθεῖς ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας, which should be taken to denote Christ's piety, rather than his fear of death. The meaning would be 'and was heard because of his piety (although Son, he learned obedience in suffering) and was brought to perfection'.<sup>57</sup> If this interpretation is preferred,



then an important contrast can be made with the pattern of the Philippians hymn, which, as we have said, lies at the root of Hebrews' High Priestly Christology. In the hymn, obedience is regarded as the act of the pre-existent One who by emptying himself, follows the path that leads to death on the cross. Hebrews incorporates this notion in its quotation from Ps. 40 in 10.5ff, but in 5.8, the notion is rather of the Son learning obedience in his suffering, which is a different notion from Philippians' presentation of suffering as the consequence of his obedience. Ulrich Luck distinguishes the two treatments:

'Durch die Parenchese ἐμαθεν ἀφ' ὧν ἐπαθεν wird der Zusammenhang mit dem Leiden in der Welt als konstitutiv für diesen Gehorsam angesehen: Das Leiden in der durch Gottferne bestimmten Welt ist nicht nur die Folge seines Gehorsams, sondern in ihm kommt der Sohn zum Gehorsam. Die Schwerpunktverlagerung gegenüber Phil.ii 6ff und Rom.v 12ff ist nicht zu übersehen.'<sup>58</sup>

Whence this shift of emphasis? Clearly, one of the factors is the influence of the author's parenesis on his Christological interpretation. The climax of the list of exemplars of faith -- viewed as steadfastness in waiting on God -- is the presentation of Christ, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who endures hostility against himself because of the joy set before him (12.1-3). The Sapiential theme of the Lord chastising



his sons is invoked as a supporting argument derived from the Christological presentation. The presence in v.8 of the common word play ἐμαθεν / ἐπαθεν <sup>59</sup> shows that this concern is operative in the verse's association of sonship and formation-through-suffering.

In the light of the author's affirmation of the obedience of Christ in coming into the world, and in the light of his statement about the sinlessness of Christ (4.15), the phrase in 5.8 cannot be taken in the sense of educative correction which it denotes in the Sapiential tradition. Moreover, the context of the verse, in chiastic apposition to the theme of compassion for the weak (5.2), indicates that what is learned by Christ in his self-offering enables him 'to administer its benefits sympathetically' <sup>60</sup> The fact that Christ, as Son, responded in faith (εὐλαβεία) to God, in the condition of weakness, enables him to be compassionate in his Priestly intercession to those who are in similar straits (2.14-16). So the theme of kenotic obedience even to death on the Cross, which the author inherited, is developed in the direction of the author's Christology of Jesus as πρόδρομος (6.20) and ἀρχηγός (12.2) with its related parenetic value, and in the direction of fulfilling the requirements of the High Priestly image. The verse has its roots in the Philippians tradition, and this remains the most obvious syntactical and thematic parallel to the verse,

but other elements in the author's Christological repertoire prevent us from seeing in the phrase  $\kappa\alpha\iota\pi\epsilon\rho\ \omega\acute{\nu}\ \upsilon\iota\acute{o}\varsigma$  a repetition of Philipians'  $\acute{\omicron}\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \mu\omicron\rho\phi\eta\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\upsilon\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\alpha\rho\chi\omega\nu$  (2.6). 5.8 still retains the notion of pre-existent Sonship within its implicative complex, but this theme must be set alongside the complementary resonances of Jesus, the exemplar of steadfastness, and Jesus, the compassionate High Priest.

The mutual influence of pre-existence and High Priestly patterns is not confined to the action of the High Priesthood metaphor on the connotations of pre-existence language; it works the other way too, and the author uses pre-existence themes to determine the interpretation of High Priesthood. Earlier in our study, we approved of Dey's opinion that the author needed to show the superiority of Jesus to a range of figures who were exemplars of perfection in certain Hellenistic Jewish circles. Dey argues that within such circles, perfection was viewed as withdrawal from the realm of the sensible and the physical. The Christian kerygma, proclaiming the suffering and salvific death of Jesus, would raise questions about whether such an involvement on the part of Jesus could be reconciled with affirmations of his superiority, since, almost by definition, to suffer and die implies imperfection:

'The Christian belief that the earthly Jesus, the man of flesh and blood, is the basis of salvation would have implied in this tradition imperfection rather than perfection/salvation...For the author of Hebrews, therefore, it was essential to connect the earthly Jesus of flesh and blood -- his suffering and death -- with the accomplishment of perfection/salvation (2.10). In terms of this tradition, it would have been necessary to show that Jesus himself became perfect in such a state of earthly existence -- since that would have been under question. -- and accomplished perfection/salvation for others.' 61

This is an important point, but Dey's consideration of the matter omits the place of pre-existence themes in the author's account of why Christ is involved in the realm of imperfection in the first place. His failure to include the perspective of pre-existence leads him to interpret 5.7ff as presenting Christ as 'the one who has achieved salvation for himself (=perfection) through ardent prayer and suffering, i.e., salvation from death and perfection through the education of suffering...Any satisfactory interpretation of Hebrews must explain this odd feature, namely, that Jesus himself needed to be saved/perfected'. 62

Against this interpretation of 5.7, we must point to the author's affirmations of the obedience of Christ at the Incarnation (10.5ff), his subsequent sinlessness, and the value for others, and not for himself, of his



self-offering (2.17; 6.20; 9.24; 10.12). In addition, there is the portrayal of the Incarnation as the decision, from the perspective of pre-existence, of Christ to share in the flesh and blood of those whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren. His entry into the realm of suffering and death is portrayed as a free, compassionate decision to identify with those who are subject to bondage (2.14-15). Unlike them, Christ enters this realm from outside, in order to become for them a High Priest who has suffered as they have, in all respects. The only necessity for this is found, not in Christ's own need to achieve salvation, but in the fittingness of God's decision to bring many sons to glory by perfecting Christ through his suffering (ἐπρέπει γὰρ αὐτῷ... [2.10]).

The presence of the perspective permitted by pre-existence thus casts its influence on the interpretation of the suffering and death of Jesus: it safeguards the theme of the gratuitousness of God's action, and the freedom of Christ in undergoing the experience of suffering, since, from this perspective, his suffering is prompted by no necessity other than the decision of God to act in this way for our salvation. Christ suffers, not because of an intramundane necessity to wrestle with the fear of death, nor because he is in need of purification through chastisement, but because God wills to save



'many sons' through him (2.10). The use of the pre-existence perspective in 2.10ff is the Christological correlative of God's freedom in electing that salvation should be brought through the one who chooses to become identified with humanity and humanity's experience. In this way, the perspective avoids the possible implication that Jesus himself needs to be saved, and thus it modifies the interpretation of Christ's presence in the realm of imperfection and suffering.

The important section 2.10-18 has been interpreted by Käsemann and Theissen as Gnostic in character, involving the theme of the purportedly pre-Christian Gnostic redeemer and the similarly pre-existent redeemed brethren. The argument centres on v.11, and on the meaning of the common origin ἐξ ἐνός. The phrase, if taken to refer to an origin 'in God' -- which is not obvious -- would describe the common origin of the Son and the sons, the sanctifier and the sanctified, as pre-existent souls or spirits (cf: 12.9, πατήρ πνευμάτων). Käsemann considers the possibility that 2.11 carries a tradition that 'bei Gott ist nicht nur das Ziel, sondern auch die ursprüngliche Heimat der Erlösten.<sup>63</sup>' His view that Jesus becomes Son at the exaltation, and that consequently the sonship of the redeemed is located in their salvation, seems to pose problems for Käsemann's desire

to speak of a pre-existent relationship between the Son and the sons in this context. However, he considers the possibility that underlying the verse there is a Gnostic view:

'An dieser Stelle bricht das gnostische Mythologem durch, das metaphysisch das Erlösungsgeschehen aus der gemeinsamen himmlischen Präexistenz von Erlöser und Erlösten ableitet.' <sup>64</sup>

Theissen appeals to the Epistle's concern with angels as indicating the object of πάντες in v.11: 'Das πάντες in ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες umschliesst alle Geister. Ein Teil von ihnen ist gefallen.' <sup>65</sup> He reads the Epistle's discussion of the angelic theme in the most unusual way:

'Die Rivalität von Engeln und Menschen ist die Rivalität des verlorenen Sohnes und des zu Hause gebliebenen -- in mythologische Sprache übertragen. Aber beide finden wieder zusammen in der ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων.' <sup>66</sup>

Theissen appeals to 12.9 as an indication that the Christological taking of flesh and blood (2.14) parallels the act of pre-existent souls ( πνευμάτων ) in their involvement in the material world:

'Es lässt sich kaum bestreiten, dass in 2,11 und 14; 12.9 und 13,3 die Präexistenz des menschlichen Selbst vorausgesetzt ist und die daraus resultierende dualistische Anthropologie.'<sup>67</sup>

However, it is debatable whether such an extension of the pre-existence theme to humanity is exegetically defensible: there is no indication within the Epistle that the commonality between Christ and the saved involves their prior common origin as souls or spirits before their common 'days of flesh' (5.7). Loader points to the difference in tenses between the aorist of Christ's act (μετέσχευ) and the perfect (κεκοινῶννηκευ) which designates the condition of the sons' existence.<sup>68</sup> In addition, the thrust of the passage is to affirm that it is in the sharing of earthly existence that the commonality, necessary for an efficacious exalted ministry, is established. Because of this emphasis, it is unlikely that ἐξ ἐνός is to be taken as meaning 'from God': the parallel phrase in Acts 17.26, meaning 'from Adam', and the different prepositional usage in Rom. 5.12 (δι' ἐνός ἀνθρώπου), combined with the Adam typology of 2.6-8, offer an alternative interpretation.<sup>69</sup> However, the undeveloped character of the Adam theme in the Epistle, and the presence in 2.16 of the reference to the 'seed of Abraham', linked with the author's insistence on the Jewish, non-priestly lineage of Jesus



(7.14) make an intra-temporal reference to descent from Abraham the preferable interpretation<sup>70</sup> The theme of the paternity of Abraham is expressed in 11.12: ἀφ' ἑνὸς ἐγεννήθησαν.

If the unity between Christ and his brethren is found in their common Abrahamic lineage -- thereby perhaps pointing to the Jewish Christian character of the addressees -- then this is a delineation which excludes the angels (v.16). Moreover it intensifies the significance of the human experience of Jesus as the basis of the community's confidence in him (v.18). It seems best to take the verb ἐπιλαμβάνεται (v.16) in the strong sense of 'take hold of' or 'deliver', and to relate it to the deliverance of those in bondage (v.14-15)<sup>71</sup> The phrase would then define the purpose, rather than the act, of the Incarnation<sup>72</sup> and has its roots in OT vocabulary: the same verb, used in 8.9, and quoting Jer. 31.31-34, is used of God's leading his people out of the bondage of Egypt.

The reference to the Exodus here may be more than just an accident, since in other parts of the Epistle, the similarity between God's act of redemption in the Scriptures and his action through Christ rises to the surface. It seems likely, for example, that the image of Christ as ἀρχηγός, with the connotations of leadership, and the related parenetic theme of the



pilgrimage of the people of God (4.1-10) have their roots in an Exodus typology: God leading many sons to glory ( πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγάγοντα ) can also be described as God leading his people to his Sabbath rest (4.9). There is also a partial similarity between the action of Christ as the Son who chooses to suffer with his brethren and the action of Moses, who refuses the status of being son in Pharaoh's family, and prefers to suffer with the people of God ( μᾶλλον ἐλόμενος συγκακουχεῖσθαι τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ 11.25). The parallel is made explicit when the author describes this compassion as a choice to endure τὸν ὀνειδισμόν τοῦ Χριστοῦ (11.26); parenetically, the same ideal is held up before the people in 13.13 -- they are to go outside the camp, τὸν ὀνειδισμόν αὐτοῦ φέροντες. Moses enters into this suffering, aware of the reward (11.26), just as Christ the ἀρχηγός suffered, knowing the joy that lay ahead of him (12.2) ( ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς ).

In addition, Moses sprinkles the blood as a protection for the first born against the power of the angel of death; Christ destroys the power of the devil (2.14) and effects redemption through the sprinkling of his own blood (10.14; 12.24), in order to lead his followers into the ἐκκλησία πρωτόκων (12.23).

We have outlined the parallels between the figure of Moses and Jesus, the pioneer of his people, because the account of the Incarnation-redemption in 2.10-18 stands in a typological relationship to the role of Moses in the Exodus tradition. Käsemann and Theissen, whose speculations led them to highly unusual, and unnecessary, exegesis about the pre-existence of souls in this section, seem to close their eyes to the parallel and model which the author himself supplies. The point we want to make is that the kenotic pattern of Incarnational language here issues directly into soteriological concerns, as a way of developing the significance of Jesus as High Priest and as the pioneer who identifies with the sufferings of his people. The Incarnation, viewed as the sharing of the condition of flesh and blood, and subjection to death, finds a typological echo in the choice of Moses to share in the ill-treatment of his people. The very human existence of Jesus is an act of condescension which is grounded in God's eschatological address to us (1.2); the account of the act of Incarnation (v.14) and of the purpose of the Incarnation (v.16) frame an account of the character of the Incarnation as a solidarity with the condition of humanity, and it is the character of the Incarnation which is the author's dominant concern. Pre-existence language, and the perspective provided by it, is used in order to highlight the features of the humanity of Christ required by the other images used by

the author -- principally High Priest and Leader. Its significance is in what it contributes to their interpretation and development.

### CONCLUSION

Our study has shown that the use of pre-existence language in the Epistle, far from providing a tension with other Christological and soteriological categories and patterns, in fact is integrated with them. We have indicated, first of all, the interaction between pre-existence and exaltation language, and shown that, while the author's dominant concern is with the exaltation, he introduces features associated with the predication of pre-existence as a consonant affirmation supporting his treatment of the exaltation. We have indicated that both pre-existence and exaltation act as figurative expressions which both give rise to, and express, the philosophical concern to demonstrate the metaphysical permanence of Christ. The metaphysical dualism of the Epistle, with its clear distinction between the heavenly, permanent world, and the earthly transitory world, establishes the contrast between Christ and the angels in the opening section, and finds expression in the attribution to Christ of a permanence which includes both his status as the heavenly Schöpfungsmittler and his status as the Exalted Son. Both images express and confirm the metaphysical



distinction between Christ and the range of inferior mediators -- Moses, Aaron, the Levitical priests, as well as the angels -- and thus the pre-existence predication is part of the dominant argumentation of the Epistle.

We have indicated that the principal themes of the Epistle centre on the character and implication of the Exaltation, and that, unlike the Fourth Gospel, the Epistle does not derive the Exaltation from the prior presence of Christ in the heavenly realm, since that would conflict with the implications of the High Priestly image. The pattern is not circular, with Christ returning where he was before. This affects the way in which the theme of pre-existence is used in the Epistle: consequently, it acts, not as a root metaphor, controlling the interpretation of the Exaltation, but as an alternative and necessary affirmation of themes which are derived from the soteriological images and from the metaphysical dualism of the argumentation.

Thus the author's argument for the superiority of Jesus and his salvation is established primarily through his interpretation of a High Priestly soteriology. In addition, there is the related theme of Christ as the forerunner and pioneer who has gone before his followers in their journey towards the presence of God.



The predication of pre-existence is integrated with the concerns which arise out of the connotations and implications of these images. So the kenotic model of pre-existence-Incarnation opens the way towards portraying the entry of Christ into the world as precisely the way in which he is able to become an effective and compassionate High Priest: he comes to make offering for sin through the offering of his body, and he experiences suffering and death, and thereby can be sympathetic to those who are weak in his intercessory role. Equally, his very presence -- his very humanity -- can be portrayed as an act of solidarity with those who are subject to bondage. The image of pre-existence is introduced in order to heighten the character of Christ's human experience as a preparation for, and an integral part of, his exalted ministry. It provides a perspective from which the themes of solidarity and compassion can be intensified in the portrayal of Christ as High Priest and pioneer.

We have indicated the distinction from the Johannine handling of pre-existence; the principal factor in Hebrews' deployment of the theme is the way in which it is geared towards meeting and supporting the themes associated with other Christological and soteriological images. This orientation enables the Epistle to provide a more satisfactory account of the reality of, and significance of, the human experiences of Jesus:

far from minimising the humanity of Jesus, the perspective provided by pre-existence enables an account of the humanity of Jesus to gain in significance, since his very existence in the arena of suffering and death is soteriologically significant for the quality of his exalted ministry.

The absence of a narrative portraying the pre-existent Son or Logos, such as is found in the Johannine Prologue, and the consequent concentration of pre-existence language with reference to the Son in the economy, increases the metaphorical relationship of the predication to Jesus. The connotations drawn from the pattern of pre-existence-Incarnation are determined by their coherence with the connotations of the High Priestly pattern. They are also able to make it clear that Christ's involvement in the sphere of suffering and death comes from no necessity other than God's salvific purpose in redeeming his people in this way.

The freedom the author clearly feels he has, with regard to the pre-existence theme, is shown particularly in the way he can transfer the features associated with Christ's pre-existence to the figure of Melchizedek. His midrash in chapter 7 exemplifies in miniature the bringing together of the High Priestly-Exaltation figuration with the predication of pre-existence, which is one of the major features of

the Epistle's broader Christological reinterpretation. Rather than turn in the direction of a Johannine-like epiphanic treatment of pre-existence-Incarnation, the author moves towards developing a kenotic pre-existence-Incarnation pattern, under the influence of the controlling soteriological and parenetic themes of High Priesthood and Leadership. It is in this way that the problems associated with the attribution of pre-existence are resolved; Dey's account of the Christological problem is accurate, and it is significant that the author turns towards a soteriology and a Christology which intensifies the theme of the involvement of Christ in suffering. Correspondingly, as we have shown, the theme of pre-existence is integrated into a more highly developed account of the earthly life and exaltation of Jesus: the pre-existence motif feeds directly into the argumentation concerning the efficacy and the permanence of Christ's salvation. It is to the author's credit that he holds such a complex structure of Christological images and motifs together so consistently. One of the factors which brings about this success is his preparedness to develop the range of implications of pre-existence language only in order to support and confirm the implications he draws from his other principal images and concerns. Thus the overall effect is a Christology in which pre-existence predications play an important subordinate role:



'subordinate', not in the sense of 'unimportant', since the Christology of the Epistle would be impaired without the theme of pre-existence, but 'subordinate' in the sense that the theme is developed in conjunction with the Christological and soteriological patterns which form the dominant argument of the Epistle. If, as Dey suggests, the very predication of pre-existence has given rise to problems about the identity of Christ and his relationship to other figures, and if, in addition, there are problems about explaining Christ's presence in the imperfection of suffering and death, then these difficulties are resolved by the author through his re-working of the Christological and soteriological patterns he inherited, in the direction of interpreting pre-existence in the light of a High Priestly soteriology. By allowing the High Priestly image to determine the connotations to be drawn from the pre-existence-Incarnation pattern, the author is able, on the one hand, to establish the superiority of Jesus to the range of competing figures -- since he alone has the metaphysical permanence characteristic of divinity -- and to establish the superiority of the salvation effected by him, since access to God's presence can only be through the offering of sacrifice by a High Priest whose ministry is 'for ever'. Pre-existence predications thus vindicate the uniqueness of Jesus as the exalted one, superior to the angels, both in his exaltation, and in his status as



the abiding Son, and, in addition, they vindicate the permanence of his High Priestly ministry and its consequent superiority to that of the Levitical priesthood.

The Dynamic of Pre-existence Language and the Trinity

In this chapter we shall consider the other area affected by the dynamic of the pre-existence predication: the development of a co-ordinated theological language in conjunction with the Christological language which develops. We have already presented our view that this double focus is part of the semantic clarification of the application of pre-existence language: it both enables Christology to articulate the significance of Jesus as the one who relates to God in the eschatological act of salvation and revelation, and, as part of the same process, it also requires and facilitates a corresponding revision of theological language in the light of the Christological impetus.

The interdependence of the two languages has frequently been asserted; what has received less attention is the distinction between them, with the result that misunderstandings and misinterpretations arise because of the easy slide from one mode of discourse to the other. Language which properly belongs within the theological context can sometimes breed confusion when it enters the Christological arena. The most obvious instance of this, which has bedevilled Christological interpretation from the New Testament period onwards, is the emergence of a Christology which seems to suggest two referents, the pre-existent Son and the human person Jesus. From the evidence of the First

Epistle of John, the pattern of the Johannine Prologue gave rise to a confusion in the life of the Johannine community precisely on this point. What is the denial that 'Jesus Christ has come in the flesh', if not a separation of a heavenly being from the reality of the humanity of Jesus, based upon the putative distinction between them as two referents?<sup>1</sup> We do not need to rehearse the history of Alexandrian and Antiochene Christologies to illustrate the logical and semantic problems which arise once pre-existence language is used to articulate a Christological pattern in which two referents are unified. Our proposal has been that within Christological discourse, pre-existence language is to be taken as a form of metaphorical predication, which gives rise to a referring expression, which we have identified as 'eternal Son' which does not designate anyone other than Jesus. We endorsed, with some modifications, Pannenberg's diagnosis of the Patristic impasse:

'Thus the real problem of the two natures doctrine is its attempt to conceive what happened in the incarnation as the synthesis of the human and the divine nature in the same individual...The impasse reached by every attempt to construct Christology by beginning with the incarnational concept demonstrates that all such attempts are doomed to failure. We found repeatedly that either the unity of Jesus Christ as person or else his real humanity were lost to view.'<sup>2</sup>



Our reservation about this general criticism is that not all expressions of 'two natures' Christology come within its scope: what Pannenberg identifies as the central flaw of the pattern -- the attempt to 'synthesise' the natures to reach a unity of person in Christ -- is more Eutychean or Apollinarian than Chalcedonian. As we have indicated, the Chalcedonian definition makes more sense as a correlate to the linguistic procedure which would maintain a distinction only at the level of the predications made of the one referent, who is identified in the definition by means of several referring expressions. The regulative presence of the four adverbs in the definition excludes what Pannenberg calls a 'synthesis' of the divine and human natures. Pannenberg is on surer ground when he discusses the relationship of divinity and humanity in Christological speech:

'The formula of the true divinity and true humanity of Jesus begins with the fact that one describes one and the same person, the man Jesus of Nazareth from different points of view. The unity of the concrete person Jesus of Nazareth is given, and both things are to be said about this one person: he is God and he is man.' 3

We have identified the relationship between this way of handling these Christological predications, and the metaphorical procedure found in the predication of pre-existence, and found a continuity there which

carries through from the figurative to the ontological expressions of Christology. Our proposal has been that within the area of Christology, pre-existence language functions as does a metaphorical predication, and that it is possible to gain some clarity in the use of this language by considering the character and functioning of metaphor. Alone of the range of New Testament metaphors, pre-existence language has given rise to problems because it raises the question of the relationship between Jesus and the predicate, the eternal Son or Word. No such difficulties exist when Jesus is spoken of as Son of David, Messiah, or even Son of Man. We have suggested that within the area of Christology, language of pre-existence does not involve a referent other than Jesus, and that the designations such as eternal Son or Word are to be taken as metaphorical referring expressions which designate Jesus. Now we must consider whether within the area of theological discourse -- the other redescriptive focus of pre-existence language -- it is sufficient to say that Jesus is the referent of language about the eternal Son, or whether it is necessary to speak of the eternal Son as a hypostasis distinct from Jesus. Our proposal is that whereas in the Christological arena, it is correct to consider pre-existence language, and its conceptual clarification, language of eternal Sonship, as referring only to Jesus, within the theological area, we must take the eternal Son or Word

as a referent distinct from Jesus. By this formal + distinction between the two areas of Christological and theological speech, and by distinguishing the different referential focuses of each of the areas, we hope that some of the difficulties in handling this language will be clarified.

The obverse of the Christological development which provides, through the conceptual clarification of the semantic dynamism of the metaphor, an ontological account of the identity of Jesus as the Son united with the Father, is the development of a Trinitarian language about God: what is the most appropriate way to speak about God's being, given what is being affirmed in the Christological sphere? Our considerations in this chapter will focus on the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinity, since it is in this context that the question of the relationship between the eternal Son and Jesus is best raised. If in the course of this chapter, we rely less on Ricoeur's theory of metaphor, this will be because its primary value lies in the realm of Christological clarification, and not in the area of Trinitarian reflection; although there is a separate study to be made of the role of metaphor in Trinitarian speech, our examination will not touch on the images of 'begetting' or 'spiration' or perichoresis. Instead, we shall examine whether it is necessary to establish the



eternal Son as a distinct referent, if the being of God is not to be constituted out of temporal processes. As part of our proposals, we shall consider the possibility of developing an understanding of the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinity through a consideration of the role of the Holy Spirit as the one who makes it possible for the 'immanent Son' to become 'the Son in the economy'. Our interest in this theme arises out of a concern to avoid the predominantly 'Binitarian' pattern associated with pre-existence language. This has been the dominant pattern in the tradition, with the result that the Spirit's role within the divine being and within the economy has been relegated to that of being a 'third' element, whose hypostatic identity has been difficult to secure. Out of our consideration of the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinity, we shall propose that the relationship between them can be attributed to the character of the Spirit who maintains the Father and Son in a relationship of distinction-in-identity, and who thus makes it possible for God's self-expression in the economy to take place. In this way, it may be possible to align pre-existence language and a Spirit Christology more successfully than has been generally thought possible. Too often, Logos Christology and Spirit Christology have been presented as irreconcilable patterns. With our proposals here, we hope to indicate that it is possible to work with



both an affirmation of the value of pre-existent Sonship and a Spirit Christology, through reconsidering the role of the Spirit within the immanent Trinity. In this way, our more general retrieval of the value and character of pre-existence language can be brought into contact with one of the other Christological patterns which is attracting attention today, namely, the viability of formulating a Spirit Christology. We hope to indicate that it is possible to develop the implications of pre-existence language fruitfully in the direction of another Christological pattern, and thus avoid the 'one-sidedness' of the Binitarian pattern normally associated with pre-existence language. Inevitably, then, our proposals here will open horizons beyond our range thus far, but it may be no bad thing to point to future developments which can be brought into contact with the dynamic of pre-existence language.

Rahner's axiom has entered the common currency of contemporary theology: 'The "economic" Trinity is the "immanent" Trinity and the "immanent" Trinity is the "economic" Trinity.'<sup>4</sup> It is intended to secure the Trinity as a mystery of salvation, rooted in the character of God's salvific act, delineating the economy of salvation as Trinitarian, and presenting God's being as present, in its Trinitarian relationality, in the economy. If we are dealing with

God's self-communication, then the economy of salvation must be an expression of the threefoldness of God's life -- otherwise, there would not be a communication of God as he is in himself. Rahner characterises the alternative to this view as 'Arian', in that 'it would do away with a true self-communication of God, it would bring down the eschatological salvific work of Christ to the level of forever provisory and open mediations, after the manner of prophetic servants, of angelic powers, or of gnostic-neoPlatonic descending emanations.'<sup>5</sup> God's communication of himself in the Son and in the Spirit in the economy, if it is truly to be a self-communication, must be grounded in God's being in itself, and reversing this, his being in itself must be truly expressed in the economy -- otherwise we are not dealing with God's being. The mystery of the Trinity is revealed in the economy:

'..the Father is the incomprehensible origin and the original unity, the "Word" his utterance into history, and the "Spirit" the opening up of history into the immediacy of its fatherly origin and end. And precisely this Trinity of salvation history, as it reveals itself to us by deeds, is the "immanent" Trinity.'<sup>6</sup>

Using the notion of 'the self-communication of the Father', which takes place in 'the inner, mutually related moments'<sup>7</sup> of the Incarnation and descent of the

Spirit, Rahner characterises the Son as 'the economic (historical) self-communication of the Father.'<sup>8</sup> This procession of the Son 'is two things at once':

'It is, first of all, for us, the economic, free self-communication of the divine reality to Jesus as the "absolute bringer of salvation." It is also the necessary "immanent" self-communication of the divine reality, the Father expressing himself in such a way that this divine utterance exists from all eternity and of necessity, as the Word of such a possible free self-expression to the world.'<sup>9</sup>

The Father's self-expression, then, has a double aspect: the utterance of the Word within the divine being, and the continuation of this self-expression in the reality of Jesus' existence. How are the two related in Rahner's presentation? He makes two clarificatory points: the first is a rebuttal of Sabellianism within the divine being, and consequently a rebuttal of a form of Patripassianism within the economic self-expression: the Father, while remaining the unoriginate and incomprehensible source of the divine being, expresses himself in bringing forth from his being a Word or Son who is distinct from himself. This distinction is a primal differentiation within the divine being, expressed by the image of 'eternally begotten' of the Father, which is the possibility of God's self-communication to the creation which he brings into being. It is because the Son stands within



the divine relationality as distinct from the Father, yet united with him, that the free gratuitous self-communication of the Father can take place: because God can express himself to himself, in a distinct mode of being, he can express himself ad extra - in the communication of his reality to the person of Jesus, and in the creation which is the enabling possibility of such a full self-expression outside himself.

Rahner's second point retrieves the Apologists' distinction between the inner and outer Word:

'...this distinction (between the Father and his self-expression) "pre-exists" to the free gratuitous self-communication of God (of the absolutely unoriginate, of the Father) as its possibility. The λόγος ἐνδιάθετος is the condition of the possibility of the λόγος προφορικός. This does not make the Logos a mere principle of creation. For if the verbum prolativum (cp. DS 144, 147) is uttered freely, thus having its condition in the Father's immanent Word, it must have an "immanent" sense and a meaning for the Father himself. Otherwise the Father's self-expression ad extra would either no longer be a free grace, or no "immanent" word could pre-exist in relation to it as the condition of its possibility. Here lies the critical point of the whole question. Why is the Son as the word of the free self-expression of the Father to the world necessarily also the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος of the Father? Why does the possibility of the Father's self-expression to the world, even as a mere possibility, already imply an inner "differentiation" in God himself?' 10



Rahner's primary answer to these questions is found in the transcendental theological argumentation which he offers: an account of the conditions within God's being, which must be posited if God's self-communication in the economy expresses his being as he is in himself. Thus, the immanent Trinity is 'the necessary condition of the possibility of God's free self-communication.'<sup>11</sup> In the Theological Investigations, he presents God's free act of self-communication in the created order (the Incarnation and the descent of the Spirit as mutually related moments of the one event) as grounded in the necessity of God's self-expression inwardly: 'It is because God "must" "express" himself inwardly that he can also utter himself outwardly.'<sup>12</sup> God's freedom to bestow himself within his creation is possible only because of the necessary inward self-utterance of the Logos within the divine being: 'the immanent self-utterance of God in his eternal fullness is the condition of the self-utterance of God outside himself, and the latter continues the former.'<sup>13</sup>

This transcendently necessary self-differentiation within God's being -- God 'must' utter himself to himself, as a necessity of his being -- is responsible, too, for the possibility of there being a creation: Rahner presents creation, the bringing into being of the non-divine, as ontologically dependent on the

primal differentiation between the Father and the Logos. The distinction between God and the created order is grounded in the distinction within the immanent Trinity: it derives from the fact that 'God, the unoriginated, expresses himself in himself and for himself, and so constitutes the original, divine, distinction in God himself.'<sup>14</sup>

Creation is 'an element in that wider and more radical decision of God's will to impart himself to that which is other than himself and not divine.'<sup>15</sup> It is the setting, established through the Logos, so that God's expression of himself might be extended or continued, in such a way that the 'becoming' constitutive of the immanent Trinity might be posited within the non-divine order: God creates in order to bestow himself, in order that the self-utterance of the Logos within creation might be a self-communication of the reality of God's being.

Rahner develops this discussion primarily in order to deal with the humanity of Jesus as the 'expressive presence of what -- or, rather, who -- God wished to be, in free grace, to the world.'<sup>16</sup> He presents the immanent self-utterance of the Father and its created expression in the person of Jesus as an instance of symbolic self-expression. The first principle he offers, as part of an ontology of symbolism, is that

'all beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily "express" themselves in order to attain their own nature.<sup>17</sup> Thus the Logos is the 'symbol' of the Father within the divine life: 'the Father is himself by the very fact that he opposes to himself the image which is of the same essence as himself, as the person who is other than himself; and so he possesses himself.'<sup>18</sup> It is because of this 'symbolising' of God the Father in the begetting of the Logos that the extension or continuation of this self-expression in the created order (the Incarnation) can occur:

'...the incarnate word is the absolute symbol of God in the world, filled as nothing else can be with what is symbolised. He is not merely the presence and revelation of what God is in himself. He is also the expressive presence of what -- or, rather, who -- God wished to be, in free grace, to the world.'<sup>19</sup>

As the Logos is the self-utterance of the Father in the Godhead, so the humanity of the Logos in the economy is the self-utterance of the Father in the created order: the first is the necessary condition for such a 'becoming' on the part of the Logos:

'The humanity is the self-disclosure of the Logos itself, so that when God, expressing himself, exteriorises himself, that very thing appears which we call the humanity of the Logos.'<sup>20</sup>



God's will to express himself in the created order is the event of the human reality of Christ. The humanity of Jesus, the self-expressive presence of God in the non-divine order, in John Cawte's words, is 'God's ek-sistence; and also, God's ek-sistence is this human reality.'<sup>21</sup> For this dialectical account to be valid, two principles must be asserted: it must be possible for God, in the mode of being of the Son, to 'become subject to change in something else,' in the created reality which is assumed as the form of his self-expression.<sup>22</sup> And, concomitantly, it must be said of humanity 'that the creature is endowed, by virtue of its innermost essence and constitution, with the possibility of being assumed, of becoming the material of a possible history of God.'<sup>23</sup> Then we are in the familiar Rahnerian territory of the inseparability of anthropology and Christology: the constituents of 'the theology which God himself has taught, by speaking out his Word, as our flesh, into the void of the non-divine and sinful.'<sup>24</sup>

What does this approach enable Rahner to do? Clearly, within the realm of Christology, it enables him to avoid the hidden monophysitism which he fears lurks behind popular interpretations of the Incarnation. Like Pannenberg, he rejects the procedure of beginning with two 'things', already existing, the divinity of the Logos and the human nature, which have to be fused into a unity: 'The Christ is split into two



possibilities, held together only by the formal and empty assertion of their hypostatic unity ... We cannot escape from this trap by looking at the unity as the (even merely logical) subsequent unity of two things to be united, already existing independently as two prior to the unity.<sup>25</sup> He insists that the humanity of Christ can be considered as diverse from the Logos 'only...in so far as it is united to the Logos.'<sup>26</sup> The ground of the unity and diversity must be the same, namely the ek-sistence of the divine being in the 'becoming' of the Incarnation. Elsewhere he explains this less densely in terms of the proportionality of likeness and distinctness:

'In the incarnation, the Logos creates by taking on, and takes on by emptying himself. Hence we can verify here, in the most radical and specifically unique way the axiom of all relationship between God and creature, namely that the closeness and the distance, the submissiveness and the independence of the creature do not grow in inverse but in like proportion.'<sup>27</sup>

This is the Christological application of the principle enunciated at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215): '...between the Creator and the creature so great a likeness cannot be noted without the necessity of noting a greater dissimilarity between them.'<sup>28</sup> Rahner's Christological expansion of this principle is: 'Thus Christ is most radically man, and his humanity is the freest and most independent, not in spite of, but

because of its being taken up, by being constituted as the self-utterance of God.<sup>29</sup> The biblical roots of this are found in the account of the creation of Adam in Genesis, where the very creation of man in distinction from God is an expression of his being in the image and likeness of God: the establishment of distinction and likeness in direct proportionality.

The Christological principle at work here is grounded in the primal distinction within the immanent being of God, between the Father and the Logos whom he posits from within his own unoriginated being, distinct from, and yet consubstantial with him. It is because of this distinction-in-likeness, or, more precisely, this distinction-in-identity, that the self-expressive presence of God in the humanity of Jesus is able to be a self-utterance and a self-communication. Thus, the Trinitarian articulation of the immanent distinction between the Father and the Son is the necessary condition for the Christological designation of Jesus in the economic context: what takes place in the economy is ontologically grounded in the immanent 'becoming' of the Trinitarian relationality.

The Christological significance of the dialectic of identification and distinction -- the polarity of Christological speech which we inherit from the early tradition of Patristic Christology, which, as

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Grillmeier states, always opts for a 'lectio difficilior' of the Gospel<sup>30</sup> is developed by Jüngel as the epistemological and ontological focus of what is at stake here. He takes up Rahner's discussion, and, with reference to the Patristic language, proposes:

'But over against the metaphysics of substance which permeates the christological doctrine of two natures, and based on the existence of Jesus Christ in its double substitutionary role, his humanity and deity should not be understood so much as two sides of one person as two poles of an ultimate differentiation and tension which defines the one godly-human person. The oppositeness of God and man is what constitutes the unity of the person who became man. On the basis of that oppositeness, then, all of the christological definitions of the being of this person are to be understood and to be developed further.'<sup>31</sup>

This oppositeness is concentrated in the death of Jesus, in the identification of God with the dead man Jesus who dies in Godforsakenness (Gal 3.13; 2 Cor 5.21): 'God has interposed himself in the midst of fatal God-forsakenness in order to create a new relationship with God'<sup>32</sup> What takes place in the crucifixion, between the Father and the Son, and the pouring forth of the Spirit which occurs as the 'eternally new relationship between the Father and the Son'<sup>33</sup> is 'not a second thing next to the eternal God but rather the event of the deity of God. For that



reason, the "economic" Trinity is the "immanent Trinity" and vice versa.<sup>34</sup> Jüngel's approach presents the immanent Trinity as the 'summarising concept'<sup>35</sup> of the event of God's deity in the relationality between Father, Son and Spirit in the Crucifixion-Resurrection: 'This eternally new relationship to God is called, christologically, resurrection from the dead, and is ontologically the being of love itself. Only in the unity of the giving Father and the given Son is God the event of giving up which is love itself in the relation of lover and beloved.' <sup>36</sup>

Jüngel's adoption of Rahner's axiomatic unity of the immanent and economic Trinity is intensified by his concentration on the fact that what is being worked out and expressed in the economy is not just a reflection of a divine relationality, but actually is that divine relationality: 'For the giving up of the eternal Son of God takes place in the temporal existence of one, that is, of this crucified man Jesus.'<sup>37</sup> Language about the immanent Trinity, then, is not speculation about the intra-divine constitution removed from the economy of God's action in Jesus, but is the explication of the phenomenon of the differentiation from, and identification with, the man Jesus on the part of God:

'.... God's identification with the dead Jesus implies a self-differentiation on God's part. The being of this dead man defines God's own being in such a way that one must speak

of a differentiation between God and God. ...The differentiation of God from God may not be understood as an opposition which is coerced on the being of God....it must be said that God defines himself when he identified himself with the dead Jesus.<sup>38</sup>

Jüngel works out the distinction-in-identity -- or, more accurately in his terms, the differentiation-in-identification -- with particular reference to the Cross: it is in the event of the crucifixion that the Son's differentiation from the Father is most extreme, and it is at this extremity, in the realm of sin, death and nothingness, that the identification with Jesus takes place. Through this action, which has as its effect the constantly new event of love between the Father and the Son which is the Spirit, there takes place the process which is the event and life of the Triune God.

Language about God's eternity is reinterpreted by Jüngel to express this event, 'this coming of God's being to itself'<sup>39</sup>, thus avoiding the implication that God's proper mode of being is distinct from the event of the economy:

'God came in the event of self-identification with the man Jesus from God the Father. And God came to Jesus as his beloved Son, and thus came to himself, to God the Son, along the path which led into the far country. And yet God remained totally in the process of coming, as God the Holy

Spirit. That is the mystery that God is already in himself, the "mystery of the Trinity" (mysterium trinitatis), the mystery of his triune nature: that God is in that he comes to himself -- from God to God as God.' 40

The conceptuality Jüngel uses to accomplish this revision of the traditional terminology -- the predominance of language of 'becoming', 'coming', 'movement' -- enables him to treat the relationship of Jesus to the Father as the relationship which 'effects' the intra-divine relationship of Father to Son. He fully endorses Pannenberg's view, which we encountered in an earlier chapter, that 'what is true in God's eternity is decided with retroactive validity only from the perspective of what occurs temporally with the importance of the ultimate.'<sup>41</sup> God's eternal 'becoming' takes place in the life and death of Jesus, and thus this 'becoming' is of salvific importance for humanity:

'God comes to himself even in the death of Jesus Christ, the Father to the Son. And thus he comes to man as his eschatological goal. In the death of Jesus, God comes in one and the same event as God to God as God (definitively) to man, as the Father to the Son, and as the Son to Jesus. This death is the seal of that event in which God comes both to God and to man, of that event then in which God as man is his own goal.'42



Language about the immanent Trinity, then, would be language about how this event is an event in God, in the history of God's 'becoming', which takes place simultaneously with his communicating himself to us: '...God comes in that he comes to man'<sup>43</sup> In terms which recall both Barth and Rahner, whose dependence on Barth is thinly disguised, Jüngel writes:

'In that the eternal Son is eternally from the Father, God is aiming in him as well toward a becoming in which God not only comes from God, but, beyond that, man with his world is made, caused, created by God. But God aims in himself at what is other. God aims in his divine eternal becoming toward the incarnation of man, toward the becoming of the world. God aims in his eternal begetting toward creation.'<sup>44</sup>

The whole process of the divine 'becoming', of the God whose essence is constituted by the divine relations, is inherently soteriological, aiming at the communication of himself to the creation which is intended by his divine becoming. There is no question of thinking of 'God as self-sufficient', as though the divine relationality were not eternally directed towards self-expression as man in Jesus Christ: as 'overflowing being' (ibid.), God expresses his being outwards, and this is directly attributed by Jüngel to the Trinitarian character of the divine being:



'In this creative being of God the Son as the aim of God the Father, God is aiming at man. In that God the Father loves the Son, in the event of this divine self-love, God is aiming selflessly at his creation.' 45

It would follow, then, that if the divine becoming which constitutes God's self-relatedness, is aimed at his expressive presence as the human person Jesus, then the events of the history of Jesus in his relationship to the Father in the Spirit, are the events which effect and realise the process of relationality within the divine being, at the same time as they effect God's self-communication to his creation. We might suggest, then, that language about the immanent Trinity is a concentrated articulation of the significance of the events of the economy, insofar as they are seen to be constitutive of the process of divine becoming.

Jüngel's adoption and development of Rahner's Trinitarian axiom enables him to formulate the process of divine becoming and self-relatedness with particular reference to the economy: the ontology of divine being can only be an explicitation of the history of God's salvific presence -- it detaches itself from this foundation at its peril. He shares Rahner's concern to interpret the immanent Trinity as the condition of possibility which makes the self-relatedness of the economy an event of the Triune God, but the emphasis is different: Rahner's central image is that of the

self-communication of the Father in the double moments of the Incarnation and the descent of the Spirit which belong intrinsically together as the 'what' and the 'how' of the Father's self-expression. Jungel's central image is that of the divine 'becoming', in which 'God is in that he comes to himself -- from God to God as God'.<sup>46</sup>

'The statement God's being is in coming implies first of all that God's being is the event of his coming to himself. This event, this coming of God's being to itself, is what the tradition has meant when it spoke of eternity. But eternity is not something distinct from God. God himself is eternity. God is eternally coming to himself.'<sup>47</sup>

Jüngel develops an 'event theology' in which God's 'coming to himself' is interpreted as an event from God to God, 'an event in which God is not only his own derivation but also his future'<sup>48</sup> Jüngel's comments on the classical Trinitarian doctrine highlight the distinctiveness of his own approach:

'Although the doctrine of the Trinity, originally arose as a confession of the man Jesus as true God, it is remarkable that this eternal event in the theological tradition has not been understood on the basis of the being of this man who died on the cross. That God became man was for the classical trinitarian doctrine not the constitutively determining event for the trinitarian being of God, although it then derived from that event as a further consequence of the basic thought.'<sup>49</sup>

The classical Trinitarian doctrine did not take the death of Jesus as normative for its formulation of the being of God: 'The death of Jesus concerned the concept of deity, the divine nature, as little as the life of this man was significant for the concept of divine being.'<sup>50</sup> In contrast with this, Jüngel offers 'a doctrine of God oriented to the man Jesus' which develops two avenues of thought:

'God does indeed come from God and only from God, and he is determined by nobody and nothing other than by himself; however, he determines to be God not without man. That is the sense of the New Testament statements about the preexistence of the Son of God identified with Jesus. As the tradition correctly asserts, God comes from himself to himself without outside help. But God comes to himself in accordance with his own self-determination in such a way that he comes to man and only thus does man come to himself. God comes from God, but he does not want to come to himself without us.'<sup>51</sup>

The Barthian roots of this presentation are strong: God's self-determination to be God for us in Jesus is grounded in the act by which God is God for himself: God determines himself in electing the man Jesus, as a primal decision of his being:

(God) 'certainly wills to be God and he does not will that we should be God. But he does not will to be God for himself nor as God to be alone with himself. He wills as God to be for us and with us, who are not God. Inasmuch as he is himself and affirms himself, in



distinction and opposition to everything that he is not, he places himself in this relation to us. He does not will to be himself in any other way than he is in this relationship.' (CD 2/1, p274)

The conclusion suggests itself, then, that the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinity is far from being a reflection model, in which the events of the economy mirror the relationality within the immanent Trinity. Instead, Jüngel's proposals move in the direction of viewing the events of the economy as effective, both for our salvation and for the divine becoming. There is one process taking place, which has two aspects or intentionalities, inseparably bound together: the act by which God is God in a triune relationality is the same act as that in which God is God for us in the economy of salvation. This would be a consequence of Barth's view that the act by which God is God is to be God-for-us as Jesus. Barth formulates this in his discussion of the Election as identical with God's act of self-determination as God; Jüngel develops this with greater concentration on the significance of the Crucifixion as the decisive moment in the history of the divine relationality. The process of divine becoming is the same process by which we are taken into God's love through his identification with Jesus in his death and resurrection.



Does this identificataion of the one process with a double intentionality vitiate language about God's eternal being, and does it collapse God's being into dependence on temporal processes? Jüngel answers that it does not:

'The task of thinking God in such a way that he is conceived of as coming to himself and simultaneously coming to man cannot be meant in such a way that God is thought of as dependent on the existence of man. The final result of our thought cannot be that ultimately man is necessary for God. That God does not want to come to himself without man does not make man the consummation of God. God perfects or consummates himself. But it may and must be said that God does not want to perfect himself without man.' 52

The relationship between the immanent and economic Trinitarian languages is that speech about the immanent Trinity ensures that it is God who determines his being towards the expression in the economy, and speech about the economic Trinity ensures that our consideration about the Trinitarian relationality posits the 'extreme' of kenotic self-expression as constitutive of God's being. Reference to the immanent Trinity is designed to designate the freedom in which the divine becoming takes place -- out of no necessity other than his own character as love -- and, correspondingly, reference to the economic Trinity designates the kenosis of the economy as integral to the character of the divine relationality. In particular, the

complementarity of the two ways of speaking about the Trinity ensures that our language about God's perfection is modified in the light of his orientation to be God-for-us, thus removing the distorting effects which notions of God's 'self-sufficiency' as divine being can have on Christian theology: God is always God-for-us, and his self-communication in the economy is not separable from the divine act of being.

Jüngel presents the image of the pre-existence of Jesus as pointing to the eternal orientation of the Trinity towards humanity. The dialectic of identity and distinction within the eternal generation of the Son makes the eternal Son both the image of God and the original image of the world. It is because the Son is an expression of the Father's being, identical in nature, but distinct in his mode of being, that the process of divine self-relatedness can be consummated in the identification of the Father with the man Jesus, across the even greater distance of sin and death in the event of the crucifixion. Thus the salvific event of our redemption is grounded in the self-relatedness of the divine being: that which takes place in the economy, the unity in distinction of Father and Son in the Spirit, is the working out of the process of becoming which is the divine life. The function of language about the immanent Trinity is not the attempt to peer 'behind' the events of the economy, but to

bring them to expression insofar as they are the events of the self-relatedness of God's being shown in the selflessness of the economy. Jüngel refuses the option of setting these two poles in opposition to each other through an opposition of the immanent and economic Trinity. He rejects the attempt to portray the immanent Trinity as a divine self-relatedness which is detachable from the divine selflessness of the economy:

'The inner-divine self-relatedness which is love takes place as the radical relatedness of God to an other which is absolutely opposite to him, that is, to the human essence which he creates for that reason. The radical relatedness of God to man is revealed in the giving up of what is most particularly his own, the sending of his Son to death. In this selflessness of the divine being the self-relatedness of that same being does not end but is rather implemented and confirmed to the highest degree.... The self-relatedness of the deity of God takes place in an unsurpassable way in the very selflessness of the incarnation of God. That is the meaning of talk about the humanity of God. It is not a second thing next to the eternal God but rather the event of the deity of God.' <sup>53</sup>

Consequently, Jüngel can speak of the doctrine of the Trinity as 'the dogma of soteriology in an absolute sense.'<sup>54</sup> Language about the immanent Trinity is not an escape from the Trinity of the economy into a speculation which attempts to portray a divine life behind, or over and above, what takes place there for our salvation. Rather, it attempts to take the event



of the Trinitarian economy as expressive and determinative of the being of God, at the same time as it is determinative of our salvation. The events of the economy implement, effect and confirm the relationality of the triune divine life, and open the divine life to the involvement of the created world in that relationality.

There are clear similarities between Jüngel's approach and that of Jürgen Moltmann: both want to conceive of God only within the context of the economy in which God's being is expressed. Jüngel attributes the rise of atheism to the failure of Christian theology to develop a doctrine of God with reference to the crucified Jesus as the focus of the event of God's being; Moltmann, too, shares this concern, even rejecting the use of the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity -- thus, disagreeing with Jüngel -- because it reinforces the desire to think of a God 'behind' the God of the economy:

'If the central foundation of our knowledge of the Trinity is the cross, on which the Father delivered up the Son for us through the Spirit, then it is impossible to conceive of any Trinity of substance in the transcendent primal ground of this event, in which cross and self-giving are not present...The thesis about the fundamental identity of the immanent and economic Trinity of course remains open to misunderstanding as long as we cling to the distinction at all, because it then sounds like the dissolution of the one in the other.' 55



The thesis of the identity of the immanent and economic Trinity is wrongly formulated if it is conceived in Platonising terms, involving 'the relation of image to reflection, idea to appearance, essence to manifestation'<sup>56</sup> Moltmann also refuses to allow the distinction to be used to assert the metaphysical distinction between the impassibility and immutability of God, who therefore cannot be capable of being affected by the world, and the changeable world which exists in a relationship of dependence on a God who is independent of its influence. To allow the distinction between immanent Trinitarian life, designating a relationship which is unaffected by the events of the history of the economy, and the economic Trinitarian life, in which God's being is expressed but not in a way which allows a retroactive 'influence' on the intra-divine life, is to impose a dichotomy which is easily open to a distortion of Christian belief in the God who revealed himself in Jesus. Rahner's thesis, however, by identifying the immanent and economic Trinity, carries implications for a revision of Christian theological language, because it forces us to consider that God's being is affected by the events of the economy:

'What this thesis is actually trying to bring out is the interaction between the substance and the revelation, the "inwardness" and the "outwardness" of the triune God. The economic Trinity not only reveals the immanent Trinity;

it also has a retroactive effect on it...the surrender of the Son for us on the cross has a retroactive effect on the Father and causes infinite pain. On the cross God creates salvation outwardly for his whole creation and at the same time suffers this disaster of the whole world inwardly in himself.'<sup>57</sup>

Moltmann makes the cross stand 'within the immanent Trinity'<sup>58</sup> as an event which determines the inner life of the triune God from eternity to eternity. The issue at stake is whether the relationship of the triune God to himself and the relationship of the triune God to his world is a mutual one. If, as Moltmann asserts, it is mutual, then 'God's relationship to the world has a retroactive effect on his relationship with himself -- even though the divine relationship to the world is primarily determined by that inner relationship.'<sup>59</sup> Under the influence of this principle, with its consequence that the events of the economic Trinitarian relationship 'affect' the immanent Trinitarian relationship, Moltmann reverses the traditional location of the immanent Trinity as the protological condition of the economy, and, instead, places it in the eschaton, as the completion of the form of God's history as it is perfected through the events of the economy:

'The economic Trinity completes and perfects itself to immanent Trinity when the history and experience of salvation are completed and perfected. When

everything is "in God" and "God is all in all", then the economic Trinity is raised into and transcended in the immanent Trinity.' 60

The immanent Trinity would then be the glorified Trinity which has brought the whole of creation into its intra-divine life. Moltmann uses the eschatological narration of the Trinitarian completion of history in the eschaton which Paul presents in 1 Cor. 15.20-8 as the basis of the completed history of the Trinity: the Son transfers the kingdom to the Father, having overcome every hostile force, and in this way 'completes his obedience and his sonship' 61

The Father receives the completed work of the Son, the kingdom which has been brought to its transfiguration, and in this way God becomes .

As John O'Donnell puts it,

'The goal of history then coincides with the completion of God's own history, that is, the eschatological glorification of the Trinity...In this sense, the fulfilment of the mission of the Trinity ad extra is not only a functional completion but the ontological completion of the persons of the Trinity themselves, and thus the completion of the life of the Trinity ad intra as well.' 62

The coherence of the idea of the 'ontological completion' of the intra-Trinitarian life is related to Moltmann's preference for terminology about the



'unification' (Vereinigung Gottes) rather than the 'unity' of God (Einheit Gottes)<sup>63</sup> He considers the Trinity, not as a static relationality, but as a living history, in which the central point is the delivering up on the Cross of the Son, and which is consummated with the handing over of the kingdom to the Father: the Sonship of the Son is completed co-terminously with the entry of the transfigured creation into the intra-Trinitarian life. This raises questions about Moltmann's fusion of the horizons of world history and God's history. At times, he presents the process of divine becoming as co-extensive with the process of world history:

'The nature of God thus does not stand behind the appearance of history and appearance in history as eternal, ideal being: it is that history itself.'<sup>64</sup>

Moltmann is determined to complement the classical doctrine of the Trinity, which is primarily a Trinity of sending, with a doctrine of the Trinity viewed eschatologically, in which the Trinity of sending is interpreted in the light of the eschatological completion of the Trinitarian history in the eschaton: the Trinity in its protological conceptuality is revealed as open to the world and time, not out of a deficiency, but because of the overflowing abundance of the love which is the character of divine being:



'Just as the Trinity in the sending is, from its very origin, open to the world and to man, because it is the "threefoldness" of seeking love, so the Trinity in the glorification is open for the gathering and uniting of men and creation in God, because it is the "tri-unity" of gathered love. Through the sending of Christ and the Spirit, the "history of the Trinity" is opened for the history of the gathering, uniting and glorifying of the world in God and of God in the world.' <sup>65</sup>

Moltmann contrasts the protological formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity with the eschatological perspective: in the former, the move is backwards from the double mission of Son and Spirit to the threefold person, and then to arrive at the divine unity: 'the unity of God comes first, as being protologically the basis of his threefoldness.' On the other hand, 'in eschatological thinking, the unity of God is the final, eschatological goal, and this unity contains in itself the whole union of the world with God and in God. Eschatologically, therefore, the unity of God is bound up with the salvation of creation.'<sup>66</sup> So, referring again to the Corinthians narrative, Moltmann can write,

'The transference of the kingdom from the Son to the Father at the End-time is to be understood both as a world-embracing event which completes history, and as an event within the Trinity itself.'<sup>67</sup>

The relationship between the protological and eschatological Trinity is one in which there is a formal correspondence, but an increment or deepening of the relationships through the experience of the history to which God has opened himself in the economy: 'in content it goes beyond it, just as the gathering love corresponds to the seeking love of God yet goes far beyond it through the gathering and uniting of mankind and the world with God.' 68

So, in Moltmann's view, the Trinitarian relationships are consummated through the events of the economy and the subsequent completion of the work of Christ: they reach a completion which is co-terminous with the transfigured Kingdom which the Son presents to the Father in loving obedience as an intra-Trinitarian act -- indeed, as the perfect Trinitarian act between Father and Son made in the communion of the Spirit who, through his action, makes the creation a participator in the relationship of Father and Son. The destiny of creation is to be taken into the Trinitarian life, and, if we can express it thus, the destiny of the Trinity is to complete its perichoresis through its involvement in the events of our temporality.

Moltmann uses the narrative genre as a way of avoiding the distorting effects which the God of classical theism has had on Christian theologising. The

following passage raises considerable questions about the compatibility of Moltmann's narration with principles derived from classical metaphysical theism: (We shall underline the words which require explicitation, since, although they are part of the coherence of the narration, it is not easy to see what content they are to be given):

'The incarnation of the Son therefore brings about something "new" even within the Trinity, for God himself. After the Son's return the relationship between the Father and the Son is no longer entirely the same. The Father has become different through his surrender of the Son, and the Son too has become different through the experience of his passion in the world.' <sup>69</sup>

But, as Langdon Gilkey points out, narration requires clarification through a philosophical articulation of the coherence and intelligibility of the symbols and narrations which are employed: 'Constructive theology requires for its completion the conceptuality of a modern ontology, given to it by loan from some example of contemporary philosophy.'<sup>70</sup> Clearly Moltmann's Trinitarian narrations imply the categories of process philosophy and theology, and raise the question of whether God is conceived to be dependent on history for his fulfilment. Moltmann's answer to Walter Kasper on this point is clear, but he may not be the most accurate judge of his own enterprise:



'If one understands by "himself" his abstract being for and with himself, then one must deny this question. If by "himself" one understands what the bible calls his glory, his justice and his kingdom, then one must affirm this question, even if one would not want to pose the question in the sense of the "imperfection" of his love and the openness of his hope.' 71

But, it can be pointed out that Moltmann's explicit assertions of the status of the immanent Trinity as the consummated relationality of the Triune God, involve more than God's glory: he clearly envisages a process of divine becoming from point A -- the Trinity in sending -- through the events of the economy to point B, which is the result of the 'new' and completed relationality, exceeding in content that which was actualised before. The awkward words, of course, are those of 'before' and 'after' -- appropriate in a narrative exposition of the Trinitarian history, but as potentially misleading in their own way as the static categories of classical metaphysics which they are meant to replace. Barth, in a letter to Moltmann after the publication of The Theology of Hope, highlights the distorting effects of the 'eschatologising' of God's being in Moltmann's approach:

'My own concern relates to the unilateral way in which you subsume all theology in eschatology, going beyond Blümhardt, Overbeck, and Schweitzer in this regard...What disturbs me is that for you theology becomes so much a matter of principle (an eschatological principle). You know that I too was



once on the edge of moving in this direction, but I refrained from doing so and have thus come under the fire of your criticism in my later development. Would it not be wise to accept the doctrine of the immanent Trinity of God? You may thereby achieve the freedom of three-dimensional thinking in which the eschata have and retain their own weight while the same (and not just a provisional) honour can still be shown to the kingdom of nature and grace. Have my concepts of the threefold time (CD III/2, \*47.1) and threefold parousia of Jesus Christ (CD IV/3, \*69.4) made so little impact on you that you do not give them critical consideration?' 72

Moltmann's assertion that the Incarnation brings something new even within the Trinity is, of course, the reverse of Barth's assertion, which we quoted in an earlier chapter, that 'the Incarnation makes no change in the Trinity.' The divergence between them is instructive: by means of the image of the pre-existence of the man Jesus, Barth is able to present God's being as eternally oriented towards the economy. His denial of the Logos asarkos is a refusal to consider the being of God without reference to the self-interpretation of the events of the economy. God's election of the man Jesus as the electing God and the elected man is the primal and determinative act of God's being. In this sense, the man Jesus belongs to God's historia praeveniens, to 'the attitude and relation in which by virtue of the decision of his free love God wills to be and is God' (CD II/2, p.9). Barth offers to Moltmann the proposal that the doctrine of

the immanent Trinity is necessary if God's 'becoming' or, expressed another way, the triune relationality, is not to be construed as implying that God is dependent on history for his actualisation as a relationality. Without this doctrine, the danger is that of 'eschatologising' the being of God, and thus compromising his freedom and transcendence. Moltmann's pattern is that of making God's immanent or economic presence a moment in the process by which God's transcendence is achieved, and, in particular, of making the event of the crucifixion the decisive moment which 'affects' God.

Jüngel, whose Barthian view is summarised in his statement that 'God's being is in becoming', guards against this misunderstanding; if we may express it thus, Moltmann asks how the Crucifixion affects God, whereas Jüngel, following Barth, is more interested in how the events of the economy effect the Triune relationality. Jüngel argues against the view that 'God would first become that which he is, through his relationship to an other than himself.' Moltmann, on the other hand, seems to be unable to avoid making the process of divine becoming dependent on temporal events by which God is affected. His desire to argue in favour of 'the pathos of God' leads him to a narrative phenomenology of the divine becoming, in which the freedom and self-relatedness of the Trinity lose their transcendent features.

The difficulty which we highlighted in Moltmann's approach -- that of making the process of divine becoming dependent on the economy -- occurs explicitly in Schoonenberg's work. His interpretation of Rahner's axiom could fairly be described as a revisionist reading, in which Rahner's safeguards against compromising the integrity or freedom of the divine life are removed: it is through the economy that the Trinity becomes a Trinity of persons. As far as the immanent Trinity is concerned, the Father, Son and Spirit are modes of deity; these modes of being become personal in the economy:

'Through the history of salvation, there is a Trinity in God himself; through his own saving action, God himself becomes three-personal, that is, three Persons.' 73

Schoonenberg separates the modalistic and personalistic approaches as applicable respectively to the immanent and economic Trinities:

'Wahr ist also die modalistische Trinitätslehre, insoweit sie sich auf das innergöttliche Sein in sich bezieht. Wahr ist die personalistische Trinitätslehre, insoweit sie sich auf Gott in der Heilsökonomie bezieht. Gott ist ökonomisch dreipersonlich, immanent hat er drei Weisen seines Seins, die sich durch die Heilsgeschichte als drei Personen verhalten, zu uns und auch zueinander.' 74



Schoonenberg uses 'person' to designate a conscious and free subject, capable of relationships with other subjects; his argument, then, against applying this term to the immanent Trinity is that it would imply a tritheism. Instead, God, in his threefold modes of being, is designated as 'personal'; but in the economy, there is a different pattern which requires a different account:

'Es bleibt aber, dass Jesus Christus und der Vater sich personal gegenüberstehen und dass der Heilige Geist in uns zum Vater betet und zum Sohn ruft und ihnen also auch personal gegenübersteht. Vater, Sohn und Geist stehen sich also nach der Schrift in der Heilsgeschichte als Personen gegenüber. Aus These 23 folgt, dass dies auch nur durch die Heilsgeschichte möglich ist. Die immanente Trinität ist eine Trinität der Personen dadurch, dass sie ökonomische Trinität ist.' 75

Yves Congar is right to point out against Schoonenberg:

'And how can there be a communication of the three Persons if they are not three Persons to begin with?' 76

Schoonenberg treats the economy as the actualisation of the triune modes of being, as their transformation into three subjectivities over against each other: 'Gott in sich ist nicht als drei Personen, er ist es in der Heilsgeschichte.' <sup>77</sup>

Schoonenberg's apophatic treatment of the immanent Trinity does not permit him to transgress the rule he sets of speaking of the immanent Trinity only within the limits placed by salvation history: we



simply are not in a position to say anything about the 'prior' threefoldness of God's being, apart from its reference to the economy:

'Damit ist nicht ausgemacht, ob und inwieweit Gott, abgesehen von der Heilsgeschichte ("vor der Schöpfung"), dreifaltig ist ("war"). Es wurde schon betont, dass diese Frage nicht zu beantworten ist.' <sup>78</sup>

The result of this is that Schoonenberg is restricted to a modalistic discussion of the being of God in himself, while engaging in a personalist treatment of the being of God in the economy; he does this through taking seriously Rahner's axiom as the only sound hermeneutical rule for speech about God's being in himself. There cannot be any discussion of the immanent Trinity except through the economic Trinity which is to be taken as identical with it. But by relating the personalistic character of the Trinitarian relationality so closely, and exclusively, to the economy -- chiefly under the influence of a particular understanding of 'personhood'<sup>79</sup> -- is not Schoonenberg failing to carry the implications of the fundamental axiom to its conclusion? While assenting to the axiomatic unity of the immanent and economic Trinity, he, nevertheless, contravenes his hermeneutical principle and refuses to recognise the personalist character of the immanent trinity, preferring instead an apophatism which is at odds with his explicit intention.

It is Congar who has raised the most acute objections against a simple acceptance of the axiomatic unity of the immanent and economic Trinity: his reservations are relevant to the development of the axiom which we have examined in Jüngel, Moltmann and Schoonenberg. While accepting unreservedly the first part of the axiom, 'the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity', in order to affirm that our dealings with God in the economy are truly dealings with God as he is, and not with an inferior or substitutionary presence, he highlights a difficulty about the simple acceptance of the umgekehrt of the axiom. If we say that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity, are we identifying the kenotic mode of being of the economy with the mode of being which is proper to God? His two questions are:

'Can the free mystery of the economy and the necessary mystery of the Tri-unity of God be identified?.... In addition to this, is it true to say that God commits the whole of his mystery to and reveals it in his communication of himself?' 80

The tradition, particularly in the struggle against Arianism, speaks of the Trinitarian character of the divine being as *κατὰ φύσιν*. Is that Trinitarian life to be identified with the Trinitarian life of the economy? Or is the Trinitarian life of the economy an 'expression' or 'transcription', within another form

of being and temporality, freely chosen by God, of the relationality which properly belongs within its own, distinct mode of being? Congar is clear on this point:

'This self-communication takes place in the economy in accordance with a rule of "condescendence", humiliation, ministry and "kenosis". We have therefore to recognize that there is a distance between the economic, revealed Trinity and the eternal Trinity. The Trinity is the same in each case and God is really communicated, but this takes place in a mode that is not connatural with the being of the divine Persons.' <sup>81</sup>

In answer to the second question he poses, Congar concludes:

'The economic Trinity thus reveals the immanent Trinity -- but does it reveal it entirely? There is always a limit to this revelation, and the incarnation imposes its own conditions which go back to its nature as a created work.' <sup>82</sup>

Congar argues for a qualification in the interpretation of the axiom, safeguarding the integrity of the immanent life of the Trinity in its proper mode of being, which is distinct from its kenotic expression: without this distinction, there is a dissolution of the immanent Trinity in the economic Trinity, and a consequent reduction of God's being to its economic expression. Kasper makes the same point, emphasising that 'the "is" in this axiom must be understood as



meaning not an identification but rather a non-deducible, free, gracious, historical presence of an immanent Trinity in the economic Trinity.<sup>83</sup> If the treatment of God's being is to avoid being a theogony, in which the processes of divine becoming are constituted through a dependence on the world-process, thus dissolving the distinction between the immanent and economic expression of God's being, then a caveat of this kind must be operative in the use of Rahner's axiom.

Language about the immanent Trinity, however, does not escape from the controls of the economic Trinity: it is not a way of peering into the divine life from a standpoint which ignores its mysterious and apophatic character. To treat it thus would be to invalidate the cardinal principle that God is expressed as God in the mode of the economy; hence, working from the reality of God's presence in the economy, it is better to see the immanent Trinity as precisely that mystery of God which is historically present in the economy, but which cannot be reduced to its economic expression. The immanent Trinity is not the God who lies 'behind' the economy, but the God who is 'in' the economy; the God who is active in the economy is God as he is in himself, expressed or 'transcribed' within the created order. Would it be accurate, then, to describe the immanent Trinity as the 'what' that is expressed within



the 'how' of the economic mode? This is partially correct, but is insufficient, since it gives the impression that the immanent Trinity is passive in this process. This partial answer must be supplemented by an attempt to show that the character of the Triune relationality, and the character of the persons within this Triune life, in fact enable the economic self-expression to take place. The hermeneutical device of 'appropriation' aims at showing, in particular, that the Son and the Spirit must be of such a nature that the economic mode of being is possible: it is because of the character of the Son and the Spirit that there can be an economic Trinity.

The considerable philosophical problems which centre on the notion of God's immutability, and its relationship to the Incarnation, are answered best by Rahner's proposal that we must attribute to the Son alone the capacity to become incarnate: it is proper to the mode of being of the Son that in him the unchangeable God can become subject to change in something else:

'The mystery of the incarnation must lie in God himself: in the fact that he, though unchangeable "in himself", can become something "in another". The immutability of God is a dialectical truth like the unity of God. These two truths only -- de facto -- retain their validity for us when we think at once of the two other truths (of the Trinity and the incarnation). But we cannot and may not think of either as prior to the other.' 84

The tension or dialectic is between the unchanging life or perichoresis of the Trinity, on the one hand, and the capacity of God in one of his modes of being to engage in a 'κένωσις and γένεσις of God himself, who can come to be by becoming another thing, derivative, in the act of constituting it, without having to change in his own proper reality which is the unoriginated origin.' <sup>85</sup> If the immutability of God is conceived as the perfection of love within the triune relationality, then what sense is there in saying that the divine kenosis, in the mode of being of the Son, alters or adds to the love which is the source of the kenosis in the first place? The kenosis of the economy is the expression of the love which is the divine being, and it cannot coherently be the means by which the love is altered or deepened. Donald MacKinnon recognises this when he writes:

'Yet what is the doctrine of the Trinity if not the effort so to reconstruct the doctrine of God that this "descent" may be seen as supremely, indeed paradigmatically declaratory of what He is in himself?

'...the history of this doctrine represents the most sustained effort made to reconstruct the conception of the Absolute under the central conviction that the mission of Jesus (and here we include his resurrection and the coming upon his disciples of the Holy Spirit) is, in an altogether unique sense, the actuality of the divine self-impartation to the world.' <sup>86</sup>

If we are seeking to locate the possibility of the economic mode of self-expression within the immanent Trinity, in a dynamic way which considers that it is the character of the Son and Spirit which provides the possibility of there being an economic self-communication, then it may be fruitful to consider the identity of the immanent and economic Trinity as the appropriated work of the Spirit: can we present the Spirit as the mode of being which opens the Trinitarian life towards expression in the created order? The Spirit may then be considered as the one who enables the unity-in-distinction of the Son, in his relationship to the Father, to be 'expressed' or 'extended' or 'actualised' in the kenosis of the Incarnation. The Spirit may be the means by which the process of God's coming to himself, to use Jüngel's phrase, takes place not without man, because if the Spirit is the one who maintains the distinction of the divine persons, while uniting them in their love, then he may be the one in whom a different, and for us salvific, expression in the economy may occur. The Spirit would then be the mode of being in which the created self-expression of God is enabled to be truly a self-expression, in which the relationship of Father and Son is enacted through the kenosis.

Both the Son and the Spirit constitute, in distinct ways, the possibility of the divine self-communication

in the mode of the economy: in their distinctness from the Father, from whom they derive their being, they are together, again in distinct ways, the modes of being 'through whom' and 'in whom' God's presence is actualised ad extra. If this emphasis is given, then discussion of the immanent relationship of Father, Son and Spirit cannot be understood to be about 'God's being in itself' detached from the economy; it is rather about what there is in God which enables the self-communication of the economy to be a self-communication of God.

Rahner's emphasis on the distinctness of the Son as the ground of the distinctness of created reality is correct, but it may be fruitful to alter the discussion to include, first of all, a consideration of the role of the Spirit as the one in whom this distinctness is constituted within the immanent Trinity, which will then enable us to consider the role of the Spirit in constituting the distinctness of the incarnate Son in his union with the Father. In this way, the Spirit may be presented as the one who enables the immanent Trinity to be the economic Trinity, since it is the appropriated work of the Spirit to be, personally, the bond of love between the Father and Son, both in the mode of being proper to God, and in the kenotic mode of the economy. The role of the Spirit in this regard can then be aligned with a Spirit Christology as the



Christological articulation of the significance of the economic Trinity.

The weakness in current, and past, Spirit Christologies is that they avoid adoptionism only with difficulty: they are notoriously unable to maintain the hypostatic identity of Jesus and the Logos, preferring instead a model of the indwelling Spirit sanctifying the humanity of Jesus.<sup>87</sup> The crucial weakness lies in the coordination of a Spirit Christology with a Trinitarian theology: if the Christological pattern is Father > Spirit > Son, then this will align poorly with a Trinitarian pattern of Father > Son > Spirit. The role of the Spirit in establishing the identity of the immanent and economic Trinity will only be adequately expressed if the Spirit is assigned a role within the immanent Trinity which will enable a Spirit Christology to be a Christological explicitation of the character of the economic Trinity. If, as we suggest, the Spirit affirms the distinctness-in-unity of the Father and Son within the immanent Trinity, then the attribution of a similar role within the economic Trinity will be a firmer grounding for developing the role of the Spirit within Christology. This may have the benefit of avoiding the predominantly 'binitarian' pattern of Trinitarian discourse, in which the Spirit's hypostatic identity is insecurely established. Graphically, we might express it in terms of placing the Spirit between

Father and Son, rather than as the third member of a predominantly binitarian pattern. If we can develop this with reference to the immanent Trinity, then the treatment of the pre-existent Son may be expressed with greater openness towards a Spirit Christology, thus avoiding the limitations inherent in a Logos Christology which undervalues the Spirit. Walter Kasper comments on the weak pneumatological dimension of Scholastic theology; we could point to the source of this weakness in the predominantly binitarian pattern of Patristic Christology, which develops a Logos Christology prior to a consideration of the Spirit:

'Scholastic theology was hardly able to give due prominence to the pneumatological aspect of the Incarnation, because of its unilaterally metaphysical approach based on the unity of the divine essence. It could do no more than attribute by "appropriation" to the Holy Spirit the Incarnation as a work of God's love.'<sup>88</sup>

So, in our examination of the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinity, if we can develop the identity of the immanent and economic Trinity as the work of the Spirit, then this will have implications in moving pre-existence language towards a more pneumatological Christology than has been developed in the tradition thus far.

If we attempt to reshape the role of the Spirit as the one who enables the immanent Trinity to be the economic Trinity through its role vis-à-vis the hypostasis of the immanent Son, then we can locate this pattern in the tradition in the Odes of Solomon: in Ode 19, we have perhaps the earliest description of the immanent Trinity, dating possibly from the early part of the second century. It presents the immanent Trinity in its relationship to the economy through the mediating role of the Spirit, who, within the immanent Trinity, enables the Son to be taken from the bosom of the Father, and, in the economy, overshadows the Virgin, thus enabling her to share in the motherhood of the Spirit: the Spirit's role in the economy is portrayed as reflecting her role in the immanent Trinitarian life, and the latter is presented as the condition of the reality of the former:

'A cup of milk was offered to me,  
 And I drank it in the sweetness of the  
     Lord's kindness.  
 The Son is the cup,  
 And the Father is he who was milked;  
 And the Holy Spirit is She who milked  
     Him;  
 Because his breasts were full,  
 And it was undesirable that His milk  
     should be ineffectually released.

The Holy Spirit opened her bosom,  
 And mixed the milk of the two breasts of  
     the Father.  
 And she gave the mixture to the  
     generation without their knowing,  
 And those who have received it are in  
     the perfection of the right hand.

The womb of the Virgin took (it),  
 And she received conception and gave  
 birth.  
 So the Virgin became a mother with great  
 mercies...' 89

The Scriptural foundation for the Ode lies in the association of the Johannine Prologue and the Lucan Annunciation narrative: the Son in the 'bosom' or 'womb' (in Syriac) of the Father; through the Spirit, the Son is given without recognition or acceptance (Jn 1.10), but in the Incarnation, this communication to the Virgin of the reality of the Son (Lk 1.35) brings a response from the Church (Jn 1.11). The Son is portrayed as the 'milk' within the being of the Father which is brought forth, through the action of the Spirit who is a strange female power associated with the deity, and is transmitted to humanity, perhaps at baptism (cf. the milk imagery of 1 Cor. 3:1-2; Heb 5.12; 1 Pet. 2.2-3).

Drijvers relates the imagery of the Ode to the Old Syriac version of the Fourth Gospel, in which Jn 1.18 is translated as 'the only begotten Son, which is from the womb of the Father':

'The wording that the Son comes "from the womb of His Father" introduces a female element into the Father's personality. That female element of the Father which gives birth to the Son is represented by the (female) Holy Spirit who functions as the womb of the Father, from where His grace and truth, the milk



of His two breasts, His only begotten Son, are born. Father, Holy Spirit and Son are three divine hypostases, who function in a sexually coloured interacting process to express the idea that God's grace and truth are given to the world as His only begotten Son, who is from the womb of His Father.'<sup>90</sup>

He suggests that the relationship between the Prologue and the Lucan Annunciation scene comes from a similarity in wording between the greeting of the angel ('Hail, thou that art full of grace') and Jn 1.14 ('the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth'), and also between Lk 1.35 ('the power of the Highest shall dwell in you') and Jn 1.14 ('and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us').<sup>91</sup> Unlike the Greek which uses different verbs, the Syriac version uses the same verb; this suggests an association between the presence of the Son in the bosom of the Father, and the presence of the Son in the womb of the Virgin, with the Spirit being the mediating agent. The Spirit both receives the Son from the Father, and overshadows Mary in a way which enables her to bear the Son.

Drijvers dates the Ode in the first half of the third century, although Charlesworth opts for a dating in the early second century, as the earliest Christian hymn book. The precise origin of the Ode is beyond our scope and competence. But what is of interest is the expression of a vivid narration which, while expressing

in imaginative terms what was later formulated as the 'consubstantiality' of the Son with the Father, links the immanent and economic Trinity through the action of the Spirit who, as a female figure, receives the Son from the being of the Father, and thus is able to permit the Virgin to share in the divine motherhood of the Spirit. In its own idiosyncratic way, the Ode takes the description of the economy given in the Annunciation scene as normative for what should be said about the immanent Trinity: if the Incarnation takes place through the action of the Spirit, then the Spirit can be said to perform this role within the immanent Trinity. The imagery of the Ode presents the Father as bisexual, and the Spirit as the feminine power who mediates the birth of the Son from the Father, and who also enables the Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. The image of the Spirit as midwife may suggest itself, but there are also suggestions of the Spirit as the womb in which the generation of the Son takes place, and of the Spirit enabling the Virgin to share in her motherhood of the Son. There are Gnostic parallels for this image, in the Gospel of Truth, for example:

'The Father reveals his bosom -- now his bosom is the Holy Spirit. He reveals what is hidden of him -- what is hidden of him is His Son -- so that through the mercies of the Father the aeons may know him.' 92

The Gospel of Philip, too, knows of the tradition of the femininity of the Spirit:

'Some said, "Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit." They are in error. They do not know what they are saying. When did a woman ever conceive by a woman? Mary is the virgin whom no power defiled.' <sup>93</sup>

Unlike the Gnostic treatises, however, with their complex emanations and syzygies, the Ode presents a simpler picture, in which 'the Holy Spirit is a feminine power of God whose relation to him is not clear, but who is the agent or intermediary through whom the Virgin conceived.'<sup>94</sup> The imagery of the Ode does not require explanation in terms of Gnostic sources and influences; the treatment of the Spirit as the feminine figure who receives the Son from the mystery of the Father's being, is a way of cohering the patterns of the generation of the Son 'from the bosom of the Father' with the Annunciation narrative in which the Spirit is the active agent in the conception of Jesus, but cannot be regarded as 'paternal' in its relationship to Jesus.

Charlesworth points to another Ode which attributes a maternal role to the Spirit in the generation of the Son in the immanent Trinity:

'The Spirit brought me forth before the  
 Lord's face.  
 And because I was the Son of Man,  
 I was named the Light, the Son of God;  
 Because I was the most glorified among  
 the glorious ones,  
 And the greatest among the great ones.  
 For according to the greatness of the  
 Most High, so She made me;  
 And according to His newness He renewed  
 me.' 95

Here, the location of the 'bringing forth' is not so obviously heavenly, as Robert Murray points out: 96 it could refer to the Baptism or to the Transfiguration, which another Judaeo-Christian text, quoted by Origen and Jerome, relates to the action of the maternal Holy Spirit:

'Even so did my mother, the Holy Spirit, take me by one of my hairs and carry me away on to the great mountain Tabor.' 97

However, given the insistence of the Odes on the pre-existence of the Son, and given the angelic company of 'the glorious ones', it is defensible to take Ode 36.3 as referring to the action of the Spirit described in Ode 19. 98 The Spirit cannot be construed, in her relationship to the Father in the generation of the Son, as a female consort, through whose union with the Father, the Son is begotten. The Ode expresses the generation of the Son as an event which is wholly 'from the Father', from his breasts of grace and truth (Jn.



1.14). Here, as Drijvers points out, there are echoes of the blessing of Joseph, 'with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that couches beneath, blessings of the breast and of the womb' (Gen. 49.25)<sup>99</sup>. The Spirit is the one who receives the Son from the Father from whose substance he proceeds, and who maintains him in distinction from the Father; this is done in a way which makes possible the further distinction of the Son in the Incarnation. The mediation of the Spirit is the event in the divine being which makes possible the presence of the Son within the created order. It is through the appropriated action of the Spirit that the immanent begetting can also be an incarnate begetting. These are the points which can be adduced from the figurative imagery of the Ode, which point in the direction of developing the role of the Spirit in the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinity.

The theme of the double birth of the Son, from the Father and from Mary, is of course a dominant concern in Patristic Christology: we can point, for example, to Hippolytus who uses the Genesis text of the blessing of Joseph to demonstrate that the Incarnation is to be understood as 'the unity of the procession of the Logos from the mouth, heart and loins of the Father and from David or the Virgin Mary. It is not just a matter of the Logos coming into the world, but of a procreation

in respect of the world.<sup>100</sup> The Incarnation involves 'the twofold birth of the Word, from God and from the Virgin.'<sup>101</sup> The strength of this double focus is that it preserves the status of the Son within the being of God, thus ensuring that the divine being does not 'become' Trinitarian through the events of the economy, as Schoonenberg suggests. At the same time, it enables an account of the economy to be derived from the character of the immanent begetting which is directed towards kenotic self-expression in the Incarnation. Without an affirmation of the immanent begetting of the Son, we would be faced with either a Unitarian Christology which speaks of the relationship of the Father to the man Jesus, or a theology which moves towards being a theogony, in which the process of divine becoming is portrayed as the actualisation of the (Sabellian) God's capacity towards self-differentiation in 'personal' distinction.

However, the relationship of the Spirit to the eternal Son within the dominant Trinitarian tradition is not developed along the lines proposed by the Judaeo-Christian Ode of Solomon. The principal patterns are linear, in which there is a consubstantial derivation of divinity from the monarchy of the Father to the Son, and from the Son to the Spirit,<sup>102</sup> and circular, or reciprocal, in which the Spirit is the one who completes the divine wholeness as the seal of the

Trinitarian unity, the nexus amoris, who is the personalised completion of the love between Father and Son.<sup>103</sup> The dominance of this later pattern, of course, raises awkward questions about the personal status of the Spirit -- is it a hypostasis? -- and about the distinction between the Spirit and the divine essence. The tendency of this pattern towards a predominantly 'Binitarian' interpretation leaves the Spirit in a precarious position.<sup>104</sup> While retaining an affirmation of the eternal begetting of the Son within the immanent Trinity, in order to avoid the misconceptions outlined above which can result in the absence of such an affirmation, it may be possible to articulate the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity with greater regard for the role of the Spirit. A pneumatological answer may be proposed to the double question of how the immanent and economic Trinity are related, and of how the immanent and incarnate modes of being of the Son are to be viewed. The attribution to the Spirit of the work of ensuring the identity of the immanent and economic modes of expression of the Triune life could then be the Trinitarian grounding for a Christological articulation of the pneumatological aspect of the Incarnation.

Although Walter Kasper does not refer to the 19th Ode of Solomon, he proposes a close approximation to the Judaeo-Christian theologoumenon of the action of the Spirit within the immanent Trinity:

'The Spirit thus expresses the innermost nature of God -- God as self-communicating love -- in such a way that this innermost reality proves at the same time to be the outermost, that is, the possibility and reality of God's being outside of himself. The Spirit is as it were the ecstasy of God; he is God as pure abundance, God as the overflow of love and grace. On the one hand, then, the immanent love of God reaches its goal in the Spirit. But at the same time, because in the Holy Spirit the Father and the Son as it were understand and realize themselves as love, the love of God in the Spirit also moves beyond God himself....In the Spirit God has as it were the possibility of being himself by emptying or divesting himself.'105

The character of the Spirit as the one in whom God has the capacity to empty himself is portrayed pictorially in Ode 19 where the Spirit enables the Son to be distinct from the Father. If we can express it thus, we might say that the Spirit provides the capacity within the divine being which enables the distinction between Father and Son to occur, at the same time as it maintains this distinction as a distinction-in-unity.

Kasper continues:

'At this "extreme" in God, he is at the same time God's innermost essence, as one must say in the tradition of Latin theology of the Trinity. In the Spirit, God's innermost essence, his freedom in love, impels him outwards. In him, as a love that is utterly free, God at the same time has the possibility of producing something outside, that is, a creature, and while maintaining its intrinsic creaturely independence, to draw it into his love. The Spirit is,



as it were, the theological transcendental condition of the very possibility of a free self-communication of God in history. In him, God can not only reveal but carry into effect his freedom in love in an historical manner. The Spirit as mediation between Father and Son is at the same time the mediation of God into history.' 106

Clearly, the important distinction in this respect concerns the relationship between, and the difference between, the character of the procession of the Spirit and the generation of the Son; a preliminary distinction could be made by regarding the Son as the 'what', and the Spirit as the 'how' of the self-utterance of the Father. The Biblical distinction between 'Word' and 'breath' suggests this: the Word has its existence only in the simultaneous breathing forth of the Spirit. The denial of the Arian sequential treatment of the divine being, with its inherent subordinationism, makes it necessary to treat the Trinitarian relationality as the coinherence or circumincession of Father, Son and Spirit; so language about the procession of Son and Spirit from the Father does not designate succession within the divine being. It is primarily concerned with expressing the unity and integrity of the divine being in and through the Trinitarian relationships 107 The absence of temporal succession in God acts as a regulative and hermeneutical principle which permits us to describe the procession of the Spirit as the very possibility of

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the generation of the Son. It would seem to be as valid to say this as it is to say that the Spirit is the 'resultant' love between Father and Son; both patterns are attempts to describe a Trinitarian relationality which is an actus purus of eternal reality. This hermeneutical consideration of the status of language of procession can be linked with another consideration which works from Rahner's axiom of the identity of the immanent and economic Trinity: if it is legitimate to argue, as the Latin tradition does in its affirmation of the filioque pattern, that since, in the economy, the Son has a role in the sending of the Spirit (Jn. 16.7), so the Son is involved in the procession of the Spirit within the immanent Trinity, it is equally valid to assert that since the Spirit, within the economy, is responsible for the incarnation of the Son (Lk. 1.35), and for mediating the Father's good pleasure to the Son (Mk. 1.10), and for effecting the invincible bond of love between Father and Son in the Resurrection (Rom. 1.4; 1 Tim. 3.16; Heb. 9.14), so the Spirit can be presented as fulfilling the same role within the immanent Trinity. Both of these patterns are validated by Rahner's axiom which permits, indeed requires, a correspondence between the features of the Trinity in the economy, and the relationality of the triune life.

In the Spirit, God has the possibility of expressing himself in the distinctness of the Son, in a way that can be 'extended', again in the Spirit, into the created order and history. If we take up the principle that the greater the union with God, the greater the degree of distinction and selfhood, and apply this to the relationship of the Spirit to the Son, then within the Christological order we can present the pneumatological aspect of the Incarnation as the Spirit ensuring that the humanity of Jesus is endowed with the capacity to receive the self-communication of the Father, and within the Trinitarian order, we can say that it is the Spirit who bestows on the Son a degree of selfhood which is intensified in proportion to the union of the Son with the Father. In this way, the Spirit ensures the distinction of the Son from the Father, at the same time as he unites the Father with the Son in a love which overflows in creation and redemption. Thus the Spirit can be the agent who performs the same function in the Triune relationality of the economy, first of all with regard to the humanity of Jesus, and then as the 'searching' love of God, drawing the creation into the response of the Son to the Father.

If the Spirit is the one who, within the immanent Trinity, ensures the direct proportionality of distinction and union between the Son and the Father,

it is precisely this action which enables the self-expression in the economy to take place. The outreach of God's action within creation (Rom. 8.23-27) is thus grounded in the action of the Spirit between Father and Son in the divine being, maintaining in unity the self-expression of the Father in the generation of the Son who is distinct from him. If the Spirit is the one who enables the Father to express himself in the Son, and who ensures that this distinction is maintained in a perfect unity of love, then it is the Spirit who is able to exercise an analogous, and related, function within the context of God's presence to the created order: the Biblical events of the Spirit hovering over the waters at the beginning of creation (Gen. 1.2), overshadowing the Virgin at the Annunciation (Lk. 1.35), and descending upon Jesus at the Baptism (Mk. 1.10, par.), express the role of the Spirit in establishing the self-communication of the Father to that which is distinct from him. If this is the role of the Spirit within the economy, then we are entitled to locate the possibility of such a role within the context of the Spirit's action between Father and Son in the triune relationality. The self-communication of the Father within the created order is thus transcendently + grounded in the appropriated action of the Spirit who, while effecting the distinction of reality 'other than the Father', also effects a unity in proportion to that



distinction. This takes place, first of all, within the divine being; the form of the Spirit's action within the immanent Trinity is the transcendental condition for its openness to economic self-expression, in the creation and redemption which are the double aspects of God's action ad extra. The action of the Spirit, as the one who allows distinction-in-unity to exist within the divine being, allows the distinction-in-unity of the Father and Son to be expressed in the Incarnation, thus ensuring that the relationship between Jesus and the Father is nothing less than the relationship of Son and Father within the triune relationality.

In support of these proposals, we turn to two Russian Orthodox writers, Paul Evdokimov and Serge Boulgakof. Evdokimov argues, following Boulgakof, against allowing the Trinitarian relations to be conceived in terms of the 'production' of the hypostases through 'causal dependence': the perspective introduced by the phrase 'without beginning and without end' means that one cannot interpret the Trinitarian relations in these terms. They are rather the relations of 'Celui qui se révèle and ceux qui le révèlent'. He balances the Filioque, designating the role of the Son in the spiration of the Spirit -- which he accepts in the Greek patristic sense, and not in the Photian sense -- with an affirmation of the Spirituque, the role of the Spirit in the generation of the Son:

'Le sens de ces deux formules est dans l'affirmation que chaque Personne doit être contemplée simultanément dans ses relations avec les Deux autres. Ainsi le Fils dans sa génération reçoit du Père l'Esprit Saint et donc dans son être il est éternellement inséparable de l'Esprit Saint: il est né ex Patre Spirituque. De même l'Esprit Saint procède du Père et repose sur le Fils, ce qui correspond à per Filium et à ex Patre Filioque. On trouve alors que, per ou dia, partout où se pose la relation interhypostatique, toujours trine. Le Père engendre le Fils avec la participation de l'Esprit Saint et il inspire l'Esprit avec la participation du Fils, et même son innascibilité comporte la participation du Fils et de l'Esprit Saint qui en témoignent en provenant de lui comme de leur Source unique. Mais ces relations ne sont point de production mais de corrélation entre Celui qui se révèle et ceux qui le révèlent, l'acte trine de l'Amour réciproque des Trois. L'Esprit n'est pas réduit à l'instrumental de l'Amour entre le Père et le Fils, mais il est celui qui actualise l'Amour où se complaisent les Trois.' 108

Both Evdokimov and Boulgakof are firm in their rejection of causal categories which distort the relationship of the monarchy of the Father in his relation to the hypostases of Son and Spirit: 'Aucune production causale ne peut avoir place dans l'éternité.' <sup>109</sup> Instead, both writers prefer the terms offered by Bolotov, an Orthodox participant in the discussions with the Old Catholics after Vatican I, who uses the term 'condition' to describe the involvement of the other two hypostases in the reality of the third:

'...le Fils est la condition trinitaire de la spiration du Saint Esprit par le Père, l'Esprit Saint est la condition trinitaire de l'engendrement du Fils par le Père. L'innascibilité, la génération et la procession sont sans confusion ni séparation un seul acte tri-un de Révélation, avec la participation simultanée et réciproque des Trois.<sup>110</sup>

Boulgakof, too, avoids interpreting the Trinitarian relations in terms of 'relations of origin', since these categories inevitably lead, in his opinion, to a subordinationism: all the correlations of the hypostases are mutually Trinitarian: 'et ce ne sont pas les relations de trois (sujets) reliés entre eux par un ordre de succession.<sup>111</sup>' Instead, Boulgakof offers as the controlling principle for a discussion of Ταΐς, the category of 'l'auto-révélation de la Sainte Trinité':

'Cette révélation s'accomplit dans trois hypostases corrélatives. La corrélation est définie comme trinitaire: le Père se révèle par la génération du Fils et par la spiration du Saint-Esprit; le Fils se révèle par Sa naissance du Père et par la réception du Saint-Esprit; l'Esprit se révèle par la procession du Père et par Son repos sur le Fils. La naissance et la procession, aux sens actif et passif, signifient non l'origine, mais les formes de corrélation. Le principe de l'auto-révélation tri-hypostatique surmonte et supprime toute espèce de subordinationisme.<sup>112</sup>

On the basis of this principle, the 'dyad' of the Son and Spirit are not hierarchically related: they are the mutually conditioning hypostases which can be presented as jointly involved in their distinction from the Father. The tradition has been uniform in its consideration of the Son as the second hypostasis, and of the Spirit as the third, and has, in both East and West, considered first of all the relation of Son and Father as a dyadic relationship which has issued in the spiration of the Spirit; whether the Filioque is accepted or not, this has been the dominant pattern, based primarily on the Johannine presentation of the Paraclete's coming to the disciples. Boulgakof and Evdokimov permit the introduction of a complementary perspective which does not invalidate this other Trinitarian pattern:

'Néanmoins, la corrélation ontologique des deux hypostases dans l'auto-révélation du Père à travers elles, n'établit pas entre elles de relation hiérarchique, laquelle est immuablement dans leur rapport au Père (en "soumission"). En effet, cet ordre de relation entre le Fils et le Saint-Esprit, n'est pas stable, il peut être inversé. En un certain sens, le Fils est prius pour le Saint-Esprit, mais aussi le Saint-Esprit est prius pour le Verbe. Cela dépend du point d'où l'on procède: dans la plénitude de l'auto-révélation divine .... la première place appartient à l'hypostase accomplissante du Saint-Esprit qui éprouve les profondeurs de Dieu; et la deuxième place appartient au Fils....Elle repose sur le Fils et elle l'unit au Père. Sans la Trinité économique, cette corrélation de la



Trinité immanente se manifeste aussi d'une façon définie; l'Esprit Saint, initialement, "se mouvait au-dessus des eaux". C'est lui qui commence l'Incarnation en descendant sur la Vierge Marie ... Bref, et bien qu'en des sens différents, les places de la Deuxième et de la Troisième hypostases dans la taxis sont réciproquement reversibles. Seule la place de la Première, celle du Père, du Principe, a un sens hiérarchique.<sup>113</sup>

Evdokimov, too, works from the pattern of the Spirit's action within the economy to an expression of the role of the Spirit in the generation of the Son: in an earlier work, the action of the Spirit in the conception of Jesus is interpreted as betokening the 'maternal' character of the Spirit within the immanent Trinity: 'L'Esprit Saint traduit ici la présence du Père qui seul engendre et en même temps permet de dire que le Fils est né par l'Esprit Saint ... (Qui est) l'image de la maternité hypostatique.<sup>114</sup>' His retrieval of the Judaeo-Christian theologoumenon of the maternal character of the Spirit vis-à-vis the Son is, significantly, reworked not in the direction of a familial Trinity of Father, Mother and Son, which would be too anthropomorphic to be viably theological, but rather it is integrated in an expression of the perichoretic involvement of all the divine persons in the hypostatic identity of the others. Even the monarchy or ingenerateness of the Father, the fons et origo totius divinitatis in the phrase of the Council

of Toledo (675), is reciprocally involved with the perichoretic relationship of Son and Spirit: this is a necessary consequence of the eternal character of the divine relationality. The Son and the Spirit are the 'two modalities of the divine self-communication', in Rahner's phrase:

'Both basic modalities condition one another. They derive from the nature of the self-communication of the unoriginate God who remains incomprehensible, whose self-communication remains a mystery both as possible and actual...'<sup>115</sup>

The line of inquiry we have presented stands outside the customary discussion of the relationship of Son and Spirit in the Thomist tradition: Aquinas argues that unless the Son and Spirit are related through a relationship of origin, then there is no basis for distinguishing them. Since the only relations within the divine being are those between hypostases on the basis of opposition through origin, he argues that the Spirit must be said to proceed from the Father and from the Son: 'Oportet ergo quod Filius et Spiritus Sanctus ad invicem referentur oppositis relationibus.'<sup>116</sup> This seems an unnecessary point of argumentation, made against the background of the Greek rejection of the Filioque, in which, with the help of the axiom about there being only relations of origin in the Triune life, the two hypostases of Son and Spirit are related

in a way which upsets the complementarity between them as the two modalities of God's self-presence.

In addition, as Kasper points out, this account 'has difficulty in conceptually distinguishing the relation of the Spirit to the Son from the relation of the Spirit to the Father.'<sup>117</sup> One must also ask whether it is necessary to consider the Trinitarian life in terms of processions or origins: 'The Fathers and the Orthodox tell us again and again that the Spirit is received in the Son or that he takes from the Son and, in so doing, they are providing a foundation for relationships of reciprocity, the relationships, in other words, of the perichoresis.'<sup>118</sup> We should also add that our proposals are not intended to supplant the consideration of the Spirit from the Father and the Son (or through the Son), but to complement them by a consideration of the role of the Spirit in the generation of the Son from the Father and in establishing the Son in a relationship of distinction-in-unity.

We suggest that the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity might be grounded in the character of the Spirit as the hypostasis who, as the open horizon and the principle of distinction-in-unity within the divine life, makes possible the self-expression of the Father in the generation of the Son. Because this divine life is eternally directed

towards God's self-communication in the economy, the Spirit is the transcendental condition for the expression of the Triune life within the created order, in that, since the Spirit affirms the direct proportionality of distinctness and unity between Father and Son, he is able to establish the same proportionality in the Incarnation. The Spirit is the one who ensures that the distinction of the Son from the Father is not accompanied by a break in the unity of love between them.

By developing the role of the Spirit in enabling the triune God to be expressed in the economy, we are avoiding the tendency of the axiom formulated by Rahner to dissolve the being of God into a process which is dependent on temporal events. This was clearly the danger in Moltmann and Schoonenberg in particular. If the Spirit within the triune relationality presents the possibility of a unified differentiation between Father and Son, while orientating that relationship towards expression in the created order, then the divine becoming, while not dependent on creation, nevertheless has, in the Spirit, the capacity to express that same relationship between the Father and the Incarnate Son.

The Spirit is the ecstatic quality of the divine being, in which the love between Father and Son is extended outwards to find expression in the love between the



Father and the Incarnate Son. Albert the Great, who is quoted by both Scheeben and Kasper, characterises the activity of the Spirit in these terms:

'Et ideo etiam dicit Dionysius, quod est exstasim faciens divinus amor, hoc est transpositionem; transponit enim amantem in amatum et non sinit eum manere in seipso.' 119

This description can be applied to the activity of the Spirit in his role as the simultaneous condition of the generation of the Son, and to the further extension of this relationality in the kenotic mode of the economy. Malevez, too, speaks of the Spirit as the one who, in the distinction of the Son from the Father, effects 'une reposition de l'unité'<sup>120</sup> -- a phrase which is applicable both to the communion between Father and Son and in the economy, and to their communion in the triune relationality which issues in the economy. In this perspective, the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity ceases to be a 'reflection' pattern, in which the events of the economy 'mirror' the already existing and self-sufficient immanent life. Instead, consideration of the Son and Spirit as distinct hypostases in the divine life is an investigation into the mutually necessary conditions for the divine self-communication in the economy. The economic Trinity can be presented as grounded in the dynamic character of the Spirit who is the condition

for the distinction-in-unity of the Son and Father, and who opens and mediates their relationship towards the created order.

At the same time, the relationship between the pre-existent and Incarnate conditions of the Son's existence can be given a pneumatological orientation: it is the work of the Spirit to bridge the even greater distance between God and creation, and to enable the humanity of Jesus to be the actuality of the Son's presence within the created order. Like the immanent and economic Trinity, the relationship between the pre-existent and the Incarnate Son can seem to be a 'reflection' pattern. But, like the Trinitarian pattern, it is possible to provide a pneumatological account of the relationship of the 'immanent' Son and the Son in the economy. If we take up the correlation between the account of the Spirit as the innermost bond of unity and love between the Father and the Son who is posited in distinction from him, and the account of the Spirit as the mode of God's presence to the created order, then we have an account of the Spirit as both innermost within the divine being and outermost within the created order: immanent within the relationship of Father and Son, and immanent within the created order. The love between Father and Son is also the love which is extended over and within the creation, bringing that creation into a relationship with the Father and

involving it in the Triune life. The capacity within the Trinitarian life to bring that which is distinct from the Father, namely the Son, into union with him, is precisely the same capacity which establishes the created order in a relationship of unity with the Father. Because the Spirit exercises this role vis-à-vis the created order, it is able to ensure that the humanity of Jesus can exist in a perfect union with the Father as the humanity of the Son.

From Barth we derive the idea that the Trinitarian relationship is eternally directed towards the expression of the divine being as God-for-us in the economy. From this perspective, which refutes notions of the 'self-sufficiency' of the divine being, since it presents God as freely directed towards us in love, we may establish a link with the portrayal of the Spirit as the hypostasis which, within the divine life, establishes the Son in distinction-in-unity with the Father, and as the hypostasis which is capable of expressing this unity in a kenotic form. We might say then, that the Triune God's determination towards kenotic expression and involvement can be seen, by appropriation, to be the Spirit's capacity to enable the hypostasis of the Son to find 'symbolic' self-expression in the humanity of Jesus,<sup>121</sup> and to establish for that humanity the same bond of distinction-in-unity which is characteristic of the

Father-Son relationship within the divine being. It is the Spirit who enables the Son both to relate to the Father in a distinction which does not infringe the divine unity, and to be even more distinct from the Father -- as a subject within the created order -- while still being united with the Father. The Spirit ensures that in the economy, the Son is united with the Father, especially, following von Balthasar, we might say that the Spirit ensures the union of the Son with the Father even at the furthest determination of the created realm, including the realm of sin and death<sup>122</sup>

In this sense we might look to the Spirit as the one who enables the immanent Son, or the pre-existent Son, to enter into the realm of creaturely distance from the Father in the Incarnation. The relationship, then of the immanent and Incarnate Son is not a reflection pattern, in which the incarnate mode is simply a reflection of a detached and heavenly mode of existence, but the Son within the divine life is constituted in the Spirit as the hypostasis which can find expression in the created order. In this sense, we might say that the Spirit opens or orientates the Son towards the Incarnation.

This pneumatological consideration works from the pre-dogmatic theologoumenon of the 19th Ode of Solomon, which is based on the association of the Spirit-directed Lucan Annunciation scene and the



Johannine Logos-directed Prologue. It brings to the forefront the role of the Spirit within the economic order as a guiding principle for the consideration of the immanent order which must be reached by any theology. In turn, it can be aligned with the consideration of the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity: the Spirit can be seen as the hypostasis in whom there is the capacity to effect a unity with the Father, both within the triune life and in the kenotic mode of the economy. In conjunction with this perspective, we can present the Spirit as the one through whose characteristic action the Son is directed towards the involvement in the created order. In this way, the relationship between the immanent Son and the Incarnate Son can be considered pneumatologically, as grounded in the relationship between Son and Spirit, and in this way, there is the possibility of establishing a Spirit Christology which avoids the customary danger of Adoptionism. At the same time, it points in the direction of developing the strengths of a Son or Logos Christology in a pneumatological context: in this way, it can be shown that the dynamism established by pre-existence language need not result in the predominantly Binitarian pattern which has been its customary development.

Conclusion.

## Conclusion

Our study began with a question: how to find a category which would do justice to the dynamism which pre-existence language, and its conceptual clarifications, have exercised in the inter-related fields of Christology and Trinitarian monotheism. We judged that it was not helpful to restrict consideration of pre-existence to the category of myth, whose ever-expanding and diverse use in several disciplines renders it increasingly opaque as a hermeneutical tool. Nor does a mythological approach seem able to account for the redescriptive power of pre-existence language in Christology. We proposed that metaphor might be a more fruitful interpretative category, since this is a form of predication in which there is a 'tension' or 'disjunction' between the connotations of the referent and its predicate. In the course of construing a metaphor, the reader is led to resolve that tension by engaging in a redescription of the referent in the light of the connotations offered by the predicate. At the same time, metaphorical descriptions have the capacity to offer interpretative expressions which arise out of the dynamism of the metaphor: language is constantly enriched by the store of metaphors. Equally, one might say that Christological language has been enriched by the possibilities offered by pre-existence language, in its figurative and conceptual developments.

This approach has enabled us to cope with the following points in the predication of pre-existence:

1/ The figurative or imaginative aspect of the predication: metaphor involves a process of 'seeing as', a visual dimension in which the referent is 'pictured as' the predicate. In this respect it is to be distinguished from simile, in which the separation of the two elements is retained while aspects of comparison and likeness are disclosed. To say that 'Jesus is like Sophia', and to say that 'Jesus is Sophia', is to say two different things: in the first, there is only a resemblance suggested between two realities, but, in the second, there is a more complete transfer proposed, in which we are invited to see Jesus as Sophia, with all the descriptive possibilities which this presents. Similarly, to say that 'Jesus is like the pre-existent Son of Man in Daniel 7', and to say that 'Jesus is the pre-existent Son of Man in Daniel 7', is to engage in two accounts of Jesus which have different potentialities: in the simile, there is no need to transfer 'pre-existent' to Jesus, whereas in the second statement, it is precisely this transfer which is proposed.

2/ Related to this first point is the tension or clash between Jesus as a temporal existent, and the pre- or supra-temporal dimension of the predication of



pre-existence. It is characteristic of metaphor, particularly new metaphors, that there is a hiatus between what is customarily said of the referent, and what is predicated of it in the metaphorical predication. There is a jarring quality, or a surprising quality which inhibits the movement from the referent to the predicate until the interpreter is able to see the point and construe it intelligently. This is a feature of pre-existence language which is exploited most fully in the dramatic and ironic structure of the Fourth Gospel: there, the division between the Jews who reject Jesus, and the believing Johannine community is given expression in their contrasting ability to use this predication of Jesus. The Jews show their unbelief by being unable to resolve the tension between the temporal existent Jesus and the predication of pre-existence: 'You are not yet fifty <sup>fold</sup> years, and have you seen Abraham?' (8.57; cf. 3.10ff; 3.31ff; 6.42ff; 6.58ff). The Johannine community, on the other hand, is able to say these things of Jesus, and to make the clue to his origin lie in his coming from above (3.13) as God's agent, who alone has seen God and makes him known (1.18). The ability to predicate these things of Jesus is the Shibboleth by which those 'inside' are distinguished from those 'outside': the Jews are blocked at the 'literal' level, but the Johannine community construes the predication successfully. The Fourth Gospel dramatises

what is, in terms of metaphor, the clash between the referent and the predicate, and the subsequent resolution of that incompatibility through the creation of a new 'sense' or meaning about the identity of Jesus.

3/ The development of an ontological language out of the figurative expression of pre-existence. Using the Hegelian analysis of Vorstellung and Begriff, we presented 'Jesus is the eternal Son' as the conceptual clarification of the pre-existence predication. This development can be seen as the clarification of the sense to be attributed to the figurative expression of pre-existence. The open-ended character of metaphor - offering a wide range of possible interpretations of how the referent is to be seen as the predicate - requires from the interpreter that he reach a clarity about which of the interpretations are to be accepted and which are to be rejected. The move towards a more controlled and conceptual discourse arises out of the dynamism of the metaphorical expression. The predication of pre-existence, as the history of Christological development shows, offers a range of possible interpretations: for example, there is the Ebionite portrayal of the pre-existent One as an archangel; there is the confusion and inconsistency of The Shepherd of Hermas, in which the pre-existent One is

variously presented as an angel, as the Son and as the Holy Spirit who then enters into union with the flesh of Jesus; most seductively of all, there is the Arian option which, under the rubric of the immutability and indivisibility of the divine being, presents the pre-existent One as the first, and pre-eminent, created being. The distinction between orthodox and heterodox interpretation of Christological correctness and adequacy is the choice of which 'sense', out of the many possibilities offered by the predication, is to be preferred. Hence, in the evaluation of the metaphorical character of pre-existence language, we cannot avoid considering the conceptual or ontological clarifications which must be determined as part of the semantic dynamism of the figurative expression. 'The symbol gives rise to thought' should be complemented by the statement that 'the symbol requires clarification by thought': 'clarification' does not imply that the breadth and potentiality of figurative expression can be exhausted by conceptual formulation, but it does indicate the insufficiency of figurative expressions which do not issue in the activity of ontological clarification. The appeal of a 'metaphorical theology' is illusory if it is taken to be a substitute for, or a replacement of, critical and evaluative theology which includes, as an essential part of its programme, a consideration of ontological issues raised by its statements. Sallie MacFague's recent book,

Metaphorical Theology (SCM Press 1983) falls into the trap, which seems common in much recent American fascination with metaphor and story, of ignoring this dimension: narrative and figurative theological expressions are not alternatives to ontological theology, but they are rather expressive statements which offer the possibility of, and at the same time require, ontological clarification and controlled interpretation.

4/ By restoring the predicative character of pre-existence language, we have proposed that several of the methodological difficulties in Christology can be avoided. The principal source of confusion concerned the suggestion that in the Christological field two referents are discussed, the eternal Son or Logos and the human person, Jesus. We adopted the methodological approach advocated by Pannenberg, in insisting that within the Christological area, language about pre-existence is to be taken as a predication made of Jesus, which stands in a metaphorical relationship to the particular temporal existent, Jesus. The 'fictive' quality of the predication, inviting the interpreter to consider Jesus as a pre-existent One, enables a range of descriptions to be deduced concerning his identity as the one who is inseparably involved in God's act of self-revelation. Within the area of Christological discourse, the



figurative presentation of Jesus as pre-existent, and the corresponding conceptual and ontological clarification of his identity as 'eternal Son', refer only to Jesus as the referent. In addition, we traced a pattern of continuity between the metaphorical structure of pre-existence language and the referent-predicate structure of the Chalcedonian definition which we interpreted primarily as linguistic regulations for speaking about Jesus: the balance of the two sets of predicates to be made of the single referent corresponds to the balance which exists, at a more figurative level, between the already known connotations of Jesus as a temporal existent and those which are applied to him through the predicates of pre-existence language. The new descriptions which emerge concerning his identity as the eternal Son are no more destructive of the reality of his humanity than are the metaphorical connotations transferred to any referent destructive of its characteristics.

5/ We made a formal distinction between the Christological and the theological use of language of eternal Sonship: within Christological speech, it does not designate a referent other than Jesus. 'Eternal Son' is an identifying expression, derived from the clarification of the figurative predication of pre-existence, which refers to Jesus in his human existence. Within the theological area, however, it is

necessary to speak of a referent other than Jesus: we are compelled to retain discussion of the Son or Word, formally distinct from the incarnate mode of Jesus' existence, in order to avoid making the Trinitarian relationality dependent on time for its actualisation. The divine being cannot 'become' Trinitarian through the economy. It does not seem possible to jettison language of the immanent Son, distinct from the incarnate Son, without thereby making the divine being dependent on time for its constitution. Our discussion of Rahner's axiomatic unity of the immanent and economic Trinity showed that it is not possible to collapse the immanent Trinity into its economic expression; it is necessary to retain language about the immanent Trinity to designate precisely the mystery of the divine being present in the economy. However, we sought to avoid the suggestion that the immanent Trinity can be considered 'over against' the economic Trinity, as though there was a form of divine life not directed towards expression in the economy. In Barth's terms, the act by which God is God, is the same as that by which God is God-for-us. There can be no suggestion of there being a divine life which is not freely directed towards its salvific expression in the economy. Against this background, Barth's statements about the pre-existence of the man Jesus are the Christological expression of the principles reached in his doctrine of God. Barth's retrieval and

rehabilitation of this early Christologoumenon exemplifies one of the major principles we have presented in the use of pre-existence language: that it should be subsumed and integrated within a wider context of a controlled conceptual structure, if it is to be handled intelligently. Barth's use of this metaphorical predication integrates a wide range of theological concerns, and focuses attention on the need to re-think our understanding of God's being, in the light of the eternal orientation of the divine life towards the history of the man Jesus. This line of inquiry complements the Christological innovations introduced by the pre-existence predication, and represents the process of thinking through the theological implications of speaking of Jesus as eternal Son.

6/ While retaining the use of language about the immanent Trinity, and about the 'immanent Son' who is to be distinguished from Jesus in theological discourse, nevertheless we refused to allow the presentation of the immanent and economic Trinity to be a 'reflection' pattern, in which the events of the economy 'mirror' the immanent life. We proposed that this can be avoided by developing the role of the Spirit as the one who makes it possible for the triune life to open itself towards economic self-expression. The Son within the immanent Trinitarian life is

'conditioned' by the Spirit as the hypostasis who can assume creaturely existence in the kenosis of the economy. The implications of this line of inquiry are threefold: firstly, the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinity can be considered pneumatologically, as located in the capacity of the Spirit to maintain the Son in distinction-in-unity with the Father in the events of the economy. Thus within the immanent life, the Spirit is the transcendental condition for the salvific expression of the Trinitarian relationality in the history of Jesus. Secondly, it opens the way towards a pneumatological understanding of the relationship between the immanent Son and the incarnate Son. Again, the 'reflection' pattern can be avoided through considering the relationship of Son and Spirit within the divine life as mutually conditioning: it is the work of the Spirit to enable the Son to become incarnate as the expression of the freely chosen determination to be God-for-us, which characterises the divine life. Thirdly, this line of inquiry acts against the predominantly Binitarian treatment of the relationship between Son and Father, which has been the principal pattern arising from the dynamic of pre-existence language. By developing the varied pneumatological patterns of the New Testament more than has been done in the tradition, the Christology which develops from pre-existence language can be formulated more pneumatologically. The



opposition, frequently stated, between 'Son Christology' and 'Spirit Christology' may then be avoided. The chief difficulty in formulating a Spirit Christology in conjunction with a Trinitarian theology has been that the patterns have not been consistently aligned: as we have indicated, the principal Trinitarian pattern has been Father-Son-Spirit, whereas a Spirit Christology prefers the pattern of Son-Spirit-Father. Our proposals, which point to a line of inquiry into the pneumatological dimension of the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity, and between the immanent and incarnate Son, indicate that the dynamic of theological and Christological formulation arising out of pre-existence language may be extended in this direction.

7/ Our study of the use of the theme of pre-existence in the Epistle to the Hebrews showed that in the Epistle there is a deliberate integration of the motif with the other, and more central, soteriological concerns of the Epistle. The author's choice of a kenotic, rather than an epiphanic, treatment of the humanity of the Son is determined by his need to integrate this theme into the principal soteriological themes which he deploys. In many ways, this has been a confirmation of our concern to consider, within the Christological sphere, the affirmation of pre-existence as a qualification or metaphorical description of the

human person, Jesus. The fact that the Epistle maintains such a 'high' Christology, while at the same time expressing a profoundly appreciative consideration of the significance of Christ in his humanity and suffering, is an indication that, carefully handled, there is no need to fear the purported docetic implications of pre-existence language. At the same time, we saw that the author relates pre-existence and exaltation in a mutually illuminating way: they are both figurative expressions of the metaphysical permanence which is a key feature of the philosophical argument of the Epistle. The theme of pre-existence is integrated into the author's argumentation concerning the permanence and efficacy of Christ's salvation, and provides, as we have said, a consonant affirmation of Christological and soteriological concerns which are developed by him in other ways. There is a comparison to be made between Barth and the author of the Epistle in this respect: both use the theme of pre-existence in conjunction with other major themes, and their handling of the theme is inseparable from its relationship to the wider context in which it is placed.

8/ Our study of metaphor has introduced several brief characterisations of metaphor: 'a deliberate yoking of unlikes' (Owen Barfield); the interpreter of metaphor requires 'the ability to

entertain two different points of view' (Bedell Stanford); 'the assimilation to each other of two networks of signification by means of an unusual attribution' (Paul Ricoeur); 'metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality' (Paul Ricoeur). All of these illuminate the process by which the Christological use of pre-existence language develops: the initial tension between the temporal referent and the pre- or supra-context in which he is envisaged; the figurative imagining of Jesus as a pre-existent one; the emergence from this predication of a conceptual and ontological clarification of the identity of Jesus as the Son or Word who is inseparable from the divine being; the corresponding emergence of a related language about God who is redescribed as differentiated in his divine being. The predication of pre-existence gives rise to a wide range of Christological and theological revisions, to the extent that its central ontological implications -- the divinity of Jesus and the orientation of the divine being towards expression in the person of Jesus -- are the principal regulative and hermeneutical categories for Christian speech about Jesus and God. If we have charted the central features of this development which arises out of the dynamic of pre-existence language, then it might be possible to view more appreciatively the role of pre-existence language in providing the

metaphorical framework for subsequent Christian reflection. In this sense, through our choice of metaphor as a valuable interpretative tool, we may have made some contribution to the understanding, retrieval and rehabilitation of this theme.



Footnotes

Footnotes to the Introduction

1/ R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, Pre-existence, Wisdom and the Son of Man (Cambridge University Press, 1973), p.11.

2/ op.cit., pp.11-12.

3/ op.cit., p.101.

Reference will be made to the following works by Ricoeur:

Interpretation Theory: Metaphor and the Surplus of Meaning (Texas Christian University Press, 1976); referred to as Interpretation Theory.

'The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination and Feeling', Critical Inquiry (August 1978), pp.143-159; referred to as Metaphorical Process.

'Metaphor and the Central Problem of Hermeneutics' in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation by P.Ricoeur, translated and edited by John B.Thompson (Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.165-181; referred to as Central Problem.

The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language, translated by R.Czerny (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); referred to as Rule.

Footnotes to Chapter 1

- 1/ The Collected Poems of Emily Dickinson, edited by Thomas H. Johnson (Faber & Faber, 1970), no. 997, p.463.
- 2/ On this maxim, cf. Ricoeur's comment in Interpretation Theory, pp.75-6: 'Now even if this maxim may receive different interpretations, even if it may be retained with proper qualifications,... it led hermeneutics astray inasmuch as it expressed the ideal of "congeniality" or communion from "genius" to "genius" in interpretation. The Romanticist forms of hermeneutics overlooked the specific situation created by the disjunction of the verbal meaning of the text from the mental intention of the author...His intention is often unknown to us, sometimes redundant, sometimes useless, and sometimes even harmful as regards the interpretation of the verbal meaning of his work.'
- 3/ Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton University Press, 1957), p.86.
- 4/ Ibid., p.87.
- 5/ Ibid., pp.77-78.
- 6/ Ibid., p.78.
- 7/ Adrian Stokes, The Image in Form: Selected Writings of Adrian Stokes, edited by Richard Wollheim (Penguin, 1972), p.136.
- 8/ Wallace Stevens, 'Description Without Place' in Collected Poems (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980, pp.339-346.
- 9/ Stokes, op.cit., p.319.
- 10/ Rule, p.16.
- 11/ Ibid.
- 12/ Ibid., p.17.
- 13/ Ibid., p.18.
- 14/ Ibid., p.21
- 15/ Herwi Rikhof, The Concept of Church (Sheed & Ward, 1981) p.96.
- 16/ Interpretation Theory, p.47.
- 17/ L. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, 27, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe (Blackwell, 1976).



- 18/ G. Frege, The Foundations of Arithmetic, translated by J.L. Austin (Blackwell, 1953), par.60, p.71e.
- 19/ G. Ryle, Collected Papers 2, Collected Essays 1929-1968 (Hutchinson, 1971), pp.311-2.
- 20/ M. Dummett, 'Frege's Distinction between Sense and Reference' in Truth and Other Enigmas (Duckworth, 1978), p.117.
- 21/ J. Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (Oxford University Press, 1961), esp., pp.206-262.
- 22/ Rule, p.129.
- 23/ Ibid., p.130.
- 24/ Philip Wheelwright, Metaphor and Reality (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), passim.
- 25/ Cf. however, the excellent, but unfortunately brief, article by Nicholas Lash, 'Son of God: Reflections on a Metaphor' in Concilium 153 (1982), pp.11-16.
- 26/ Central Problem, p.169.
- 27/ Rule, p.98.
- 28/ Ibid., p.70.
- 29/ G. Frege, 'On Sense and Meaning' in Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege, ed. by P. Geach & M. Black (Blackwell, 1980), p.62.
- 30/ J.R. Searle, Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language (Cambridge University Press, 1969), p.24.
- 31/ Ibid., p.25.
- 32/ Central Problem, p.174.
- 33/ W. Stevens, op.cit., p.212.
- 34/ Central Problem, p.170.
- 35/ Ibid., p.174.
- 36/ Ibid.
- 37/ Ibid., p.170.
- 38/ Rule, p.72.
- 39/ H.P. Grice, 'Utterer's Meaning and Intentions', The Philosophical Review 78 (1969), pp.147-177.

- 40/ J.R. Searle, Expression and Meaning (Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.77.
- 41/ Ibid., p.84.
- 42/ Ibid., p.87.
- 43/ Interpretation Theory, pp.56-7.
- 44/ G. Frege, 'On sense and Meaning', p.58.
- 45/ Frege, Kleine Schriften, ed. by I. Angelelli (Hildesheim, 1967), quoted and translated in Hans Sluga, Gottlob Frege (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p.159.
- 46/ R. Scruton, From Descartes to Wittgenstein (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p.252.
- 47/ M. Dummett, Frege: Philosophy of Language (Duckworth, 1973) p.183.
- 48/ Ibid., p.415.
- 49/ Rule, p.98.
- 50/ Central Problem, pp.174-5.
- 51/ Ricoeur's discussion of this term is found in Rule, p.229. Cf. Frye's statement in Anatomy of Criticism, p.74: 'Literary meaning may best be described, perhaps, as hypothetical, and a hypothetical or assumed relation to the external world is part of what is usually meant by the word "imaginative".'
- 52/ Central Problem, p.167.
- 53/ Interpretation Theory, p.29.
- 54/ Central Problem, pp.176-7.
- 55/ Ibid., p.178.
- 56/ Ibid.
- 57/ Metaphorical Process, pp.153-4.
- 58/ Rule, p.36.
- 59/ Central Problem, p.179.
- 60/ I.A. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric (Oxford University Press, 1936, 1971), p.47.
- 61/ Rule, p.80.
- 62/ Richards, op.cit., p.97.

- 63/ Rule, p.80.
- 64/ Richards, op.cit., p.93.
- 65/ Rikhof, op.cit., p.100.
- 66/ Max Black, Models and Metaphors (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1962), p.27.
- 67/ Ibid., p.39.
- 68/ Rikhof, op.cit., p.97.
- 69/ Ibid., p.98.
- 70/ Rule, p.87, quoting Black, op.cit., pp.39-41.
- 71/ Black, op.cit., pp.44-5.
- 72/ M. Black, 'More about Metaphors', Dialectica 31 (1977), pp.431-457; quotation from p.442.
- 73/ Wheelwright, op.cit., p.72.
- 74/ Ibid.
- 75/ Black, Models and Metaphors, p.37.
- 76/ D. Berggren, 'The Use and Abuse of Metaphor, I', Review of Metaphysics 16 (1962-3), pp.237-258; quotation from pp.243-4.
- 77/ Ibid., p.244.
- 78/ Rule, p.196.
- 79/ Michel Le Guern, Sémantique de la métaphore et de la métonymie (Paris: Larousse, 1973), p.16; quoted and translated in Rule, p.183.
- 80/ Owen Barfield, Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1928), p.81.
- 81/ Interpretation Theory, p.52.
- 82/ Paul Henle, 'Metaphor' in Language, Thought and Culture, ed. by Paul Henle (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), pp.173-195; quotation from p.176.
- 83/ Rule, p.189.
- 84/ Marcus B. Hester, The Meaning of Poetic Metaphor (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), p.179.
- 85/ Rule, p.240. Rikhof, op.cit., pp.160-7, is critical of the various attempts to align models and metaphors.

86/ Rule, p.243.

87/ Stephen C. Pepper, World Hypotheses (University of California Press, 1942), esp. pp.41-2; Cf. Rule, p.244.



Footnotes to Chapter 2

- 1/ John R. Donahue, 'Temple, Trial and Royal Christology (Mk. 14.53-65)' in The Passion in Mark, ed. by Werner Kelber (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp.61-79: 'In the trial narrative Mark uses the royal Christology to interpret the trial and death of Jesus as the suffering of the crucified King.' (p.78)
- 2/ On the Christology of this passage, cf., J.A.T. Robinson, Twelve New Testament Studies (SCM Press, 1962), pp.139-153.
- 3/ Wayne A. Meeks, 'The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism', Journal of Biblical Literature, 91 (1972), pp.44-72. Cf., also E. Kasemann, The Testament of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p.22: '...the stranger from the world above reveals himself, while the world below continuously seeks to capture him in the net of its own categories and experiences.'
- 4/ The intra-ecclesial dimension of the development of Johannine Christology, and the tension between competing Christological claims, is brought out forcibly by M. de Jonge who takes more seriously than Meeks the internal concerns of the Johannine community: M. de Jonge, 'Jewish Expectations about the Messiah according to the Fourth Gospel', New Testament Studies, 19 (1972-73), pp.246-70. Cf., p.264: '...Johannine Christology is developed not only in contrast with Jewish thinking, but with other Christological views...It also tries to formulate its own standpoint over against Christological discussions in the Church, particularly against Jewish Christian arguments adduced in the debate between Christians and Jews.'
- 5/ Northrop Frye, The Great Code: The Bible and Literature (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp.62-3.
- 6/ Ibid., pp.63-4.
- 7/ Ibid., p.63.
- 8/ John Knox, The Humanity and Divinity of Christ (Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.14.
- 9/ Ibid., p.96.
- 10/ Ibid., p.73.
- 11/ Ibid., p.106.

12/ S.W. Sykes, 'The Theology of the Humanity of Christ' in Christ, Faith and History, ed. by S.W. Sykes and J.P. Clayton (Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp.53-71: 'Any account which does not distinguish him (Christ) from the rest of humanity is not credible as Christology; and any account which does so distinguish him is clearly not "normal" or "empirical" humanity' (p.66).

13/ Knox, op.cit., p.111.

14/ Ibid., p.113.

15/ F. Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), p.393.

16/ Knox, op.cit., p.109.

17/ Ibid., p.110.

18/ Ibid.

19/ Ibid., p.111.

20/ G.W.H. Lampe, God as Spirit (Oxford University Press, 1977), p.23.

21/ Ibid., p.33.

22/ Ibid., p.142.

23/ Ibid., p.143.

24/ Ibid.

25/ Ibid. This is hardly a worthwhile point to make; it requires no refutation or comment.

26/ Ibid., pp.137-8.

27/ Ibid., p.138.

28/ Ibid.

29/ Ibid., p.136.

30/ A. Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition (Mowbrays, 2nd edition, 1975) p.553.

31/ Lampe, op.cit., p.141.



32/ Although our discussion focuses on a predominantly 'Binitarian' pattern here -- the relationship between Father and Son -- we use 'Trinitarian language' to point to the developed pattern of differentiation within the divine being. A consideration of the role of the Spirit will be given in our chapter on the interpretation of the Immanent/Economic Trinity. There we shall propose that the Binitarian emphasis in Trinitarian theology -- the dominant model associated with pre-existence language in Christology -- should be supplemented by a consideration of the role of the Spirit in the generation of the Son within the divine being. In this way, the Trinitarian pattern can be aligned more successfully with a Spirit Christology.

33/ Piet Schoonenberg, The Christ (Sheed and Ward, 1974), pp.80-82.

34/ Above, notes 5-6.

35/ Ricoeur, Rule, p.295-6.

36/ Ibid., p.296.

37/ D.M. MacKinnon, 'Prolegomena to Christology', Journal of Theological Studies, N.S.33 (1982), pp.146-160; quotation from p.158.

38/ Ibid., p.151.

39/ The literature is voluminous: of special note are: E. Kasemann, 'Aufbau und Anliegen des johanneischen Prologs', in Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen II (Göttingen, 1965), pp.155-180; R. Bultmann, The Gospel of John: A Commentary (Blackwell, 1971), pp.13-83; M.E. Boismard, St. John's Prologue (Blackfriars, 1957); P. Lamarche, 'Le Prologue de Jean', Recherches de Science Religieuse, 52 (1964), pp.497-537.

40/ Again, only a selection of the vast bibliography can be presented: E. Käsemann, 'A Critical Analysis of Philippians 2.5-11', Journal for Theology and Church 5 (1968), pp.45-88; R.P. Martin, Carmen Christi: Philippians 2.5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship (Cambridge University Press, 1967); J. Murphy-O'Connor, 'Christological Anthropology in Phil. 2.6-11', Revue Biblique, 83 (1976), pp25-50.

41/ I am convinced by J.A. Sanders' argument that the background of the Philippians hymn is best located in the theme of the rebellious angels: 'Dissenting Deities and Phil. 2.6-11', Journal of Biblical Literature, 88 (1969), pp.279-290. This is a stronger argument than the current preference for Adamic parallels, which stumble over the phrase in v.7b.

42/ H.M. Schenke, 'Die neutestamentliche Christologie und der gnostische Erlöser', in Gnosis und Neues Testament, hrsg. von K.W. Tröger (Berlin: Mohn, 1973), pp.205-229; quotation from p.206 (my emphasis).

43/ M. Hengel, The Son of God (SCM Press, 1976), pp.71-2.

44/ Ibid, p.71; quotation from E. Jüngel, Paulus und Jesus (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964), p.283.

45/ C. Taylor, Hegel (Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.480.

46/ G.W.F. Hegel, Sämtliche Werke, 8 (Stuttgart: Fromann, 1929), p.74; quoted and translated in J. Yerkes, The Christology of Hegel (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), p.70.

47/ G.W.F. Hegel, Berliner Schriften, hrsg. von J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1956), p.318, quoted in Yerkes, op.cit., p.70.

48/ Yerkes, op.cit., p.77.

49/ Ibid., pp.77-8.

50/ Hegel's Science of Logic, trans. by W.H. Johnson & L.G. Struthers, 2 vols., (London: Allen & Unwin, 1929), I, p.27.

51/ P. Ricoeur, 'The Specificity of Religious Language,' in Semeia 4, ed. by J.W. Crossan, p.133.

52/ Ibid.

53/ W. Pannenberg, Jesus - God and Man (SCM Press, 1968), pp.150-1. Hereafter: Pannenberg, Jesus.

54/ Ibid., pp.151-2.

55/ Ibid., pp.152-3.

56/ Ibid., p.141.

57/ Ibid., p.321.

58/ W.Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God (Westminster Press, 1969), p.63.

59/ Allan D. Galloway, Wolfhart Pannenberg (Allen & Unwin, 1973), pp.77-85; Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'Resurrection and Reality in Wolfhart Pannenberg', Heythrop Journal 24 (1983), pp.1-18.

60/ W.Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God, p.56.



- 61/ N. Lash, 'Up and Down in Christology', in New Studies in Theology, I, ed. by S.W. Sykes & D. Holmes (Duckworth, 1977), pp.31-46.
- 62/ Pannenberg, Jesus, p.130.
- 63/ Ibid., p.156.
- 64/ Ibid., p.154.
- 65/ Ibid.
- 66/ Ibid., p.155.
- 67/ Ibid.
- 68/ Ibid.
- 69/ Ibid., p.284.
- 70/ Ibid., p.287ff.
- 71/ Ibid., p.336.
- 72/ Ibid.
- 73/ Ibid., pp.334-5.
- 74/ D. Wiederkehr, 'Esquisse d'une Christologie Systématique', in Mysterium Salutis, 11 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1975), p.97.
- 75/ W. Kasper, Jesus the Christ (Burns & Oates, 1976), p.233.
- 76/ Ibid., p.245.
- 77/ P. Borgen, 'God's Agent in the Fourth Gospel', in Religions in Antiquity (In memory of E.R. Goodenough), ed. by J. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1968), pp.137-148.
- 78/ Cf., especially J.A. Bühner, Der Gesandte und sein Weg im 4.Evangelium (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977), for an important presentation of the 'son of the house' theme.
- 79/ Hans Urs von Balthasar, The Glory of the Lord, I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982), p.323.
- 80/ R. Bultmann, op.cit., p.251: 'John of course frees himself from this mythology, but at the same time he retains its terminology. Jesus' destiny is not an event of cosmic significance which inaugurates the natural process of redemption, nor does he bring miraculous cosmological and soteriological doctrines. His doctrine is the that of his mission, the fact that he is the Revealer.'

- 81/ R. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, II (SCM Press, 1955) p.66: 'Thus it turns out in the end that Jesus as the Revealer of God reveals nothing but that he is the Revealer.... John, that is, in his Gospel presents only the fact (das Dass) of the Revelation without describing its content (ihr Was).
- 82/ P. Lamarche, 'Le Prologue de Jean', Recherches de Science Religieuse 52 (1964), pp.497-537, especially p.527: 'la parole de Dieu avant d'être révélation du mystère cache était, en effet, parole intérieure, mystère caché, dessein de Dieu.'
- 83/ In an as yet unpublished paper on the Prologue.
- 84/ The Sapiential treatment of the three aspects is found in Prov. 8.22 (creation); Wis. 10.1ff (salvation); Wis. 7.27 (revelation).
- 85/ Above, n.33.
- 86/ Hilary of Poitiers, Trin, X, 19: PL 10, 357AB, quoted in Grillmeier, op.cit., p.395.
- 87/ A. Grillmeier, op.cit., p.456.
- 88/ K. Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978), p.222. Augustine's original formulation is 'Nec sic assumptus est ut prius creatus post assumeretur, sed ut ipsa assumptione crearetur' (Contra Sermonem Arianorum 8,6). The phrase is also found in Leo the Great (Ep. 35.3).
- 89/ K. Rahner, Theological Investigations, IV (Darton, Longman & Todd), p.227.
- 90/ Our discussion of the definition is not intended to be a presentation of the intention of the Fathers of the Council. The definition may, however, be successfully reinterpreted for contemporary Christological use, by being regarded as an expression of the regulative principles which govern Christological speech. This does not, of course, imply that this approach is identical with the original function or intention of the definition.
- 91/ A. Grillmeier, 'The Figure of Christ in Catholic Theology Today' in Theology Today, I: Renewal in Dogma, ed. by J. Feiner et al. (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1964), pp.66-108, especially p.80.
- 92/ D. Wiederkehr, op.cit., p.127.



Footnotes to Chapter 3

References in the text to the Church Dogmatics are to the edition edited by G.W.Bromiley and T.F.Torrance (Edinburgh:T.& T.Clark, 1936-69).

1/ E. Jüngel, The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being is in Becoming (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976), pp.80ff.

2/ A.T. Hanson, The Image of the Invisible God (SCM Press, 1982), p.44. To Hanson's credit, however, he emphasises that the NT treatment of pre-existence was motivated, in part at least, by a desire 'to show that God's revelation of himself to Israel of old was in some sense through Jesus Christ' (p.52). He sees, in the NT, indications of the later Patristic theme of the OT theophanies as manifestations of the pre-existent Logos: Jesus Christ in the Old Testament (SPCK, 1965). However, we have reservations about his systematic treatment of the theme.

3/ J. Thompson, 'The Humanity of God in the Theology of Karl Barth,' Scottish Journal of Theology 29 (1976), pp.248-269; quotation from p.251. Cf., also: J. Thompson, Christ in Perspective: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1978), pp.20ff.

4/ C. Gunton, 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of Election as Part of his Doctrine of God', Journal of Theological Studies, N.S. 25 (1974), pp.381-392; quotation from p.384.

5/ R. Williams, 'Barth on the Triune God', in Karl Barth: Studies of his Theological Method, ed. by S.W. Sykes (Oxford University Press, 1979), pp.147-193; quotation from p.178. Cf. the comment by G.S. Hendry in 'The Freedom of God in the Theology of Karl Barth', Scottish Journal of Theology 31 (1978), pp.229-244: 'Barth has attempted by the transcendental method to articulate a system of freedom extending from the work of reconciliation through the work of creation to the inner being of God, and bringing them all into a unity' (p.232).

6/ R. Jenson, God After God: the God of the Past and the God of the Future, Seen in the Work of Karl Barth (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), pp.130-131. Jenson's work is an incisive analysis of Barth's doctrine of God, more radical than the comparable work of Jungel.

7/ For some reason, the English translation omits 'pre-existing' from the phrase which in German reads 'der praeexistierende Gottmensch Jesus Christus.' I have emended the translation to highlight Barth's original usage. (Cf. KD II/2, p.118)

8/ Jüngel, op.cit., p.73.

9/ S.T. 3a, 24, art.1, c. et ad 2 (Blackfriars, vol.50, 1965), p.172, typographical error emended.

10/ Jungel, op.cit., pp.94-5. On the problematic status of the Holy Spirit in this model of revelation as self-interpretation, cf. R. Williams, op.cit., p.181. Moltmann, too, criticises Barth's model for establishing a 'duality' in God, at the expense of the status of the Spirit: The Trinity and the Kingdom of God (SCM Press, 1981), pp.139-144. For a criticism of Barth's account of the relationship of the divinity of Christ to God's self-revelation, cf. J.McIntyre, The Shape of Christology (SCM Press, 1966), esp.pp.151ff; cf., also, C.T.Waldrop, 'Revelation, Redemption and the Divinity of Jesus Christ,' Scottish Journal of Theology 31 (1981), pp.501-15.

11/ The original Latin text is found in Hildegardis, Scivias, Corpus Christianorum, Cont. Med. XLIII, ed. A. Führkötter (Turnholt: Brepols, 1978), p.124. The translation here is that given in the following reference.

12/ A. Führkötter, The Miniatures from the Book Scivias (Turnholt: Brepols, 1977), p.20.

13/ R. Jenson, op.cit., p.73.

14/ Karl Barth's Table Talk, recorded and edited by John D. Goodsey (Edinburgh: SJT Occasional Papers, 10, 1963), p.49.

15/ Jungel, op.cit., p.80.

16/ The translation is that used in A. Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition (Mowbrays, 2nd ed., 1975), p.544.

17/ Pannenberg, Jesus, pp.166-8. Pannenberg's own critique of the importation of non-Christian themes in the Logos doctrine of the Apologists is found in Basic Questions in Theology, II (SCM Press, 1971), pp.119-183.

18/ On the Alexandrian character of Barth's Christology, cf. Charles T. Waldrop, 'Karl Barth's Concept of the Divinity of Jesus Christ', Harvard Theological Review 74 (1981), pp.231-263. Waldrop's instinct is right, but he lacks any way of distinguishing between a Monophysite and a Chalcedonian Christology: he is of the opinion that because, according to Barth, Jesus is 'essentially and by nature divine', this 'undermines the claim that Jesus Christ is fully human' (p.263). Comments like this betray a



deficient grasp of orthodox Christology and a naive judgment about what Barth is doing. To say that Barth has a concept of Jesus as 'the God who walks on earth' (p.262) is to betray an immature grasp of Trinitarian language and an overdependence on Kasemann's reading of the Fourth Gospel.

19/ R.H. Roberts, 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of Time: Its Nature and Implications', in Karl Barth: Studies of his Theological Method, ed. by S.W. Sykes (Oxford University Press, 1979), pp.88-146; especially pp. 126ff.

20/ C. Gunton, Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth (Oxford University Press, 1978), p.179.

21/ Roberts, art.cit., pp.124-5.

22/ H. Bouillard, Karl Barth (Paris: Aubier, 1957), vol.2, p.271.

23/ Roberts, art.cit., pp.143.

24/ Ibid., p.121.

25/ H. Zahrnt, The Question of God: Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century (Collins, 1969), p.113.

26/ Ibid., p.114.

27/ R. Jenson, 'Religious Pluralism, Christology and Karl Barth,' Dialog 20 (1981), p.33.

28/ Ibid., p.34 (my emphasis).

29/ Jenson, God After God, p.73.

30/ Jenson, 'Religious Pluralism, Christology and Karl Barth', Dialog 20 (1981), p.33

31/ Jüngel, op.cit., pp.81-2.

32/ Thompson, art.cit., p.262.

33/ Williams, art.cit., p.157.

34/ Jüngel, op.cit., p.49.

35/ Ibid., pp.51-53, quoting CD, II/1, p.55.

36/ Hans Urs von Balthasar, Elucidations, trans. by John Riches (SPCK, 1975), p.51.

37/ Jenson, God After God, p.73.

38/ Williams, art.cit., p.180.

39/ Jüngel, op.cit., p.107.

40/ Ibid., p.83.

41/ C. Gunton, Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), p.134.

Footnotes to Chapter 4

- 1/ E. Grässer, 'Der Hebräerbrief 1938-1963', Theologische Rundschau 30 (1964), pp.138-236.
- 2/ E. Kasemann, Das wandernde Gottesvolk. Eine Untersuchung zum Hebräerbrief, (FRLANT 55) (Göttingen, 1961).
- 3/ op.cit., p.110.
- 4/ For the religionsgeschichtlich approach to the Epistle, cf., Hans Windisch Der Hebräerbrief HNT14, (Tubingen, 1931). Grässer regards the Nag Hammadi texts as a confirmation of Käsemann's interpretation (E. Grässer, op.cit., p.185). Cf., also his collection Text und Situation (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1973, p.199). The classic critique of the history of religions school's estimate of Gnosticism is C. Colpe, Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythos (FRLANT 60) (Göttingen, 1961).
- 5/ G. Theissen, Untersuchungen zum Hebräerbrief (Gütersloh, 1969). Theissen, however, expresses reservations about the extent of the thematic dependence of Hebrews on Gnostic sources, and about the judgment which moves too rapidly from juxtaposition of parallels to an estimate of dependence: 'Es genügt also innerhalb dieses Arbeitganges nicht, neben den Hb viele gnostischen Parallelen zu stellen; entscheidend ist ihre traditionsgeschichtliche Beurteilung' (p.117).
- 6/ James W. Thompson, The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 13, Washington, 1982), p.4.
- 7/ C. Spicq, L'Épître aux Hébreux, 2 vols., (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1952).
- 8/ op.cit., I, p.91.
- 9/ R. Williamson, Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970). Williamson's judgment, however, on the relationship of Philo and the author of the Epistle is minimal: 'he almost certainly lived and moved in circles where, in broad, general terms, ideas such as those we meet in Philo's works were known and discussed; he drew upon the same fund of cultured Greek vocabulary upon which Philo drew. But this is as much as the evidence allows us to concede' (p.493). For an assessment that Williamson has exaggerated the differences and minimised the similarities between the two writers, cf., J.W. Thompson, op.cit., p.11.



- 10/ L.K.K. Dey, The Intermediary World and Patterns of Perfection in Philo and Hebrews (Missoula: Scholars' Press, SBL Diss.Ser.25, 1975), p.7.
- 11/ Ibid.
- 12/ Ibid., p.123.
- 13/ '..Let him press to take his place under God's first-born, the Logos, who holds the eldership among the angels, their ruler as it were. And many names are his, for he is called "the Beginning", and the Name of God, and his Logos, and the Man after his Image, and "he that sees", that is, Israel.'
- 14/ K. Wengst, Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums (S.Nt.7, Gütersloh, 1972), p.166. Wengst characterises 1.3 as a 'Schöpfungsmittler-Inthronisations Lied', but as Frankowski points out, it more properly belongs to the 'Way of the Son' gattung: J. Frankowski, 'Early Christian Hymns Recorded in the New Testament', Biblische Zeitschrift NF 27 (1983), pp.183-194. Cf., G. Bornkamm 'Das Bekenntnis im Hebräerbrief' in Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum (Munich: Kaiser, 1959), pp.188-203, esp. p.198; G. Deichgräber, Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit (SUNT, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1967), p.137.
- 15/ E. Grasser, Text und Situation, p.195.
- 16/ op.cit., p.196.
- 17/ H. Windisch, Der Hebräerbrief, p.12; cf., W. Manson, The Epistle to the Hebrews. A Historical and Theological Consideration (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951), pp.102f.
- 18/ W.R.G. Loader, Sohn und Hoherpriester (WMANT 53, Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), p.116.
- 19/ E. Grasser, op.cit., p.225.
- 20/ On the vocational interpretation of the concept of perfection in the Epistle, cf., D. Peterson, Hebrews and Perfection (Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- 21/ L.K.K. Dey, op.cit., p.153.
- 22/ J. Hering, L'Épître aux Hébreux (Paris: Delachaux et Niestle, 1954), p.54.
- 23/ R. Williamson, op.cit., p.79.
- 24/ W.R.G. Loader, op.cit., p.139.



- 25/ Aelred Cody, Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Grail Publications, 1960), p.78.
- 26/ Ibid., p.86.
- 27/ Ibid., p.91.
- 28/ Loader, op.cit., p.141.
- 29/ Käsemann, op.cit., p.58: 'Die Himmelfahrt reicht also dem Christus zugleich die Sohneswürde dar.'
- 30/ The image of Sonship, within the traditions inherited by the author, extends over a range of areas, from pre-existence, through the earthly life (5.8), to exaltation. It makes little sense to attach Sonship solely to the exaltation, and to consider its other applications as dependent on a proleptic use of this designation.
- 31/ Thompson, op.cit., p.132.
- 32/ op.cit., p.128.
- 33/ H. Strack & P. Billerbeck Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (Munich: Beck, 1926), III, 678; quoted in Thompson, op.cit., p.133.
- 34/ Thompson, op.cit., p.133.
- 35/ Ibid.
- 36/ op.cit., p.137.
- 37/ I am indebted to Thompson, op.cit., pp.128-140 for the points about the Platonic assumptions which influence the author's choice of the catena.
- 38/ F. Bleek, Die Brief an die Hebräer (Berlin, 1828-40, 3 vols), III, p.322; quoted in Bruce A. Demarest, 'Hebrews 7.3: A Crux Interpretum Historically Considered', Evangelical Quarterly 49 (1977), pp.141-162, p.155.
- 39/ F.A.G. Tholuck Kommentar zum Briefe an die Hebräer (Hamburg, 1850), quoted in Demarest, ibid.
- 40/ M. de Jonge & A.S. van der Woude, '11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament', NTS 12 (1965-6), pp. 301-326, esp. p.321. Cf. Y. Yadin, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews', Scripta Hierosolymitana 4 (1958), pp.36-55.
- 41/ Fred L. Horton Jr., The Melchizedek Tradition (Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.169.

- 42/ In addition, the background of Qumranian angelology sits uneasily beside the words ἀπάτωρ, ἀμήτωρ, which are divine predicates in certain Hellenistic circles. Thompson comments: 'Such honorific terms, which were on occasion used for pagan deities, would have no place in an apocalyptic work like 11Q Melch. Such terminology indicates the proximity of Hebrews 7 to the conceptual framework of Philo' (op.cit., p.119).
- 43/ G. Theissen, op.cit., pp.20-25.
- 44/ P. Ellingworth '"Like the Son of God": Form and Content in Hebrews 7.1-10', Biblica 64 (1983), pp.255-262, esp. p.261.
- 45/ Thompson, op.cit., p.117.
- 46/ op.cit., p.119.
- 47/ quoted in Ellingworth, art.cit., p.255.
- 48/ A.T. Hanson, Jesus Christ in the Old Testament (London: SPCK, 1965) pp.70-71.
- 49/ Thompson, op.cit., p.119. The divine predicates ἀπάτωρ, ἀμήτωρ, are used in Hebrews primarily in connection with the central focus of Melchizedek's superiority, expressed by ἀγενεαλόγητος -- the absence of priestly lineage.
- 50/ Horton, op.cit., p.161.
- 51/ E. Käsemann, The Testament of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp.9ff.
- 52/ I owe this point to John Ashton's forthcoming book on the Fourth Gospel.
- 53/ E. Käsemann, op.cit., p.12.
- 54/ A. Cody, op.cit., p.164.
- 55/ D. Peterson, op.cit., p.234, n.79.
- 56/ E. Brandenburger, 'Text und Vorlagen von Heb. 5.7-10,' Novum Testamentum 11 (1969), pp.190-224. A. Strobel, 'Die Psalmengrundlage der Gethsemane-Parallele Heb. 5.7ff', ZNW 45 (1954), pp.252-266. P. Andriessen, 'Angoisse de la Mort dans L'Épître aux Hébreux', Nouvelle Revue Théologique 96 (1974), pp.282-92.
- 57/ J. Jeremias, Abba (Göttingen, 1964), pp.319-23; cf., J. Jeremias, 'Hebr. 5.7-10', ZNW 44 (1952-3), pp.107-111.

- 58/ U. Luck, 'Himmlisches und irdisches Geschehen im Hebräerbrief', Novum Testamentum 6 (1963), pp.192-215; quotation from p.195.
- 59/ J. Coste, 'Notion Grecque et Notion Biblique de la "Souffrance Educatrice" (à propos d'Hébreux 5.8)', Recherches de Science Religieuse 43 (1955), pp.481-523.
- 60/ D. Peterson, op.cit., p.95.
- 61/ L.K.K. Dey, op.cit., pp.217-8.
- 62/ Ibid., pp.224-5 (my emphasis).
- 63/ E. Käsemann, Das wandernde Gottesvolk, p.90f.
- 64/ Ibid., p.91.
- 65/ G. Theissen, op.cit., p.66.
- 66/ Ibid.
- 67/ Ibid., p.122.
- 68/ W.R.G. Loader, op.cit., p.129.
- 69/ Ibid., p.132.
- 70/ G.W. Buchanan, To the Hebrews (New York: Anchor Bible XXXVI, 1972), p.32.
- 71/ E.K. Simpson, Words Worth Weighing in the Greek New Testament (London: Tyndale Press, 1946), pp.27ff.
- 72/ D. Peterson, op.cit., p.62.



Footnotes to Chapter 5

- 1/ Cf. R. Bultmann, The Johannine Epistles (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973) p.62: '...they deny that the Christ, whom they revere as the bringer of salvation, has appeared in the historical Jesus.' Also, R. Brown, The Epistles of John (Anchor Bible, 1982), p.53: 'If the adversaries were once Johannine Christians, it is far more plausible that they held the high Christology proclaimed by John. The author would then be attacking them for going further and holding too high a christology, stressing the importance of pre-existence to the point of neglecting the flesh or humanity of Jesus.'
- 2/ W. Pannenberg, Jesus - God and Man (SCM Press, 1968), p.322.
- 3/ Ibid., p.284.
- 4/ K. Rahner, The Trinity (Burns & Oates, 1970), p.22. For a criticism of the distinction, cf. James P. Mackey, The Christian Experience of God as Trinity (SCM Press, 1983), p.295.
- 5/ Ibid., p.38.
- 6/ Ibid., p.47.
- 7/ Ibid., p.85.
- 8/ Ibid., p.63.
- 9/ Ibid., p.64.
- 10/ Ibid., p.64-5.
- 11/ Ibid., p.102.
- 12/ 'The Theology of the Symbol' in Theological Investigations, IV (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), p.236. References to this series will be denoted by 'T.I.', followed by the date of publication.
- 13/ 'On the Theology of the Incarnation' in T.I. IV (1966), p.115.
- 14/ Ibid.
- 15/ 'Christology in the Setting of Modern Man's Understanding of Himself and his World' in T.I., XI (1974), p.219.
- 16/ T.I., IV, p.237.
- 17/ Ibid., p.224.



- 18/ Ibid., p.236.
- 19/ Ibid., p.237.
- 20/ Ibid., p.239.
- 21/ J. Cawte, 'Karl Rahner's Conception of God's Self-communication to Man', Heythrop Journal, 25 (1984), pp.260-271; quotation from p.268.
- 22/ 'On the Theology of the Incarnation', T.I., IV, p.113.
- 23/ Ibid., p.115.
- 24/ Ibid., p.117.
- 25/ 'Current Problems in Christology', T.I., I (1961), pp.179-180.
- 26/ Ibid., p.181.
- 27/ T.I., IV, p.117.
- 28/ DS 806: 'quia inter creatorem et creaturam non potest similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda.'
- 29/ T.I., IV, p.117.
- 30/ A. Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition (Mowbrays, 2nd ed., 1975) pp.555-6. Earlier, he quotes Maximus the Confessor on the necessary tension in Christological unity: 'For there is evidently a union of things in so far as their physical distinction is preserved' (p.553).
- 31/ E. Jüngel, God as the Mystery of the World (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983) p.367, n.54.
- 32/ Ibid.
- 33/ Ibid., p.375.
- 34/ Ibid., p.372.
- 35/ Ibid., p.346.
- 36/ Ibid., p.374.
- 37/ Ibid., p.372.
- 38/ Ibid., p.363-4.
- 39/ Ibid., p.375.

- 40/ Ibid., pp.380-1.
- 41/ Ibid., p.363, quoting Pannenberg, op.cit., p.321.
- 42/ Ibid., p.383.
- 43/ Ibid.
- 44/ Ibid., pp.383-4.
- 45/ Ibid., p.384.
- 46/ Ibid., p.381.
- 47/ Ibid., p.380.
- 48/ Ibid., p.36.
- 49/ Ibid., pp.36-7.
- 50/ Ibid., p.37.
- 51/ Ibid.
- 52/ Ibid., pp.37-8.
- 53/ Ibid., pp.371-2.
- 54/ Ibid., p.344.
- 55/ J. Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God (SCM Press, 1981), p.160.
- 56/ Ibid., pp.160-1.
- 57/ Ibid., p.160.
- 58/ Ibid.
- 59/ Ibid., p.161.
- 60/ Ibid.
- 61/ Ibid., p.92.
- 62/ J. O'Donnell, Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the Light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope (Oxford University Press, 1983), p.136.
- 63/ Ibid., p.149.
- 64/ J. Moltmann, The Future of Creation (SCM Press, 1979), p.74.
- 65/ Ibid., p.91.

- 66/ Ibid.
- 67/ Ibid., p.94.
- 68/ Ibid., p.95.
- 69/ Ibid., p.93 (my emphasis).
- 70/ Langdon Gilkey, Catholicism Confronts Modernity (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p.123.
- 71/ J. Moltmann in Diskussion über Jurgen Moltmanns Buch 'Der Gekreuzigte Gott', ed. Michael Kaiser (Munich: Kaiser, 1979), p.155; quoted and translated in J. O'Donnell, op.cit., p.133.
- 72/ Karl Barth, Letters 1961-1968, ed. by J. Fangmeier & H. Stoevesandt (Edinburgh: T.& T.Clark, 1981), pp.175-6.
- 73/ Yves Congar, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, III, (Chapman, 1983), p.14; Congar translates this saying from Schoonenberg from a Dutch article on 'Jesus Christ, the same today' in Melanges W.H. van der Pol (Roermond and Maasiek, 1967), without giving more detailed page references. I have been unable to locate the original.
- 74/ P. Schoonenberg, 'Trinität -- der vollendete Bund. Thesen zur Lehre von dreipersonlichen Gott', Orientierung, 37 (Zurich, 1973, fascicle of 31st May), pp.115-117; These 28.
- 75/ Ibid., These 24.
- 76/ Congar, op.cit., p.14.
- 77/ Schoonenberg, op.cit., These 25.
- 78/ Ibid., These 26. Cf. Schoonenberg's statement in his proposal for a Spirit Christology: 'In uniting themselves with Jesus' human person in this most intimate way, the Logos and the Spirit themselves become persons in the Trinitarian sense of this term. They are no longer merely extensions of God, but also divine persons...The Logos, becoming flesh in the human person Jesus, becoming the divine hypostasis of that human person, personalizes itself over against the Father and becomes the divine Son' ('Spirit Christology and Logos Christology', Bijdragen 38 (1977), p.368). I am puzzled by the coherence of the notion that the Son and Spirit can be regarded as 'extensions of God' which gain personal identity at the Incarnation.
- 79/ Cf. Thesen 17-23.



- 80/ Congar, op.cit., p.13.
- 81/ Ibid., p.15.
- 82/ Ibid., p.16.
- 83/ W. Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ (SCM Press, 1984), p.276.
- 84/ K. Rahner, T.I., IV, p.114.
- 85/ Ibid.
- 86/ D.M. MacKinnon, 'The Relation of the Doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity' in Creation, Christ and Culture; Studies in Honour of T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1976), pp.92-107; quotation from pp.102-3.
- 87/ W. Pannenberg closely associates the pattern of Spirit Christology with Adoptionism (op.cit., pp.12-1). Cf. the proposals to avoid this in P. Rosato, 'Spirit Christology: Ambiguity and Promise', Theological Studies, 38 (1977), pp.423-449. Schoonenberg's attempt is flawed by his view of the role of the economy in the formation of the Trinity ('Spirit Christology and Logos Christology', Bijdragen, 38 (1977) pp.350-375). For some reason he thinks that Lampe's study God as Spirit can be harmonised with a Trinitarian doctrine! The most cogent proposals are those expressed by W. Kasper in Jesus the Christ (Burns & Oates, 1976), pp.252ff, and developed in his The God of Jesus Christ (SCM Press, 1984), pp.223ff; 277ff.
- 88/ W. Kasper, Jesus the Christ, p.250.
- 89/ The Odes of Solomon, edited and translated by James Charlesworth (Scholars Press, 1977), p.82.
- 90/ H.J.W. Drijvers, 'The 19th Ode of Solomon', Journal of Theological Studies, N.S.31 (1980), pp.337-355; quotation from pp.343-4.
- 91/ The similarity of the wording is 'especially in the Old Syriac versions' (Drijvers, art.cit., p.349).
- 92/ The Gospel of Truth, 24 in The Nag Hammadi Library, ed. by J.M. Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), p.41.
- 93/ The Gospel of Philip, 55 in ibid, p.134.
- 94/ Robert Murray, Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition (Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.316. I acknowledge my debt to Robert Murray for his insights into this text.



95/ Ode 36.3-5 in Charlesworth, op.cit., p.126f.

96/ Murray, op.cit., p.314.

97/ The Gospel of the Hebrews, 3 in E. Hennecke, New Testament Apocrypha (SCM Press, 1973), p.164; cf. Charlesworth, op.cit., p.83.

98/ Charlesworth, op.cit., p.128: '...the Odist has in numerous places stressed the pre-existence of the Word, the Son and the Messiah.'

99/ Drijvers, art.cit., p.345.

100/ A. Grillmeier, op.cit., p.114. Cf. Drijvers' comment: 'This text which Hippolytus, Ben.Iac.27.3, uses to explain the twofold birth of the Logos, from God and from the Virgin, causes the special interpretation of John's Prologue as birth in heaven and links it to the birth from the Virgin on earth' (art.cit., p.345).

101/ Hippolytus, Ben.Iac.27.3.

102/ Tertullian, for example: 'Tertius enim est Spiritus a Deo et Filio sicut tertius a radice ex frutice et tertius a fonte rivus ex flumine et tertius a sole apex ex radio. Nihil tamen a matrice alienatur a qua proprietates suas dicit. Ita trinitas per consertos et connexos gradus a Patre decurrens et monarchiae nihil obstrepat et oikonomiae statum protegit.' (Adv. Prax. VIII, 8,7: Corpus Christianorum II, pars 2 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1954), p.1168). On the imagery used by Tertullian, and his concern to preserve the distinction of persons, while maintaining the monarchy of the Father, cf. J. Moingt: 'Tertullien se préoccupe uniquement d'établir que la substance du dernier degré vient du premier, et il ne voit dans les degrés intermédiaires (pris comme tels) que des organes de transmission, qui véhiculent la substance d'un bout à l'autre de la lignée.' (Théologie Trinitaire de Tertullien (Paris: Aubier, 1966), vol.3, p.1068). Cf. also B. de Margerie, The Christian Trinity in History (Massachusetts: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), pp.78-85. Boulgakof's comment on the treatment of the Spirit in the Fathers is also relevant: 'Nous avons déjà vu combien la position patristique était faible sous ce rapport, quand la Troisième hypostase se transformait en une espèce d'addendum théologique dans le genre de "etc." ou de "ainsi de suite", sans légitimation intérieure de son être; ou alors, la Sainte-Trinité n'était conçue que comme un double et, unissant trois sujets distincts: le Père et le Fils et le Saint-Esprit (thèse cappadocienne)' in S. Boulgakof, Le Paraclet (Paris: Aubier, 1944), p.64. (I have retained the French spelling of his Russian name in order to be consistent in text and footnotes.)

103/ Boulgakof identifies this as the distinctive contribution of Augustine to pneumatology: 'C'est une doctrine du Saint-Esprit en tant qu'amour intra-trinitaire, en tant qu'amour entre le Père et le Fils'. (Le Paraclet, p.95.) Augustine's own statements include: 'Spiritus ergo sanctus commune aliquid est patris et filii, quidquid illud est, aut ipsa communio consubstantialis et coaeterna; quae si amicitia convenienter dici potest, dicatur, sed aptius dicitur caritas ... Ed ideo non amplius quam tria sunt: unus diligens eum qui de illo est, et unus diligens eum de quo est, et ipsa dilectio' (De Trinitate, IV, V (Corpus Christianorum, L, ed. W.J. Mountain (Turnholt: Brepols, 1968), pp.235-6). 'Ergo spiritus sanctus ineffabilis quaedam patris filiique communio' (Ibid., V, XI, p.221).

104/ J. Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God, p.143: 'Ever since Augustine, whenever the Spirit is merely termed the vinculum amoris between the Father and the Son, it is enough to assume a "duality" in God. The third "mode of being" does not add anything special and individual to the Revealer and his Revelation.' Cf., also, G.S. Hendry, The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology (SCM Press, 1957), p.45: 'It has always been difficult to see how the bond that unites two hypostases in the Godhead can itself be a distinct hypostasis like the other two....But if the Trinity is no less ultimate than unity in God, and if this is signified by the Holy Spirit, it would seem more natural to identify the Spirit with the substance or ousia of God rather than with one of the three hypostases.'

105/ W. Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, p.226.

106/ W. Kasper, Jesus the Christ, p.250.

107/ Cf. the Creed of the Council of Toledo (675): 'quia inter generantem Patrem et generatum Filium vel procedentem Spiritum Sanctum nullum fuisse credimus temporis intervallum, quo aut genitor genitum aliquando praecederet, aut genitus genitori deesset, aut procedens Spiritus Patre vel Filio posterior apparet!' (DS 531).

108/ P. Evdokimov, La Théologie de L'Esprit Saint (Paris: Aubier, 1969), pp.71-2. Cf. Boulgakof, op.cit., pp.61-86.

109/ Evdokimov, op.cit., p.74.

110/ Ibid., p.75.

111/ Boulgakof, op.cit., p.81.



112/ Ibid., p.83.

113/ Ibid., pp.85-6.

114/ P. Evdokimov, La Femme et le Salut du Monde (Paris: Casterman, 1958), p.217.

115/ K. Rahner, The Trinity, p.99.

116/ Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Ia.q.36, a.2 (Blackfriars, 1964), vol.7, p.58. Cf. Y. Congar, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, III, pp.116-127; J. Pelikan, 'The Doctrine of the Filioque in Thomas Aquinas and its Patristic Antecedents. An Analysis of Summa Theologica Part I, q.36', in St. Thomas Aquinas 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1974), vol.I, pp.315-336.

117/ W. Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, p.222.

118/ Y. Congar, op.cit., p.75.

119/ Albertus Magnus, Summa Theologiae, VII, q.31, membr.4 in Opera Omnia, vol.31 (Paris, 1895), p.336. Cf. M.J. Scheeben, The Mysteries of Christianity (London: Herder, 1947), p.104: 'No one, so far as we know, has discussed the import of procedere, as predicated of the Third Person in distinction to the origin of the Second Person, so thoroughly and exhaustively as St. Albert the Great ... Indeed, he is practically the only author who professedly sets out to treat the question fully.' Also, W. Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, p.279: 'According to Albert processio signifies an ecstatic going-beyond-oneself and self-transcending, a being-out-of-oneself such as is proper to love.'

120/ A. Malevez, De Deo Trino (Facultés St. Albert Codex, 1952), p.155.

121/ K. Rahner, 'The Theology of the Symbol', T.I., IV, pp.221-252: '...the Logos, as Son of the Father, is truly in his humanity as such, the revelatory symbol in which the Father enunciates himself, in this Son, to the world..' (p.239). Cf. the study of Rahner's notion of symbol by J.H.P. Wong, Logos-Symbol in the Christology of Karl Rahner (Rome: LAS, 1984).

122/ Hans Urs von Balthasar, Le Mystère Pascal in Mysterium Salutis, 12 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1972), pp.207-8: 'La révélation décisive du mystère de la Trinité ne se produit donc pas avant le mystère pascal.'

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