A Living History:

Trinity and Divine Activity in the Theology of Karl Barth, 

Wolfhart Pannenberg and Robert W. Jenson

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Abstract

This essay offers a constructive take on the theological relationship between God and history. Following in the wake of the revitalization of the doctrine of the Trinity in modern theology, this essays examines how a trinitarian understanding of God's being can be used to articulate a notion of God's living relation to history in pre-temporal, inner-historical and eschatological perspective. I explore this topic by way of a critical engagement with the trinitarian theology of Isaak A. Dorner, Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Robert W. Jenson.

The central notion of the triune God's living relation to history derives from a modified form of Dorner's way of reconciling a notion of divine immutability with the revealed vitality of God in nineteenth century context. With the twentieth and twenty-first century theological figures of this study — Barth, Pannenberg, Jenson — the question becomes intensified so as to ask how the Trinity of God's being not only grounds God's activity ad extra, but enables the history that God lives with others; how construals of eternity and divine immutability bear on the conception of the reality of God in history; and how a historicized notion of the triune God encompasses an idea of God as transcendent being. There exists various contextual links, internal critiques and adaptations between these figures and their theological work that this essay incorporates into its constructive responses to these questions.

In formulating a conception of the triune God's living relation to history, Barth's doctrine of election is gleaned for an idea of the Son's obedience that underlies the vitality of
God in the relation between God's pre-temporal eternity and history; Pannenberg's concepts of the dependent monarchy of the Father and divine self-actualization are utilized to generate a view of the livingness of God in history; and Jenson's eschatological idea of the Spirit is used to support a historical notion of divine freedom. The concluding assessment identifies the constructive possibilities that the analysis of this study opens up for a trinitarian understanding of the relation between God and history, including a way forward on the question of the vitality of God in history based in the divine person of the Spirit as the possibility and guarantor of the future.
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Introduction

What follows is a study into the theological question of the relationship between God and history. Two points can be used to outline the basic background from which the study proceeds. First, the thesis of this work is set within the context of the revitalization of the classical doctrine of the Trinity in contemporary theology. Kant once famously remarked that the "doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, has no practical relevance at all." And as recent as the middle of the twentieth century, Claude Welch could, with a notable sense of lament, still classify this classical notion's place in prominent strands of modern theology as a "doctrine of the second rank." And, yet, today it is widely acknowledged that the doctrine of the Trinity has come to fully occupy a central place in constructive theological work once again. One can readily find Trinity as a theological concept being put to use in the theological interpretation of scripture, debates on personhood and subjectivity, gender studies, inter-religious dialogue and much more.3

Second, and more specifically, this study belongs to a mode of theological thinking that employs a trinitarian notion of God's being as the means for articulating the presence and activity of God in revelatory history, or what Hans Urs von Balthasar has described as the

"exteriorization of God" that "has its ontic condition of possibility in the eternal exteriorization of God — that is, in his tripersonal self-gift." Notably, there is an overlap here in regards to the topic of this study — God and history — and some of the initial ways that a trinitarian concept of God began to reemerge as a central theme in modern theology. At the beginning of the nineteenth century certain of the German idealists, such as Schelling and Hegel, appropriated this classical doctrine in order to conceive of the God-world relation. In his later work Schelling sought out a foundation for the basis and structure of created reality in the triadic nature of God's being. More elaborately, Hegel adapted a trinitarian idea of God in order to account for the way that humanity arrives at an awareness of Spirit, or the truth of the eternal Idea, a point that he based in the internal diremption of God in the incarnate Son and sublation of the Spirit that takes place and comes to realization in the community of faith. As expected, construals of the triune God's relation to history by subsequent figures vary in deeply significant ways. But, at least with these early nineteenth century thinkers, the basic idea is there: Trinity is a concept capable of advancing an idea of how God relates to creaturely and historical reality.

Utilizing the doctrine of the Trinity, this work aims to discuss a notion of God's relation to history. In the following pages I will consider four theological perspectives that, in one aspect or another, take up the question of how God relates to history in a living way. The study will assess the work of Isaak A. Dorner, Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Robert


W. Jenson. Each of these figures, in distinct fashion, gives extended attention to the way in which the historic activity of God proceeds from the trinitarian being of God. And as I will show, the various historic and contextual connections that link them together also provide a rich supply of material in the form of critiques and adaptations of one another's thinking — how, for example, Dorner's concept of immutability impacts Barth's trinitarian idea of divine constancy or a comparison of a notion of divine futurity as it develops in Pannenberg's doctrine of God verses that of Jenson's — that will be built into the constructive analyses of this work. Furthermore, while I will treat each figure of the study separately, increasingly bringing the relevant connections and points of critique between them to bear as the work unfolds, I intend to work out a unified and holistic, although not exhaustive, account of God's living relation to history. This will entail a degree of greater deviation from the proposals themselves of some figures more than others, but at each stage in the work such deviations will be explicitly argued. I will, in short, make the case for a notion of God's living relation to history that takes into account three essential dynamics: the link between God's *pre-temporal* eternity and history, the *inner-historical* vitality of God and God's *eschatological* relation to history.

Given that a treatment of God's relation to history nevertheless remains broad in its points of conceptual application and the problems that it works to address, it will be helpful to specify the central themes in what follows and what will not be considered in this study. One of the two essential themes in this work has to do with the notion of the *vitality* of the triune God in history, and thus with the already noted point of God's *living* relation to history. In a basic a way, the concern stems from the wealth and the dynamic range of the activity of God as depicted in holy scripture. God, in the biblical text, is creative, active in the world God has made in making judgments and issuing words of mercy anew. God even repents. God hears prayer, and responds. God incarnates. God, in a word, lives out a history with oth-
ers. "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt. 28.20). Alongside the basal notion of God's vitality is the related question of the reality of God's history with creatures. By reality here what I mean is simply an understanding of God's genuine or authentic presence in temporality. Perhaps unlike any other category to be treated in this study, it is this basic idea, difficult to examine simply in its own right — what does it mean to say God is really present with creatures? — and that must be assessed in view of a set of closely related doctrinal themes. The recurring interest in the doctrines of infinity, immutability and, above all, eternity in what follows has to do with how such conceptions lend themselves to and/or inhibit notions of God's active presence in history and the process of time without loss to the sovereignty and freedom of God's transcendent being.

With the formation of a conception of God's living relation to history and the reality of God therein, however, I will largely leave aside two closely related themes: im/passability and divine foreknowledge. I will attend to questions of God and the constitution of the divine being in the sequence of events that make up Christ's passion, but a definitive position on the question of im/passability goes beyond the scope of this study. The im/passability question is both immensely significant and highly divisive in contemporary theology. I do not mean to side-skirt the issue for this reason, but simply wish to return to this theme in a subsequent work where it can be given the attention that it requires. Likewise, the theme of divine foreknowledge could be addressed at different points in this work. Because of the central place of matters of (divine) ontology in this study, I will focus, rather, on the question of the presence of the future to God, or, put somewhat crassly, of God's physical presence to the future, and vice versa, and specifically as it bears on the above themes of the reality of God's living relation to history.
Before proceeding, however, one significant question looms. Is it, in fact, suitable to speak of God's living relation to history, or the idea of a real relation to creation that has been raised and rejected at various points in the Christian theological tradition? Thomas Aquinas states: "Since . . . God is outside the whole order of creation, and all creatures are ordered to Him, and not conversely, it is manifest that creatures are really related to God Himself; whereas in God there is no real relation to creatures, but a relation only in idea." By logical relation ('relation only in idea'), William J. Hill states, Thomas does not mean the absence of an actual relation with created reality, but the absence of one that designates "an ontic determination of deity, a passive dependence upon creatures." The question of the way, if at all, that historical reality becomes determinative of God will arise in what follows. However, more pertinent to this study are recent attempts to conceive of receptivity and those aspects that make up mutual relational activity as proper to God's own being. In the triune being of God, writes W. Norris Clarke, receptivity is "present in the Son and the Spirit . . . as a pure perfection of existence at its highest." Receptivity, in other words, is characteristic of God in the begetting and the procession of God's eternal relations. And so in relating to another, in responding to supplications, in wrath and mercy, in incarnate life, God is not up to something entirely alien to God's being. The idea of God as triune, in short, opens up a way to conceive of the relationality of God in the world. And not as a kind of compromise to the divine sovereignty, but, rather, as a true expression of God's activity that stems from the perfection of the trinitarian being of God. Similar to the way that Balthasar was cited above, it is this notion.


that will be carried forward in order to conceive of the triune God's living relation to history in this study.

The outline of the main chapters of the work is as follows: In lieu of a longer introduction to the theme of God and history taken up in this study, in chapter 1 I turn to the work of the mediating theologian Isaak A. Dorner in order to further specify the problem of this study and to provide one way in which it can be seen to emerge in the context of the second half of the nineteenth century. The essential contribution of Dorner for the purposes of this work lies in the clarity with which he poses and responds to the question of how to reconcile a notion of divine immutability with the revealed vitality of God in history. Immutability, as noted above, is only a secondary theme to be addressed in this study, but the larger point here lies in the way that Dorner makes recourse to an ethical concept of God, and specifically, defined in terms of the trinitarian contours of God's being, as the solution to the problem of reconciling immutability and the livingness of God. Dorner's approach, as I will show, can, with a slight modification, be adapted to form the basic question of this study in terms of how the doctrine of the Trinity works to establish a notion of God's living relation to history.

Beginning to set forth the constructive argument of this work, in chapter 2 I examine how Trinity as a theological concept underlies God's relation to history in the work of Karl Barth. This chapter consists of two main parts. In part 1 I assess how Barth incorporates his trinitarian idea of God into his doctrines of revelation in Church Dogmatics I/1 and divine constancy in Church Dogmatics II/1 in order to show how God's activity in history proceeds from the antecedent being of God as triune. I argue that up to Church Dogmatics II/1 Barth's way of applying Trinity to the question of God's activity in history makes only a minor advance on Dorner's approach in the immutability essay, focusing primarily on the question of
the grounds of God's activity *ad extra*, and more significantly, that his correspondence theory leaves open the possibility to conceive of a self-contained idea of God, and one that would ultimately undermine a conception of God's actual presence in history. In part 2 I follow through on a point of doctrinal development in Barth's theology and his use of Christology in the doctrine of election from *Church Dogmatics* II/2. With a more robust reflection on the eternal being of God in view of the concrete history of Jesus Christ, I make the case that Barth's conception of the eternal obedience of the divine Son provides the means to conceive of the continuity and vitality which underlie the relation between the pre-temporal eternity of God and history. I close this chapter with a qualified defense of Barth on the charge made by Jenson, Pannenberg and others of an over-actualized conception of God's primal history, or the locale in which the initiating activity of election takes place.

In chapter 3 I turn to Wolfhart Pannenberg's conception of God's trinitarian mediated history. I begin this chapter with Pannenberg's criticism of Barth's notion of divine subjectivity in the doctrine of the Trinity as a way in which eschatology becomes an underplayed element in Barth's trinitarian idea of God. I develop this assessment with the aid of Jürgen Moltmann's similar critique of Barth in order to support Pannenberg's turn to a trinitarian theology that takes its cue from the eschatological aims of God as depicted in the biblical text. In order to further elucidate the difference between Pannenberg and Barth, I attend to Pannenberg's early notion of revelation as history, and specifically in view of Pannenberg's concern with the concept of a totality or the whole. I highlight Pannenberg's requirement for an idea of God compatible with the movement of history. This is distinct from the stress on immediacy in Barth's idea of revelation. A brief treatment of Pannenberg's early idea of futurity is offered for comparatives purposes later in the chapter. As the primary constructive aim of this chapter I make the case that Pannenberg's notion of the dependent lordship or monarchy of the Father
can be used to articulate a conception of the vitality of God in the process of history itself. I argue that this requires, however, linking Pannenberg's trinitarian theology with his notion of divine self-actualization in a way that potentially goes beyond Pannenberg's own aims, as well as applying Pannenberg's principle on the unity of deity and lordship much more stringently than he himself does. In a final section of this chapter I consider Pannenberg's mature doctrine of eternity, highlighting a point of development in this notion that results in at least two plausible renderings of it. And at least one of these renderings of eternity fails to adequately distinguish how the future is different from God's present and comes into conflict with Pannenberg's own concern to speak of God as the God of history, present and active therein. This assessment is used to show the urgency for a clarified conception of God and futurity taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 consists of an engagement with Robert W. Jenson's eschatological doctrine of God. I examine Jenson's early appropriation of Barth's doctrines of election and divine eternity and Jenson's critique of a timeless conception of God's being in Barth. More critically, I attempt to temper Jenson's critique in terms of its actual applicability to Barth's theology and revise it in view of the criticism I set forth on the parallel realities of God and the world in Barth's theology leading up to *Church Dogmatics* II/2 in chapter 2. Positively, I note how Jenson's critique opens up the need for a more temporal and historical conception of divine freedom, which I begin to outline by way of a comparison with Pannenberg's view of history and through a consideration of Jenson's idea of narrative identity. The essential constructive claim of this chapter is that Jenson's divine ontology based in the Spirit, or what he conceives as the futurity of God, opens up a way to conceive of God as present in history and transcendent being simultaneously, and thus a notion proper to God's living relation to history. There remains, however, a tendency in Jenson to over-identify the Spirit with time future in such a
way as to threaten a view of God's activity in the historical present. Methodologically similar to the critique of Pannenberg's use of the notion of deity and lordship, I will show that to maintain the idea of God's eschatological relation to history here requires a more exclusive focus on the futurity of God in terms of the divine identity of the Spirit in God.

In the concluding chapter I offer an overview of the work as a whole. Furthermore, interacting with the previous critical engagements with the four theological figures of this work (chapters 1-4), I set forth my own specific proposals for a constructive way forward on the question of the triune God's living relation to history. First, I take up a methodological consideration on the formulation of the eternal relations of God that maintains an identity with their historical telos. Second, I propose an eschatological construal of the immanent Trinity based on the revealed being of God that allows for a conception of the triune God's self-enabled living relation to history. And third, I argue for a construal of the relation between the eternity of God and time that attends to the divine person of the Spirit as the guarantor and the possibility of the future for both God and creaturely beings. This final point leads into a new framework for considering the triune God's relation to history.

In this study I intend to set forth a conception of God's living relation to history that constructively and critically builds on the trinitarian theological proposals of these four figures. With Dorner I suss out what is at stake in reconciling a notion of God's being with the revealed history of God. With Barth I attempt to illuminate the vitality of God's pre-temporal relation to history; with Pannenberg, the being of God in history; and with Jenson, God's eschatological relation to history. I then set forth some constructive possibilities for conceiving of the triune God's relation to history. The reader will notice a general emphasis on distinct divine persons in chapters 2 to 4, meant to be appropriated to the respective dimension of God's relation to history and the operative agency in God very loosely: the obedience of the

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Son in pre-temporal eternity (Barth); the dependency of the Father for the historical establishment of the divine lordship (Pannenberg); and the futurity of the Spirit (Jenson). If nothing else, the allotments here are only meant to convey once again how the triune God is the God of history.
Chapter 1: The 'living immutability' of God:

Isaak A. Dorner on the Question of the Triune God and History

Between 1856 and 1858 the Lutheran theologian Isaak A. Dorner published his three part treatise in the *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie* 'On the Proper Conception of the Doctrine of God's Immutability, with Special Reference to the Reciprocal Relation between God's Suprahistorical and Historical Life.' In it Dorner reconstructs the traditional doctrine of immutability along the lines of an ethical understanding of God's being. It is a work that demonstrates Dorner's place in nineteenth century mediation theology (*Vermittlungstheologie*), as Dorner straddles between his commitments to Orthodox Lutheran theology and classical theological doctrines, including immutability, on the one side, and the influence of his German idealist predecessors and their push for a historicized conception of God, on the other side. The central problem of the essay is as follows: how to reconcile a notion of divine immutability with the revealed vitality of God in history. It is in view of this problem that I take up Dorner's essay. For, as I will show in the final section of this chapter, the central problem of this study can be seen as a modified form of Dorner's way of reconciling divine immutability with God's livingness in history in a trinitarian idea of God; and that is, *how to conceive of the Trinity of God's being as the basis and means for God's living relation to history.* Furthermore, Dorner's essay, which was given something of a historical lifeline shortly before the middle of the twentieth century when Karl Barth made a brief but significant reference to it in his doctrine of the divine constancy from *Church Dogmatics* II/1, will also be used as a sig-

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1. Isaak A. Dorner, “Über die richtige Fassung des dogmatischen Begriffs Der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes, mit besonderer Beziehung auf das gegenseitige Verhältniss zwischen Gottes übergeschichtlichem und geschichtlichem Leben,” in *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie* I/2 (1856); II/3 (1857); III/4 (1858); reprinted in *Gesammelte Schriften aus dem Gebiet der systematischen Theologie* (Berlin: Verlag Wilhelm Hertz, 1883), 188-377. Hereafter cited as *Der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes.*
significant comparative point of reference in the treatment of Barth's trinitarian theology in chapter 2 and the beginning of the constructive argument of this work.  2

1: Isaak A. Dorner and Divine Immutability

In the first section of this chapter I will survey Dorner's essay on divine immutability and his solution to the problem of reconciling a notion of immutability with the revealed vitality of God in history. In the second part I turn to a short analysis of how Dorner's treatment of immutability sets up the basic problem to be considered in the following chapters on God's living relation to history.

1.1: Immutability and History

1) Immutability in Context: The specific occasion for Dorner's essay on immutability was the kenotic controversy of the mid-nineteenth century. In part I of the essay Dorner provides an assessment and critique of the controversy. The debate, mainly between Lutheran and

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2. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God*, II/1, eds. G. W. Bromiley, T. F. Torrance, trans. T. H. L. parker, et al. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark LTD, 1957), 493. Although Dorner was perhaps the most prominent figure of the *Vermittlungsdogmologie*, Jörg Rothermundt claims that the references which Karl Barth makes to Dorner in his *Church Dogmatics* are the only direct points of influence of Dorner on twentieth century theology (writing in 1968). *Personale Synthese: Isaak August Dorner: dogmatische Methode* (Göttingen: Vandenheck & Ruprecht), 45-46.

Reformed theologians, laid claim to the concept of the *communicatio idiomatum* or the communication of properties that belong to the distinct natures of the person of Christ. One of the leading Lutheran proponents, Gottfried Thomasius, advanced the idea in which the incarnation of the *Logos* entails not merely the non-use but the actual divestment of certain divine attributes. In view here is a divestment of the 'relative' divine attributes, or those attributes that pertain to the divine essence in its being and activity *ad extra* (omnipotence, omnipresence, etc.), and not the 'necessary' attributes such as love and wisdom proper to God's own being.

In the middle of part I of the essay Dorner applies a subtle critique which he thinks endemic of the kenotic project as a whole. The kenoticists labor to conceive of the unity of the God-man as a "fixed unity" from the very beginning of Christ's life. This is evidenced in Thomasius' construal of a self-divested *Logos* capable of uniting with a human nature. However, what the kenoticists presuppose, according to Dorner, is a notion of the *Logos'* immutability which they otherwise oppose in order to conceive of the possibility of incarnation. The assumed notion of immutability results in a Christology that "excludes genuine development from the person of Christ." The human nature can undergo change but the *Logos* does not experience any kind of alteration. Dorner does not say as much in part I of the essay, but he is already setting up a plea for a thoroughgoing reconsideration of the idea of immutability as more compatible with the flux and changes of historical life.

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3. Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 68-69. Thomasius writes: "The immanent attributes God cannot give up because he would thereby give himself up; the relative attributes he can renounce because the world, and thus also the relation to it, is not necessary for him. In renouncing them he surrenders nothing that makes him to be God; his essence thereby suffers no diminution. But he renounces them in holy love, in order to be able to experience in truth a humanly natural life, a life in the flesh, and to redeem us. During this stage he is thus no *all-mighty, all-present, all-knowing man.*" "Christ's Person and Work," in Welch, *God and Incarnation*, 94.

In part II of the essay Dorner surveys the doctrine of immutability in the theological tradition. Dorner's critique of certain trends towards either pantheism or deism within the tradition betray his constructive concern for a doctrine of immutability that takes into account God's independence from and real relation with the world. This is an important distinction, insofar as immutability is a doctrine with a wide sense of application and can function as a kind of governing attribute for the doctrine of God. For instance, immutability can apply to God's foreknowledge of future contingent events, the application of the eternal decree, the unity of God's essence and attributes and so on. Dorner treats related themes that fall under the scope of divine immutability as they emerge in the tradition. The primary question to which he returns, however, is how the immutable being of God provides the basis for God's living relation with the world.

Dorner begins with the impact of Augustine's doctrine of simplicity. God is the highest good and being of pure substance without accident. Thus, Dorner states for the view of Augustine, "all that God has, God is." In the sheer simplicity of God, "any change would be a change for the worse, a loss, diminution, or dying away from simple perfection. God not only does not change, God cannot change." Quoting from Augustine's Confessions, "all mutable things have in you their immutable origins. In you all irrational and temporal things have the everlasting causes of their life." God's unchangeable and simple being is the source of the world's existence, but it does not share in the fluctuations and composite order of the world. Simplicity, on this view, is essentially interchangeable with God's immutability:

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5. See Dorner, Divine Immutability, 136 and the relation between immutability and divine simplicity.


"immutability is . . . the negative exposition of simplicity, that is, the constant identity of the divine essence in all relations." 8

Similarly, in Thomas Aquinas' description of God's being as pure act (actus purus), the effects of God that stem from the divine understanding and will are made identical with God's absolute actuality. Potentiality and change, key markers of the nature of the created world as grounded in God, do not exist in God. Moreover, although the distinctions of the divine attributes have subjective significance for the perceiver, they entail no corresponding and objective distinction in God's simple essence. 9 As simple and unchanging substance, God is free from the determinations of the created world. Dorner traces the employment of the same themes through the post-Reformation period.

The contention of Dorner is that the exclusion of change and diversity in the idea of God's simple essence leads to a distinction between God and the created order that undermines the objective reality of the world. "To be sure," writes Dorner, "the world will be assumed on empirical grounds, but there is no basis in God that explains the world in its concrete and determinate existence and particularity." 10 That is, the strong contrast between historical and determinate reality, one the one hand, and the dominant categories used to describe the being of God such as simplicity, on the other hand, creates a conceptual barrier for understanding the way in which the world is grounded in God, its ultimate source. Before the absolute actuality and simplicity in the "refined concept of God," Dorner claims, the ever-changing and composite world appears as illusory. It appears as an "idea (Idee)" of God but

not as truly historical and temporal with its own distinct existence in relation to God, with
"too great a similarity with the Platonic realm of Ideas."\textsuperscript{11} When God reclaims the creation in
the consummation of all things (Rom. 11:36), the world will return to the indeterminate and
unconditioned reality of God: "a different form of pantheism."\textsuperscript{12} In short, the traditional
notion of immutability, according to Dorner, hinders the formation of a conceptual basis for
the world's objectivity in the divine being, and with this, how God relates to the historical
reality that God indwells.

But the solution for Dorner is not to be rid of a conception of God's immutability, or,
as will become clear, a notion of God's actuality. In scripture God is the object of absolute
trust. The Psalmists' recurrent use of the metaphor of God as a rock who provides stability
and the basis of faith declares this basic function.\textsuperscript{13} Moreover, throughout the immutability
essay, the role of creaturely freedom, and specifically in the ethical independence of the
creature, is made central. But even this essential independence of the creature should not be
conceived apart from its foundation in "the living God, the highest and \textit{absolute} ethical
end."\textsuperscript{14} The absoluteness of God, the fundamental place of God's abiding will to save and to
be in fellowship with creatures, rooted in the constancy of God, retains an important place in
Dorner's own formulations. The question then is how to conceive of immutability in view of
the full reality of the created world in which God's revelation occurs; a solution that
compromises neither God's unchangeability nor livingness, and positively, one that entails an

\textsuperscript{11} Dorner, \textit{Divine Immutability}, 106, 270.

\textsuperscript{12} Dorner later identifies this as substance pantheism. "Substance pantheism never achieves a world that is
actual, but, insofar as it attributes being (reality) to the world, the latter is essentially identified with God."
\textit{Divine Immutability}, 110. See also the treatment of deism that Dorner pairs this account with. 112-19.

\textsuperscript{13} Dorner, \textit{Divine Immutability}, 87.

\textsuperscript{14} Dorner, \textit{Divine Immutability}, 119. Parenthetical edit and emphasis mine.
understanding of God's unchangeable being as compatible with a determinate and conditioned world.

(2) The Vitality of God and Creation: In part III of the immutability essay Dorner introduces his idea of the ethical immutability of God. In this notion Dorner attempts to reconcile divine immutability with the revealed livingness of God in what he calls the "higher principle" of God's ethical being. He begins to elucidate the meaning of divine vitality and immutability — in that order — in relation to other theological topics such as creation. Only then does Dorner turn to the ethical idea of immutability as the conceptual grounds for the union of God's livingness and unchangeable nature.

Dorner understands the task of reconciling immutability with the revealed vitality of God in relation to the Reformation's insight into the personal nature of the being of God. The Reformation's great discovery, Dorner argues, lies in the boldness by which it ventured to articulate the reality of faith in its doctrine of salvation. Implicit in the doctrine of salvation is the proximity of God in the gift of faith alongside divine transcendence in the sovereign act of justification. The doctrine of God, however, went largely untouched in the Reformation period. Nor did the later Protestant scholastics apply the insight into the personality of God to the attribute of immutability or the absolute character of the divine being. Dorner thus interprets the task of reconciling immutability with the livingness of God as an extension of the central principle of the Reformation into the doctrine of God.

To carry out this work Dorner leans on the tradition's assertion of the trinitarian

distinctions as real in the essence of God.\textsuperscript{17} The traditional conception of sheer simplicity, and with it, immutability, rules out a distinction between what is potential and actual in God or between God and the divine knowing and willing. Sheer simplicity, Dorner contends, is at odds with the plurality and distinctions of the eternal persons of the Trinity, "especially when the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit are conceived (with the orthodox early church) as perennial (\textit{perennirend}) and not as complete by a once-for-all act."\textsuperscript{18} Dorner is making reference to the eternal decision by which God "knows himself and the world of his decree."\textsuperscript{19} Dorner can go as far as to say that if God's nature is "motionless in itself" then it mirrors "lifeless law" and even "rigid dead substance."\textsuperscript{20} Dorner, however, does not reject the absolute nature of God's being. God is not composite nor substance with accidental qualities. Rather, as triune, God is self-generating life.

With the dogma of the trinitarian distinctions in place, Dorner supports his notion of vitality in God. God's being in the eternal mode of the triune relations means that God has God's own being, as said above, not in a "once-for-all act" but in a "cycle of life (\textit{Kreislauf des Lebens})."\textsuperscript{21} Moreover, God's existence as triune, inclusive of relational distinctions, is identical to God's essence.\textsuperscript{22} From these observations Dorner contends that the distinctions of God's triune being provide the conceptual grounds for the distinctions implied in the being of God, such as God's self-knowing and self-willing. God knows Godself, for example, insofar

\begin{enumerate}
\item See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologica}, 1.28.1.2.
\item Dorner, \textit{Divine Immutability}, 136; \textit{Der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes}, 305.
\item Dorner, \textit{Divine Immutability}, 136.
\item See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologica}, 1.3.3.4; 28.1.2.; 31.1.
\end{enumerate}
as God's self-knowledge as Father extends to the Son and Spirit as well. Further, as "self-rejuvenating divine life-process," by which Dorner means the eternal recurrence of the relations of the divine persons, God is not only "absolute actuality (absolute Verwirklichung)" but also "absolute potentiality (absolute Potenz)." This is to be kept distinct from a substance-accident relation. Because the triune being of God consists in a cycle of life and not a once-for-all act, God possesses absolute potentiality with the absolute actualization of the divine persons in a relation that eternally "confirms its own ground." In other words, the condition for the possibility of God is God in eternal actualization. Because of God's perennially occurring triune relations, actuality and potentiality are mutually conditioning, and thus both real in the being of God.

By means of the distinctions of the divine persons in the church's trinitarian doctrine Dorner works out a notion of the divine vitality. He does this by incorporating the activity of God's being into a trinitarian construal of divine aseity. The self-causation of God lies in the perennial nature of the eternal relations of God's triune being. Moreover, Dorner also takes this to mean that God's being is inclusive of potentiality, and one that is ever actualized anew by means of the inner-relations of the divine persons. In this way Dorner conceives of the being of God ad intra as inherently vital.

The significance of conceptually establishing the livingness of God's being does more for Dorner than overcome a notion of God without movement. The rest of Dorner's argument


24. Dorner, Divine Immutability, 137. Dorner's notion of a "cycle of life" is resonant with Schelling's concept for the necessary nature of God as the "unremitting wheel." The difference between them, however, is notable. For Dorner the circularity of the divine life provides conceptual distinctions in God that gives grounds for creation. For Schelling the divine circularity structures created reality as the "interior of all nature"; the expansion and retreating in the created world reflect the triadic powers of God's necessary nature. See, F.W.J. Schelling, The Ages of the World, trans. Jason M. Writh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 15-30.
hinges on the positive side of God's aseity: "God's particularity, his characteristic essence, is his aseity, through which he can be the universal ground of all being." In part II of the essay Dorner criticized related notions of simplicity and immutability that result in an idea of God and the created order as mutually incompatible. Dorner has sought a way to maintain the doctrine of the absolute character of God while simultaneously incorporating the distinctions which underlie the vitality of the divine life. With the idea of the livingness of God set forth, Dorner moves through the applicability of God's vitality ad intra for the divine relationality ad extra. I will outline how Dorner applies the notion of divine vitality to the doctrine of creation and God's relation to history.

Dorner elaborates the doctrine of creation with a revised basis for the eternal decree. It followed from the traditional idea of simplicity that "God thinks and knows himself and the world with one and the same eternal and simple act." The intention of this claim was to denote the essential and non-arbitrary origin of the world in God; not through emanation but in a creative act grounded in God's living being. The older dogmatic formulas understood the eternal decision to include an internal ordering so as to distinguish between God's self-constitution and will to create. Dorner thinks this much is correct. However, in view of the idea of God's sheer or absolute simplicity, according to Dorner, the distinction was unfounded. By means of the vitality that Dorner proposes in the triune being of God, there is a more specific conception that grounds the complexity of God's self-determination, a

25. Dorner, Divine Immutability, 139.


27. Johannes Wollebius: "In itself God's decree is unicum et simplicissimum, nor is any prius or posterius to be found in it. But as regards the things decreed the distinction is that God is said to have decreed their eventuation in the order in which they do eventuate." Cited in Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G.T. Thomson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 140.
foundation that adds consistency to the notion of a single and yet diverse eternal act. What all of the conceptual distinctions lead to for Dorner is the clarification that God's self-willing is the "logical prius" of the divine will to create.\textsuperscript{28} In this way God cannot be understood as "absorbed into being the world-cause," which sheer simplicity risks confusing. Although, as Dorner notes, such an idea was of course far from its adherents' intention. In God there is (logically, not temporally) first an eternal self-thinking and then the thought of God's self as the ground of the world. In this way God becomes "the loving \textit{instrument} for his creative will of love." The result is not only a world that is good in the eyes of created humanity, but also for God (Gen. 1.31).\textsuperscript{29}

Dorner's construal of creation works from the distinctions latent in the divine vitality to their application in God's act of willing the world. In his subsequent assessment of God's relation to the changing reality of history, he moves in the opposite direction, asking what the divine vitality must be like if God is truly present to the world. Dorner writes:

If one acknowledges that God has also an immediate and not merely the deistic relation to the actual emergence of the new, then it must also be recognized that the efficacious, that is, properly creative, activity of God (to be sure, in unity with the order of the divine decree) proceeds temporally and conditions itself in its action by what is spatially and temporally already given. But with this we already have a change in God's living self-exercise.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{28} Dorner, \textit{Divine Immutability}, 141.

\textsuperscript{29} Dorner, \textit{Divine Immutability}, 142, 179.

\textsuperscript{30} Dorner, \textit{Divine Immutability}, 143.
Dorner's primary concern here is not the flux and change of the natural order, but God's historical relation to free human subjects: "the highest causes which are created are those which are free. . . . they are consequently the highest revelations precisely of the omnipotent causality of God." What is learned about the divine vitality comes through God's interactions with human subjects that are given the capacity not only for self-conditioning but to influence the activity of God.

The creature lives, moves and has its being in God (Acts 17.28). In its "history of freedom" the creature owes the truth of its existence to God in that the parameters of the creature's being, including its freedom, are determined by God. And yet, God shares in the creature's historical life, willing to "dwell and move in them" without detriment to their freedom. The created world in which God and the human subject relate is also the ethical world. By means of its created receptivity God moves in the creature in order to generate new goods in the world. Dependent upon the divine being, the creature only comes to the realization of its ethical end through participation in God. The history between God and free subjects discloses the nature of the divine vitality as united to the divine love. God does not act by the execution of raw power. In the place of sheer power the divine omnipotence is communicated by means of a "communion of love." This extends to the point of openness to the creature's resistance, yet it makes possible a new and previously unseen good in the


33. Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 146-47, 156.

transcendence of the creature's fallenness. Moreover, this history reveals that God, based in the vitality of the divine being, is capable or entering into mutual relation with another. This gives further content to the realization of the divine potentiality and actuality as it manifests itself *ad extra*.\textsuperscript{35} God leads creation to its ultimate end (actuality) in a real history and process (potentiality) with the creature.

The two recurring elements in Dorner's construal, evidenced in his conception of the eternal relations of the Trinity and the self-grounded communion of God with creatures, are divine *immutability* as the perfect actualization of God's being, on the one hand, and the divine *vitality* as the principle for God's salvific relation with the world, on the other hand. The fundamental task for Dorner is to discern the particular way in which they are united. The task is admittedly "speculative." Yet, as Dorner asserts, it has "Christology" as its "archetype."\textsuperscript{36} For in the union that occurs between deity and humanity in the incarnation lies the question of how the being of God in its vital and immutable perfection comes to a living relation with others in the realm of creation. The culmination of Dorner's immutability essay lies in his proposal for a notion of the unity of God's unchangeable being and the livingness of God in the world in an ethical idea of God's being, or the ethical concept of immutability. I turn to this concept in what follows.

(3) *The Ethical Concept of Immutability:* Dorner takes it as given that God be thought in some general sense as ethical being. The thought of the ethical, he writes, has "a kind of ontological necessity." To think it is to think of the "absolute excellence" of its nature.\textsuperscript{37} But a

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 148.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 160.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 166.
\end{itemize}
broad idea that would unite divine immutability and vitality in an ethical concept such as love remains too elusive and indefinite, at least as a conceptual starting point. Dorner turns to a version of the Euthypro dilemma to examine the relationship between God and the good; that is, "whether good is good because God wills it, or whether God wills it because it is good."\(^{38}\)

When the question took shape among the scholastics it was Duns Scotus and the nominalists who argued that the ethical is subordinate to the freedom of the divine will and Thomas Aquinas and the intellectualists who made the case that God wills the good insofar as it is good. Dorner advocates neither option, at least on its own. In the nominalist view God is reduced to sheer power. And because the good is accidental, God's underling relation to it is a matter of indifference. The intellectualist option runs into the same problem. If God wills the good because God knows it as truly good then it appears to exist in its own right; the good is not essential but accidental to the being of God.\(^{39}\) Rather, Dorner claims the good must be identical with God. The ethical is God's "primal power" and God is the "ethical in itself," the "primal ethical (Urethische)."\(^{40}\) But as soon as one asks how God is the primal ethical, the problem is shown to be unresolved. The ethical, identical to God's self, is never simply immediate to God or dormant, but desires to become actual and posited by the will. Both the divine nature as ethical and the ethical willing, Dorner claims, are necessary to God. The basis for the union of the two — will and nature — in God's ethical actuality is made possible because of God's "*multiple and yet inwardly coherent mode of existence.*"\(^{41}\) And that means,

\(^{38}\) Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 167.

\(^{39}\) Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 167-68.

\(^{40}\) Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 168-69; Der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes, 343-44.

because God is triune.

In the beginning of part III the doctrine of the Trinity played a fundamental but much more implicit role in accounting for the aseity of God alongside a notion of God's vitality. Here the doctrine becomes the explicit basis for the union of God's internal immutability and vitality conceived in terms of the relation between necessity and freedom. The previous assertions on God's being, it seems, culminate in the ethical idea of God. Dorner writes: "only in the ethical concept of God . . . does even aseity achieves its true meaning and its absolute foundation."{42}

Dorner lays out a specific ordering for the conception of God's ethical being that runs (logically, not temporally) as follows: from necessity to freedom to the eternal actualization of the two, necessity and freedom in God, in the divine love. He states:

The ethical in the character of the necessary is rather a necessary mode of being of God and indeed the primary one. We cannot begin with the divine will as free if God is to be conceived ethically. For had we only the free, without any kind of conditionality and determination by the ethically necessary (Notwendig) . . . then we would be left eternally in capriciousness.\(^{43}\)

In this passage Dorner gives primacy of place to the ethically necessary which he equates with God the Father. As ethical necessity the Father is the "holy and necessary power which

\(^{42}\) Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 175.

\(^{43}\) Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 171; *Der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes*, 346.
neither will nor can renounce itself." But ethical necessity does not exist for itself. Rather, it desires to actualize the good in freedom (Freiheit). Inherent thus in the ethically necessary is the drive to be willed by another. Thus ethical necessity posits an ethical freedom that affirms itself, which is one and the same as the confirmation of the divine goodness. Robert R. Brown appears to overlook the broader sense of ethical freedom in the immutability essay in his claim that Dorner "undercuts his own emphasis on divine will and freedom," concluding his treatise "with a philosophical account of ethical immutability that sounds more like Hegelian necessity than Schellingian voluntarism." Admittedly, Dorner gives primary of place to absolute necessity (the Father) in his account. And, yet, Dorner is clear: God "wills, just as eternally as he is the ethically necessary being, the principle of the ethically free in itself, as the instrument for his eternal self-actualization into absolute ethical personality." And, likewise, ethical necessity tends towards actualization (it 'ought to be'). By itself it "does not suffice for the ethical in (God)." Furthermore, Dorner equates ethical freedom with the Son. Ethical freedom is the "instrument for (God's) eternal self-actualization into absolute ethical personality." Together, the Father and the Son generate the eternal realization of the good in the being of God, making not only the necessary goodness of the Father, but the freedom of the Son co-constitutive of the ethical being of

44. Dorner, Divine Immutability, 171.

45. Dorner, Der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes, 347.


47. Dorner, Divine Immutability, 172.


God.

Ethical necessity desires the willing of itself in freedom; ethical freedom knows and wills the truth of its essence in the highest good. Their perfect union takes place in the Spirit, which Dorner describes as "the absolute actualization of the ethically necessary achieved in freedom's own desire and love." The Spirit in Dorner's account maintains its traditional role as the "bond of unity" between the Father and Son. The bond is an act of the Spirit, which is important to emphasize as Dorner's account can at times suggest that ethical freedom is the underlying power of the divine will in the Godhead. Rather, the Spirit eternally actualizes ethical necessity's drive to be and ethical freedom's desire for the good in the perfect harmony of the divine being.

What has Dorner achieved in this trinitarian framework for the ethical being of God? Although Dorner does not use the term, he has essentially employed the traditional idea of mutual indwelling or perichoresis in order to draw out the way in which immutability and vitality exist in the depths of God's being. The perichoretic approach is manifest in that the immutability of God's ethically necessary being and the vitality of God's ethical freedom do not exist side-by-side but imply each other. By the Spirit the ethical necessity of the Father and the ethical freedom of the Son are mutually actualized. In a statement that reflects the way in which Karl Barth will take up Dorner's essay in his doctrine of the divine constancy, Dorner writes, "we must say that there is in God not a fixed but a living immutability (lebendige Unveränderlichkeit)." Whereas in previous sections Dorner laid down separate foundations for the essentiality of divine immutability and vitality, the ethical concept of God


51. Dorner, Divine Immutability, 175; Der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes, 351. Barth will speak of the "immutable vitality of God," Church Dogmatics, II/1, 511. See chapter 2, 1.3b.
brings the two notions together as proper to the one God. Furthermore, Dorner summarizes the ethical being of God as love. Dorner previously hesitated to use this popular term to describe God's being for fear that it work as a designation for God's nature only abstractly. But it is a scriptural claim (1 John 4.8). And with the specifics of God's ethical being in place, Dorner claims that God is love insofar as God both affirms and makes actual the necessary goodness of God's own being. God's self-love and divine goodness are one and the same.\(^{52}\) This divine self-love, as will become clear, grounded in God's ethical being, serves as the basis for God's interactions with created reality.

In the remainder of the essay Dorner applies the ethical notion of immutability to an understanding of God's relation with the world. It is worth singling out again Dorner's account of creation in which he first lays out the logic of God's relation to the world in terms of the ethical immutability of God.

In regards to creation Dorner uses his concept of God as love as shorthand for the idea of immutability set forth above. The world comes into being neither by means of an arbitrary act nor for the sake of the completion of God's own self. Rather, God creates from the "blessedness and perfection of his love and out of the self-identity of its free being."\(^{53}\) The perfection of God's love as self-love is first and foremost that which distinguishes God from all that is not God based upon the self-causality or aseity of God's ethical being. Distinct from all that is not God, the perfection of God's love nonetheless includes the "desire of self-impartation."\(^{54}\) Although nothing in the world necessitates God's act, there is a kind of

\(^{52}\) Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 178. Parenthetical edit mine.


\(^{54}\) Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 181.
internal grounds in God for God's creative work. Dorner states:

(The) willing of objects is included in God's self-love because within and for the divine sphere itself the self-impartation of pure love cannot yet, in the proper sense, reach manifestation. It is to be insisted that love, as imparting, does not yet find the proper place of its manifestation in God himself, but only where purely free original giving takes place, only where there is pure want in the recipient.55

The divine loving, according to Dorner, extends to the point of a possible self-giving that does not receive back what it gives — a self-impartation of love that differs from the mutuality that characterizes the Godhead.56 Creation, and to be more specific, the creature endowed with freedom, is precisely this possibility. God "determines himself to enter into alteration and change" for the sake of establishing a "communion between God and the free creature."57 In sum, from God's primary self-love there emerges the self-impartation of God towards creation and the creature for the sake of a new communion of love.58

Notably, Dorner comes as close here as anywhere in the immutability essay to the necessity of creation. But his primary concern is not this point, but, rather, what God's being must be like if God is at once free for the creature and yet remains distinct from the whole of created reality: "The self-impartation to the . . . creature, is in no way a loss of self, a giving

up of self by God; it is rather the power of love to be in the other itself and to be itself in the other."\(^{59}\) In the creation event God wills a world for the sake of a communion of love with creatures. God "loves love" in that God, beginning with the divine self-love, wills creation's end as a fellowship of love.\(^{60}\) In God's act of self-impartation to free creatures God affirms the very thing that characterizes God's being: divine love. In this way the ethical immutability of God remains unchanged. Incidentally, for Dorner, the immutability of God is not simply that God is loving, as Bruce A. Ware claims in regards to Dorner's essay, but, in God's ethical immutability, God is this love, ethical being itself, from which God acts.\(^{61}\) The point above can be spun one other way: insofar as God's self-love is necessary and thus universal, the externalization of love in God's self-imparting communion of love with free creatures affirms the original divine self-love. The underlying point is that God's living immutability, here expressed in the alternate form of love, enables a relation with created reality; the divine communion with free creatures affirms God's living immutability. In this way of relating to created reality the ethical self-identity of God remains the same.

Dorner's subsequent construals of God's reciprocal relation with humanity and the reconciling event with Christ follow the pattern of a demonstration or a confirmation of God's ethical immutability as it manifests itself in historical and temporal reality. Much of the reciprocal relation with humanity is embedded in Dorner's treatment of creation with an additional emphasis on God's receptivity for creaturely freedom based in the divine vitality.\(^{62}\)

\(^{59}\) Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 178.

\(^{60}\) Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 181; *Der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes*, 359. Translation slightly altered.


\(^{62}\) Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 184-86.
The incarnation fulfills the "essence of love" — in the sense of self-impartation — in that God does not merely have the idea of being in history with the eternal decree, a kind of docetic version of election, but shares in "historico-temporal humanity . . . in order to give a share in itself."63 And reconciliation, the "inner sanctum of the Christian religion," involves the "living participation of the whole person of Christ in humanity," such that in his death the "divine-human love . . . affirm(s) itself" in the most extreme of historical realities.64 In each, the divine love of God's living immutability confirms itself by means of God's living relation in and with the created world.

1.2: Immutability and the Livingness of God

In his treatise 'On the Proper Conception of the Doctrine of God's Immutability,' Dorner helpfully locates some of the critical issues at stake in the treatment of this doctrine. Initially driven by the question of whether or how God changes in the incarnation event amongst fellow Lutheran and Reformed theologians, Dorner proceeds to address the need for a notion of God's being consistent with the active expressions of God as depicted in revelatory history. At a more basic level, Dorner points to the issue of maintaining a notion of immutability in view of the livingness of God. Dorner is clear that neither immutability nor divine vitality are dispensable. For under the common denominator of salvation the two are united; regarding God's unchangeable nature lies faith's certainty in God as the trustworthy grounds for salvation; and the divine vitality occurs in the revealed history of God in order to achieve such ends.

63. Dorner, Divine Immutability, 188.

64. Dorner, Divine Immutability, 189. Parenthetical edit mine.
Accordingly, the question that animates Dorner's study is how to reconcile the two indispensable elements of immutability and the livingness of God. The question has two sides. On the one side, this has to do with the reconciliation of actuality and potentiality in God, or Dorner's construal of the divine relations of God's triune being. Likewise, and most significantly here, it involves the actualization (Spirit) of necessity (Father) and freedom (Son) in the ethical idea of God. On the other side, and which more closely bears on the main problem of this work, it has to do with the reconciliation of divine immutability and the revealed vitality of God in history. The two sides are, however, related. For Dorner conceives of the basic condition for the revealed vitality of God to lie in the living immutability of God, or in the ethical concept of God's trinitarian being. As Dorner describes this in the culminating section of the immutability essay, love, the shorthand expression for the ethical nature of God as triune, affirms itself time and again, or becomes manifest anew, in all of the self-imparting acts of God in creation.

I noted at the beginning of this chapter that my purpose in taking up Dorner's essay is to show how the central theme of this study follows from Dorner's way of treating the problem of reconciling a notion of immutability and the revealed vitality of God in history. When Dorner attempts to reconcile immutability and vitality in God, he turns to the perennial nature of the eternal relations of the divine persons. When he attempts to reconcile immutability with the revealed activity of God, he turns to an ethical conception of God's triunity, forming the basis for a notion of the vitality of God in history and that takes shape in terms of divine love as interactive with ethically independent creatures. Trinity, in short, becomes the means by which to conceive of the livingness of God. It becomes the means by which to conceive of God's living relation to history.

It is this point on the doctrine of the Trinity as the basis for understanding God's living
relation to history that I take up in what follows. The question which Dorner's immutability essay opens up for further reflection is how the triune nature of God's being makes possible a conception of the vitality of God in history. Looking ahead, a distinction between Dorner's account here from the second half of the nineteenth century and those to be examined in the figures of the subsequent chapters — Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Robert W. Jenson — can be noted. For Dorner, the triune conception of God, or God's ethical nature, primarily serves as the grounds for God's living activity in history. And when Dorner articulates the vitality of God in history, the trinitarian idea of God remains just that, more foundational than actually coming to expression in the historical activity of God itself. Dorner supplies an idea of God as the grounds for God's own history, but not one that adequately points to the way that God is, in fact, active in history itself. He attends to the activity of God in history as it involves God's way of relating to ethically independent creatures, creatures that reside in God and who have the divine being as their highest end. This is, perhaps, a starting point. But, at least in the immutability essay, it does not bring to bear the insights that Dorner establishes in his ethical notion of God on the God-world relation. As I will show in what follows, for Barth, Pannenberg and Jenson, in different ways and not always consistently, Trinity not only serves as the grounds for God's activity ad extra — though this point remains highly important — but is also conceived as the way that God acts in the history that God indwells; that is, Trinity is conceived more concretely as the way that God lives a history with others.

The point stands, however, that Dorner's treatment of the problem of reconciling divine immutability with the vitality of God in history helpfully opens up the possibility to extend the reflection on the livingness of God in history. The critical and constructive engagement with the work of Barth, Pannenberg and Jenson in what follows will make the
case for an expanded conception of the triune God's living relation to history. I will consider this point in three aspects: in God's pre-temporal relation to history, in God's inner-historical reality and in God's eschatological relation to history. I start with the pre-temporal aspect of this argument in chapter 2 and the trinitarian theology of Karl Barth.
Chapter 2: 'Ours in Advance':

Trinity and History in the Theology of Karl Barth

I begin the treatment of the primary figures of this work with a study of Karl Barth's trinitarian theology. The relevance of Barth's theology to the question of the reality of the triune God's relation to history comes to the fore at the very beginning of the *Church Dogmatics* (CD). In the prolegomena to this work Barth asks, in revelation, Who is revealed? How does it come about? and What happens as a result? His response: God, thrice over. God reveals God, both *through* God and *as* God.¹ And thus Barth proceeds to his doctrine of the Trinity, indicating an initial and basic connection between this classical doctrine and the being of God in history. The triune God acts in history.

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: (1) I will show how Barth conceives of the revelatory or historical activity of God to be grounded in a conception of God's triune being, and in such a way that what God does in temporal reality corresponds to the life of God as Father, Son and Spirit. Barth's use of this doctrine comes to have a significant impact on the place of Trinity in subsequent theology of the twentieth (and twenty-first) century, and which is especially the case with the later figures of this study. However, I will also show that despite the ingenuity that Barth's formal doctrine of the Trinity allows him in his account of the God-world relation (a key positive example here will be noted in his doctrine of the divine constancy), Barth makes little of an advance on Dorner's use of Trinity in the immutability essay, focusing primarily on the triune being of God as the grounds of God's revelatory history. His correspondence theory of God's being and revelatory history, moreover, leads to a no-

¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1: *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 295-96. All references that follow the first full citation of a volume of the *Church Dogmatics* hereafter cited as CD.
tion of God's being as self-contained and that consequently undermines the conception of God's actual presence in history.

(2) I will also trace an important development in Barth's christologically attuned notion of God from his doctrine of election in CD II/2. The essential way that Barth's trinitarian theology is incorporated into the constructive argument of this work lies here. I will make the case that Barth's doctrine of election, and specifically his notion of the obedience of the divine Son, can be used to conceive of the continuity and vitality which underlie the relation between the pre-temporal eternity of God and history. In anticipation of criticisms that will surface in the later chapters on Pannenberg and Jenson, establishing this thesis will require some clarification around Barth's idea of a primal history in God and, more specifically, how Barth conceives of the connection between the eternal decision of God and its actualization in history.

More broadly, this chapter begins to develop the constructive argument for a notion of the triune God's living relation to history. Subsequent chapters will serve to fill out Barth's protological perspective on election and the divine Son for a more comprehensive conception of God's involvement in history. In chapter 3 I will turn to Pannenberg's trinitarian theology and his idea of the monarchy of the Father for a notion of the vitality of God in history. And in chapter 4 I will take up Jenson's doctrine of the Spirit in order to make the case for a conception of divine transcendence based in an eschatological understanding of God's relation to history.

In order to unpack the two purposes noted above, I will structure this chapter into two parts. In part 1 I examine the link between Barth's doctrine of the Trinity and the being of God in revelatory history in CD I/1. A brief assessment of the second edition of Barth's commentary on the book of Romans will provide some of the key background to Barth's under-
standing of the divine subjectivity and revelation which informs his trinitarian theology in CD I/1. Following this, I consider how Barth applies his trinitarian theology to his doctrine of the divine constancy in CD II/1 and the questions of the vitality of God in revelation and God as the subject of a living history with creatures. The first division of the chapter concludes with a constructive and critical analysis of the role of the eternal Trinity for understanding God's relation to history. In the transition between the two main divisions of the chapter I offer a short excursus into Barth's trinitarian doctrine of eternity in CD II/1. This doctrine will be taken up in greater detail in the following chapters. In part 2 I attend to Barth's doctrine of election and the meaning of Barth's inclusion of the eternal obedience of the divine Son for understanding the relation between God's pre-temporal eternity and revelatory history. The constructive use of Barth's idea of the Son's conformity to the divine will for an understanding of God's living relation to history will be addressed in the final section of the chapter.

1: The Eternal Trinity and Revelation History (the second edition of The Epistle to the Romans; Church Dogmatics I/1, §§8-12; Church Dogmatics II/1, §28, §31.2)

1.1: Revelation and God in the Second Edition of The Epistle to the Romans

A study of Barth's theology that starts with his second edition of The Epistle to the Romans (Romans II) is not uncommon. What is at least somewhat unique is a study that does so that is primarily concerned with Barth's trinitarian theology, and which requires some explanation.² Barth only begins to develop his trinitarian theology a few years after the appearance of this

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work. The reason to begin here, however, has to do with the fact that in it Barth proposes two notions, namely, divine subjectivity and revelation, by which he not only articulates his later trinitarian theology, but which shape his initial approach to the doctrine of the Trinity. Moreover, a treatment of these notions will prove important in bringing Barth into critical conversation with other figures of this study, especially Wolfhart Pannenberg. In what follows I will briefly outline these notions as essential background points to Barth's trinitarian theology in CD 1/1.

As has been explored extensively, the shockwave that Romans II creates is the result of the evocative way that Barth distances himself from the liberal Protestant tradition that characterized his formal theological training. In Romans II Barth sets out to assert the overarching principle of the sovereignty and alterity of God. And because theology has to do with God, it can, he asserts time and again, in no way proceed from anthropological or phenomenological insights. Barth believed he had seen the devastating result of this anthropocentric approach to theological work when several of his teachers, including Adolf von Harnack and Wilhelm Herrmann, willingly signed off on the war plans of Kaiser Wilhelm II.3 It is in view of this point that the main principle of Romans II can be understood. Romans II is marked by a notion of diastasis: the definite contrast between God and the world or all that is not-God. As Barth writes in an often cited passage from the work, the reality of God "touches the world of the flesh, but touches it as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it."4


Or more fervently, the world is simply not capable of containing what takes place in the event of God's self revelation: "God is pure negation."

But for all this the revelation of God does, in fact, occur. And so the question for Barth is how to speak of the absolute subjectivity of God in revelation; how God remains God in the event of revelation, and accordingly, is never directly identifiable with the creaturely medium by which God is revealed. To do this Barth makes use of a set of dialectical notions. The revelation of God, Barth writes, "must be the most complete veiling of His incomprehensibility . . . . (God) is made known as the Unknown." In this way revelation reinforces the diastasis between God and the creature as continually made anew. A direct communication of God would do away with the "vast chasm" between God and the world. In his well known reference to Kierkegaard, Barth gives credence to "the infinite qualitative distinction between man and God."

There are two forms of dialectic to note in this context. The first pertains to the absolute distinction between divine eternity and time. I will not dwell on this notion, for Barth would soon discard it. How, for instance, can the gospel of the Christian faith, based in the

5. Barth, Romans II, 141-42.


9. Barth, Romans II, 98.

10. Barth, Romans II, 98-99; Der Römerbrief (Evangelischer Verlag Zollikon-Zürich, 1940 [1922]), 73. Hereafter cited as Römerbrief II. Translation slightly altered.
history of a specific individual, be true of God when that God's eternity seems to negate the temporal nature of reality itself? More important here is the other notion of the dialectic of the veiling and unveiling of God. In this idea Barth issues forth a conception by which God remains the sovereign subject in the event of revelation. By whatever medium the revelation of God takes place, the divine alterity remains intact due to the dialectical nature of God's self-revelation. The details of this occurrence, and specifically the medium of revelation, was a point Barth would fill out in the years ahead. Bruce L. McCormack has traced the shift from the focus on dialectics to the idea of the analogy of faith in Barth's discovery of the an/en-hypostatic Christology of the Protestant Scholastics while lecturing at Göttingen in the mid-1920's. Dialectics were not lost here, specifically the veiling-unveiling dialectic, but were shaped along christological lines in a way that goes beyond anything in Romans II. More important for the purposes here, however, is that Barth also finds a suitable place for this form of dialectic in his emerging trinitarian theology. And with this, so do the accompanying and interrelated notions of revelation and the divine subjectivity. I turn to this treatment of Trinity in the following section.


12. For the other uses of dialectic in this work, see McCormack, Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology, 266-80; Michael Beintker, Die Dialektik in der 'dialektischen Theologie' Karl Barths, Studien zur Entwicklung der Barthschen Theologie und zur Vorgeschichte der 'Kirchlichen Dogmatik' (Chr. Kaiser Verlag München, 1987), 55-59.


1.2: Revelation and the Doctrine of the Trinity: *Church Dogmatics* I/1 (§§8-12)

The importance of the doctrine of the Trinity in Barth's understanding of the relation between God and history becomes evident at the beginning of the *CD*. Barth situates this classical doctrine in his treatment of revelation. Trinity, therefore, is explicitly linked to the activity of God *ad extra*, the revelatory history of God. Keeping in view the interrelated themes of revelation and the divine subjectivity from the previous section, what follows focuses on how Barth's notion of God as triune forms the basis for the activity of God in revelation in *CD* I/1, §§8-12.

Barth locates the doctrine of the Trinity in the prolegomena of the *CD*, proper to the concept of God's revelation.\(^{15}\) As in *Romans* II, the divine subjectivity is at the forefront of Barth's concerns.\(^{16}\) He writes, "*God reveals Himself. He reveals Himself through Himself. He reveals Himself.*"\(^{17}\) In its simplest form, the three-fold concept of revelation runs: "*God reveals Himself as the Lord.*"\(^{18}\) Revelation, as such, contains a subject, predicate and object structure. God, who reveals God, as God. Importantly, the idea of revelation forms "the root of the doctrine of the Trinity."\(^{19}\) Rather than taking the route of deriving his trinitarian theology, at least initially, from New Testament claims or the traditional approach of the efficacy of


\(^{16}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 307.

\(^{17}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 296. "*Revelation means the knowledge of God through God and from God.*" See also, *Göttingen Dogmatics* I, 61.

\(^{18}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 306.

\(^{19}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 307.
God's reconciling activity or questions around the worship of the Son and Spirit, Barth proceeds with the notion of revelation: "we arrive at the doctrine of the Trinity by no other way than that of an analysis of the concept of revelation." What is more, because the revelation of God is nothing other than Godself, "God is identical with His act in revelation and also identical with its effect." This leads Barth to posit a correspondence between what God does in revelation and the triune being of God from which this act proceeds. "The question of revealer, revelation and being revealed corresponds to the . . . doctrine of the Trinity," a reference that Barth proposes to fill out as his trinitarian understanding of God unfolds.

The subjectivity of God in revelation, moreover, takes shape in terms of the veiling-unveiling dialectic seen in Romans II, but this time in view of God's triune being. God "cannot be unveiled" to creatures. In revelation, however, precisely this, the self-unveiling of God, happens. God is free, and free both "to reveal Himself or not to reveal Himself." The trinitarian dimension of this dialectic appears in the "three moments" of God's sovereign self-disclosure, an "unveiling, veiling and impartation." Barth then proceeds to unpack the dialectic in view of the divine persons.

20. Barth, CD I/1, 312. George Hunsinger claims that this leaves Barth's "Trinitarian doctrine with a certain imbalance." "Karl Barth and Some Protestant Theologians," 296.

21. Barth, CD I/1, 296.

22. Barth, CD I/1, 314.

23. Barth, CD I/1, 315.

24. Barth, CD I/1, 321.

25. Barth, CD I/1, 332; Die kirchliche Dogmatik I/1 (Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1980), 351. All references that follow the first full citation of a volume of Die kirchliche Dogmatik hereafter cited as KD. English translation slightly altered. In the standard english version's rendering of Momente as "elements" something of the logical and sequential ordering of revelation is lost.
Barth begins his explication with the unveiling of God in the Son. The biblical revelation of God's unveiling discloses the lordship of God in the divine capacity and "the freedom of God to differentiate Himself from Himself, to become unlike Himself and yet to remain the same."\(^{26}\) Although free not to create and become involved with creaturely reality, God takes on "temporal form," form in a medium "that does not take God's place" but which is God in revelation.\(^{27}\) As the Son, God is not "tied to His secret eternity," but involves Godself in time.\(^{28}\) In that disclosure, however, the lordship of God is revealed a second time in the Father.\(^{29}\) "God is always a mystery."\(^{30}\) God is not another object for creatures in created reality. As the creator in the biblical revelation, God is free to veil Godself with the same freedom of the divine unveiling. The Father is the "free ground and free power" of the Son, and who, even in the form of the Son's unveiling, remains within a veil.\(^{31}\) And lastly, the Spirit. In the veiling and unveiling of God, the divine self-revelation is a concrete event that is directed towards humanity in history. In this way revelation is the contingent "impartation" of God that occurs as the "historicity of revelation."\(^{32}\) The Spirit creates the relation between the creator and creatures established in Jesus Christ.\(^{33}\) In the veiling, unveiling and impartation that make


\(^{27}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 320-21; see also, *Göttingen Dogmatics* I, 59.

\(^{28}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 320.

\(^{29}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 388-90.

\(^{30}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 321.

\(^{31}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 324.

\(^{32}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 325-26, 330.

\(^{33}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 330, 450-52, 462-63.
up God's self-revelation, God is disclosed in three divine "modes of being" — Barth's preferred term for the divine hypostases — of the Father, Son and Spirit. The name of Father, Son and Spirit means that God is the one God in threefold repetition...grounded in His Godhead.

Through the doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, Barth delineates the structure of God's revelation and the way in which God remains the active and yet hidden and sovereign subject of the divine self-disclosure. In §§10-12 of CD I/1, Barth turns to an explication of the eternal Trinity and God's activity in salvation history. As already alluded to above, Barth understands the relation between the eternal Trinity and God's revealed self to take shape by way of correspondence. Here Barth begins with the first divine mode of being, the Father. In the appropriated activity of God ad extra, the Father is the creator, and therefore the source from which all things come. Yet already in the being of God there corresponds to this the Father as "from himself alone," the eternal author of the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the revelation of Christ God is known to be the creator, to be the unique Father in relation to creatures, and so, Barth writes, "it follows that He already is that which corresponds thereto antecedently and in Him-


35. Barth, CD I/1, 359.

36. Barth, CD I/1, 350.

37. See also Jüngel's notion of God's self-interpretive act in revelation here. God's Being is in Becoming, 35-37.

38. Barth, CD I/1, 392-93, 433.
self, namely, in His relation to the One through whom He is manifested." The Father is creator in a "self-grounded and self-reposing possibility in God."

Similarly, the lordship of the Son among creatures belongs to the antecedent reality of his being in God. Christ the Word comes in the form of grace and truth to others, the object of faith, because in God he is already the object of the Father as the only-begotten Son. The confession that "Jesus Christ is Lord," writes Barth,

is not just an analysis of the meaning of Jesus Christ for us as this is manifested to us in faith. It tells us that grounded in Himself, and apart from what He means for us, Jesus Christ is what He means for us, and that He can mean this for us because quite apart therefrom He is it antecedently in Himself.

Who and what Jesus Christ is in the antecedent being of God makes possible who and what he is among creatures. Barth describes this alterity or objectivity in God's own self to be the means of God's capacity to be "the Lord in our midst" and with that, to reconcile a fallen world.

And lastly, Barth understands the appropriated work of the Spirit in setting others free, and thus as the redeemer. In begetting the Son the Father also "brings forth the Spirit of

39. Barth, CD I/1, 391.
40. Barth, CD I/1, 393-94.
41. Barth, CD I/1, 424.
42. Barth, CD I/1, 423-24.
43. Barth, CD I/1, 409.
44. Barth, CD I/1, 448.
love," negating in Godself "from eternity, in His absolute simplicity, all loneliness, self-containment, or self-isolation."45 The Spirit, as such, is the antecedent communion of the Father and Son, or that love which unites the Father and Son.46 As already "the act of communion . . . of impartation, love, gift" in God, so does the Spirit impart the divine love to others in revelation.47 "The Holy One and sinners" can come into relation on the basis of the prior union of the Father and Son in the Spirit. With each divine mode of being of the one God, what God does ad extra always moves in the same direction, from the eternality of God's triune being to the revelatory history of God in creation, reconciliation and redemption.48

Who God is and what God does in revelation corresponds to the creative lordship, objectivity and fellowship of God's triune being.49 Barth writes, "to the involution and convolution of the three modes of being in the essence of God there corresponds exactly their involution and convolution in His work."50 Concisely, God acts in revelation out of the immanent Trinity of God's being. Or, as Barth puts it, "as Father, Son and Spirit God is, so to speak, ours in advance."51

45. Barth, CD I/1, 483.
46. Barth, CD I/1, 480, 486.
47. Barth, CD I/1, 470.
48. Barth, CD I/1, 471. "Because (God) is it antecedently in Himself, He is it also in His revelation." Parenthetical edit mine.
49. On Barth's understanding of the distinctions of the divine modes of being as grounded in the eternal relations of origin, see CD I/1, 363.
50. Barth, CD I/1, 374.
51. Barth, CD I/1, 383. For a more a detailed account of the theme of antecedence in the CD, see George Hunsinger, Reading Barth With Charity: A Hermeneutical Proposal (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 8-10, 43-44, 68; "Karl Barth and Some Protestant Theologians," 294-309.

46
To summarize, Barth's doctrine of the Trinity in *CD I/1* carries over his underlying concern from *Romans II*, the subjectivity of God in revelation, and draws it out along trinitarian lines. The concern is reformulated in the three-fold slogan, 'God reveals Himself as the Lord,' and unpacked in the trinitarian appropriations of Barth's veiling-unveiling dialectic. In his notion of the antecedent Trinity Barth further fills this out with the ideas of the creative lordship, objectivity and fellowship of God. These ideas represent most clearly Barth's idea of the eternal Trinity that corresponds to the being of God in revelation. The correspondence, and with it, the emphasis on the actuality of God's antecedent being as triune, highlights both the basis for God's revelatory dealings, and also the distinction of God from revelation history, or who God is 'apart from what He means for us,' as Barth puts it. God is 'ours in advance,' already, and continuing to be, the sovereign subject in the event of revelation. In short, according to Barth, God acts in salvation history out of the eternal Trinity of God's being. This basic framework underlies Barth's understanding of the relation between Trinity and the revelatory history of God in *CD I/1*, and, as I will show in what follows, shapes the way in which he employs his trinitarian theology in view of the relation between God and salvation history in subsequent volumes of the *CD*. In the next section I will examine this relation in Barth's doctrine of the being of God and the divine constancy from *CD II/1*.

Before proceeding, however, it is worth noting a critical question that arises with Barth's formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, and one that is closely connected to the main critique of Barth by Pannenberg.\footnote{52. See chapter 3, 1.1-2.} Does the emphasis that Barth places on the lordship and subjectivity of God as triune in revelation detract from the significance of God in revelation history? From, for instance, the way in which God exists alongside creatures, and in
view of the goals that God creates for creatures in God's reconciling history? Antecedence is a watchword of Barth's treatment of the Trinity in *CD I/1*. It is about origins, beginnings and mediation. Eschatology is not. I will take up this point in detail and address its implications in a more thorough way with Pannenberg's trinitarian theology in the following chapter. At this point I will simply state that there is a critical element to Barth's formal doctrine of the Trinity that has largely gone missing, namely, the meaning of the future that the triune God has and enables for others.

1.3: Trinity, Ontology and the Divine Constancy: *Church Dogmatics II/1* (§28, §31.2)

In *CD II.1* Barth takes up his specific engagement with the doctrine of the being and attributes of God. As I will show, Barth's various treatments build on the trinitarian material of *CD I/1*. In what follows I will consider Barth's doctrine of the divine constancy. Barth's indebtedness to the essay of Dorner outlined in the introduction to this work is seen in his treatment of this classical doctrine, typically discussed under the notion of divine immutability. Moreover, this doctrine is of particular importance for the concerns here as one of the locales where Barth raises the question of God as the subject of a real and living history with creatures. Before taking up Barth on the divine constancy, I will briefly lay out the basic features in the leading motif of Barth's doctrine of the divine attributes: God as the one who loves in free-

dom. Above all, it is this notion that Barth incorporates into and uses to shape his conception of the divine attributes. And, notably, it too is shaped along trinitarian lines.

1.3a: The Freedom of the Divine Love (Church Dogmatics II/1, §28)

§28 is divided into three sub-sections, each of which concerns one aspect of Barth's maxim for the doctrine of God's being as the one who loves in freedom: first, God who *is* or God's being-in-act; second, God who *loves*; and third, God as *free*.

(1) God's being-in-act: Barth's doctrine of the divine being begins with an explication of the short statement that *God is*. To begin this way is to set forth the task of defining the subject of inquiry, God and the attributes of the divine being. In a claim that recalls the subjectivity of God in revelation from *CD* I/1, Barth describes God as a being-in-act (**Gottes Sein in der Tat**) because, quite simply, "God is who he is in His works." Furthermore, because in the self-revealing works of God, God is never at the mere disposal of others, Barth can also describe the act of God's being as a deed, an event or a happening that takes place among others. To the pure being-in-act (**actus purus**) that God is, notes Barth, "there must be added at

54. The division of God's love and freedom as the guiding perfections for an understanding of God's being partially maps onto the traditional distinction in Lutheran and Reformed theology of God's relative and absolute (Lutheran) or communicable and incommunicable (Reformed) attributes. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1: *The Doctrine of God*, eds. Geoffrey William and T.F. Torrance, trans. T.H.L. Parker, et al. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), §29.

55. Barth, *CD* II/1, 257.

56. Barth, *CD* II/1, 257, 260; *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* II/1 (Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1980), 288. Parenthetical edit mine.

57. Barth, *CD* II/1, 267.
least 'et singularis.' As a one-of-a-kind event, and specifically a personal one, God is the "freedom of a knowing and willing I."59

Two other points stand out in Barth's notion of God's being-in-act. First, the unique event of God's being and the divine subjectivity in the form of an 'I' leads to Barth's culminating claim, a spin off of God as self-mover, that God's being-in-act "means that it is (God's) own conscious, willed and executed decision."60 For Barth, however, the decision that God is stands from eternity as once for all, yet made anew to the world in every moment.61 As I will show in the second division of this chapter, Barth applies the same structure to the electing decision of God in CD II/2. And second, God is not just any act. Rather, "being in its own, conscious, willed and executed decision, and therefore personal being, is the being of God in the nature of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."62 This means that God's trinitarian constitution is the divine decision and that God's self-determination is based on the constitution of God as triune. There is no wedge between God's triunity and the being-in-act, the very decision, that God is.

(2) God who loves: The sub-section on God who loves (Gottes Sein als der Liebende) stands at the heart of Barth's divine ontology.63 The focus here is on the fellowship of love that specifies God's being-in-act.64 The triune name of God emerges from God's revelatory

58. Barth, CD II/1, 264.
59. Barth, CD II/1, 267.
60. Barth, CD II/1, 271. Parenthetical edit mine.
61. Barth, CD II/1, 271-72.
62. Barth, CD II/1, 271; KD II/1, 304-05. Translation slightly altered.
63. Barth, KD II/1, 306.
64. Barth, CD II/1, 272.
activity in creation, reconciliation and the establishment of a future communion with God. In each, God "seeks and creates fellowship with us." The basis for this fellowship, however, lies in the self-fellowship of God's triune being. Barth regularly employs the metaphor of an "overflowing" of the divine essence to the world. "God is sufficient in Himself" and would be the God who loves "without us and without the world." The sentiment behind the independence of God here intends to denote the voluntary or free nature of God's activity. But Barth can also articulate the God-world relation in other, less voluntaristic ways. "Although (the divine love) could satisfy itself, it has no satisfaction in this self-satisfaction." It "leans towards this unity with our life." At any rate, the underlying point is that God's eternal triune fellowship is the freedom of God's love, serving as a prototype for the gracious activity of God ad extra.

(3) The freedom of God: The divine freedom (Gottes Sein in der Freiheit) pertains to the "depth in which (God) lives and loves and has His being." As such, the freedom of God is primarily a positive notion and less so God's sheer freedom from external conditions. God's freedom is the sheer plentitude of God's being or the divine aseity. God "exist(s) in Himself." Barth distinguishes between a primary and secondary sense of God's freedom or what

65. Barth, CD II/1, 273-74.
66. Barth, CD II/1, 273, 281.
67. Barth, CD II/1, 280.
68. Barth, CD II/1, 273, 280. Parenthetical edit mine.
69. Barth, KD II/1, 334.
70. Barth, CD II/1, 297-98, 301.
71. Barth, CD II/1, 302. Parenthetical edit mine.
he also describes as the absoluteness of God.\textsuperscript{72} In the primary sense of the divine freedom, God "is conditioned by no higher necessity than that of which is His own choosing and deciding, willing and doing."\textsuperscript{73} In God's own being, apart from creatures, God "can live and love in absolute plenitude and power, as we see Him live and love in His revelation."\textsuperscript{74} The secondary sense of God's freedom is included in the primary sense. This is God's freedom for that which is distinct from God. God is free from external conditions, but also free from this sense of freedom as well.\textsuperscript{75} On Barth's view, as Katherine Sonderegger writes, God "is free to be gracious."\textsuperscript{76} The sheer absoluteness of God includes the divine capacity to be in relation with the world that "accrues to (God's) glory" and "authenticates His reality" or the divine freedom anew. Furthermore, in the case of God's second mode of being, alterity is already proper to the being of God itself. This self-alterity of the divine being means that God can enter into a reality distinct from Godself, a reality of limitations and distinctions, without ceasing to be who God is. In this way the divine Son is the "principle" of God's secondary absoluteness or the "basis of all divine immanence."\textsuperscript{77}

Barth's divine ontology, in short, describes the eventfulness of God's being; God who is God's own decision. The divine loving and the divine freedom specify the "two comple-

\textsuperscript{72} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 309-310.

\textsuperscript{73} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 301.

\textsuperscript{74} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 301.

\textsuperscript{75} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 302.

\textsuperscript{76} Katherine Sonderegger, \textit{Systematic Theology: Volume 1, the Doctrine of God} (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 124.

\textsuperscript{77} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 317. Colin E. Gunton puts it a slightly different way: "For Barth God's \textit{trinitarian} transcendence (i.e., primary absoluteness) provides the ontological basis for the acts in which he becomes . . . immanent." \textit{Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth}, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2001), 197.
mentary sides to the divine act.” The act of God is the fellowship of the divine persons in God's triune being and the divine freedom marks the sheer plentitude of God's self-realization. In the unity of God's being-in-act, the freedom of God ensures that the divine love is necessitated by nothing external to itself and is therefore gracious; the love of God ensures that the divine freedom is not arbitrary but oriented towards another. God loves in freedom. This is the refrain of Barth's doctrine of the divine being, and which Barth incorporates to shape his treatment of the divine attributes.

1.3b: The Divine Constancy (*Church Dogmatics* II/1, §31.2)

Barth's treatment of the divine constancy is governed by his notion of the being of God who loves in freedom. The activity of the divine loving makes for a lively characterization of divine immutability. As Barth writes in a later volume of the *CD*, the nature of the divine loving is "immovable (unbeweglich)" insofar as "it is an overflowing of love which is in God Himself." A similar pattern underlies Barth's treatment of the divine constancy. Here the influence of Dorner on Barth can be seen. Barth notes his indebtedness to Dorner's essay on immutability. Like Dorner before him, Barth's concern is the question of reconciling the unchangeability of God in bringing the covenantal relation to fulfillment, and the liveliness of God in revelation history that this entails. Barth does not make explicit how or at what points he draws from Dorner, but it is clear that Dorner's conception of immutability as the "living

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80. Barth, *CD* II/1, 493.
immutability" has a significant impact on Barth's construal of the divine constancy.81 Most importantly, the appeal of this particular section for the purposes of this study lies in Barth's use of the doctrine of the Trinity to fill out the construal of the divine constancy and the emphasis which Barth places on the reality of God's creative activity and salvific history with creatures. Constant in the divine freedom, Barth writes, God is "unchangeably alive (un-veränderlichen Lebendigkeit)."82

In what follows I will attend to the place of Barth's trinitarian theology in his construal of the divine constancy. In his study of Barth on the divine perfections, Robert B. Price delineates three sections in Barth's exposition of the divine constancy. The first is Barth's general definition of the divine constancy in relation to scripture and the classical conception of immutability; the second is the construal of the divine constancy in a notion of salvation history; and third is the concept of the divine constancy as affirmed in the history of Jesus Christ and the sub-topic of divine election.83 I will incorporate Price's divisions in the following way: first, I will analyze how Barth's idea of God as triune underlies his general concept of immutability; second, I will look at the function of Barth's trinitarian theology in his construal of God's involvement in salvation history, or creation, reconciliation and revelation,84 and


82. Barth, CD II/1, 511; KD II/1, 574.


84. Barth alternates between revelation and redemption in describing the third and final phase in salvation history in the treatment of the divine constancy.
specifically in regards to the question of God's living history; and third, I will assess the place of the Son's incarnation in Barth's understanding of the divine being.

(1) **Immutability**: Barth begins the introductory section with a basic affirmation of God's immutable being. He writes:

> there neither is nor can be, nor is to expected or even thought possible in (God), the One omnipresent being, any deviation, diminution or addition, nor any degeneration or rejuvenation, any alteration or non-identity or discontinuity. The one, omnipresent God remains the One He is. This is His constancy (*Beständigkeit*). 85

God "cannot cease to be Himself." 86 Furthermore, from the start of this section, the role of the divine freedom and love is clear. The divine freedom and love are God's because "they are the freedom and the love of the One who is constant in Himself." 87 The very freedom of God lies in that nothing else is to expected of God but that God will demonstrate Godself again and anew, or that God, in the divine freedom, is constant. Slightly different, in the divine love and freedom, God is the "living God." 88 Barth writes, "immutability includes rather than excludes life. In a word it is life." 89 It is notable that Barth continues to use the term 'immutability' for the description of God's living and constant being. In contrast to John M. Russell, then, when

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85. Barth, *CD* II/1, 491. Parenthetical edit mine. *KD* II/1, 552.
86. Barth, *CD* II/1, 492.
87. Barth, *CD* II/1, 491.
88. Barth, *CD* II/1, 491.
89. Barth, *CD* II/1, 495.
Barth uses the term, or that of God's "immutable essence," it should not be read as a "lapse" into a static notion of immutability that, as I will show, Barth opposes.90

Alongside this basic way of structuring the idea of God's immutability, Barth includes another, more implicit reference to the vitality of the divine constancy in his introductory comments. God's life in the divine constancy takes place "in eternal self-repetition."91 Here, Barth, like Dorner before him, intentionally interweaves a previously articulated theme into his account of the divine constancy that derives from his trinitarian assertions of CD I/1.92 He writes there, as noted before, "the name of Father, Son and Spirit means that God is the one God in threefold repetition . . . grounded in His Godhead."93 As Father, Son and Spirit, God is repeated, thrice over, as the one God. It is the latter point, the *unity* of God's three modes of being, that Barth stresses in the notion of God's self-repetition in CD I/1. Along these lines, Barth writes, the self-repetition of God rules out the idea of "alteration in his Godhead."94 In his treatment of the divine constancy, similarly, the eternality of God's self-repeated being serves to illuminate the continuity of God in the divine vitality, and with it, the living immutability of God by which God relates to others.

Barth follows the allusion to his trinitarian theology with the claim concerning the divine capacity to "go out from the peace, return to the peace, and be accompanied, upheld and


91. Barth, *CD* II/1, 492.


93. Barth, *CD* I/1, 350.

94. Barth, *CD* I/1, 350.
filled by the peace, which He has in Himself as the only really living One. ”\footnote{Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 492.} The constancy of God as triune enables God's living relation with another, or enables God to be in relation with a reality of change and movement insofar as God is vitality and life in Godself. In the following parts of his introductory notion of the divine constancy Barth goes on to reject a notion of God as the pure \textit{immobile} in the Protestant orthodox theologian, Amandus Polanus, and, more telling, to affirm a notion that Barth calls God's "holy mutability." \footnote{Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 496-98.} This notion of a holy mutability on the part of God is outlined in view of the divine ability to change in relation to the changing attitudes of humanity. And while the doctrine of God as triune does not play a key or explicit role in it, the idea of God's holy mutability, and with it, Barth's notion of the living immutability of God, represents his basic concern to specify God's active involvement in created reality. God, in the loving freedom of the divine being, which, as has been shown and as I will note further below, is connected to God's triune being, remains the same in responding to creatures, in a living relation with others. The living immutability that characterizes God's being, on Barth's view, underlies his conception of the vitality of God in the world.

\textit{(2) Salvation History}: In the second division of \S 31.2, Barth takes up a schematic of salvation history. Here Barth's concerns with the relation between God and creation and the revelatory history of God become a specific point of focus. Barth's trinitarian theology underlies this schematic in both explicit and implicit ways.

In his treatment of creation Barth claims that God both posits and upholds a reality other than Godself. The novelty that marks creation has its basis in the newness of the divine

\footnote{Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 496-98.}
vitality. As Barth describes this, God posits a "reality distinct from Himself" as "an expression and confirmation of His constant vitality." For this reason, "when (God) becomes the Creator and Lord of the world he does not become anything that He was not before." Similarly, "it is by (God) that there is the new thing of a reality distinct from Himself . . . by Him that all new things in this reality exist . . . in the fact that He is the One who is eternally new." That is to say, the creative work of God does not bestow something entirely new upon God. The order of creation has its origin in the living immutability of God, and, as such, God relates to it out of the supreme and originating vitality that belongs to God alone.

Barth makes no explicit reference to his trinitarian theology in the exposition of creation. But the notion of novelty in the world, specifically as it finds its grounds in God, brings to mind Barth's previous claims from *CD I/1* in regards to the primal and unique form of "origination" in the Godhead. The Father, as noted before, is the "eternal author" of the Son and Spirit, both of whom proceed from him. As Barth writes later in his doctrine of creation, God's creative work "denotes the divine action which has a real analogy, a genuine point of comparison, only in the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father, and therefore only in the inner life of God Himself." And speaking of the Father-Son relation, there is a real "fellow-

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97. Barth, *CD II/1*, 499.

98. Barth, *CD II/1*, 499-500. Parenthetical edit mine. The way in which Barth's doctrine of the Trinity underlies his conception of the divine love (and freedom) is important here. Conceptually, the basis for God's self- alterity must be the trinitarian unity-in-distinction of God.


100. Barth, *CD I/1*, 395.


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ship in separateness and separateness in fellowship” in God, one that the Spirit subtends.\textsuperscript{102} Albeit unique in its eternality, there is novelty and movement in the unity of the divine life from one mode of being to another. Out of this living fellowship of God there corresponds God's creative works in the world.

The divine intention for creation, however, becomes manifest only in God's work of reconciliation and revelation. This work sheds a light backwards on creation and forwards to its end in redemption. As a new work of God, distinct from creation, Barth turns his attention to God as the "real subject of this real history" of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{103} In this history, he writes, God "leads the world to a future redemption."\textsuperscript{104} Barth frames this history in terms of a conflict between the susceptibility of humanity towards self-destruction, on the one hand, and the harmony of the divine being, on the other hand. Barth does not provide a short account of atonement here, however. Rather, like his treatment of God's creative work, he specifies an ontological condition in God which underlies and makes effective the work of reconciliation and points to the living reality of God in the world.

The basic condition in God that grounds God's reconciling work belongs to God's triune being. The constancy of God, he states, consists of the "perfect, original and ultimate peace between the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit."\textsuperscript{105} In contrast, the defection of the creature against the creator means that it faces "the possibility of self-annulment."\textsuperscript{106} In other words: God cannot not be; the creature can not be. God, in the harmony of the inner-relations

\textsuperscript{102} Barth, \textit{CD} I/1, 480.
\textsuperscript{103} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 502.
\textsuperscript{104} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 502.
\textsuperscript{105} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 503.
\textsuperscript{106} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 503.
of the divine modes of being is at peace, at one with Godself in an eternal fellowship of love; the creature faces the possibility of its destitution. In view of this contrast Barth describes reconciliation in terms of an encounter between God and the creature. How God relates to the conflicted creature corresponds to the peace of God's own being. Inasmuch as the creature "rejects the preserving grace of God," God "opposes the opposition of the creature to Himself." God "confronts," "has mercy," and "befriends" the fallen creature.\footnote{Barth, CD II/1, 504-506, 515.} God's original, triune peace is the possibility of a reversal in the fortunes of the creature. Barth writes, "the fact that He is (the God of the fallen creature) is simply a confirmation that He is unalterably alive with a life to which sin cannot oppose anything new."\footnote{Barth, CD II/1, 505. Parenthetical edit mine.} Constant in the peace of God's triune being, God acts accordingly as the "Lord of the world, and therefore of the sinful world," for God can be no other way.\footnote{Barth, CD II/1, 504.}

As noted above, a primary concern of Barth here is the understanding of God as the subject of a real and living history in reconciliation. It is worth noting here that Barth's affirmation of a real and living history of God with the world runs up against a traditional notion of God's relation to creation, exemplified in Thomas Aquinas, as conceptual, and only creation's relation to God as real.\footnote{Barth also links reconciliation and redemption quite closely together, although they are, on Barth's view, not the same: "reconciliation is real reconciliation because it makes us those who wait and look and move towards the redemption which has already taken place for us and is ready for us." CD II/1, 510; see also, CD I/1, 409; George Hunsinger, "Mysterium Trinitatis: Karl Barth's Conception of Eternity," in Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 208.} That said, Barth's account does not entail a fundamental

\footnote{Barth, CD II/1, 510. One will note the exclusion of a treatment of redemption here. This largely has to do with the minimal attention Barth gives to the final stage of salvation history and lack of references or allusions to his trinitarian theology therein. See CD II/1, 509-10. Barth also links reconciliation and redemption quite closely together, although they are, on Barth's view, not the same: "reconciliation is real reconciliation because it makes us those who wait and look and move towards the redemption which has already taken place for us and is ready for us." CD II/1, 510; see also, CD I/1, 409; George Hunsinger, "Mysterium Trinitatis: Karl Barth's Conception of Eternity," in Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 208.}
change in the nature of God by means of interacting with the creature.\textsuperscript{111} God, in relating to another, remains the being-in-act that God is; but all importantly, the "essence of God . . . is . . . His act as Father, Son and Holy Spirit."\textsuperscript{112} Barth's trinitarian starting point provides him the means to conceive of a prior relationality in the harmony of the divine life — the Spirit-filled peace between the Father and Son — by which God actively relates to creaturely reality out of the sheer abundance of God's being. In the plurality of times and contexts that make up the salvific history of God, the unchanging peace of God overflows anew to the creature that God loves and wills to restore. For this reason the self-identity of God goes unchanged in the living history of God in the work of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{113}

(3) Jesus Christ: In the third and final division of Barth's engagement with the divine constancy in §31.2, Barth turns to the particular history of Jesus Christ. The significance of this history, notes Barth, is that in it one lives "in obedience to God" in the uniqueness of the "full possession of all the divine perfections."\textsuperscript{114} Although hidden in its revelation, his life is identical to the presence of God. As such, the incarnation, in which God "becomes one with the creature," is the distinct act of God that forms the presupposition for all of the work of God \textit{ad extra}. However, Barth does not develop his understanding of the divine constancy in any substantially new way in view of the specific history of Jesus Christ. What happens with Christ, rather, serves to confirm what has already been said. Barth writes:

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111. Elsewhere Barth qualifies the potency of God's eternity as simultaneous with divine actuality. See \textit{CD II/1}, 612.

112. Barth, \textit{CD II/1}, 273.

113. Select parts of my essay "Unchangeably Alive: Karl Barth's Trinitarian Doctrine of the Divine Constancy" (in \textit{Canadian Theological Review} 4.2 [2015]: 1-10) have been adapted into sub-sections 2 and 3 above with permission from the publisher.

114. Barth, \textit{CD II/1}, 514.
\end{flushright}
Without abrogation of the divine unity, there is revealed in (the incarnation) the distinction of the Father and the Son, and also their fellowship in the Holy Spirit. He does it as the Creator because the incarnation is as such the confirmation of the distinctive reality of creation; for in the fact that God becomes one with creation there is revealed that God and creation as such are two distinct realities, and that the creature has its own reality over against God. He does it finally as Reconciler and Redeemer, because the incarnation as such confirms and explains the fact that God has befriended and continually befriends fallen creation, and will lead it on to a full redemption.¹¹⁵

Barth equates the incarnation event with the same basis as God's other works ad extra: as the particular act of God it "is the decisive and final demonstration of what His being is — His free love."¹¹⁶ Or, likewise, "what is revealed under the name of Jesus Christ is the confirmation and manifestation of the immutable vitality of God."¹¹⁷ God, therefore, does not change in becoming a creature, but is constant in the freedom of the divine loving.

Similarly, Barth's exegesis on the theme of Christ's self-emptying in Philippians 2 speaks more to questions of revelation and the capacity of the divine love and freedom for incarnation than it does in adding new insight to the constancy God's being.¹¹⁸ Notably, Barth's final comments on the doctrine of divine election in §31.2 shed some light on the develop-

¹¹⁵. Barth, CD II/1, 515.

¹¹⁶. Barth, CD II/1, 512, 514.

¹¹⁷. Barth, CD II/1, 513.

ment of his thinking. While composing CD II/1 Barth was in the process of reconceiving his understanding of election. Later in the CD he provides a personal account of this period.\(^{119}\) The key statement that Barth will develop in tandem with his doctrine of God is this: "Jesus Christ Himself (is) . . . the one reality of the divine decision."\(^{120}\) Moreover, notes Barth, it is possible to conceive of this decision as the "basis for the doctrine of the opera Det."\(^{121}\) The overwhelming tendency of scripture, he notes, locates the telos of the divine decree in history: "I am God . . . declaring the end from the beginning . . . I will put salvation in Zion for Israel my glory" (Isa. 46. 9-13). The mystery of God's will, writes Barth, is "set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time" (Eph. 1.9-10).\(^{122}\) While little, if anything, new is said in regards to the constancy of God's triune being in the final division of §31.2, early signs of the doctrine of election's importance for Barth's understanding of the relation between the person of Jesus Christ and God's relation to history are evident.

Barth's treatment of the divine constancy, in sum, is primarily shaped in terms of the persistence of God in the divine love and freedom. In this section I have drawn out the trinitarian contours that accompany this construal. Notably, the Trinity does not play the more explicit role it that it does in Dorner's immutability essay. I will come back to Dorner in a more specific way in section 4. But it is clear that Trinity, even as a background concept, affords Barth a notion with which to articulate the vitality of God's being similar to Dorner. This, in

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119. Barth, CD II/2, 188-94. See also Barth's preface to Pierre Maury's La Prédestination (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1957) as well as Matthias Gockel, Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Comparison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 158-64; McCormack, Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology, 455-58; Busch, Karl Barth, 278.

120. Barth, CD II/1, 521.

121. Barth, CD II/1, 522.

122. Emphasis mine. Barth also includes Ps. 2.7-8, Eph. 1.12, and Acts 2.23, 4.27-28. CD II/1, 521.
turn, underlies Barth's description of God's creative work and the real history of God in reconciliation, with the notion of God as triune coming to expression in both explicit and implicit ways. Like CD I/1, what God does ad extra in salvation history has a basis in God's triune nature, or the supreme originality of God (i.e., creation) and the harmony of the Father-Son relation (i.e., reconciliation). In this way, Barth understands God's activity in revelation history to correspond to the triune being of God.

1.4: The Eternal Trinity and Revelation History

The analysis of Barth's trinitarian theology in the selections from CD I/1 and CD II/1 above show that Trinity, on Barth's view, is not, at least in intention, mere abstract reflection. Regarding Barth's treatment of the Trinity, Robert W. Jenson writes, "the Trinity’s first function is identification of the Christian God, which leads to its wider role as the frame within which ancient and new theological puzzles can be resolved."123 The claim alludes to the way in which Barth situates Trinity in his doctrine of revelation. This initial move allows Barth to use the doctrine in a dynamic way. For, on the one hand, the doctrine of the Trinity, at least in intention, can be seen as a summary expression of the eternal being of God derived from the revelatory witness of the Bible or the concept of revelation itself. And yet, on the other hand, as the truth of who God is, the doctrine lends itself to speculative — though, again, not necessarily abstract — application. This approach to the doctrine of the Trinity, embedded in the revelatory activity of God and, in turn, employed in metaphysical reasoning, as I will show, is the same approach taken up by the figures in the following chapters.

The above claims on Barth's trinitarian theology, both in its formal treatment in *CD I* /1 and the material assessed in *CD II* /1, are captured most precisely in Barth's assertion that "as Father, Son and Spirit, God is, so to speak, ours in advance." Barth's claim here is at once basic and yet contains far-reaching implications. The doctrine of the Trinity allows Barth to conceive of the way in which God relates to history *out of* the eternal Trinity of God's being. The one God in three modes of being is a dynamic life inclusive of alterity, love and fellowship in itself. Out of these realities, proper to God's own being, God creates and gives creatures a share in the fellowship of God's being. Moreover, as noted in *CD I* /1, the doctrine of the Trinity makes possible a way to construe the disclosive and hidden nature of God's self-revelation as grounded in the antecedent lordship and objectivity of the Father-Son relation. And more still, as noted in *CD II* /2, it allows one to conceive of the way in which the self-identity of God remains intact in God's history with fallen creatures; namely, as God acts from the unbreakable harmony of God's triune fellowship of love. Because God is triune, God can be the God of history, one who relates with created beings, present to creatures *in* history itself. *God acts in revelation history out of the eternal Trinity of God's being.*

Barth's initial construal of the trinitarian idea of God, however, is not without its conceptual difficulties. In anticipation of a critique that will continue to be assessed in subsequent chapters, the idea of God as 'ours in advance,' or the notion of God who acts in revelation history *from* the eternal Trinity leaves open a certain ambiguity. Does this conception imply a self-contained idea of God? Does it mean a notion of God's being-in-and-of-itself apart from creatures, and out of which God then acts in history? Barth's idea of a corresponding reality of God, and his assertions of who God is 'apart from what He means for us,' cer-
tainly leave open this conceptual possibility. The problem here is that it suggests a kind of antecedence that is also an ulterior reality of God. Jürgen Moltmann makes a similar point in his more direct critique that Barth retains a notion of God as a "closed circle" in relation to the world.125 Jenson offers a more explicit critique on the question of the self-contained being of God. It draws more so from aspects that I will consider in Barth's doctrines of eternity and election, and so I will return to it below. The emphasis on antecedence, the idea of God as 'ours in advance,' serves as the background to the foreground of God's revelatory history. But is the background determined, self-determined, by God as the God who exists to be God for others? Transcendent and eternal, but still the God of revelation history? The problem with the idea of an eternal Trinity that corresponds to God in history is that it leaves open the idea of a higher, parallel reality of God in relation to who God is in history. This ultimately undermines a conception of the genuine reality of God in history itself.

Second, the focus of Barth's trinitarian theology remains on the way in which the divine being of God grounds God's historical activity. As seen in Barth's doctrine of the divine constancy, the idea of God as triune provides a positive, albeit largely implicit, way to conceive of the vitality of God in history. But on the whole, Barth's emphasis on the grounds for God's historical activity in the antecedent being of God does not quite answer how the Trinity of God's being enables God to, in fact, live a history, of how God indwells and moves in historical reality itself. For this reason, in the material addressed up to this point, Barth makes only little of an advance on Dorner's immutability essay. For Dorner, God relates to created reality out of the realized (fully actual) potentiality and distinctions of God's ethical being. And God's historical, self-imparting acts to creatures confirm it. Barth goes beyond Dorner

by applying the triune idea of God more precisely to God's own involvement in history, and not as it is primarily mediated in ethically free independent creatures. This is a step forward. But the idea of the being of God that is manifest and demonstrated anew in history, of God's being as the grounds of God's activity *ad extra*, remains the primary way that Trinity is used for understanding God's relation to history in both Dorner and Barth. Barth takes a step forward, but not a large one. How God, in fact, *lives* a history with others, based in God's being as triune, remains an open question.

And lastly, as even a sympathetic interpreter of Barth like Price notes, Barth "remains disappointingly vague about what particularity Christ's dying reveals about the unchangingly lively divine nature."

Likewise, Barth remains somewhat vague about what this revelation entails for understanding the way in which God acts in the course of salvation history out of the triune nature of God's being. The lack of an in-depth construal of God's triune life in view of Christ's concrete history, of his relations to the Father and the Spirit, leaves Barth's formulations of the eternal Trinity in terms of a divine lordship, alterity and fellowship of God's antecedent being somewhat conventional. These latter ideas are by no means untrue, or incapable of being put to constructive use, as Barth's idea of the divine constancy shows. Rather, they merely lack a certain level of specificity that could, as I will pursue in greater detail in following sections and chapters 3 and 4, prove helpful in filling out the basic claim that God acts in history out of the eternal Trinity of God's being.

God acts out of the eternal Trinity of God's being. The point can be readily affirmed in Barth's trinitarian theology, and with some gainful insights for the notion of the vitality of God in history, as is particularly the case in Barth's doctrine of the divine constancy. But apart

from a more exact construal of God's being in view of the salvific events of Christ's life, the idea of God as 'ours in advance' remains stuck at conceiving of God's self-grounded relation to history through generalizations: alterity, objectivity and a fellowship of love. Is there more to be said? Much of the remainder of this study can be understood as a response to this question.

This brings us to a transitional point in this chapter. As noted before, at the end of his treatment of the divine constancy Barth asserts that Jesus Christ is the content of the divine decree. Furthermore, the statement can be taken as a 'basis for the doctrine of the opera Dei.' Barth does not develop the point there, but does in the doctrine of election of CD II/2, and, notably, in so doing, conceives of the significance of Jesus Christ's concrete history for the eternality of God's being with a depth and a level of particularity that surpasses his notion of God up to this point. The exploration of Barth into this theme in CD II/2, and its implications for a conception of God's relation to history in protological perspective, will be the focus of the second division of this chapter.

**Excursus: The Eternity of God (Church Dogmatics II/1, §31.3)**

Before taking up the notion of election in CD II/2, I will first proceed with a short excursus into Barth's trinitarian doctrine of divine eternity from §31.3 of CD II/1. Barth's doctrine of eternity plays an important role in both Pannenberg and Jenson's configurations of the relation between God as triune and the process of time and history. And, significantly, in taking up the basic structure of Barth's doctrine of divine eternity, both apply the doctrine in notably different ways. In the following chapters I will consider Pannenberg and Jenson's respective uses of Barth's doctrine of eternity and construe the argument of this work alongside their distinct ways of employing this classical doctrine. Setting out the fundamental parameters of
Barth's doctrine will provide the essential background for Pannenberg and Jenson's engagements with the attribute of divine eternity.

Eternity is "pure duration (reine Dauer)."\textsuperscript{127} With these words Barth highlights the basic contrast between eternity and time. The ever-fleeting present of creaturely existence in time is absent in the duration of God's eternity. God endures. Yet the relation between eternity and time in Barth's construal is largely positive. Eternity, to be sure, is not the sheer opposite of time. Time, in a distinct way, belongs to the being of God itself. Barth's construal can be seen to build on Boethius' classic notion of eternity as "the total, simultaneous and complete possession of unlimited life."\textsuperscript{128} Barth writes, the duration of God includes "beginning, succession and end" as well as "past" and "future" and "a before and an after."\textsuperscript{129} Yet each expression of the divine temporality is distinct to God in that God conditions it and not vice versa. The just mentioned distinctions belong to God's eternity. What makes them proper to the eternity of God, however, is that they exist in God without coming into conflict or opposition.\textsuperscript{130}

In God "all these things are simul."\textsuperscript{131} The eternity of God "has and is simultaneity (Gleichzeitigkeit)."\textsuperscript{132}

Barth's trinitarian theology grounds his positive understanding of divine eternity. The relations between Father, Son and Spirit entail the realities of an origin and two distinct pro-

\textsuperscript{127} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 608; \textit{KD} II/1, 685.

\textsuperscript{128} Boethius, \textit{Consolation of Philosophy}, V, 6, cited in Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 610. Barth is more critical, however, of Boethius' way of contrasting the now or duration of eternity (\textit{nunc stans}) with the movement of eternity (\textit{nunc fluere}). 611.

\textsuperscript{129} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 610, 611, 615.

\textsuperscript{130} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 615.

\textsuperscript{131} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 612.

\textsuperscript{132} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 608; \textit{KD} II/1, 686.
ceedings in the eternality of God's being. But Barth does not divide or even appropriate the distinct dimensions of temporality to particular modes of being in God. Each mode of being in God, Father, Son and Spirit, he writes, is "undecidedly beginning, succession and end, all at once in His own essence." The 'all' here is indicative of the pure duration of God's being, "free from all the fleetingness and the separations of what we call time, the nunc aeternitatis which cannot come into being or pass away . . . (and) established and confirmed in its unity by its trinity." God, as triune, is a dynamic life, and the unity of that life underlies the totality or the simultaneous nature of God's eternity.

On the other hand, the relations in God entail that there is "order and succession" in God, a unity in the movement patterned after God's three modes of being. Beyond any illustration or analogy from created time, to "think of eternity" is "to think of God Himself . . . the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Invoking the notion of the triune God's self-repeated being, Barth writes, "God is once and again and a third time." God has time. But, uniquely, it is "the absolutely real time, the form of the divine being in its triunity." Out of this original, basic time in God, God makes time for others.

133. Barth, CD II/1, 615.
134. Barth, CD II/1, 615.
135. Barth, CD II/1 615. Parenthetical edit mine.
136. Barth, CD II/1, 615.
137. Barth, CD II/1, 639.
138. Barth, CD II/1, 615.
139. Barth, CD II/1, 615.
140. Barth, CD II/1, 612.
Barth specifies God's time for others into the three forms of eternity, each of which revolves around the purposes and revelation of God in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ "eternity became time." God, as such, "takes time to Himself" and makes it "the form of His eternity." Along these lines Barth delineates the pre-, supra- and post-temporality of God's eternity. In *pre-temporal* eternity creation receives its basic determinations in Jesus Christ and in the readiness of the Son to do the Father's will. In time itself, God endures. This is God's *supra-temporality*. God gives time past, time future and the present transition of one to the other their definitive meaning in Christ's salvation, in irreversible movement from sin to righteousness and death to life. Lastly, God is the goal of time, or *post-temporal*. The telos of time is the kingdom of God, the revelation of God who will exist after all things become past. God, as Barth writes elsewhere, is "supremely temporal," bracketing time around the divine purposes that God wills, accomplishes and brings to consummation in Christ.

Barth concludes the treatment of eternity with the claim that the modes of God's eternity as before, above and the goal of time are each contained within the others, a mutual indwelling patterned after the perichoretic relations of God's being. In eternity, the beginning, middle and end in God have a real order, "a direction which is irreversible." And yet,

141. Barth, *CD* II/1, 616.
142. Barth, *CD* II/1, 621-23.
143. Barth, *CD* II/1, 623-29.
144. Barth, *CD* II/1, 629-38.
146. Barth, *CD* II/1, 640.
147. Barth, *CD* II/1, 639.
each — pre-, supra- and post-temporality — shares in the others, and "no one can be preferred to the detriment of another or neglected to the other's advantage."\textsuperscript{148}

Barth's doctrine of eternity, in sum, has to do with the unique and dynamic temporality of God. Based in the triunity of God's being, a before and after, past and future, distinctly apply to God's eternity; and \textit{distinctly} because, for God, they are simultaneous. Eternity, on the one hand, is an ordered reality, inclusive of movement and succession, and, on the other hand, is itself pure duration. It is Barth's intention to maintain the dialectical tension that exists between these two poles. But this also raises a question. The dialectic demonstrates at least some compatibility with the eternity of God and creaturely time. But does a notion of time's holistic presence to God conflict with the successive nature of time, or, differently, from the unfolding process of revelation history? Does the pure duration of God here imply an idea of time so comprehended as to result in a \textit{static} idea of eternity? Or, if not eternity, of temporal reality and history? To some degree Barth's idea of eternity's three forms — the pre-, supra- and post-temporality of God — demonstrates how God's eternity exists in relation to time, or at least how the eternality of God orders temporal reality. However, Barth's general assertion concerning the mutual indwelling (i.e., perichoretic union) of these three forms on the part of the eternality of God reintroduces the questions above. Moreover, much depends here on how both the distinct dimensions of time as well as the triunity of God's being is furthered distinguished in relation to the simultaneous nature of God's eternity. In the chapters on Pannenberg and Jenson that follow two distinct approaches to this point are set forth that I will incorporate, critically and constructively, into the argument of this work.

\textsuperscript{148} Barth, \textit{CD II} 1, 639-40.
2: Trinity, Election and History (Church Dogmatics II/2, §33)

In part 2 of this chapter I turn to Barth's doctrine of divine election. Election, Barth writes, is "the sum of the gospel." For it involves a divine decision that, at its most specific point, illuminates the general purposes of God's activity ad extra. It provides, as Barth said in CD II/1, a basis for the works of God in revelation. Particularly, it is God's decision to elect "the man of Nazareth, that he should be essentially one with Himself in His Son." This decision extends to God's "innermost being, willing and nature." Thus Barth situates his doctrine of election within his doctrine of God.

The significance of Barth's doctrine of election for the purposes of this study lies in that it exhibits a christological shape that distinguishes it from the previous treatments of his trinitarian doctrine of God. Barth makes use of a notion of the eternal obedience of the divine Son that applies to the electing will of God and its actualization in Jesus Christ's concrete history. The constructive claim of this chapter hinges on this point. I will make the case that Barth's idea of the obedience of the Son provides a notion by which to conceive of the vitality of God in the relation between pre-temporal eternity and history.

2.1: The Election of Jesus Christ (Church Dogmatics II/2, §33)

149. Barth, CD II/2, 10. See also Barth's exegesis of Ephesians 1 and related New Testament passages. 60.
150. Barth, CD II/2, 8.
151. Barth, CD II/2, 11.
152. Barth, CD II/2, 5-6.
The dominant theme in §33, 'The Election of Jesus Christ,' is the way in which the divine electing of God relates to the person and history of Jesus Christ. What is significant about Barth's conception of divine election is that he pursues the meaning of this doctrine in view of the eternal identification of the divine Word (or the divine Son) with the individual, Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, election has implications for the incarnate existence of God as well as God's being in eternity. Barth takes the parallels between the eternal Logos and its incarnate existence in Jesus from the Johannine prologue as crucial for this identification.153 Also significant are claims like Colossians 1.17 in which the Son, in the explicit context of his incarnate existence, is described as the one who is "before all things." Or, likewise, in Hebrews 1.2-3 where Christ, the "heir of all things," is also the one by whom God creates and "sustains all things by his powerful word."154 By the eternal, self-same identity of the divine Word with Jesus of Nazareth, Barth means more than that the Son, with the Father and the Spirit, wills to become incarnate without further consequence to the immanence of the divine being. Rather, the very presence of the divine Word, identified with the man Jesus, indicates a "subjective self-determination" on the part of God.155 Certainly, one that occurs by means of and within the wealth of the divine freedom and love, but nonetheless one that defines the very contours of God's eternal being.

Barth's description of the relation between divine eternity and the being of God requires specific attention. He takes liberties throughout §33 in using temporal expressions to describe the event of election, even while acknowledging that it occurs in the sphere of God's

153. Barth, CD II/2, 95-99.
154. Barth, CD II/2, 99.
155. Barth, CD II/2, 100.
eternity, or in the beginning of God's ways *ad extra*, the beginning of time itself. On Barth's view, God, as noted before, is being-in-act. God's act and being are not two divisible things, but, rather, constitute the one reality that God is. Election, as such, bears in the most intimate of ways on the nature of God's being. Importantly, Barth elevates the theological significance of God's electing to be incarnate and, with it, the identification of the divine Word with Jesus to the plane of the eternal existence of God as triune. Among Barth's interpreters, how best to understand the relation between election and the triunity of God has incited some significantly different renderings.

George Hunsinger distinguishes between two prominent ways of interpreting Barth on the ordering of election and the triunity of God's being. Of course, as Hunsinger is aware, the categories are generalizations with a fair amount of differentiation in each. On the one hand are those who hold out that for Barth the pre-temporal event of the election of Jesus Christ presupposes the being of God as Father, Son and Spirit, the divine *Logos* in-and-of-itself and distinct from its relation to the man Jesus — the "traditionalists." On the other hand are those who take God's triunity to presuppose the pretemporal election of Jesus Christ, making election, in one way or another, a self-constituting event — the "revisionists."

156. Barth, *CD* II/2, 117.

157. Several of the most critical contributions to the debate on the relation between Trinity and election in Barth can be found in *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (ed. Michael T. Dempsey [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011]).

Several reasons animate the differences behind such readings. The CD is an unfinished, monumental theological endeavor. The sheer length of it raises the question of Barth's theological development. And there is no doubt that Barth's experiences leading up to the composition of CD II/2, which he himself reflects on,\textsuperscript{159} as well as the importance of election throughout the various loci of subsequent volumes of the CD, makes it something of a watershed moment in Barth's theology.\textsuperscript{160} Moreover, Barth makes a wealth of claims on election and the being of God that make the synthesizing aspect of interpretation its own challenge. On the one hand, he writes that the "primal decision (Urentsheidung)\textsuperscript{161} of God means "we cannot and should not say the word 'God' without at once thinking of it."\textsuperscript{162} Likewise, "God Himself does not will to be God, and is not God, except as the One who elects. There is no height or depth in which God can be God in any other way."\textsuperscript{163} In "no depth of the Godhead shall we encounter any other but Him," Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{164} And yet, on the other hand: "that Jesus Christ is the Son of God does not rest on the election."\textsuperscript{165} "The subject of this decision is the triune God — the Son of God no less than the Father and the Holy Spirit."\textsuperscript{166} The most consistent of interpretations, it seems to me, takes there to be a logical priority of Trinity over

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\textsuperscript{159} See above, I.1.3b.

\textsuperscript{160} Barth, CD II/2, 188-194.

\textsuperscript{161} Barth, CD II/2, 103; Die kirchliche Dogmatik II/2 (Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1980), 110.

\textsuperscript{162} Barth, CD II/2, 8.

\textsuperscript{163} Barth, CD II/2, 77.

\textsuperscript{164} Barth, CD II/2, 115.

\textsuperscript{165} Barth, CD II/2, 107.

\textsuperscript{166} Barth, CD II/2, 110.
election in Barth's theology. More significant, though, is Barth's understanding of election as a decision that gives shape to the eternal life and the triune nature of God in a fundamental way. In CD IV/1, for instance, Barth writes that it is not only "pointless," but even "impermissible" to reflect on the inner being of God, or an abstract idea of the Logos asarkos, apart from the divine decision. Whether Barth holds to this principle with resolute consistency is a different question. Nevertheless, Paul Daffyd Jones is right, I think, when he ascribes "equivalent dogmatic importance" for Barth in regards to both the being of God as Father, Son and Spirit and the decision to become incarnate in Jesus. What is ultimately significant about this point for the argument that I will make in relation to Barth's doctrine of election in what follows is that this move allows Barth to posit an act of obedience in God, or the Son's living conformity to the divine will, and that extends from the pre-temporal eternity of God to Jesus Christ's concrete history.

The decisive exegetical point in Barth's doctrine of election in §33, as noted above, is the identification of the incarnate individual Jesus with the divine Word at the beginning of all God's ways and works ad extra. Barth sifts out this identification by means of detailing divine election in the two-fold division of, first, Jesus Christ as the electing God, and second, Jesus Christ as the elected human.


168. Barth, CD IV/1, 52.

First, Barth begins with the explication of Jesus Christ as the electing God based upon the preceding claim that he, the individual Jesus, was with God before the coming into being of everything distinct from God. Election, of course, is a divine decision. And as a self-determining decision, or a decision in regards to the being-in-act that God is, its ramifications reach unto the entirety of God's being. God is this decision. "In Himself God is rest, but this fact does not exclude but includes the fact that His being is decision."170 And insofar as this decision is identical to Jesus, his history, obedience and faithfulness to the Father, so is this individual, as Barth puts it, not only the object of election, but, also, its subject. Again, God is this decision. The circularity of God's eternal being-in-act is essential here.171 Barth writes:

The election of Jesus Christ is the eternal choice and decision of God. And our first assertion tells us that Jesus Christ is the electing God. We must not ask concerning any other but Him. In no depth of the Godhead shall we encounter any other but Him. There is no such thing as Godhead in itself. Godhead is always the Godhead of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. But the Father is the Father of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as a decretum absolutum. There is no such thing as a will of God apart from the will of Jesus Christ.172

The election of God in Jesus Christ, on Barth's view, is a self-constituting decision, basic to the divine being.

170. Barth, CD II/2, 175.

171. Cf. Barth's comments on the unity of eternity. CD II/2, 156.

172. Barth, CD II/2, 115.
Because of the specific locating of Jesus Christ in God's eternity, Barth slips freely between descriptions of the divine electing as executed by Jesus Christ and God's second mode of being in the divine Son. Furthermore, because election is identical to the will of Jesus Christ and his concrete history, Barth renders the divine decision in terms of an eternal obedience on the part of the Son. The activity between the Father and Son in the self-election of God lends itself, according to Barth, to two perspectives regarding one divine act. On the one hand, Jesus Christ "as the Son of God (is) given by the Father" for the purpose of being united with human flesh. 173 On the other hand, the divine Son voluntarily conforms to the will of the Father. To the giving of the Son by the Father there corresponds the self-giving of the Son to the will of God, or the unity of the Son of God and the Son of man, and with it, the divine will to save fallen creatures. 174 In the "harmony of the triune God" Jesus Christ "elected to be man, and as man, to do the will of God" in an act of "free obedience to His Father." The Spirit of God is the "Spirit of obedience itself." 175 The "Son became obedient to the Father," and the result of which, Barth states, is "the determination of (God's) whole being," or the being of God in anticipation of fellowship with humanity. 176 "All God's freedom and love were identical with this decree, with the election of Jesus Christ." 177

Barth's inclusion of a divine obedience in the eternal being of God has not passed without contention. Guy Mansini and others have argued against positing such a notion in God. Mansini draws on Gregory of Nyssa's idea from *Ad Ablabium* on the unity of operation

175. Barth, *CD* II/2, 105-06.
176. Barth, *CD* II/2, 162.
177. Barth, *CD* II/2, 162.
that characterizes the works of God. That idea of obedience that Barth suggests, according to Mansini, implies a distinct operation of the Son in relation to the Father's command. The result of which is two powers, two wills and even "two natures or essences, and two Gods."  

In response to this charge, however, it should be noted that in *Ad Ablabium* Gregory himself construes the operation of God within the ordering of the trinitarian relations: a divine operation begins with the Father, proceeds through the Son and is perfected in the Spirit. The divine works are three-fold, co-operative acts. In light of this, the obedience of the Son can be understood as the way in which the divine will begins with the Father's command and concludes in the perfecting activity of the Spirit. Barth does not take up the question, but there is nothing in his construal that precludes a notion of the divine activity along these lines, as a single act of God that occurs between the divine modes of being. Not an act of three individuals, but an act that takes shape in view of the totality of the inner-relations of God's being. That this act is without analogy goes without saying. As Darren O. Sumner notes, the thrice repeated being of God, according to Barth, entails that God acts in three modes of being "in diversity . . . despite the fact that their subjectivity, and therefore their will, is one." As unique being that exists in a unity-in-diversity, "God has it within himself to 'command' and to 'obey' within the structure of that relation." In short, a notion of the Son's obedience need not imply three distinct powers or wills in God, and certainly not three gods.


The second aspect of election pertains to Jesus Christ as the object of the divine decision. Like the first aspect it is a richly packed construal that takes up the relation between the divine will and the Son. In the second aspect Barth gives specific attention to election and the humanity of Christ. I will consider only the relation between election and history here. The election of Jesus Christ, Barth writes,

tells us that 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, His humiliation and exaltation, His obedience and merit.\textsuperscript{181}

Barth takes this point to mean that from eternity the result of election is that the Son suffers the rejection of the fallen creature. His rejection coincides with God's mercy for humanity as elect in Christ (Eph. 1.4).\textsuperscript{182} But as noted here, this also means that Barth understands that God takes history into the eternal life and being of God. More specifically, the life of Christ, his death and resurrection, become the 'object and content' of the divine will. Conversely, the historical object of election defines the divine will, and with it, the being of God. And the will of God itself becomes "realized in time" in what takes place with Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{183} Elsewhere in CD II/2 Barth explains the actuality of election in terms of a "primal history

\textsuperscript{181} Barth, CD II/2, 116.

\textsuperscript{182} Barth, CD II/2, 117.

\textsuperscript{183} Barth, CD II/2, 172.
(Urgeschichte)" in the being of God itself. In the historical actuality of election, creation "attains its goal as this primal history attains its goal."  

Towards the end of §33 Barth picks up again on the themes of election and history. As the living will of God, identical with Jesus Christ, election is a "history, encounter and decision between God and man." Barth makes a clear effort here to underscore the fact that election is not a thing fixed in the pre-temporality of God's eternity, once made and now merely unfolding in this and that way. Election, again, is history. It is first the primal history manifest in the obedience that characterizes the Father-Son relation "before time was." And yet "it cannot remain beyond time." Barth writes, "it is in time as well as before time." Barth can articulate this relation between election and history in more than one way.  

Most commonly, Barth describes election in terms of the temporal actualization of the divine will. In Jesus Christ the divine will is "enacted in time." "It can never belong only to the past." What happens in the event of Jesus Christ is the eternal decree of God "temporally actualized and revealed in that event." From this perspective election is a divine decision, one made in the eternal life of the triune God, and which, in turn, is temporally realized in God's activity in the world. In other words, election is an eternal determination that comes to fulfillment in the salvation history of God. Here, the basic connection consists of the link

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184. Barth, CD II/2, 8; KD II/2, 6.
185. Barth, CD II/2, 175.
186. Barth, CD II/2, 186.
187. Barth, CD II/2, 106.
188. Barth, CD II/2, 184.
189. Barth, CD II/2, 179. See also, 125-26.
between pre-temporal eternity and what happens in God's revelatory history. Election, in this sense, pertains to the primal history in God that is "played out" in the world.  

Somewhat differently, Barth also relates election to the notion of eternity from CD II/1. As the divine decision, election "has and is the life of God." Therefore it is "not left behind by time," but "above time" as it "accompanies" and "outlasts" time — reflecting God's pre-, supra- and post-temporality. In that the being of God is wrapped up in this event, the electing decision is not exhausted or relegated to the pre-temporal past. Yet, at the same time, Barth is keen on noting its pre-temporal basis and actuality. Election, he writes, is the "secret of everything that takes place in this world," based ultimately on "the decision of God which eternally precedes it." And, likewise, election is "the presupposition of all the movement of creaturely life." It "occurs in the very midst of time no less than in the far distant pre-temporal eternity," giving history as a whole its structure and meaning.

In the doctrine of election, in sum, Barth sets forth a christologically shaped notion of God's triune being. Taking into account the concrete history of Jesus Christ into a conception of God's eternal identity, Barth conceives of God's triune being in terms of the obedience of the divine Son. After making the case for the suitability of attributing obedience as proper to God's second mode of being, I laid out the various ways in which this account bears on the relation between the eternity of God and time or the divine decision and its actualization in revelation history. In what follows I consider more closely how Barth's doctrine of election

190. Barth, CD II/2, 7-8; see also, CD II/2, 173.
191. Barth, CD II/2, 183.
192. Barth, CD II/2, 185.
193. Barth, CD II/2, 184-85.
194. Barth, CD II/2, 185. Emphasis mine.
relates to the critique of his theory of correspondence in CD I/1 and CD II/1 of the previous section and his understanding of the triune God's relation to history.

2.2: Trinity, Election and History

The first division of this chapter ended with the critique that in the surveyed sections of Barth's doctrine of God there remains inadequate attention to the meaning of Christ's incarnate history for the understanding of God's triune being, and with it, of the relation between God and revelatory history. This point is taken up, however, in Barth's doctrine of election. By incorporating the incarnate history of Christ into his conception of the divine decision, Barth can speak of an eternal obedience of Jesus the Son to the divine will. What is more, in the doctrine of election Barth continues to conceive of God's relation to history as grounded in the antecedent reality of God's eternal being. With the notion of election, however, Barth specifies this conception in an important way. It remains the case that God acts in revelation history out of the eternal Trinity of God's being. But, all importantly, that activity proceeds from the divine decision, which is one and the same as the obedience of the divine Son to the will of God. The obedience of the Son, synonymous with the divine decision, is the decree of God as made in eternity and for history. In other words, the self-determining decision of God in eternity not only grounds God's activity in time, but, as an act of obedience, it extends to the life that Jesus the Son lives and the salvific history of God encompassed therein.

It is in this way that Barth's christologically attuned notion of election opens up an understanding of the vitality of God in the relation between pre-temporal eternity and history. Before further specifying this, however, an obstacle to the conception of God's living relation to history in Barth's doctrine of election should be addressed. To be sure, election, as an eternal decision of God, has to do with the fullness of the divine vitality in the pre-temporal reali-
ty of God. But Barth can depict this decision in a way that fails to specify how the pre-temporal vitality of God in election coheres with the temporal enactment of the divine decision in important ways. Barth writes, election is a decision that "is in time as well as before time," or as just noted, a decision that "occurs in the very midst of time no less than in the far distant pre-temporal eternity."\(^{195}\) The equivalency of the electing decision and time, or the lack of a distinction, obscures an important point: election is an eternal decision actualized in time. What God wills from eternity has its primary object in a specific, concrete history. This is the whole of election.

Likewise, in Barth's notion of a primal history of God he writes that created reality "attains its goal as this primal history attains its goal."\(^{196}\) Here the problem is elevated. It is one thing if the primal history is the divine decision, an act of God determinative of God's being, \textit{to be} enacted in history. When Barth describes election in terms of two simultaneously occurring phenomena without proper distinction he runs the risk of positing two realities of God, one in pre-temporal eternity and the other, a reflection of this more basic pre-temporal reality in what is known from revelation history, a subordinate history of God. It is this point that Pannenberg seems to have in view when he writes of Barth on the "primal history belonging to a dimension which is 'oblique' to ordinary history . . . if, indeed, it has not remained in an archetypal realm above the plane of history."\(^{197}\)

Jenson makes a similar critique, but comes at it from a different angle. Barth speaks of Christ as \textit{both} the divine decree and as a history in time. Since, Jenson argues, Christ is the

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\begin{enumerate}
\item [195.] Barth, \textit{CD} II/2, 185-86. Emphasis mine.
\item [196.] Barth, \textit{CD} II/2, 8.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
revelation of the eternal history of God, or what has been described here as the primal history of God, Barth's depiction threatens to make the reconciling history of God a reality above the plane of history itself.198 In chapter 4 I will attend further to Jenson's criticism alongside his assessment of Barth's doctrine of eternity. Alan E. Lewis puts the question I am getting at here bluntly: "Has indeed everything significant already happened in eternity within the Trinity, needing now only to be recapitulated and revealed so that we might know what has primordially occurred?" 199

But the answer to Lewis' question must ultimately be no. Not everything has already happened in eternity. I will explain why momentarily. Somewhat differently, the response to Pannenberg and Jenson's criticisms on the possibility of a conception of a reality of God above and beyond history, back in the primal history that Barth speaks of, is ultimately perhaps — but only perhaps! Barth, I think it fair to say, makes an ill-suited decision to describe election in terms of a 'primal history' in God insofar as the notion hints at a kind of pre-temporal rehearsal of what, in fact, takes place in time and space with the individual, Jesus of Nazareth. And, more definitively, the notion of election as that which 'occurs in the very midst of time no less than in the far distant pre-temporal eternity,' certainly leaves itself open to the rendering of a strange kind of duality in the life of God, one within and one outside the realm of temporal history. But, at once, these must be noted as only possible conceptions. Nothing in the idea of a primal history or the construal of election considered here necessitates conceptions in which God lives a two-fold reality, or in which everything has already taken place in eternity. We should not, and I think cannot, read this as what Barth is actually


saying. Interpretations which claim that Barth sets forth a two-fold reality of God, one in primordial history or eternity and another in time, must be said to diverge from the main line of the argumentation of Barth's doctrine; that is, that election is the eternal decision of God, the basic "will of God, actualized in Jesus Christ and his revelatory history — the pre-temporal will of God "enacted in time." Election "takes place in time." 

If Barth's doctrine of election is to be incorporated into a conception of God's living relation to history, as I attempt here, then the distinction between what God wills in pre-temporal eternity, specifically as what God wills, and its actualization in history, specifically as what God enacts, must be noted, and perhaps with more consistency than Barth himself does. With that point in place, however, I now turn to the more constructive use of Barth's construal.

In his understanding of election in terms of the obedience of the divine Son, Barth sets forth a notion of the continuity of God in pre-temporal eternity and the being of God in history. For it is the Son, as the one who conforms to the will of the Father, and in the Spirit of his obedience, that decides on this history. And it is this decision that underlies and comes to fruition in his enacted obedience to the Father in time, in the events of Christ's self-giving life unto death for others. God elects the particular history in which Jesus obeys the Father's will; and Jesus' conformity to the Father's will reaches back to his obedience to the eternal decree of God, which he himself partakes in. The livingness of God in history, therefore, is grounded in the vitality of God's pre-temporal decree, but specifically as the Son's decision to heed the Father's will in the Spirit. The obedience of the Son in the electing decision of God

200. Barth, CD II/2, 106.

201. Barth, CD II/2, 186.
extends into the life of Christ and his actualization, alongside the Father and the Spirit, of the divine decree in history.

Moreover, as the decision of God to make what happens with Jesus definitive of who God is, a decision to be enacted in his history, much of the ambiguity on the self-contained notion of God's being addressed at the end of part 1 of this chapter is overcome. If Moltmann's critique that Barth retains a notion of God as a 'closed circle,' in fact, actually applies, then it would seem to primarily do so only up to Barth's treatment of election in CD II/2. Barth's reticence to reflect on an abstract notion of the Logos asarkos after the fact of election testifies to this turn in his theology. And the point is greatly significant for the reason that a notion of God's being, in-and-of-itself and apart from creatures, risks positing a reality of God parallel to the being of God in history, and therefore undermining the actual presence of God therein. This is not to remove an element of mystery from the revelatory presence of God in history. All things, for example, exist in God, even as God exceeds all things (Acts 17.28; Col 1.16-17). To propose a notion of God's being in-and-of-itself, especially after the basic decision of God in election, is, however, to go beyond the claim that God contains all things even as God surpasses them; and to do so in such a way that ultimately calls into question the real vitality of God in history.

In the idea of divine election Barth sets forth a notion for understanding the link between the vitality of God in pre-temporal eternity and God's history in the person of Jesus Christ. Rooted in a conception of the eternal obedience of the Son, Barth shores up concerns about an isolated idea of God's being and, furthermore, goes beyond a notion in which God's activity ad extra merely confirms God's antecedent being. The notion of the Son's conformity to the will of the Father in the Spirit encapsulates the vitality of God in both the divine decision and the enactment of this decision in the concrete history of Jesus Christ.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate how Barth conceives of the revelatory history of God to proceed from the eternal Trinity of the divine being (part 1). As triune, God acts out of the complex riches of God's being, making God's dealings in revelatory history both gracious and of an orderly nature. Furthermore, when the notion of God as triune is applied to Barth's idea of the divine constancy he is able to further substantiate a conception of God as the one who loves in freedom as present and active in history. More constructively, I have also attempted to set out a notion of the livingness of God in the relation between pre-temporal eternity and history (part 2). Tracing a conceptual development in Barth's christologically attuned doctrine of the being of God, I made the case that Barth's notion of the obedience of the divine Son links the vitality of God in Christ's concrete history with the self-determining decision of election. It remains integral, however, to conceive of election as an eternal decision actualized in time, and to a greater degree than Barth himself does. Moreover, the definitive place that Barth attributes to Christ's history for the understanding of God's being, as grounded in the divine decision, works to overcome a lingering notion of the self-contained being of God, at odds with the being of God in history, in those sections of the CD addressed in the lead up to the doctrine of election.
Chapter 3: 'The Trinitarian Mediated History of God':

Trinity and History in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg

In this chapter I take up the understanding of the relationship between God and history in the trinitarian theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg. The doctrine of the Trinity becomes a crucial focal point of Pannenberg's theology beginning in the 1970's. The relevance of Pannenberg's theology to the central question of this study is seen in his assertion that the classical doctrine of God as triune "formulates the relationship of God to history in general." In what follows I assess how Pannenberg's trinitarian theology can be put to constructive use for an understanding of the vitality of God in history.

The purpose of this chapter is three-fold: (1) First I will examine Pannenberg's critique of revelation and the divine subjectivity in Karl Barth's formal doctrine of the Trinity (CD I/1), a critique that figures heavily into his conception of God's relation to history. Pannenberg overstates the case in his criticism that Barth's idea of subjectivity leads to a heteronomous relation between God and the world. More suggestive, however, is his methodological assessment on the way in which Barth's idea of subjectivity precludes a consideration of the eschatological dimension of God's history. I will take a similar critique by Jürgen Moltmann into account here, and also connect this with the previous chapter's claims around the generic or conventional elements in Barth's idea of the antecedent Trinity in CD I/1. (2) Following his critique of Barth on the divine subjectivity, I will turn to Pannenberg's notion of the mutual relations of the divine persons. The essential constructive claim of

this chapter is that Pannenberg's idea of the dependent monarchy of the Father can be used to articulate a conception of God's forward-moving or eschatologically shaped history; that is, a notion of the livingness of God in history. (3) And, finally, I offer a critical assessment of Pannenberg's doctrine of eternity, raising the point of an underlying ambiguity in regards to the essential place of temporality in the reality of God. This, in turn, will set up the transition to the following chapter on the theology of Robert W. Jenson and an engagement with a trinitarian idea of eternity as the futurity of God.

The chapter will be structured into four parts: In part 1 I begin with the initial critique of Barth on the divine subjectivity, connecting elements of the previous chapter with Pannenberg's constructive aims. Part 2 will look at the notions of history and eschatology and related themes in Pannenberg's early work. This part both intends to clarify how revelation and history in Pannenberg compare to the approach of Barth and also to introduce two pervasive themes in Pannenberg's theology, the principle on the unity of deity and lordship as well as divine futurity, that I will incorporate into the appropriation and critical assessments of Pannenberg's mature theology in parts 3 and 4. In part 3 I turn to Pannenberg's trinitarian theology in order to articulate the constructive notion of the vitality of God in history through Pannenberg's idea of the mutuality of the divine persons and his conception of the Father's rule in God. In Pannenberg's schematic this will require not only expanding on his trinitarian conception of mutuality in God, but also employing his principle on the unity of deity and lordship in a way that potentially conflicts with a tendency in Pannenberg's trinitarian theology to prize the epistemic side over the ontological side of God's eschatological revelation. And, lastly, in part 4 I lay out a critique of Pannenberg's conception(s) of eternity that sets up the transition to the work of Jenson in the chapter that follows.
In relation to the work as a whole this chapter begins to develop the argument for an eschatological understanding of the triune God's relation to history. In chapter 1 I highlighted how the central problem of this work, the use of the doctrine of the Trinity to conceive of God's living relation to history, emerges from Isaak A. Dorner's way of reconciling divine immutability with the revealed vitality of God. Chapter 2 served both to further situate the question on Trinity and history with the work of Karl Barth by examining aspects of his trinitarian doctrine of God and divine election. I argued there that Barth's doctrine of election, insofar as it elevates the notion of the obedience of the divine Son, provides the means to conceive of the continuity and vitality that underlie the relation between the pre-temporal eternity of God and history. The current chapter will both add a new element to the protological argument of the previous chapter and will constructively and critically build on Barth's notion that God acts in history out of the eternal Trinity of God's being. In what follows I will make the case for a notion of the vitality of God in history in view of Pannenberg's eschatological doctrine of God. If the emphasis in Barth's protological account of God and history can be said to fall on the conformity of the Son to the divine will, here, as I will show, it rests on the dependent rule of the Father.

1: Subjectivity, Mutuality and History

Before turning to Pannenberg's constructive conception of God's relation to history, I first take up Pannenberg's critique of revelation and divine subjectivity in Karl Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. The critique appears in an essay from 1977 entitled, "Die Subjektivität Gottes und die Trinitätslehre: Ein Beitrag zur Beziehung zwischen Karl Barth und der Philosophie Hegels" ("The Subjectivity of God and the Doctrine of the Trinity: An Essay on the Relation
between Karl Barth and the Philosophy of Hegel"). It was during this time that Pannenberg was beginning to work out a developed doctrine of the Trinity. In another significant essay from the same year, "Der Gott der Geschichte" ("The God of History"), Pannenberg sets forth the notion of God as triune as the answer to the question of how to conceive of the unity between the being of God and God's historical activity.

As I will show, the merit of Pannenberg's actual criticism of Barth on the divine subjectivity is limited. More persuasive, however, is his methodological critique concerning the specific way that Barth derives the doctrine of the Trinity and how this confines constructive trinitarian reflection on God's self-grounded relation to history. This critique leads naturally into Pannenberg's positive take on the relation between Trinity and history that I will turn to in subsequent parts of the chapter.

1.1: Pannenberg's Critique of Barth

Pannenberg's critique of Barth's trinitarian theology centers on the way that Barth adheres to a notion of the single subjectivity or personhood of God. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, this concern of Barth stems from his earliest theology and the attempt to lay out a conception that gives expression to the rightful sovereignty of God in revelation. As Pannenberg notes, this emphasis on the divine subjectivity that makes its way into Barth's theology mirrors the tradition of construing the doctrine of the Trinity in psychological analogies running back to Augustine, who famously pointed out the final inadequacy of such representations in book XV of De Trinitate. In CD I/1 Barth distances himself from this conventional approach, taking the derivation of the Trinity from a general concept to be a form of natural theology. In a similar way, Barth criticizes Hegel for identifying God with "the self-movement of the thinking of the human subject." The risk here, Barth writes with some wit, is that
humanity risks becoming God's idol. Nevertheless, Pannenberg claims that Barth's way of relating the subjectivity of God with divine revelation has much in common with the tradition that Barth so vehemently critiques.

The problem pertains to the logical priority of the divine subjectivity that Pannenberg finds in Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. Pannenberg cites Barth: "It follows from the trinitarian understanding of the God revealed in Scripture that this one God is understood...as person, i.e., as an I existing in and for itself with its own thought and will." With the derivation of God's single subjectivity from the three-fold revelation of God here, or God as the subject, predicate and object of revelation, Pannenberg argues that the divine I stands behind Barth's way of conceiving of God's trinitarian revelation. For the subjectivity of God is not only derived from the three-fold or trinitarian nature of revelation for Barth, but the subjectivity of God, in fact, defines and shapes the revelation event itself. As Pannenberg puts it:

If the doctrine of the Trinity should depict, according to Barth, the indissoluble subjectivity of God in his revelation, then the I of God, as the I of the Lord, must form (bilden) its 'root' (i.e., the 'root' of the doctrine of the Trinity).  

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3. Barth, CD I/1, 358-59.

4. Barth, CD I/1, 304, 306-07.

Whether knowingly or not, in giving primacy to a notion of the divine subjectivity, Barth, on Pannenberg's view, follows the path of speculative idealism.

In Hegel, for instance, revelation is the self-objectification of the subject in its self-consciousness. Barth, at least in intention, distances himself from this starting point. Trinity is not deduced from a general concept, but from revelation itself — a point with which Pannenberg notes his explicit agreement. However, Pannenberg asks, is not the thrice-repeated subjectivity of God in revelation, and specifically in its subject, predicate and object structure, or even as revealer, revelation and being revealed, analogous to a model of self-objectification? Pannenberg takes Barth's use of modality language to describe the hypostases of God, the divine persons as distinct "modes of being (Seinsweisen)," to indicate the primacy of the idea of subjectivity in Barth's idea of God. For modalities better coheres with an idea of singular subjectivity than does that of the distinctive quality that accompanies a notion of divine persons in God.

Pannenberg identifies several problems that result from Barth's procedure. He claims that the notion of God as a single subject leads to a perception of God prior to the repetition of God's three modes of being, or a non-trinitarian idea of God. He also asserts that single subjectivity makes it almost natural to attribute personhood primarily to the Father first and only thereafter to the Son and Spirit who proceed from him, resulting in a kind of subordina-


tionism.\textsuperscript{9} More relevant to my assessment of Pannenberg's critique in what follows, he argues that the notion of absolute subjectivity leads to the idea of a heteronomous relation between God and the world.\textsuperscript{10} For if God is absolute single subject, and is not one and the same with the world itself (pantheism), then the divine being is the transcendent correlate of the world.\textsuperscript{11} The idea, of course, stands in explicit contrast with a conception of God's relation to the world as based in and proceeding from the diversity of the trinitarian being of God.\textsuperscript{12}

On Pannenberg's view, Barth is too hasty in forming the basis for his doctrine of the Trinity from an idea of the subjectivity of God in his notion of revelation. His trinitarian theology in \textit{CD I/1} proceeds from the proposition that "God reveals himself as Lord."\textsuperscript{13} The result of which is a reified notion of divine subjectivity, and one that does not give adequate attention to the biblical witness. And most important for our purposes, Barth, Pannenberg says, bypasses how the biblical text describes the revelation of God as not instantaneous disclosure, but in the process of history itself. He bypasses the fact that the revelation of God in scripture takes place in a history that culminates in the definitive self-revelation God only in the eschatological consummation of all things.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{9} Cf. Pannenberg, "Der Gott der Geschichte," 125.


\textsuperscript{11} Pannenberg, "Die Subjektivität Gottes und die Trinitätslehre," 110.


\textsuperscript{13} Pannenberg, "Die Subjektivität Gottes und die Trinitätslehre," 101, 107-08; \textit{Problemgeschichte}, 256; \textit{ST I}, 295-96; Barth, \textit{CD 1/1}, 306.

\textsuperscript{14} Pannenberg, \textit{Problemgeschichte}, 257.
1.2: Reciprocity and History

For the purposes here, the two most important observations in Pannenberg's criticisms pertain to his assessment that Barth's idea of subjectivity leads to the idea of a heteronomous notion in the God-world relation and Barth's way of overlooking the eschatological dimension of God in revelation. I will address these points in what follows.

Does Barth's notion of the divine subjectivity, as Pannenberg would have it, ultimately lead to the idea of a heteronomous relation between God and the world? Is it right to say that it lends itself to a conception of God as the transcendent correlate of the world, and one in which revelation is the basic means for the (three-fold) self-objectification of God in history? It is important to note here that Barth, in his notion of subjectivity in the doctrine of the Trinity from CD I/1, goes on to highlight the constitutive place of the eternal relations in God, or the kind of relationality that would call into question the model of heteronomy that Pannenberg proposes here. More significantly, Eberhard Jüngel demonstrates a way in which it appears that Barth has the essential relationality of God's triune being in view even in the initial sections on the subjectivity of God's lordship in revelation of CD I/1.

As Jüngel notes, Barth's formulation of the three-fold nature of revelation (the 'root' of the doctrine of the Trinity) corresponds to the classical notion of the eternal relations of origin in God. The claim that 'God reveals himself as Lord' can be broken down into "(a) a whence of revelation, (b) a becoming revealed of God which is grounded in this whence, and (c) a being revealed of God which is grounded in this whence and in the becoming revealed."\(^{15}\) As in God's own being, the analogous activity of God in revelation contains an origin and two dis-
tinct ways of being issued in relation to that origin. The point stands to note what is at least a plausible rendering of the place and importance of the relationality of God's being in Barth's formal doctrine of the Trinity and, consequently, one that works against a heteronomous conception of God's sheer singularity, on the one hand, and the created world, on the other hand.

More suggestive here is Pannenberg's assessment that with the domineering role of God's subjectivity in Barth's idea of revelation, Barth overlooks the scriptural emphasis on the eschatological dimensions of revelation. Even as it is, the idea of God's three-fold lordship on which Barth's doctrine of the Trinity rests does not, at least in any explicit way, derive from exegetical findings. The point of concern here is that revelation, as Barth deals with it, be about the facticity of God, the exclusive and absolute sovereignty of God in revelation. This is surely a poignant assertion given the nineteenth century liberal Protestant theology that Barth has in view. But the risk in making the subjectivity of God so central is that Barth overlooks the historical content by which the triune God is supposedly known, and with it, of what the eschatological direction of God's revelatory acts might mean for the triune understanding of God.

Jürgen Moltmann made a similar and sharper critique prior to Pannenberg. According to Moltmann, Barth takes over the personalism of Wilhelm Herrmann and applies it theologically to the always elusive and non-objectifiable nature of God. In distinction from Pannenberg, Moltmann claims that Barth does not simply transfer notions of selfhood and personal reflection to the idea of God. The trinitarian complex of God as revealed in another eschews such notions.\textsuperscript{16} However, and here the critique, or at least its result, is much closer to Pannenberg's assessment, according to Moltmann, Barth's concept of the self-revelation of God

makes his concern to articulate a notion of divine lordship in the event of God's disclosure more central than developing the idea of revelation along trinitarian lines. The lordship of God, as Barth describes it, is a kind of "self-contained novum," with a foundation and basis in God's own being, or what God is "antecedently in Himself." In this way Barth makes the source and the aim of revelation one and the same. For each it is God. Or as Moltmann puts it, "to understand the revelation in Christ as self-revelation of God, is to take the question as to the future and the goal indicated by revelation, and answer it with a reflection on the origin of revelation, on God himself." Left unaddressed here is the question of the eschatological dimension of God's revelation, or how, more specifically, the revelation of God in the resurrection of Christ is indicative of a future that is, at least in some sense, still open. If the revelation of God occurs in history, and even as history, how does it speak of a still outstanding future, of God's genuine involvement with the reality of creatures?

Pannenberg's turn to the eschatological side of God's revelatory activity in his trinitarian idea of God is significant. For it means not only the examination of an aspect that is largely missing in Barth's formal doctrine of the Trinity, but also, by attending to the future dimensions of God's worldly involvement, requires a consideration of the particular activity of God in history for understanding the eternal being of God as triune. This relates to the critique of Barth's notion of the Trinity from the previous chapter, namely, that in the lead up to CD II/2 Barth fails to adequately consider Christ's concrete history and its meaning for God's being, resulting in somewhat generic ideas of lordship and alterity by which God is said to act in

17. Barth, CD I/1, 306, 384, 399, 448.

18. Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 58. The same point might be made in regards to Barth's idea of the knowledge of God based on his notion of God's primary (or own) objectivity and secondary objectivity with creatures. See CD II/1, 3-62.

history. Such notions can be put to important uses (e.g., Barth's idea of the divine constancy), but nevertheless remain at a rather conventional or abstract level, and therefore at a remove from the particularities of God's revelatory history.

Pannenberg's trinitarian theology, which is at least in part motivated as a response to the critiques of Barth noted here, works to conceive of God's being in a way that is more closely derivative of and congenial to God's historical activity.20 This leads Pannenberg to a closer assessment of the eschatological activity of God. Furthermore, it leads Pannenberg to advance a notion of reciprocity in the divine life of God, or a concept of the internal becoming of the Father, Son and Spirit consistent with the relational activity of the divine persons in salvation history. In a programmatic claim, Pannenberg writes:

(The) reciprocity in the relationship of the trinitarian persons provides the foundation for the compatibility of the salvation-economical view of the Trinity with the immanent Trinitity which precedes all time and world history.21

In part 3 I will consider Pannenberg's notion of mutuality in his trinitarian theology and its constructive use for understanding the relation between God and history. But first, in order to draw out some of the basic themes that will be incorporated into the critical appropriation of Pannenberg's trinitarian theology, as well as to highlight its basic background, I turn to the themes of history and the essential role of eschatology in Pannenberg's early theology.


2: Early Notions of God, History and Futurity

The construal of the trinitarian God's relation to the world in Pannenberg's later theology extends the application of several essential theological concepts from his earlier work. In what follows I narrow in on a pair of themes that appear early on in Pannenberg's work: history and eschatology. The first section will briefly outline Pannenberg's idea of revelation as history. This notion provides a basic backdrop for Pannenberg's notion of God and will be compared to Barth's idea of revelation and how their respective conceptions set up a framework for a trinitarian construal of God. The second section will attend to two ideas — on deity and lordship as well as divine eternity — that underlie Pannenberg's eschatological idea of God, also providing some essential context to Pannenberg's later trinitarian theology. However, I also attend to these specific themes and concepts in Pannenberg's eschatological notion of God insofar as their meaning and application shifts in his later work, and in ways that I will incorporate into the constructive and critical appropriation of Pannenberg's theology in parts 3 and 4 of this chapter.

2.1: History and Revelation

During the 1950's Pannenberg and a cohort of scholars from the fields of biblical studies and theology formed a working group that came to be known as the 'Pannenberg Circle.' The collection of essays entitled *Revelation as History (Offenbarung als Geschichte)* is the result of their collaborative work. In this text Pannenberg, the systematic theologian of the group, substantiates the claim that from a biblical perspective revelation should be understood as both indirect and historical. Pannenberg has two figures in view here. In conceiving of revelation as indirect in nature, Pannenberg distances himself from the sense of immediacy and completion in Barth's understanding of the concept.23 I will return to this point at the end of this section. The other relevant point that Pannenberg makes with Barth in view during this period pertains to the meaning of the incarnation and the locale of revelation in history. The revelation of God in Christ, in a basic way, is an event in history. With the notion of a 'primal history,' as noted at the end of chapter 2, Pannenberg worries that Barth conceives of the reality of the incarnation in "a dimension which is 'oblique' to ordinary history . . . if, indeed, it has not remained in an archetypal realm above the plane of history."24 In the previous chapter I offered a qualified defense of this notion in Barth, making the case that it be understood as indicative of the divine will, and not as the pre-temporal unfolding of what occurs in time. At any rate, the critique highlights Pannenberg's underlying concern to conceive of revelation within the scope of history.

Likewise, the indirect nature of revelation points to its wider, encompassing or essentially historical framework, putting Pannenberg at odds with some of the demythologizing


24. Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," 41-42. That Pannenberg primarily has in view Barth's commentary on Romans is clear. But his comment in n. 73 of this essay (41) specifies that it applies to the *CD* as well.
strands in the exegetical-theological program of Rudolf Bultmann.\footnote{Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation," 130-31.} For example, the biblical notion of the word of God, Pannenberg claims, is not an unmediated revelation of God, but takes shape as the apostolic kerygma (esp. in Luke-Acts) and the prophetic witness of Jesus (Rev. 19:10, 19:13).\footnote{Pannenberg, "Introduction," 7, 10-11.} Moreover, the distinct acts of God's revelation in scripture are not complete in-and-of themselves. God, as scripture insists, "will carry out many things which cannot be foreseen, and they will point back to the origin, though in different ways." "God's activity illuminates the being of God only in a \textit{partial} way."\footnote{Pannenberg, "Introduction," 14-16.} The result of which is that a definitive self-revelation of God occurs only with the totality of God's actions — at the end-point of history.

connection between God's eschatological glory and the resurrection is repeated, albeit in a unique way, in the New Testament (Rom. 8.23; 2 Cor. 3.8-11, 4.6; 1 Peter 4.14).\(^{30}\)

Revelation, then, on Pannenberg's view, is not a self-enclosed disclosure of God, but rather "the defined goal of the present events of history."\(^{31}\) Pannenberg writes:

Since knowledge of God's divinity was no longer expected from single events but from one final occurrence which would gather together all earlier, single events into one single history, this ultimate knowledge had to be placed at the end of all history. Only when all occurrence is ended can the divinity of God be known on the basis of the connection of history. So one may say that only the last, the eschatological, event which binds history into a whole brings about final knowledge of God.\(^{32}\)

In other words, the mediation of God's self-revelation, not through isolated occurrences, but in a series of interrelated events, means that the disclosure of God comes to completion only at the end. Herein lies Pannenberg's basic notion of history as it proceeds from his doctrine of revelation. More to the point, the revelatory actions of God culminate in a final fulfillment. Thus Pannenberg is ultimately concerned with history as a meaningful whole, history that comes to a unity under the auspice of God's activity. Pannenberg finds extra-theological support for the priority of the whole in the idea of establishing the meaning of the parts in both Heidegger's existential philosophy and, particularly, in Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutics.\(^{33}\)

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33. Dilthey writes, "one would have to wait for the end of a life and, in the hour of death, survey the whole and ascertain the relation between the whole and its parts. One would have to wait for the end of history to have
Pannenberg's interest in history as a totality, though, is fundamentally theological and grounded in the forward-looking nature of the revelation of God.

Pannenberg connects the resurrection event of Jesus to the idea of history outlined above. He takes the emphasis on the link between the resurrection and a divinely established conception of history as a whole in apocalyptic Judaism as key to understanding the meaning of Jesus' resurrection. What makes the resurrection of Jesus ultimately decisive is that in it the eschatological end of history occurs, with one individual, in advance. The resurrection is a proleptic occurrence, a pre-happening of the eschatological future.\(^\text{34}\) In it, says Pannenberg, "the perfection of history has already been inaugurated."\(^\text{35}\) In this way the resurrection event serves to substantiate Pannenberg's conception of history as a whole. And, furthermore, Jesus' resurrection indicates the eschatological thrust to God's historical activity.\(^\text{36}\)

Before turning to Pannenberg's idea of divine futurity, the implications of his notion of revelation as history for an understanding of God should be noted. In the previous chapter I addressed Barth's notion of revelation. For Barth, reaching back to his commentary on Romans, revelation has to do with the immediacy of God in the sovereignty of the divine freedom. Revelation, on this view, is indicative of a primal concern with the subjectivity of God in the event of the divine self-disclosure. It is not surprising, then, that idea of Trinity that fol-

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allows in CD I/1 upholds a notion of alterity or objectivity in God and, above all, an idea of the antecedent lordship of God's own being. The lordship of God is the foundation of God's lordship in revelation. Pannenberg, however, is doing something different.

With the idea of revelation as history, Pannenberg takes the disclosure of God to be a self-defining and eschatological event. This means a notion of revelation more inclusive of process and movement than is the case with Barth. But this also requires a notion of God, and with it, of God's trinitarian being, for Pannenberg, consistent with such an idea of history. Where immediacy dominates in Barth, and a notion of God follows, a sense of the future as open alongside a point of final closure lies at the heart of Pannenberg's idea of revelation as history. As I will show in the next section, and more fully in part 3 of this chapter, Pannenberg's idea of revelation sets him in a direction distinct from Barth, towards a notion of God's being (as triune) compatible with the eschatological end and the open-ended nature of God's revelatory acts.

2.2: Futurity and God

In Revelation as History Pannenberg set out to detail the link between the eschatologically oriented history of God and the specific mode of God's self-revelation. As a result, Pannenberg identifies history's end, and less so the course of history itself, to be "at one with the essence of God."37 Already in this early work there are strong hints that Pannenberg will attempt to work out a theological vision that includes the doctrine of God's being from the locus point of the future. Two essential ideas from Pannenberg's early work that recur, in no-

tably distinct ways, in his mature, systematic theology are (1) his idea of deity and lordship and (2) divine eternity.

(1) Deity and Lordship: One of the basic mooring points for Pannenberg's eschatological notion of God, as it proceeds from the idea of revelation outlined above, pertains to his notion that the deity of God is fundamentally inseparable from the divine lordship. The point is axiomatic in Pannenberg's theology: "God's being and existence cannot be conceived apart from his rule."38 Roger Olson has coined this notion "Pannenberg's Principle."39 The principle, while basic, is of decisive significance. For if lordship and the deity of God are one, then the still outstanding disclosure of God's lordship means, in some sense, that the being of God lies in the future. But how so?

The principle of the unity of God's deity and lordship has a basic epistemic meaning: because the revelation of God's lordship is, or will be, an eschatological occurrence, so is the being of God only fully disclosed at the end of all things. But with this principle Pannenberg also intends, at least in his early writings, a stronger, ontological claim. This leads to one of Pannenberg's more provocative statements: it is true to say "in a restricted sense . . . God does not yet exist. . . . God's being is still in the process of coming to be."40 Concerning God's existence, it is possible to avoid a great deal of misunderstanding here by pointing to the claim of Pannenberg that "everything that already exists, all being, can be fundamentally called into question."41 This, however, does not apply to the being and existence of God if understood in


an eschatological sense. A being that really is, but that is not "present at hand (Vorhandedheit)," is unsurpassable. Such is the case if, again, in some way, futurity is proper to the being of God.

What Pannenberg intends here is a distinct notion of divine transcendence. The idea is not fully developed in Pannenberg's early theology. In one of the more detailed descriptions of God's eschatological being, or futurity, Pannenberg writes, "God, through the realization of the historical future at a given time, pushed this away from himself as the power of the ultimate future and in this way mediated himself to it in his own eschatological futurity." God is, as Pannenberg is fond of saying in his early writings, "the power of the future." God "exists only in the way in which the future is powerful over the present." In this way God's transcendence involves a kind of straddling of the future and the present. In the divine futurity God transcends the present, notably as the mediation thereof; and as the power of the future God is involved or intimately related with every present.

Philip Clayton summarizes the tension in Pannenberg's notion of futurity and divine being:

God must be in some sense fully actual; he cannot be deficient in being; he cannot be solely located in the future, for he must be vitally involved with every Now of history; yet he is so dependent on the future that it can be spoken of as the locus of his being. Hence

44. Pannenberg, "The God of Hope," 242; see also, "Theology and the Kingdom of God," 56.
he is God now in anticipation of the God he will show himself to be (have been? [sic.]) at the end of history.\textsuperscript{46}

Again, Pannenberg's intention is a distinct notion of transcendence, and one that is shaped along eschatological lines. But, as Clayton rightly notes, that does not mean that God, who does 'not yet exist,' is sheer futurity or being as that which lies, to incorporate a spatial metaphor, in the temporally distant future that is ahead of creatures. Pannenberg, rather, attempts to conceive of an ontology that incorporates the present and the future. God is not simply identical to the future, mere future being, as some commentators note.\textsuperscript{46} God as the power of the future intends something more complex than this reduction.\textsuperscript{47}

The ideas here come to expression in a similar way in Pannenberg's notion of Jesus' retroactively confirmed unity with God.\textsuperscript{48} While Jesus' unity with the Father does not begin in the resurrection event, his pre-Easter authority is, in its historicity, contingent upon his life concluding in consonance with the coming reign of God.\textsuperscript{49} Pannenberg's notion of retroactive permanence attempts to make sense of a real becoming of God in history, on the one hand, and yet a stability in the identity of God and the history of Jesus as mediated by God's future, on the other hand.\textsuperscript{50} At times it appears that Pannenberg's claims around the futurity of God in


\textsuperscript{47} Pannenberg, "Theology and the Kingdom of God," 56.

\textsuperscript{48} Pannenberg, \textit{Jesus — God and Man}, 322; see also 320-21.

\textsuperscript{49} Pannenberg, \textit{Jesus — God and Man}, 135-37.

\textsuperscript{50} Cf. Pannenberg, \textit{Jesus — God and Man}, 157, 320-21.
his early theology are rather context specific. In an engagement with the process philosophy of Whitehead and Hartshorne, for instance, Pannenberg specifically rules out a notion of development in God, or a kind of fundamental alteration to the essence of God: "what turns out to be true in the future will then be evident as having been true all along."51 These contrasts, or what I have described as tensions in Pannenberg's early work, resurface in his later theology.

(2) *Eternity:* Pannenberg's early treatment of eternity follows upon his idea of futurity, and can be dealt with in brief. According to Pannenberg, futurity implies the idea of eternity. For, as the power of the future, God is and has been the future of every present gone by. As once present, the past is not lost on God but is included within the divine futurity.52 Likewise, God precedes every historical present as the power of its future, and thus the dynamics of temporality, from past to future, are present to God as a whole. The eternity of God, therefore, is not timeless. Rather, insofar as the dimensions of time are included in the futurity of God, the eternity of God is compatible with temporal reality.53

This basic character of eternity as suitable to temporality holds throughout Pannenberg's work. The point to highlight here, however, regards the primary expression of eternity. In his early writings Pannenberg seemingly indicates a notion of eternity as futurity, time that proceeds from the eschatological being of God. There is also, however, a stress on the presence of God to time as a whole. In these early writings it is the former view, eternity as futuri-


ty, which Pannenberg seems to favor. As I will show, in his later theology it is the latter, eternity as an encompassing reality, that predominates, and which creates questions in its own right for conceiving of God's relation to time and the process of history.

In sum, Pannenberg's early concern with the indirect nature of revelation leads to a theological concern with history as a whole or a totality. In a way that distinguishes Pannenberg from Barth, this plays into his concern for a conception of God's being compatible with the specifically eschatological nature of God's revelatory activity, a point that will continue to be developed in Pannenberg's trinitarian theology. In Pannenberg's early work this notion of God's being takes shape in terms of the idea of divine futurity and the idea of eternity conceived accordingly.

3: Trinity, History and Eschatology

Having treated the two prominent themes of history and futurity in Pannenberg's earlier work, I now return to the constructive analysis of Pannenberg's developed trinitarian theology and the question of God's relation to history.

In part 1 of this chapter I looked at Pannenberg's critique of Barth on the divine subjectivity. Although there is reason to doubt Pannenberg's criticism that Barth's construal leads to the conception of a heteronomous relation between God and the world, Pannenberg's claim that Barth's concern with the subjectivity of God in his doctrine of the Trinity leads to an oversight in regards to the essential place of eschatology is correct. And as I noted, this critique, along with the prioritization of the divine subjectivity in Barth, inhibits more specific formulations concerning the inner-relations of God as triune, and particularly as they are conceptually derived from the revelatory history of God itself. In this section I look to Pannen-
berg's constructive response and the way in which he, beginning with Jesus' relation to the Father, conceives of the mutuality that characterizes the trinitarian relations as "the foundation for the compatibility of the salvation-economical view of the Trinity with the immanent Trinity."  

The following will lay out the contours of Pannenberg on the trinitarian mediated history of God in three sections. The first section will narrow in on Pannenberg's notion of the Trinity of persons and his revised conception of the traditional relations of origin. The second marks out how Pannenberg applies the notion of the mutuality of the divine persons to a conception of God's relation to history, or the relation between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity. In a third section, focused on the constructive argument to made in view of Pannenberg's theology, I show how Pannenberg's eschatological doctrine of the Trinity can be used to articulate a notion of the vitality of God in history in eschatological perspective.

3.1: The Trinity of Persons and the Eternal Relations of God

The doctrine of the Trinity is an attempt to answer the question of "who the God is who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ."  This, moreover, gives away the starting point for the doctrine in the Spirit-filled relation of Jesus to the Father. Prior to addressing that relation, Pannenberg raises a question that lies at the heart of any trinitarian theology: What is the exegetical basis in establishing the idea of the consubstantial relation between Jesus the Son and the Father, as well as the deity of the Spirit. Pannenberg's take on the equality and sameness of deity between the divine persons could take up a chapter's content. My focus in what follows,


55. Pannenberg, ST 1, 300.
however, is limited to the way in which Pannenberg's solution to this problem gives way to his construal of the eternal relations of God in terms of the mutuality of the divine persons.

I begin with Pannenberg's assessment of the construal of the inner-trinitarian relations within the theological tradition. The classical doctrine of the Trinity identifies the specific nature of the inner-relations of the Trinity along the lines of an eternal begetting or generation of the Son and the procession or breathing of the Spirit from the Father (Jn. 1.14, 3.16, 15.26, 20.22). These are then sharply distinguished from the sendings or the missions of the Son and Spirit in the economy of salvation. But, as Pannenberg notes, the exegetical basis for such a distinction is thin. The Spirit is breathed on the disciples in the presence of the risen Jesus. And the begetting statements primarily designate the unique quality of Jesus' sonship in the events of his baptism and resurrection (Mt. 3.17; Lk. 3.22; Jn. 3.16; Acts 13.33). Each has a historic, not an eternal, reference point. As will be seen, these relations remain important in describing the eternal being of God as triune insofar as the latter, God's eternal being, is inferred from the revelatory history of God. However, what is needed, according to Pannenberg, is a more definitive basis within that history itself if the Son, and likewise, the Spirit, are to be conceived on equal terms with the deity of the Father.

It is against this background that Pannenberg puts forward his thesis that the equality of the divine persons comes to expression in their personal self-distinctions. This leads not only to his conception of the mutuality of the divine persons as basic to the divine being, but

56. Pannenberg, ST 1, 305-06.

57. Pannenberg, ST 1, 264-5, 307; Systematic Theology 2, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 371. Hereafter cited as ST 2. Pannenberg notes that the sending claims, in fact, give greater specification to the eternality of the second and third persons of the Trinity insofar as they imply pre-existence; although, the ontological relation between sender and those sent remains unclear with this notion by itself. ST 1, 305, 307.
also to a qualified notion of the divine monarchy understood in terms of the traditional relations of origin.

Pannenberg's assessment of the form of the trinitarian relations starts with the nature of the revelation of God in Jesus the Son. Pannenberg attends to the life and proclamation of Jesus as marked by his witness to the exclusive sovereignty of God and the coming of the divine rule. Jesus makes public confession to the sole goodness of God (Mk. 10.18), declares the Father to be greater than himself (Jn. 14.18) and surrenders his will and the outcome of his life to the Father (Mk. 14.36). Of his relation to the Father, Pannenberg writes:

Precisely by distinguishing himself (sich unterscheidet) from the Father, by subjecting himself to his will as his creature, by thus giving place to the Father's claim to deity as he asked others to do in his proclamation of the divine lordship, (Jesus) showed himself to be the Son of God and one with the Father who sent him. 58

The self-distinction of the Son in relation to the Father is not, however, unilateral. In what is perhaps Pannenberg's most novel exegetical move, he turns to the way in which the Father grants "all authority" (Mt. 28.18) and "all things" (Lk. 10.22) to the Son. The Father gives the right to the kingdom of God over to the Son. And the Son, the recipient of the Father's gift, carries out his mission until, in the consummation of all things, he returns the kingdom to the Father in order that "God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15.15, 28). 59 As such, not only does the deity of the Son become manifest in relation to God the Father, but a similar self-distinction

58. Pannenberg, ST 1, 310; Systematische Theologie: Band 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 337.

59. Pannenberg, ST 1, 312.
pertains to the Father in relation to the Son. For, recalling the principle of the unity of the deity and lordship of God, the Father's kingdom, handed over to the Son, entails that the Father's rule is not lost, but, rather, hinges on whether "the Son glorifies him and actualizes his lordship by fulfilling his mission."\(^{60}\)

And likewise, Pannenberg posits a similar self-distinction of the Spirit. The farewell discourse of John exhibits the basic pattern of the Spirit's unique activity (14.26, 15.26, 16.13-14, 17.4). Just as the Son distinguishes himself from the Father in honoring him, so the Spirit glorifies the Son (Jn. 16.14), and, through him, the Father, by shedding light on the Father-Son relation. In bearing witness to the Son, the Spirit testifies to the one through whom the Father is known (Jn. 14.6, 15.26). Likewise, the Spirit has the same goal as the Son in glorying the Father and the coming of his kingdom, and such that all of Jesus' work must be understood as driven by the Spirit.\(^{51}\) In this way the rule of the Father pertains also to the activity of the Spirit. A similar pattern applies to the New Testament witness to the Spirit's role in raising Jesus from the dead, giving way to his fellowship with the Father (Rom 1.4, 1 Tim. 3.16).\(^{62}\) As the medium of their fellowship, the Spirit cannot be reduced simply to the 'we' of the Father and Son's communion. The Spirit has its hypostatic identity over against them as the principle of their unity, or as their common Spirit.\(^{63}\)

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60. Pannenberg, ST 1, 313; Systematische Theologie 1, 340. English translation slightly altered; see also, ST 2, 29-30; Ángel Cordovilla Pérez sets forth a similar rendering of Pannenberg. "The Trinitarian Concept of Person," in Rethinking Trinitarian Theology: Disputed Question and Contemporary Issues in Trinitarian Theology, eds. Giulio Maspero and Robert J. Woźniak (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 137.

61. Pannenberg, ST 1, 317.


63. Pannenberg, ST 1, 315-17, 358; see also ST 2, 32. In reducing the Spirit to the common principle of the Father and Son, their 'we,' Pannenberg has H. Mühlen's Der Heilige Geist als Person in view. Pannenberg cites Moltmann's criticism of Mühlen in which the Spirit, conceived as the first person plural, leads to only a constitutive duality in God. The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God, 245n. 73.
By beginning with the specific relation of Jesus to the Father, Pannenberg draws out the mutuality that characterizes the life of God in the relations of the Father, Son and Spirit. The answer to the sameness and equality of deity between the divine persons of the Trinity lies in that none possess it on their own. That the Father is God, and the Son and Spirit as well, is correct. But the Father's deity, for instance, hinges on the honor that he receives from the Son in the Spirit. Deity among the divine persons of the Trinity is had in their self-deferential relations unto one another. Ted Peters aptly captures Pannenberg's intention when he describes the deity of the divine persons as "dependent divinity."\(^64\)

Two theological points, both of which bear on Pannenberg's understanding of God's relation to history, follow from this exegetical analysis. First, the self-distinction of the divine persons that Pannenberg highlights are exegetically obtained from distinguishable acts (e.g., the Father's bestowal of the kingdom or the obedience of the Son) of the divine persons in the revelatory history of God. They are not, however, according to Pannenberg, "mutually exclusive."\(^65\) What Pannenberg means here is that the distinctions of the divine persons do not merely emerge or unfold with the progression of God's involvement in history.\(^66\) While the giving of the kingdom and its return follows the narrative of Jesus' ministry in Judea to the final consummation, at each point in the historic fellowship of the divine persons the glorification of the Father by the Son in the Spirit obtains, as in the case of Jesus' baptism. This is true even as the inner-relations of the divine persons take shape in varying ways and from differing perspectives in that history: "The handing over and the handing back (of the kingdom) . . .

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64. Ted Peters, "Trinity Talk: Part II," in *Dialog* 26.2 (Spring 1987): 136. The notion of the dependent deity also illuminates Pannenberg's affinity for Athanasius' axiom that the Father is not Father without the Son. On this theme, see *ST* 1, 273, 275, 311-12, 322; *ST* 2, 367.

65. Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 313.

66. Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 313.
interpenetrate one another."\(^{67}\) In other words, the mutuality of the divine persons' inner-relations comes to expression anew in the common operation of God *ad extra*.

And second, in view of the mutuality that underlies the relations between the Father, Son and Spirit, Pannenberg sets forth a revised notion of the eternal relations of origin, or the divine monarchy in God. He writes:

The Father does not merely beget the Son. He also hands over his kingdom to him and receives it back from him. The Son is not merely begotten of the Father. He is also obedient to him and he thereby glorifies him as the one God. The Spirit is not just breathed. He also fills the Son and glorifies him in his obedience to the Father, thereby glorifying the Father himself.\(^ {68}\)

Pannenberg thus complements the traditional conceptions of the Son's begetting and the procession of the Spirit with a simultaneous responsiveness of the Son to the Father mediated by the Spirit.\(^ {69}\) It is a notion of the perichoretic relations in God that seeks to give more concrete expression to the reality of each person's form of divine indwelling. The relations between Father, Son and Spirit "cannot be reduced to relations of origin."\(^ {70}\) The persons, furthermore,

\(^{67}\) Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 313, 324-25.

\(^{68}\) Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 320; "Die Subjektivität Gottes und die Trinitätstlehre," 110.

\(^{69}\) Linn Tonstad denies that the kind of dependence Pannenberg articulates "enacts genuine reciprocity and mutuality." Tonstad compares Pannenberg's conception to a "boss (that) depends on his subordinates for his status as boss," and doubles down: "Indeed, that is the case." "The ultimate consequence of his self-distinction from the Father . . . .: Difference and Hierarchy in Pannenberg's Trinity," in *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 51 (2009): 392. However, an important point is left out of Tonstad's metaphor. For Pannenberg, lordship and deity are one and the same. A more genuine notion of reciprocity must obtain if, in keeping with her metaphor, the boss not only relies on the subordinate, but, even, goes so far as to put the whole fate of the company in the hands of the subordinate.

\(^{70}\) Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 320.
claims Pannenberg, are not "identical simply with any one relation. Each is a catalyst of many relations." But, as noted, Pannenberg retains a notion of the divine monarchy. The difference from the traditional schematic is that the Son and Spirit not only depend on their eternal origin in the monarchy of the Father, but that this monarchy be understood as equally constituted by the reciprocal aspects of these relations, in the Son and Spirit's ways of glorifying the one from whom they have their eternal derivation. The Father is Father, for example, always and only affirmed by the Son in his Spirit-filled self-subjection or conformity to the Father's will.  

By beginning, in sum, with the inner-relations of the divine persons as they come to expression in Jesus' Spirit-filled relation to the Father, a notion of mutuality or reciprocal self-distinction marks Pannenberg's trinitarian theology. However, Pannenberg's point is not only to mark out the essential affirmations and novelties for a doctrine of the Trinity — although it is this, too. Moreover, Pannenberg's intent, as stated before, is to show how the "reciprocity in the relationship of the trinitarian persons provides the foundation for the compatibility of the salvation-economical view of the Trinity with the immanent Trinity." The mutual dependency of the divine persons already begins to demonstrate this point. For in Pannenberg's way of interweaving the establishment of the coming reign of God with the inner-relations of the divine persons, he fills out his early notion of revelation as history, or the climatic self-revelation of God in the eschatological end: the coming of God's kingdom, the culmination of God's revelatory work in history, takes shape in terms of the manifestation of

71. Pannenberg, ST 1, 320.

72. Pannenberg, ST 1, 325, 421.

the Father's rule achieved in the activity of the Son and the Spirit. It comes as little surprise then that Pannenberg entitles the paragraph which follows his treatment of the mutuality of the divine persons in *Systematic Theology* 1, "The World as the History of God and the Unity of the Divine Essence." In the section that follows I turn to Pannenberg's way of applying his trinitarian theology to the relation between the immanent and the economic Trinity.

### 3.2: The Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity

The common way of articulating the relation between the eternal Trinity of God's being and the activity of God in revelation history as the relation between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity in the second half of the twentieth century goes back to Karl Rahner's 1967 work, "Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendeter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte," published in English under the title of *The Trinity*. Both Pannenberg and, although to a lesser degree, Jenson pick up on this terminology and I incorporate it into the descriptions and analysis that follows.

The basic slogan of Rahner's trinitarian theology lies in the claim that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity, and vice versa ('Rahner's Rule'). The claim, which Rahner describes as his *Grundaxiom*, lends itself to various interpretations and uses in the theological history that follows. Pannenberg explains the appeal of Rahner's axiom in the following way:

> This thesis ('The immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity, and vice versa) means that the doctrine of the Trinity does not merely begin with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ

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and then work back to a trinity in the eternal essence of God, but that it must constantly link the trinity in the eternal essence of God to his historical revelation, since revelation cannot be viewed as extraneous to his deity.\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 328. Parenthetical edit mine.}

In other words, not only does the axiom grasp the fact that God is known in God's own self-revelation. It also asserts that God is involved in salvation history and the eternal Trinity of God's being must be understood accordingly. For this reason Rahner can positively assert that the specific activity of incarnation in the man Jesus belongs uniquely to the divine Son and should not be merely appropriated to his person in distinction from the Father and the Spirit.\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 328.} But Pannenberg's reception of Rahner's classical statement on the Trinity is not without critique. The most important criticism for the purposes here lies in Pannenberg's claim that, for Rahner, the Father possesses no direct involvement in the history of revelation. To "give life" to Rahner's thesis, as Pannenberg puts it, requires an understanding in which the Father is himself implicated in the economy of salvation.\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 330.}

Pannenberg's concern to conceive of the Father's genuine involvement in salvation history follows from his analysis of the mutuality or the reciprocal self-distinctions of the divine persons, outlined in the section above. The decisive point of Pannenberg's exegetical findings lay in the dependency of the Father, or the establishment of the divine rule, on the Spirit-filled mission of the Son. And therefore the lordship of the Father, grounded as it is in the eternal monarchy of the divine being, hinges — in some way — on the historic activity of

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
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\item 75. Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 328. Parenthetical edit mine.
\item 76. Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 328.
\item 77. Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 330.
\end{thebibliography}
the Son and the Spirit. Following both Jüngel and Moltmann, Pannenberg also makes reference to the crucifixion of Jesus as well as the eschatological arrival of God's kingdom following an identical pattern: God acts in the revelatory history by means of the interdependency of the divine persons.\textsuperscript{78} The success of the Son's mission comes to fruition in the life-giving power of the Father through the Spirit; and in regards to the definitive arrival of God's rule, the Father depends on the witness of the Spirit "for the realization of the kingdom of God in the world."\textsuperscript{79} In each, it is the mutuality of the divine persons that underlies the triune God's activity in revelation history.

However, Pannenberg does not set out a single concise formulation on the relation between the immanent and the economic Trinity. Rather, he identifies certain concerns that govern his construal and conceives of the relation between the immanent and economic Trinity in view of multiple themes in his doctrine of God and treatment of the divine attributes. The two prominent concerns that govern his conception of the immanent-economic Trinity relation are as follows: \textit{First}, Pannenberg wishes to maintain an identity-in-distinction in his construal of the immanent and the economic Trinity. The need to distinguish the immanent from the economic Trinity lies in the fact that equating the two would entail "the absorption of the immanent in the economic Trinity," and which, in turn, "steals from the Trinity of salvation history all sense and significance."\textsuperscript{80} Pannenberg does not elaborate on this. Presumably he has in view issues around divine freedom, transcendence and the salvation of creatures. The element of identity, on the other hand, lies in that God is the "same in salvation history as he is from

\textsuperscript{78} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 329.


\textsuperscript{80} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 331-32.
eternity." The immanent Trinity is the God of revelation. The two elements coalesce in Pannenberg's claim that the immanent Trinity is "to be found" in the economic Trinity.

The second pertains to Pannenberg's eschatological concerns. In stated agreement with the similar formulations of Jenson and Moltmann, the eternal Trinity comes to definitive manifestation in the final consummation of all things; the immanent Trinity is the eschatological Trinity. Pannenberg is clear, there is not a "divine becoming in history, as though the trinitarian God were the result of history and achieved reality only with its eschatological consummation." And yet, alongside this notion, Pannenberg insists that the "eternal deity of the trinitarian God moves in history toward its final confirmation, and so, too does the truth of his revelation." The link between the immanent and the economic Trinity involves accounting for the selfsame identity of God in eternity and the debatability of the reality of God in history.

Having identified these underlying concerns in Pannenberg's formulation, I now turn to three basic themes in which Pannenberg's conception of the immanent-economic Trinity relation finds expression: (1) Pannenberg's ideas of the true Infinite and (2) divine self-actualization and (3) the link between deity and lordship.


84. Pannenberg, ST 1, 331.

85. Pannenberg, ST 1, 332, 438.
(1) **The True Infinite:** The notion of divine infinity plays a crucial role in Pannenberg's treatment of the divine attributes. He divides this treatment into, first, the attributes that designate the general form of the divine nature (omnipresence, eternity, etc.) and, second, those that culminate in the divine loving and the revealed character of God (righteousness, patience, etc.) as the concrete form of God's essence. The idea of God as infinite belongs to the former, the general form of the divine nature. The specific importance of the notion of God as infinite in its application to the immanent-economic Trinity relation lies in that it does not merely designate the transcendence of God in distinction from the finitude of created reality. Here Pannenberg makes use of the paradoxical structure of Hegel's idea of the infinite. In this view, that which is authentically infinite (in distinction from the mathematical infinite) does not only stand in opposition to finite reality, but "must be conceived both as transcendent in relation to the finite and as immanent to it." Or, as Hegel puts it, "if God has the finite only over against himself, then he himself is finite and limited." Finitude is "posited in God himself, not as something insurmountable," but as that which God sublates.

In regards to the immanent-economic Trinity relation, the doctrine of God as triune enables a conception of God by which "the transcendent Father works in the world through the Son and the Spirit." The tendency of Pannenberg is to conceive of the Father's relation to the Son and Spirit as that of a tension between two poles by which the divine being occupies the world — mainly in the Son and Spirit — that God simultaneously lies above and be-

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86. See Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 384-96.


yond — mainly in the Father.\textsuperscript{90} In this way God, as the "true Infinite," "transcends the antithesis to what is distinct from it," or the created reality that it indwells.\textsuperscript{91} But this notion must be understood alongside the idea of the mutual indwelling of the divine persons. "In the mutual relations of the trinitarian persons . . . their existence as persons or hypostases is wholly filled by these specific mutual relations."\textsuperscript{92} In light of the perichoretic nature of God's being, therefore, the transcendent Father is present to the world and, conversely, the divine Son and Spirit are not simply confined to the finite structure of created reality.\textsuperscript{93} Moreover, Pannenberg notes that God's unity in the fullness of the relations of the divine persons, a notion that only comes to full expression in the idea of God as love, goes beyond the abstract idea of God's unity that stands in contrast to the plurality of the world — a perhaps subtle critique of Barth's notion of the divine subjectivity.\textsuperscript{94}

(2) Divine Self-actualization: Pannenberg describes the relation between the immanent Trinity of God's being and the divine economy more concretely in terms of God's self-actualization (Selbstverwirklichung) in the world.\textsuperscript{95} In keeping with the previously identified concerns about God's being in history, Pannenberg's notion of the actualization of God in the world does not entail a kind of self-realization or the coming to completion of God's being in the work of God \textit{ad extra}. Divine self-actualization, on Pannenberg's view, is closer to an idea of self-expression and self-manifestation of God. A brief comparison is helpful here. For

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{90} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 415.
  \item \textsuperscript{91} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 445.
  \item \textsuperscript{92} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 431.
  \item \textsuperscript{93} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 415.
  \item \textsuperscript{94} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 445.
  \item \textsuperscript{95} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematische Theologie} 1, 418.
\end{itemize}
creatures, the I is always *on its way* to identification with the self, which, as far creatures go, applies only to the point at which life comes to an end and one's identity is established once for all. For God, however, there exists a perfect harmony between the divine being and the self-determinations of God.\(^{96}\) Hence, unlike creatures, the divine self *to be* actualized, to become the result of its own actualization, is "already actual" from the starting point of the action.\(^ {97}\)

In regards to the doctrine of the Trinity, Pannenberg describes the self-actualization of God in the world in terms of the inner-relations of the divine persons.\(^ {98}\) Presupposed in all of the actions of God *ad extra* is the fellowship of God *ad intra* from which the self-actualization of God takes place. The importance of this point lies in the fact that constitutive for the Godhead are the relations of the divine persons in their distinct orientation to both themselves and to one another.\(^ {99}\) Thus in the communion of the divine persons there takes place an eternal self-actualization anterior to the actualization of God in the world. Pannenberg writes,

> already in the eternal fellowship of the Son with the Father the Son subjects himself to the Father as the King of eternity. The divine lordship is not first set up in God's relation to the world. It has its basis in his trinitarian life. By his subjection to the monarchy of the Father the Son is what he is from eternity, the Son of the Father, bound to him in the communion of the Godhead.\(^ {100}\)

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96. Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 390.


98. Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 327, 385, 388-89.


100. Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 421; see also, 313; *ST* 2, 392-93.
This eternal self-actualization precedes the still outstanding eschatological consummation on which the lordship of God in history depends. In fact, Pannenberg can write that the "goal of the world and its history is nearer to God than its commencement," for the action of God in the world occurs "in the signs of his in-breaking lordship," or, more specifically, "as the in-breaking of its consummation from the future." The principle of the unity of deity and lordship is considered further in the next section. The point to note here is that the realization of the divine monarchy, as that which is essentially anticipated in creaturely reality, is the basis for the actualization of God and the arrival of the kingdom in the world.

Kent Eilers is right, I think, then, to point out that Pannenberg conceives of the relation between the immanent and economic Trinity as asymmetric: the conceptual priority belonging to the former — the immanent Trinity. It is clear that Pannenberg's predominant concern is to speak about God as God is in relation to the world, or God pro nobis. But that does not preclude an accompanying notion of the immanent Trinity by which Pannenberg conceives of the antecedence of the eternal being of God in relation to historical reality. With the thought of action, however, Pannenberg also highlights that "the one who acts is with another on or toward which he or she acts." He continues, thus "the thought of God's action links . . . the intratrinitarian life of God with the economic Trinity, the active presence of Fa-


102. Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 389-90. Pannenberg's claims from his doctrine of creation around the basis of the establishment of the eschatological monarchy of God in the self-distinction of the eternal Son from the Father also apply here. See *ST* 2, 23, 58.


104. See Hill, *Three-Personed God*, 157. Hill's claim, however, that "of the Deus in se, nothing whatsoever can be said," no longer applies after the publication of Pannenberg's *ST*. 

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ther, Son and Spirit with their creatures in the economy of salvation."\(^{105}\) In their common operation in the world, the "monarchy of the Father is mediated by the Son, who prepares the way for it by winning form for it in the life of creatures, and also by the Spirit," who lets "them share in the relation of the Son to the Father."\(^{106}\) This is God's self-actualization in the world, and which takes shape in view of the eschatological end of God's rule. Insofar as this activity proceeds from the "eternal fellowship of the Son with the Father through the Spirit," or the eternal monarchy of God's being, it is, as Pannenberg puts it, "a repetition or reiteration of (God's) eternal deity in his relation to the world."\(^{107}\)

(3) Deity and Lordship: And, finally, I turn to Pannenberg's principle on the deity of God as its rule. As cited before, Pannenberg asserts that the kingdom of the Father depends on whether "the Son glorifies him and actualizes his lordship by fulfilling his mission."\(^{108}\) The claim points to the close involvement of God in a history through which the deity of God itself is at stake. But, notably, it is the epistemological side of Pannenberg's principle on the deity of God as its rule, or the manifestation of God's lordship for creatures in the final consummation, that appears to be the primary dimension in Pannenberg's mature trinitarian theology. The "eternal deity of the trinitarian God," writes Pannenberg, "moves in history toward its final confirmation, and so, too, does the truth of his revelation."\(^{109}\) And, most explicitly, the "eschatological consummation is only the locus of the decision that the trinitarian God is al-

\(^{105}\) Pannenberg, ST 1, 388.

\(^{106}\) Pannenberg, ST 1, 389.

\(^{107}\) Pannenberg, ST 1, 389. Parenthetical edit mine.

\(^{108}\) Pannenberg, ST 1, 313; Systematische Theologie 1, 340. English translation slightly altered. See also, ST 2, 29-30.

\(^{109}\) Pannenberg, ST 1, 332-33.
ways the true God from eternity to eternity."\textsuperscript{110} While the ontological side in the principle of the unity of the deity and lordship of God is not entirely lost, it recedes into the background in view of the idea of history as the plane upon which the manifestation of God's deity will be made known.\textsuperscript{111}

In short, for Pannenberg, God relates to history from the eternal monarchy of God's triune being. The eschatological nature of the divine monarchy, or its reality as the already realized rule of God, synonymous with the mutual relationality of God as Father, Son, and Spirit, serves as the basis for the actualization of God's rule in history. In the eschaton the monarchy or the rule of the trinitarian God comes to fulfillment in the manifestation of God's lordship. In the section that follows I turn to a constructive analysis of Pannenberg on the trinitarian mediated history of God.

3.3: The Trinitarian Mediated History God

In an approach that is at least partially motivated by his critique of Barth on the divine subjectivity, Pannenberg sets out a trinitarian theology that begins explicitly with Jesus' relation to the Father. In turn, Pannenberg conceives of the eternal being of God in terms of a complex of relations, characterized by mutuality and the bestowal of the Father's authority on the Son, on the one hand, and the glorification of the Father by the Son in the Spirit, on the other hand. The notion of a divine monarchy remains, but it is qualified in an important way as the dependent rule of God's being, as the deity of the Father that hinges on the self-deferring activity of the Son in the Spirit.

\textsuperscript{110} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 331; see also, 59, 245.

As with Barth's formal doctrine of the Trinity, it can be said of Pannenberg's theology that God acts in history out of the eternal or immanent Trinity of God's being. But it can also be said that Pannenberg's conception of the divine monarchy offers a notion of the eternal relationality of God's being that, one the one hand, adds a needed perspective on the eschatological dimension of God in revelation. And, on the other hand, the notion of the divine monarchy in Pannenberg possesses a level of depth and particularly that Barth's formal doctrine of the Trinity (*CD* 1/1) lacks, more attuned to the contours of God's revelatory history and that only appears in Barth following his treatment of the Son's obedience in the doctrine of election. I return to the point on eschatology below. Pannenberg's notion of the divine monarchy of God's being coheres more closely with the salvation-economic relations of the Father, Jesus the Son and the Spirit — from which, in the order of knowing, the notion of the eternal monarchy is derived — than the conventional ideas of lordship, alterity and fellowship in Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. Notably, this is not to claim that Barth's formulations are without significant application to the relation between God and history (e.g., Barth's treatment of the divine constancy), but, rather, point to a conceptual advance in Pannenberg's trinitarian theology. The question now, however, is how successfully the idea of mutuality or reciprocity in the relational structure of God's being applies to a conception of God's relation to history in Pannenberg's construal, and what other possibilities it might afford.

The two primary ways in which Pannenberg conceives of this relation, identified above, pertain to his notions of God's self-actualization and infinity (the principle of deity as lordship is a motif relatable to each). Both have the reciprocal self-distinctions of the divine persons as their underlying and essential content. The primary constraint of Pannenberg's idea of God as the true Infinite simply has to do with the fact that his treatment of it gives way to the more revelation-specific qualities of God in the divine loving. It remains unclear, at least
within Pannenberg's depiction, whether the idea can be further exploited in regards to the specific temporal relations between Jesus, the Father and the Spirit, and how they transcend the finite reality in which they abide. As I will show in the next and final part of this chapter, how the true Infinite comes to expression in Pannenberg's doctrine of eternity can prove problematic for understanding God's relation to time. At any rate, the concept is more central to the trinitarian theology of Robert W. Jenson and I will return to it in the next chapter.

Pannenberg's notion of the self-actualization of God in history is capable of being put to more constructive use. For Pannenberg, the establishment of the divine rule in history proceeds from the eternal rule of God, a monarchy that is, notably, actual (in the mutuality of the divine persons) prior to its actualization in the world. "Already in the eternal fellowship of the Son with the Father the Son subjects himself to the Father as the King of eternity." This prior actuality of God's trinitarian life need not be understood as a Trinity in-and-for-itself that remains so while the history of God in the world unfolds. I highlighted this tendency in Barth's theology and the way in which it suggests a two-fold reality of God, an eternal reality apart from who God is and what God does in history. To say that God acts in history out of the immanent Trinity does not require this. Rather, the immanent Trinity of God's being can be understood as the antecedent reality out of which God acts, and, with that, from which God acts into a history that God makes determinative of God's own being; God who wills to be God for others, for creatures — to be the God of history.113

112. Pannenberg, ST I, 421.

113. The key here, of course, is that this is a divine decision, consistent with God's eternal being, as argued for in Barth's doctrine of election. Such a decision would, perhaps, as Iain Taylor argues in Pannenberg's way of linking the establishment of God's lordship with the deity of God, "tie the hands of the trinitarian God in se." Pannenberg on the Triune God (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 188. Taylor is following a critique of Paul A. Molnar ("Some Problems with Pannenberg's Solution to Barth's 'Faith Subjectivism'," in Scottish Journal of Theology 49 [1995]: 331). But the decision here is God's, and should be understood in keeping with the divine faithfulness or the kind of God who makes irrevocable promises, which are themselves the
The point is reinforced in Pannenberg's theology if, but only if, the deity of God is, in fact, understood to be at stake in history. But here I must note a tension in Pannenberg's account. The principle of the unity of deity and lordship in Pannenberg has always contained an epistemological meaning. The lordship of God will only be fully disclosed at the end of history. But with his trinitarian theology, the epistemological side of the principle, over its ontological dimension (i.e., the significance of history for God), becomes the central point. "The eschatological consummation is only the locus of the decision that the trinitarian God is always the true God from eternity to eternity."114 Pannenberg does not entirely do away with the ontological dimension of this principle. But as it moves into the background, the idea of God's revelation risks becoming the mere manifestation of a static, deadlocked reality. And the meaning of history for God, in fact, appears to be insignificant when Pannenberg speaks of the monarchy of God that 'repeats' itself in time, or claims that the immanent Trinity is only 'found' in the divine economy. The concern here is that if the eternal monarchy of God merely repeats itself in time, awaiting only the final manifestation of its lordship therein, then the real reality of God is seemingly situated in the primal divine place of which Pannenberg once critiqued Barth: "in an archetypical realm above the plane of history."115

But retaining the ontological side of the principle on the unity of deity and lordship is important for another reason. In advocating for a notion of the immanent Trinity as the eternal monarchy of God here, there is always the risk that Moltmann rightly noted of understanding the nature of God's activity in history in terms of its origin and antecedence, and

basis for the creature's salvation (Ps. 145.13; 2 Tim. 2.13).

114. Pannenberg, ST 1, 331; see also, 59, 245. Emphasis mine.

thus without consideration of the truth of the still outstanding future. Pannenberg's idea of the eternal monarchy of God is, to be sure, more congenial to the movement of history than is Barth's idea of the eternal lordship and objectivity of God. Where God acts in history, for Pannenberg, the Son mediates the Father's lordship in the Spirit, the trinitarian enactment of God in history. But even here things might still be just a continual re-playing of the prior reality of God in history. Without the fact of the unity of deity and lordship at the forefront, there remains the possibility of seeing the future as the locale where what has always been will simply be once more — and not as a reality that matters for God, the reality towards which God is currently at work in establishing the divine rule and lordship in the world.

But the proclivity in Pannenberg to conceptually privilege the manifestation of God's deity in the end is just that, a tendency. If not as poignantly central as in Pannenberg’s early theology, the idea that God's actual deity is at stake in history maintains some place, even if a diminished one, in his trinitarian thought.116 The constructive appropriation of Pannenberg's theology, and particularly in view of the notion of God's self-actualization in the world, only needs to make sure that the principle of the unity of deity and lordship is upheld in both its epistemic and, as emphasized here, ontological dimensions.

Returning to Pannenberg's notion of self-actualization, the trinitarian shape of this idea opens itself up to a notion of the livingness of God in history. According to Pannenberg, it is the eternal monarchy of God, construed in terms of the mutuality of the divine persons, that reiterates itself in time in the divine action. The idea can be constructively advanced in terms of Pannenberg's idea of the dependent monarchy of the Father. For the rule of God's being that precedes its actualization in time is the Father's monarchy, itself dependent upon the

116. See Pannenberg, ST 1, 313.
way in which the Son and Spirit confer glory to him. But this also means that the monarchy of the Father is mediated in God, that it has an end or a telos in the persons of the Son and Spirit; the lordship of God's own being, it can be said, although Pannenberg does not make the point himself, is uniquely eschatological. What does this mean for God's activity in history?

As Pannenberg writes, the Son "prepares the way for (the Father's rule) by winning form for it in the life of creatures," and by the Spirit, who gives creatures a share in the Father-Son relation, "the monarchy of the Father is consummated."\(^{117}\) It should be noted that Pannenberg is not himself always this clear on the historical side of God's activity; that is, in the temporal enactment of the Father's lordship along trinitarian lines. After the just cited claim above he writes, as I noted before, that God's acts in time are a "repetition or reiteration of his eternal deity in his relation to the world."\(^{118}\) Again, what I propose in what follows utilizes Pannenberg's insights but also, perhaps, goes beyond him.

The mediated, eschatological activity of God proceeds from the eternal rule of God's being. And, as just noted, that monarchy can be understood in an eschatological sense. As such, and herein lies the crucial claim, where God acts in history through the Son and the Spirit, so too does the enactment of the Father's deity, its historical movement in the coming of God's reign, take place. That the Son 'prepares the way' for this rule in the mutuality that characterizes the relationality of the divine persons, and, likewise, the Spirit sees to its fulfillment, are themselves the particular ways in which the dependency of the Father on the Son and Spirit in history takes place. This is not to speak of an unfolding of God in history as sheer process, for each divine act is, as noted above, a common operation of the triune God; a

\(^{117}\) Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 324, 389.

\(^{118}\) Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 389.
reoccurring actualization of the eschatological monarchy of God in a history that is determinative of God's own being. As the monarchy of God's being is antecedently mediated in the eternal obedience of the Son in the Spirit, the rule of God in history is mediated in kind. This preserves a notion of divine immutability, the eternal Trinity out of which God acts in history. But as a history determinative of God's own being, in which the deity of God is, in fact, at stake, it is also a real history. The importance of this, and perhaps a point that does not come through clearly enough in Pannenberg's theology, also lies in the fact that with the deity of God at stake, so too is the reality of the created order, sustained and upheld at every moment by God. The implications of this point are immense. The deity of God is at stake in a real and living history. Moreover, this is the reason that repetition language (the 'repetition' of God's 'eternal deity in his relation to the world') is insufficient. At this point a connection to Barth's notion of election can even be made. For the obedience of the Son that establishes the Father's monarchy is the divine decision — one that extends to the outermost limits of the Godhead — to be enacted in time.

In short, the rule of the Father in God is eschatological monarchy, realized in the mutuality of the divine persons, or the eternally self-deferential activity of the Son and the Spirit. The dependency of the Father's monarchy gives God's activity in history its forward-moving or eschatological shape. The result is a notion of the livingness of God in history, grounded in the eschatological rule of the Father and mediated by the Son and the Spirit. As triune, God is the God of history.

It becomes clear here just how much hinges on the notion that the deity of God is, in fact, at stake with the still outstanding arrival of God's kingdom. If the arrival of God's kingdom is only a matter of the debatability of God's existence in the world, then Pannenberg's construal can be taken as merely a tableau of an eternal reality, manifesting itself in different
degrees in the process of revelation history. In this case, Pannenberg offers a more in-depth depiction of the mutual relationality of God's being than Barth's formal doctrine of the Trinity and some helpful cues on the eschatological reality of God, but the subsequent meaning of this construal for a notion of God's relation to history is made void. But if the deity of God is truly understood to be at stake in history, then Pannenberg's eschatological doctrine of the Trinity can be used to articulate a vision of God's living being in history. This is what I have attempted to do in the above. In the next and final part of this chapter I turn to Pannenberg's doctrine of eternity and the question of divine transcendence.

4: Eternity and Time

Previously I looked at Pannenberg's early notion of eternity. Pannenberg's idea of eternity there pertains to the presence of the distinct moments of time to God in light of God as the power of the future. I made the claim in that section that Pannenberg's notion of eternity is an attempt to conceive of God's transcendence in view of the futurity of God's being. Pannenberg's developed idea of eternity in Systematic Theology 1 continues to address these themes, but notably with a focus on the presence of time to God as a whole. Like Pannenberg's ideas of the true Infinite, to which the notion of eternity belongs, and the self-actualization of God, he sets out his construal of eternity in terms of the relation between the immanent and economic Trinity.

The purpose of this section is to highlight a way forward in conceiving of the transcendence of God in history with Pannenberg's doctrine of eternity. I note here only a way forward insofar as the idea of eternity in Pannenberg's mature theology maintains some of the same ambiguities as does his principle of the unity of God's being and lordship out-
lined above. I will demonstrate that Pannenberg's notion of eternity, and with it, the way in
God transcends temporal reality, can be read in multiple ways, suggestive of both notions of
timelessness as well as the radical futurity of his early theology. The following chapter on
Jenson's theology will continue with the themes of this section in order to fill out a construc-
tive conception eternity and divine transcendence along trinitarian lines.

4.1: The Totality of Life

As was evident in the notion of eternity in his earlier work, Pannenberg sets his construal of
the divine reality against a conception of eternal timelessness. Certainly, the eternity of God
does not match the succession of events of temporality in any neat way. Rather, in divine
eternity, according to Pannenberg, time past and time to come are included in God's own present.119 Pannenberg takes the scriptural claims to God as the "first" and "last" (Isa. 44.6, 48.12; Rev. 2.8, 21.6, 22.13) as lending support to the idea that the eternal reality of God
"embraces (umgreift)" the dimensions of time.120 Passages that speak of the future salvation
of the faithful as experienced in the present underscore eternity's "entanglement (Verschänkung)" with time (Rom. 6.5; Col. 3.3).121 Of particular importance for Pannenberg is Ps. 90.4: "for a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past." For 'yesterday'
entails both a sense of completion and proximity to the beholder. In the eternity of God,
writes Pannenberg, "all time is before the eyes of God as a whole (als Ganzes)."122

119. Pannenberg, ST 1, 403.

120. Pannenberg, ST 1, 403; Systematische Theologie 1, 435.


122. Pannenberg, ST 1, 401; Systematische Theologie 1, 434.
The inclusion of time in the eternity of the biblical God, on Pannenberg's view, finds suitable expression in Plotinus' notion of the "presence of the totality of life." It is this idea that enters the Christian tradition with Boethius right up through Barth's doctrine of eternity. The eternity of God presupposes the distinct dimensions of time, but uniquely insofar as past, present and future exist in relation to God as an undivided whole, present to God at once. Notably, this is to speak of the relation of eternity to time as a whole, and, in sharp distinction, not eternity itself as any kind of temporal-finite whole. Pannenberg claims, "God's eternity includes the time of creatures in its full range, from the beginning of creation to its eschatological consummation." Eternity "is itself simultaneous (gleichzeitig) with all events, and, indeed, in the strict sense of this word." More specifically, Pannenberg asserts that from eternity God is present to what is distinct in time according to its temporal position. The focal point of Pannenberg's claims lies in the fact that the distinct dimensions of time remain present to God at once or as a simultaneous whole.

Alongside the notion of eternity as presence of the totality of life are assertions more resonant with the emphasis on futurity in Pannenberg's early theology. In distinction from fi-


124. Pannenberg, ST 1, 405-06; Metaphysics and the Idea of God, 76-78.

125. See Pannenberg, Metaphysics and the Idea of God, 139-47, esp. 142-43.

126. Pannenberg, ST 1, 405-06.


128. Pannenberg, ST 1, 405.
nite being, God does not look ahead to a future that is distinct from God's present. Rather, the future of God, proper to God's own life, is God's own. God, writes Pannenberg, is "absolute future." What makes God eternal lies in that God "has no future outside himself. His future is that of himself and of all that is distinct from him." And, likewise, unlike finite creatures, God is not "subject to the march of time" and "does not have ahead of him any future that could be distinguished from his present." Likewise, Pannenberg's claims around the self-actualization of God in the world also point to the ongoing place of the future for God in Pannenberg's theology. "In the coming of God into the world . . . the goal of its history, the kingdom of God, is already really present as the in-breaking of its consummation from the future." As I will show, one of the main ambiguities in Pannenberg's doctrine of eternity comes with the attempt to bring together his notion of eternity as simultaneity with this emphasis on futurity. And lastly, of particular importance here is Pannenberg's claim that Plotinus' notion of eternity as a totality is "fully realized" only with the doctrine of the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity provides, on Pannenberg's view, the structural grounds for the differentiated totality in his conception of eternity. In this regard the simultaneous presence of time in God's eternal life both rests on and finds expression in the "intrinsically differentiated unity" of God's trinitarian being; or, in other words, in the unity-in-distinction of

129. Pannenberg, ST 1, 410.
131. Pannenberg, ST 1, 390; see also, ST 3, 646.
the divine persons of the immanent Trinity. This allows Pannenberg to articulate his notion of divine eternity in keeping with the idea of God's infinity. On trinitarian grounds the similarity between eternity and time holds without obfuscating the distinction between them, making eternity a "paradigmatic illustration . . . of the structure of the true Infinite." Pannenberg, as he himself notes, is following Barth by including the trinitarian idea of God in his notion of eternity. He even lauds Barth's way of speaking of an "order" and a "before and after" in God's eternity, although Pannenberg himself makes little use of the successive nature of time in his temporally inclusive concept of eternity.

Pannenberg argues that the unified presence of time as coherent with the eternal being of God stands in contrast to the notion of God as a solitary, undifferentiated subject. In that view, he states, "all temporal distinction would evaporate, and with that the quality of life itself." But, as triune, the simultaneity of time in the eternality of God's being makes space for the temporal distinctions manifest in the economy of salvation, notably in the separate events of creation, incarnation and redemption. "The unity of the immanent and the economic Trinity secures these distinctions to be significant within the eternal life of God." The meaning of time's distinctions and the temporally distinct acts of God rest on the fact that they have their basis in the eternal life of God itself. On the flip-side, the differentiated totality of the immanent Trinity, from which these events originate, is also the certainty of

133. Pannenberg, ST 1, 405.

134. Pannenberg, ST 1, 408; see also, Metaphysics and the Idea of God, 143.


137. Pannenberg, "Eternity, Time, and the Trinitarian God," 70; ST 1, 405-06.

that they remain a whole in the "eventual actuality" of the economy as the actions of God proceed from the wholeness of God's eternity.\textsuperscript{139}

\textbf{4.2: Remaining Ambiguities}

A fundamental ambiguity marks Pannenberg's doctrine of eternity. On the one hand, Pannenberg lays stress on the simultaneous nature of God's eternity, the reality of eternity in its comprehensive relation to all the dimensions of temporal existence. This aspect accompanies his adaptation of Plotinus' idea of eternity as the presence of the totality of life. On this view, the futurity of God is an important aspect of God's eternity, and particularly, as Christiaan Mostert highlights, in regards to the locale from which God acts in the world. But futurity does not in-and-of-itself constitute the eternity of God, in contrast to certain strands of Pannenberg's early notion of eternity. Mostert, who highlights this shift away from futurity in Pannenberg's mature theology, writes, "God's eternity must have priority over God's futurity because God's being encompasses all the modes of time."\textsuperscript{140} And, notably, there is plenty in Pannenberg's later theology to back up this claim. As Mostert goes on to cite from Pannenberg, "all time is before the eyes of God as a whole."\textsuperscript{141}

On the other hand, one is hard pressed to a find a claim from Pannenberg's mature theology that would, in fact, rule out the early notion of eternity as the futurity of God, or God as the one who actualizes the present as the power of the future. On this view, God, as the power of the future, is, so to speak, just ahead of time, and before God no present slips

\textsuperscript{139} Pannenberg, "Eternity, Time, and the Trinitarian God," 67, 70.

\textsuperscript{140} Mostert, \textit{God and the Future}, 144.

\textsuperscript{141} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 331; see Mostert, \textit{God and the Future}, 144.
into the past without having presence to God. There is a simultaneity of presence to the different dimensions of time even in this notion of futurity. And while Mostert is certainly right to pick up on the focus towards the presence of a totality and the encompassing nature of God's reality in Pannenberg's later treatments of eternity, there remain those future-centered claims of Pannenberg noted above: God is "absolute future"; God's "future is that of himself."142 Can eternity still be understood in terms of God's futurity? Or, rather, do such claims only pertain to an aspect of God's eternity?

The answer to such questions is, perhaps. It would seem that Pannenberg's notion of eternity can be read in at least two different ways. For what appears to be the essential futurity of God may only be an element in God's more encompassing and simultaneous presence towards time as a whole. Or, in contrast to this, the simultaneous presence of God to time as a whole might simply be the fact that every momentary present proceeds from God as the power of the future, and thus has presence to God. Both, as Pannenberg describes eternity, are tenable interpretations. And, unfortunately, Pannenberg's trinitarian theology does little to clarify the matter. For when Pannenberg speaks of the internal differentiation of God's being as the grounds of the temporally distinct events of creation, incarnation and consummation, and when he conceptually grounds the significance of such temporally distinct events in the immanent Trinity of God's being, he seems to favor a notion of eternity in the broader sense of God's all-encompassing presence to time.143 The same point pertains to his claim that the "trinitarian differentiation of God's eternity includes the time of creatures in its full range,

142. Pannenberg, ST 1, 409.
from the beginning of creation to it eschatological consummation."\textsuperscript{144} And, yet, in reference to his trinitarian based idea of the self-actualization of God, when he claims that in "the coming of God into the world . . . the goal of its history, the kingdom of God, is already really present as the in-breaking of its consummation from the future," some form of futurity, and its priority to God, is seemingly implied.\textsuperscript{145}

But this is more than an ambiguity in interpreting Pannenberg's understanding(s) of divine eternity. The delineations put in place for a conception of eternity matter. And here, it would seem, that the two notions, that of the simultaneous presence of time to God as a whole and the lingering ideas of futurity, come into conflict, and in a potentially problematic way for a conception of God's living relation to history. The key instance here is this: On the understanding of eternity as the encompassing presence of God, or as the simultaneity of all things to God at once, Pannenberg's claim that the "eternal God does not have ahead of him any future that could be distinguished from his present" would appear to distance temporal distinctions from the eternity of God's life.\textsuperscript{146} Is this a timeless conception of God? When pressed by Jenson on this point, Pannenberg offers little to clarify the matter. He responds, "the presence of God is different," and then doubles down on the previous assertion, "since it is no other than his future."\textsuperscript{147} One must take care, however, in response to the question of timelessness in Pannenberg's idea of eternity. Pannenberg is clear that the idea of simultaneity he sets out intends to be understood as allowing for temporal difference. Nevertheless, a sig-

\textsuperscript{144} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 406.

\textsuperscript{145} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 390.

\textsuperscript{146} Pannenberg, \textit{ST} 1, 410; \textit{Systematische Theologie} 1, 443. English translation slightly altered.

significant degree of ambiguity remains, and which is particularly striking given Pannenberg's underlying concern for a notion of the vitality of God and the claim above that without some sense of temporal distinction, the very quality of life is made null and void. One wonders if Plotinus' notion of eternity as the presence of the totality of life is not as critically adapted to Pannenberg's temporally structured and trinitarian based idea of eternity as he thinks it is.

The notion of eternity in terms of the futurity of God is, I think, more suggestive. I shall not attempt to reconstruct this idea using Pannenberg's theology, although this does not rule out the possibility. Rather, in the next chapter I take up this question in view of the theology of Robert W. Jenson. For Jenson attempts just such a notion of historical transcendence in light of an idea of eternity as God's futurity. And though Jenson's attempt is not without its own shortcomings, it more readily avails itself to conceive of a trinitarian based idea of eternity and transcendence in view of the futurity of God's being in the divine person of the Holy Spirit.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have attempted to set out a notion of the vitality of God in history in view of the trinitarian theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg. The value of Pannenberg's trinitarian theology for an understanding of God's relation to history lies in his notion of the mutuality of the divine persons, or the dependent monarchy of God. The notion provides a sense of particularity in regards to the inner-relations of God and a consistency with the revealed life of God as Father, Son and Spirit that Barth obtains only in his doctrine of election. And more construc-

tively, the essential dependency of the Father on both the Son and the Spirit for the realization of the divine monarchy in Pannenberg's account can be understood to give the notion of the activity of God in history its forward-moving and eschatological shape. Pannenberg's notion of mutuality, and particularly in regards to the insights around the dependency of the Father's monarchy, allows for a conception of God as active and living in history. In Pannenberg's schematic this requires taking seriously the principle of the unity of God's being and lordship, or the final establishment of God's deity in the world — more seriously than Pannenberg himself does. This notion of the livingness of God in history, centered on the idea of the dependent monarchy of the Father, serves as the second essential point in the argument of this work, building on the sense of vitality that underlies the relation between pre-temporal eternity and history in Barth's notion of the obedience of the divine Son from chapter 2.

I concluded the chapter with a more critical assessment of Pannenberg's doctrine of eternity. Pannenberg's construal leaves itself open to multiple readings, and the result of which is a certain ambiguity regarding the essential place of temporality, the quality of life itself, in his understanding of eternity. How a notion of futurity as the eternity of God might be applied along more specifically trinitarian lines will be the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter 4: 'The active Goal of all things':

Trinity and History in the Theology of Robert W. Jenson

In this final main chapter I turn to the work of the American Lutheran theologian Robert W. Jenson. As in the case of Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jenson belongs to a generation of scholars following after and, as I will show below, influenced in important ways by the theological program set forth by Karl Barth. And also like Pannenberg, eschatology maintains a central place in Jenson's theology. With the questions and considerations from the previous chapters on the work of Barth and Pannenberg in view, in what follows I turn to the themes of divine vitality and God's eschatological relation to history in Jenson's trinitarian theology.

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: (1) First I will examine Jenson's early critiques of Barth on election and his notion of eternity. I will show how these critiques overlap in significant ways with my assessment of Barth from chapter 2, particularly in regards to the points that were worked out alongside the critiques of Moltmann, Pannenberg and others on the need to inflect the actuality of election in history and the problems of a self-contained notion of God's being. I will also take up Jenson's turn to an eschatological conception of God with its parallels to Pannenberg's early theology while highlighting what distinguishes their respective approaches to this central theme. (2) Following the assessment of Jenson's early critique of Barth and relation to Pannenberg's theology, I turn to Jenson's trinitarian theology. There are two essential constructive claims in this chapter: first, Jenson's doctrine of the Spirit enables an eschatological conception of God's living relation to history. And, second, his pneumatology affords a way to conceive of divine transcendence within a temporal and trinitarian based framework.
The chapter will be divided into two main parts: In part 1 I will address Jenson's early theological engagements with Barth and Pannenberg. The comparison with Pannenberg will lead into a final introductory section on Jenson's notion of narrative identity that underlies his trinitarian conception of God and view of God's relation to history. In part 2 I turn to Jenson's trinitarian understanding of God's relation to history and his notion of the temporal infinity of God. Prior to laying out Jenson's view of eternity as a temporal infinity, I take up his eschatological doctrine of God with a focus on the reality of the Spirit in God. The Spirit, which Jenson identifies with the futurity of God, is also the principle by which Jenson understands the distinction of God from created reality. I then turn to an idea of God's immanence in Jenson's notion of envelopment. In the final section of part 2 I make the case that Jenson's trinitarian idea of God's temporal and transcendent being opens up a way to conceive of God's living relation to history in eschatological perspective. I will conclude this section with a consideration of this point in view of the ongoing questions around divine freedom, eternity and God's relation to the future from previous chapters.

In its predominantly eschatological focus, this final chapter rounds out the constructive assessment of the triune God's living relation to history. Chapter 1 treated Isaak Dorner's notion of immutability as a way of introducing the basic question on the triune God's living relation to history. Chapter 2 served to both further introduce the primary theme of this work in twentieth century perspective and, with the beginning of the constructive part of this thesis, argued for understanding the continuity and vitality in the relation between the pre-temporal eternity of God and history in a notion of the obedience of the divine Son in Barth's doctrine of election. Building on Barth's notion that God acts in history out of the eternal Trinity of God's being, I incorporated Pannenberg's idea of the dependent monarchy of the Father into his conception of divine actualization to make the case for a notion of the vitality of God in
history in chapter 3. The current chapter picks up on the eschatological side of God's involvement in history from the previous chapter with a conception of God's living relation to history based in the futurity of God as Spirit in Jenson's trinitarian theology. If the accent in Barth's protological construal of God and history falls on the conformity of the Son to the divine will, and with Pannenberg, on the dependent rule of the Father in history, here, as I will show, it belongs to the Spirit as the futurity of God that underlies the transcendent relationality of God in the world.

1: Eternity, Eschatological Transcendence and Narrative Identity

An occupation with the work of Barth marks Jenson's early theology. Jenson undertook his doctoral studies at the University of Heidelberg in the 1950's. His dissertation under the supervision of Peter Brunner is one of the earliest treatments of Barth's doctrine of election. In writing the dissertation Jenson moved to Basel for a period of five months to be in closer proximity to Barth, whom he describes in an autobiographical sketch as an "informal advisor." Two of Jenson's earliest works, one a slightly condensed version of the dissertation, deal directly with Barth's theology, and both of which evidence the positive influence of Barth on Jenson's thought as well as his critical adaptation of the Swiss theologian's work.

In what follows I consider two of Jenson's early critiques of Barth on divine election and the eternity of God and briefly compare Jenson and Pannenberg on the place of futurity and the understanding of historical reality. The latter point will lead into a short exposition of

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Jenson's idea of narrative identity as important background for his trinitarian notion of God that I will turn to in part 2. Alongside a brief assessment of the early critiques of Barth and Pannenberg in Jenson's early work, I will attempt to situate Jenson's theology between these two figures and lay out his constructive concerns for an understanding of God's relation to history that will form the basis for the argument on God's living relation to history in the subsequent parts of this chapter.

1.1: Beginnings with Barth

The critiques that Jenson levels against Barth's doctrine of election in *Alpha and Omega*, the more expository of Jenson's two works on Barth, are best understood as an attempt to carry out Barth's own intention with greater consistency. Concerning the central doctrine of this work, Jenson lauds Barth's assertion that the "goal of history" for the electing God lies in the "life of Jesus Christ, as God's life with and for unworthy man." In regards to Barth's claim regarding the question of God's rule of history that has its ultimate purpose in what takes place with Jesus Christ, Jenson states, "we could not wish a more unequivoal answer." In the more explicitly constructive book on Barth, *God after God*, Jenson writes that "everything is indeed there (in Barth's theology) for the creation of a new understanding of theological meaning . . . and we will use it." The claim echoes a statement made years before in a letter that Jenson sent to Barth shortly after submitting his dissertation: "For me, it is not possible

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to do theology without the *Kirchliche Dogmatik.*" As I will make clear, Jenson's theology diverges from the work of Barth, and sometimes in significant ways. But there is little doubt, however, that at a basic level he remains indebted to it.

Before turning to one of Jenson's central critiques in *Alpha and Omega,* a more particular point in the positive reception of Barth's theology by Jenson should be noted. Jenson states that "the most striking and true side of Barth's doctrine of God's rule of history is his insistence that the act of will by which God rules is identical with the history of Jesus Christ." There is a separate, critical rendering of this claim by Jenson that I will turn to momentarily. Constructively, the essential importance of this notion for Jenson lies in the underlying link between the will and work of God. "Jesus Christ is God ruling human history." In election God makes a basic, self-determining decision, and the result of which is the essential identification between Jesus Christ and what there is to say about the reality of God. To conceive of God, creation and the divine activity is to reflect on the doctrine of reconciliation in which "God's work outside himself is one great uninterrupted act of rule, proceeding from His decision to reconcile sinful man to Himself in Jesus Christ." The importance of this fundamental link between the will of God and the acts of God gleaned from the work of Barth plays a highly important role in Jenson's theological reflections on God.

More critically, the repeated theme around which Jenson distances himself from Barth in his earlier writings pertains to the fundamental meaning and place of God's temporal histo-


ry. In *Alpha and Omega* Jenson makes the case that for all the merits of Barth's doctrine of election, its christologically attuned notion of God's pre-temporal life, it retains an underlying element that conflicts with the reality of God in history. Jenson writes:

> Jesus Christ is the eternal decree of God before all time. Jesus Christ is the history in Palestine which reveals this decree. Barth does not separate these two; his concept of revelation and knowledge is far too rich. But we must still ask: Which is the prior definition? Barth defines the history in time as the revelation and analogy of eternal history and so gives his answer. And with this answer he puts himself in danger of removing reconciliation itself, the inner reality of Jesus' life, from our history.\(^{10}\)

Jenson takes the point to follow from claims in Barth such as, "the giving of the Son by the Father indicates a mystery" that Jesus reveals "in the necessary decision and achievement here below of what is decided and achieved by God Himself up above."\(^{11}\) The claim points to a kind of duality in perspective, God above and God below, that comes into view more sharply in Jenson's criticisms of Barth from *God after God*. But what must be noted here is that the construal of election, achieved in the inner life of God and in time, runs the risk of coming into conflict with Barth's greater intention to speak of election as an eternal decision actualized in time. Barth, as noted in chapter 2, construes election as the "primal history" of God. The threat Jenson perceives here is that the playing out of this history, as Barth claims,

\(^{10}\) Jenson, *Alpha and Omega*, 162-63.

between God and the individual, Jesus Christ, in the world, be understood as its *re-playing*, as a mirror in history of what happens primally in God.\(^{12}\)

Jenson picks up the engagement with Barth again, and in more constructive fashion, in *God after God*. Among other themes, Jenson attends to Barth's doctrine of divine eternity. Here Jenson largely endorses the way in which Barth works to overcome a notion of eternity that smacks of timelessness. For it is this notion, so commonly received in the Christian theological tradition, that is seemingly at odds with the biblical God's involvement in the created order and the trinitarian identity of God. As Barth puts it, "the theological concept of eternity must be *freed* from the Babylonian captivity of an abstract opposition to the concept of time."\(^{13}\) If the eternal being of God is ultimately defined by what happens with Jesus Christ in time, then the existence of God, the eternality of God's being, must be historical.\(^ {14}\)

It is Barth's appeal to the doctrine of the Trinity in his construal of eternity that Jenson finds most promising. Already here, in this early work, and which continues into Jenson's *Systematic Theology*, Jenson's trinitarian idea of eternity builds on Barth's previous formulations. Particularly appealing is the idea that the eternality of God is inclusive of a "whither and whence," "present, past and future," proper to God's own being.\(^ {15}\) Moreover, in Jesus Christ God "takes time to Himself" and makes it the "form of his eternity."\(^ {16}\) This point, notes Jenson, is identical to divine election, or the eternal covenant God makes between the Father

\(^{12}\) Barth, *CD II/2*, 8.

\(^{13}\) Barth, *CD II/2*, 611, cited in Jenson, *God after God*, 72.

\(^{14}\) Jenson, *God after God*, 72.

\(^{15}\) Barth, *CD II/1*, 610-613, cited in Jenson, *God after God*, 128-29.

\(^{16}\) Barth, *CD II/1*, 616.
and Jesus the Son in the communion of their Spirit. Jenson quotes Barth approvingly: "God is, so to speak, ours in advance." All this, according to Jenson, can be taken to mean that the eternity of God, at one with the trinitarian being of God, has its own time, or what Jenson describes as the "radical temporality" of God in Jesus Christ and that gives creaturely existence its "concrete temporal structure." But, Jenson asserts, it is not the only possible interpretation. Barth describes God's time for creatures, the "fulfilled time" that occurs in Jesus, for instance, as the replacement "of our non-genuine and improper time" that is not "real time." And in his account of the resurrection narratives, attesting to the "pure presence of God," Barth characterizes the "eternal presence of God" with the risen Jesus as "a present without any future." Such claims lend themselves to a take on eternity not as uniquely temporal, but in terms of God's essential immunity to time and the changes of history; that is, to an idea of divine timelessness. Jenson is aware that such a reading conflicts with Barth's intentions. "When we read (Barth's) theology so we are reading it wrongly." He continues, "but there is something that compels us to read it wrongly in this way."

What, according to Jenson, compels such a reading? On Jenson's view the answer has to do with Barth's use of analogy. Barth retains a notion "of God in himself distinct from

17. Barth, CD II/2, 104-05, 116, 156-57.
18. Barth, CD I/1, 384; Jenson, God after God, 108.
20. Barth, CD I/2, 45, 66.
21. Barth, CD I/2, 114. Likewise, "the fact that Christ had risen actually points to a time, a real part of human time amid so many other portions of time, which, as it cannot become past, neither needs any future, a time purely present because of the pure presence of God among men." CD II/1, 114.
22. Jenson, God after God, 152. Parenthetical edit mine.
God-for-us." To avoid an idea of God different from God's self-disclosure, this reality of God apart from creatures is taken to be "the prototype of God-in-his-revelation." This holds for the relation between eternity and time. However, if God's eternity only resembles time, then there remains a potentially radical rendering of it, radical in the sense of utterly without time. "It all depends on which way you look at it." The heart of Jenson's critique is manifest in the claim that Barth does not "sustain the dialectic (of eternity and time) to the end as a temporal dialectic." Barth wants to say God "is and is not in Jesus," but fails to provide a way of describing God's transcendence in relation to who God is for creatures; that is to say, a way of describing God as what happens with Jesus, and free over against that happening — at the same time. Simply put, Barth does not put forward a notion of "God's transcendence within the terms of time itself." And this, he thinks, leaves open the possibility of speculation into a timeless notion of eternity that underlies, and ultimately undermines, a conception of Jesus' history as God's own.

The common concern to the criticisms of Jenson on Barth's notion of election and understanding of eternity is the tendency to conceive of God's eternal life in a way that ultimately, though perhaps only slightly, evades the historical reality of God. And the common basis


25. Jenson, Alpha and Omega, 86-93.


27. Jenson, God after God, 154. Parenthetical edit mine.

28. Jenson, God after God, 155.
of these critiques lies in that Barth maintains a notion of God's being in-and-for-itself, apart from creatures, in the history that God lives with others, even as this notion comes to expression in only limited ways. My assessment of Jenson's critique can be limited, for the concerns that he highlights overlap significantly with the concerns registered in chapter 2. Though, there are some differences to note here.

In his critique of Barth on divine election, Jenson, I believe, overstates the case. He points to the claim of Barth in which the giving of the Son has to do with a mystery "in the necessary decision and achievement here below of what is decided and achieved by God Himself up above." In chapter 2 I noted that there remains the possibility of understanding a kind of duality in perspectives in certain of Barth's formulations around election, one of God's being in eternity and, the other, of God's being in history — a kind of parallel relation between God and the world that risks undermining a conception of God's living history. But within the broader context of election, this description of God's electing history is ultimately one-sided, and fails to adequately account for Barth's consistently applied notion of election as the will of God that occurs in time.

That said, in chapter 2 I also highlighted the plausible rendering of a concept of God's being-in-and-of-itself apart from creatures prior to Barth's treatment of election in his formal doctrine of the Trinity in CD I/1 (i.e., in the idea of God as 'ours in advance'). Here, the just noted conception of God in eternity and God in history as parallel realities applies. In regards to Barth's conception of God within this specific portion of the CD, Jenson's critique on the notion of a being of God in-and-of-itself is more on the mark. If there is a difference between the critique I noted and Jenson's, it is that Jenson is more concerned to highlight the potential

29. Barth, CD III/2, 66, cited in Jenson, Alpha and Omega, 85-86.
understanding of God's eternity in Barth as having to do with timelessness. At any rate, the critique highlights the need to reconsider a notion of the freedom of God in relation to historical reality, or an idea of transcendence that conceives of God's presence in time even as God surpasses it.

1.2: Beginnings with Pannenberg

What remains to be noted are the constructive aims of Jenson's critiques of Barth and, moreover, how this situates Jenson's approach in relation to Pannenberg's. The connection between Jenson and Pannenberg is explicit. In order to conceive a notion of transcendence that stems from the eternity of God as triune, Jenson proposes the following: "we will understand God's freedom over against what he is for and with us as his futurity to what he already is with and for us."30 The turn to eschatology and futurity resonates with the work of the early Pannenberg. Jenson himself describes Pannenberg as a kind of pioneer in the constructive thinking about God's relation to time in terms of futurity. After outlining Pannenberg's idea of history as a whole in light of "Jesus Christ as the end of history" in God after God, and this idea as definitive for "who and what God is," as well as Pannenberg's principle on the unity of deity and lordship, Jenson offers a sweeping affirmation of Pannenberg's work (up to this point) as in keeping with his own theological vision. Jenson quotes Pannenberg approvingly: God is "the power of the future."31

As noted in chapter 3, Pannenberg makes the claim in his early work that "God, through the realization of the historical future at a given time, pushed this away from himself

30. Jenson, God after God, 155.

31. Wolfhart Pannenberg, Grundfragen systematischer Theologie (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 292, cited in Jenson, God after God, 166; see also, 177.
as the power of the ultimate future and in this way mediated himself to it in his own eschatological futurity.\textsuperscript{32} Like Pannenberg, as will become clear, Jenson's idea of God contains this eschatological notion of being as a unique kind of futurity; God is the \textit{power} of the future, and not simply one and the same with the future itself. Alongside this common idea, or at least shared terminology, Jenson notes a distinction between himself and Pannenberg in conceiving of the unity of reality. The primal notion that guides Pannenberg's thinking, writes Jenson, is "the postulate of a totality of history."\textsuperscript{33} As Pannenberg himself writes, "an individual event can say something about the one God only when it has in view the totality of reality," which in the biblical view is a "totality as the totality of history" and "accessible only through the anticipation of the end of all events."\textsuperscript{34} In the distinct ways that Pannenberg articulates the importance of the future, demonstrated in notions like the eschatological nature of God's ultimate self-disclosure and the characterization of historical existence by way of anticipation, the idea of history as a whole and a basic sense for the unity of reality remain fundamental.

Jenson's alternative understanding of the unity of reality lies in what he describes as "the contradiction of death and life." And this not in the abstract, but in "the suffering unity of the crucified and future one as the very being of God."\textsuperscript{35} As stated, Jenson's idea of God and, moreover, his notion of God's relation to time derives from this point. Notably, though, the distinction between Jenson and Pannenberg is one of emphasis. For as mentioned before, Pannenberg's idea of the whole is also, at least in part, driven by the particular event of

\begin{thebibliography}{16}
\bibitem{32} Pannenberg, "The God of Hope," 244; cf. "Theology and the Kingdom of God," 54.
\bibitem{33} Jenson, \textit{God after God}, 178.
\bibitem{34} Pannenberg, \textit{Jesus — God and Man}, 185.
\bibitem{35} Jenson, \textit{God after God}, 179.
\end{thebibliography}
Christ's resurrection, for in it "the dawning of the end of history" takes place, or the preliminary "onset of the end."\footnote{36} And, especially in his later theology, Pannenberg takes efforts to conceive of the dependency of the Father's monarchy as connected to the death of Christ and his victory. And conversely, Jenson maintains an important place for the understanding of the whole in relation to the activity of God in history.\footnote{37} But emphasis, of course, matters. Jenson's attempt to conceive of God and the relation between God and time through the events of Christ's death and resurrection results in more temporally determined notions of eternity and infinity.

To best explain this underlying conception of the temporal nature of God and, with it, of how the relation between death and life functions in his idea of God, I turn to Jenson's idea of narrative identity.

1.3: Narrative Identity

The basic understanding of reality and history in terms of the events of Jesus' death and resurrection for Jenson come to expression in his concept of narrative identity. The identification of God, writes Jenson, is "the chief theological task."\footnote{38} That such an identification takes shape along narrative lines is based, in one way, on the fact that narrative makes up the central genre of the biblical text. God wills a history with creatures, and the testimony to God's salvific dealings occurs in construals of pilgrimage, exodus and exile and an incarnation, and specifically one that is narrated. Under the influence of his former teacher, Gerhard von Rad,

\footnote{36. Wolfhart Pannenberg, "What is Truth," in Basic Questions in Theology II, 24.}

\footnote{37. See Jenson's comments on his connection to Pannenberg's theology in "A Theological Autobiography, to Date," 49.}

Jenson gives prolonged attention to God's narrative identification in the Old Testament. Here, as Jenson notes, the narrative identification of God has definitively scriptural warrants, seen in the promise making and keeping of the biblical God. For instance, in Isaiah 40-45 God is depicted by recounting promises of old, and makes them anew in light of the exilic predicament. "See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them" (Isa. 42.9). In this way the narrative links the divine faithfulness to the contingencies of history. At the fulfillment of the promises, all will know that "I am the Lord" (Isa. 45.5). "The Lord explicitly puts his self-identity at narrative risk."

The central event of scripture that evokes the question of the narrative identity of God is the crucifixion of Christ. Jenson's narrative ontology, based in the event of Christ's death, is an instance of what he describes as a project in "revisionary metaphysics," or a reconsideration of traditionally employed ideas such as divine eternity in view of the central events of the gospel history. At the cross the being of God as Father, Son and Spirit, writes Jenson, as


40. Francesca Aran Murphy misses this point. She claims that Jenson equates "what he knows of (the divine identities)," that is, in the narrative genre of scripture, "with how he knows them." God is Not a Story: Realism Revisited (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 268. This, however, overlooks Jenson's recourse to the nature of the scriptural events themselves. See especially Jenson's treatment of God's being in the events of the cross and resurrection below.

41. Jenson, STh 1, 65.

42. Cf. Isa. 42.6-8, 43.3, 43.11-25, 45.3.

43. Jenson, STh 1, 65.

a "self-identical personal reality" is at stake. If the crucifixion of the Son, expressed most vividly in the cry of dereliction, is not to denote a "mutually betraying pantheon," then, in a claim that mirrors the stance of Moltmann, the identity of God "must be constituted precisely in the integration of this abandonment."45 And herein lies the key point. If God maintains the divine unity in the occurrence of Jesus' death, then the identity of God must, on this view, take place in and through the events of the cross and Jesus' victory. Given that no ontological rift between the Son and Father occurs in the crucifixion event, then the abandonment and death of Jesus must be incorporated into that relation.46 These "blatantly temporal events," notes Jenson, belong to the deity of God.47

It can be added to this that a narrative identification requires a point of closure if the identity at hand is to be established at all. If God is one (Deut. 6.4), then the being of God must cohere in a dramatic way; and, finally, cohere at the end of God's ways with the created order. The point is made forcefully in scripture itself: God is not "eternally himself" in the recurrence of a beginning, repeated ever anew in time, but in anticipation of an end in which God is "all in all" (I Cor. 15.28).48


45. Jenson, STh 1, 65.

46. Jenson, STh 1, 65. In his commentary on Ezekiel Jenson expresses his agreement with Jürgen Moltmann on this point. Ezekiel, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 187-88. "The cross stands between the Father and the Son in all the harshness of its forsakeness. If one describes the life of God within the Trinity as the 'history of God' (Hegel), this history of God contains within itself the whole abyss of godforsakeness, absolute death and the non-God." Moltmann, The Crucified God, 235-49, esp. 246.


48. Jenson, STh 1, 66.
All this leads to the programmatic claim for Jenson's theology that the biblical God is not only identified "by events in time," but also "with those events."\(^{49}\) The events of Jesus' death and resurrection holding a kind of primal place within this notion. Noting the difference from Pannenberg, reality as a completed whole, while important to the dramatic closure of God's history for Jenson, is ultimately understood in view of the *continuity* that God lives between Jesus' death and resurrection. Pannenberg understands the reality of God to somehow be at stake (in regards to God's deity or just in revelation?) in Jesus' death and resurrection, but even more so, takes the resurrection to *verify* in advance the final closure or completion of all things with God. For Jenson, the events of Jesus' death and resurrection are more explicitly self-constituting events for God, events in the history that God has with others. God, on Jenson's view, is not other than God in revelation history, *with* the events thereof.

A connection to Barth's doctrine of election ought also to be noted here. It is possible to think of the claim that God is identified with the events of salvation history as Jenson's attempt to modify in narrative form Barth's assertion that God, the subject of revelation, "is identical with His act in revelation."\(^{50}\) Furthermore, and more to the point, Jenson regularly designates the narrative involvement of God in history as "God's *commitment* by and in that (scriptural) story."\(^{51}\) The language of commitment points to Jenson's recourse to Barth's notion of election, and specifically when taken to be "God's will — its eternity undiminished — as an event in history . . . an event which occurred in time at the Cross."\(^{52}\) In this way, the

\(^{49}\) Jenson, *STh* 1, 59-60.

\(^{50}\) Barth, *CD* I/1, 296.

\(^{51}\) Jenson, *STh* 1, 72.

identification of God with specific historic events has to do with the self-determining decision of God from eternity to be this God, the God of Israel who raises Jesus from the dead in the Spirit. As based in the eternal will of God, the being of God is defined by events in time, but also, importantly, God is not merely at the whim of history and its contingencies. Overlooked, Jenson's theology may appear to conceive of God as purely actualized in history itself. Jenson's idea of narrative identity, God's identification with events in time, is indeed difficult, and raises the question that I will examine in part 2 below of God's distinction from created reality. But that he is moved to it lies in the fact that with the concrete link between the eternal will of God and its realization in the concrete acts and deeds of a historical individual, God is not merely identified as the author of a work, but as a participant, and, in fact, the central participant of that story.

In sum, in part 1 of this chapter I have highlighted Jenson's early critiques of Barth and Pannenberg and the constructive concerns for his understanding of God's relation to history. Jenson's approach should be understood as a modification of Barth's theological endeavor, an attempt to conceive of the goal of election and the eternality of God's being as triune along specifically historical lines. There is overlap between Jenson's turn to the futurity of God and the early Pannenberg. Notably, though, where Pannenberg links this notion more closely to the idea of history as a whole and the definitive revelation of God at the end, Jenson brings it to bear on a view of God and reality based on a dialectic of death and life, and specifically in view of the continuity of God in the narrative events of Jesus' death and victo-


ry. In what follows I turn to the application of these concerns in Jenson's trinitarian theology and the question of God's eschatological relation to history.

2: The History of the Trinitarian God

Having situated Jenson's theology in relation to the work of Barth and Pannenberg and setting forth his concept of narrative identity, I now turn to the more explicitly constructive portion of this chapter. In part 2 of this chapter I take up Jenson's trinitarian theology in order to make the case for a conception of God's living relation to history in eschatological perspective.

The constructive assessment of Jenson's theology in what follows centers on his idea of divine eternity as the temporal infinity of God. In order to understand Jenson's assertions on divine eternity, and more specifically, to consider it in view of God's relation to history in the events of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, two other notions will be addressed. In section 1 I will lay out the basic features of Jenson's trinitarian theology, giving specific attention to his distinctive notion of the liberating and eschatological reality of the Spirit in God. This idea forms the basis for a concept of God's distinction from created reality, a qualified form of divine aseity. In section 2 I will address Jenson's idea of divine envelopment in his doctrine of creation. This will take us to notions of divine immanence and the historical being of God in Jenson's theology. I then turn to Jenson on the key notion of eternity as the temporal infinity of God, demonstrating how ideas of divine transcendence and historicity come together in his theology specifically around the understanding of God's being in the resurrection event of Jesus. A fourth and final section will take up the constructive claims concerning God's eschatological relation to history as noted in the previous paragraph.
Before proceeding it is worth pointing out Jenson's use of the term "identity" in place of the more traditional nomenclature of a divine person or *hypostasis*. Jenson's use of identity is an attempt to put the Cappadocian notion of *hypostasis* into modern idiom.\(^{55}\) He notes three concerns in using the alternative of identity: *First*, an identity is distinguishable by name and identifying description (e.g., Spirit, the breath of God). *Second*, an identity can be repeatedly identified. The being of God, as triune, is thrice-repeated, and thus has a three-fold identity that is more basic to God than a fixed set of characteristics, such as timelessness or omnipotence. And *third*, identity captures a sentiment in the modern notion of personal existence as posited over the course of time. Again, Jenson likens this to the thrice-repeated being of God: "God does God, and over again, and yet over gain."\(^{56}\) Note, however, the initial reference to God's own being here. The question of achieved identity in time will arise in what follows, but that is not Jenson's basic assertion in this context. Jenson consistently applies the term in his trinitarian theology and I will use it in the exposition below.

2.1: The Eschatological Trinity

In this section I consider the dynamic of the Spirit in Jenson's trinitarian theology. Jenson's doctrine of the Spirit, and the temporal notion in God that accompanies it, leads towards Jenson's idea of what distinguishes God from all reality besides God, and with it, a notion of divine aseity.

The way in which God is distinct from God's involvement in created reality, or, in fact, whether God is distinct as such in Jenson's theology, is a contested point among his in-

\(^{55}\) Jenson, *STh* 1, 105-06.

\(^{56}\) Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 109-11. Jenson is aware that the last point is something that only "struggled for expression . . . in the Cappadocians." 110; see also, "Three Identities of One Action," 6-8.
terpreters. The principle concern here is an over-identification or a collapse of the eternal Trinity of God and the economic Trinity. In a review of Jenson's *Systematic Theology*, Pannenberg himself states that "in Jenson’s presentation, the difference between the 'immanent' Trinity, the eternal communion of Father, Son, and Spirit, and the 'economic' Trinity almost vanishes." He continues, "without that distinction, the reality of the one God tends to be dissolved into the process of the world." 57 Others, such as Scott Swain and, to a lesser extent, Ellen T. Charry, offer similar critiques. 58 This critique, and specifically as it bears on the constructive use of Jenson's trinitarian idea of God for the argument of this chapter, will be addressed in what follows. This initial section will offer a partial response in taking up the question of what distinguishes God from created reality. It will be considered more fully in the final section of this chapter.

Jenson's constructive engagement with the doctrine of the Spirit picks up on the creedal era formulations on the being of God. Here Jenson reiterates a point that, as noted before, also animates Pannenberg's trinitarian theology. Within the traditional formulations of God's being the eternal relations in God flow primarily one way, in a linear direction that proceeds from the Father. Jenson does not object to the essential place of the relations of origin in God, and, as I will show, his notion of the distinctiveness of God's being heavily relies on this traditional construal. But with the constitutive relations of origin in God in place, Jenson notes that creedal era trinitarian theology left largely untouched the significance of scripture's


eschatological dimensions for an understanding of the divine being.\textsuperscript{59} Like Pannenberg, Jenson takes up the question of the eschatological reality of God's eternal being as triune. Jenson describes this as a "pneumatological deficit" in the tradition, and his trinitarian theology is an attempt to remedy it.\textsuperscript{60}

Jenson's trinitarian theology proposes to address this deficit in various ways. Jenson works to demonstrate how the Spirit possesses its own Archimedean standpoint in God like that of the Father's, the origin or \textit{arche} of the Godhead. Moreover, he is driven, like Pannenberg, by a concern to distinguish the Spirit's personhood in God. The traditional conception of the Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and Son, according to Jenson, all too easily lends itself to an I-Thou trinitarianism that underwrites much theology in the west.\textsuperscript{61} But most important for the purposes here in highlighting the principle of God's alterity is Jenson's concern to draw out the eschatological dimensions of the Spirit's identity in God and its theological implications.

From his exegetical take on the role of the Spirit as described in scripture, Jenson speaks of the Spirit as the transcendent force of God. Reflective of its presence in creation, in the exodus event the Spirit (\textit{ruach}) revokes Israel's oppressors and opens a path for the chosen people through the waters (Ex. 15.8-10). In later Israel the presence of the Spirit among the prophets can be seen to both create a future for the people of God and, at the same time, to be itself the content of that future: "I am going to open your graves . . . I will put my spirit

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{59} Jenson, \textit{STh} 1, 108.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Jenson, \textit{STh} 1, 157.
\end{itemize}
within you and you shall live" (Ezk. 37.4, 12-14). Post-exilic Israel attributes its remote origins in Egypt, its liberation from slavery and its way into the unknown future to the presence of God in the Spirit (Isa. 63.10-14).

In the New Testament Jesus appears as the Spirit-bearer (Mk. 1.9-11). The Spirit is responsible for his conception in Mary's womb (Lk. 1.35). At the outset of his ministry the Spirit uniquely descends on him at the river Jordan (Mt. 3.16). The acts of Jesus' ministry, performed in the Spirit, are specifically identified in the gospel of Matthew with the immanence of God's coming kingdom (12.28). The Spirit is variously described as the life-giving principle of God. The Spirit makes alive the once lifeless flesh of Jesus in the event of the resurrection and, likewise, is the power by which the faithful now live (Rom. 1.4; 1 Pet. 3.18, 4.6). And, finally, specifically eschatological cues accompany the presence of the Spirit. This is demonstrated not only of the resurrection of Christ, "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15.20), but also in Paul's dialectic from Romans 8 between the law of the Spirit and the law of sin and death and his subsequent notion of the possession of the Spirit and the expectation of future redemption. Similar eschatological notions occur in the bestowal of the Spirit in the Lukan-Acts account of the mission of the early Christian community (Acts 2.17, 2.32-33 [Joel 2.28], 3.19-21).

With the eschatological emphasis of the Spirit's activity in scripture, Jenson accounts for the Spirit with the same terminology seen in Pannenberg's early theology. The Spirit,

62. See also, Isa. 32.15-16; Robert W. Jenson, On the Inspiration of Scripture (Delhi, NY: ALPB books, 2012), 10.


64. Jenson, Christian Dogmatics 2, 114-19; STh 1, 88.
writes Jenson, is God "from and toward the End"\(^{65}\) and the "power of God's future."\(^{66}\) "The Spirit is God coming from the future to break the present open to himself."\(^{67}\) But, differently than Pannenberg, Jenson develops the point more systematically in terms of a futurity proper to the trinitarian relations in God. I noted in the previous chapter that the Spirit can be seen as a kind of telos or end for the Father's monarchy in Pannenberg's trinitarian theology, although the point is not worked out by Pannenberg himself. Pannenberg describes his early ventures into the idea of God as the power of the future as a "first sketch," and continues to use this notion in his *Systematic Theology* to address the temporal structure of God's activity in the Spirit within his doctrine of creation.\(^{68}\) The overall place of God's futurity in Pannenberg's developed, systematic doctrine of God — *distinct from* his eschatological conception of the monarchy of the Father — as I highlighted in the previous chapter, remains a point of ambiguity. In Jenson, however, the futurity of God as the Spirit, grafted into his trinitarian theology as a whole, becomes a more explicit tool by which to conceive of God's relation to history. In regards to God's living relation to history, it plays an analogous role to the dependent and historically involved deity of the Father in Pannenberg's theology. The Spirit, Jenson writes, "is the End of all God's ways"; likewise, the Spirit is "God coming to us from the last future; he is God coming from and as the Kingdom."\(^{69}\)

\(^{65}\) Jenson, *STh* 1, 26, 89, 160; *STh* 2, 26, 121; *The Triune Identity*, 23-24.


\(^{68}\) Pannenberg, *ST* 2, 95-112, esp. 98.

\(^{69}\) Jenson, *STh* 1, 157, 219.
The Spirit, according to Jenson, is "the active Goal of all things."\(^{70}\) As this applies to God, the Spirit is the way in which God's being is itself ordered in view of an Outcome that is God's own.\(^{71}\) Here Jenson builds on Barth's trinitarian based idea of eternity. I noted previously that eternity for Barth pertains to the duration of God that includes "beginning, succession and end" as well as "past" and "future," "a before and an after," but which, distinct to God alone, do not fall apart.\(^{72}\) All of this, on Barth's view, is based in the unity-in-distinctions of God's triune being. Jenson agrees. The difference from Barth lies in that Jenson appropriates distinctive dimensions of eternity to the identities of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Particularly, he appropriates the distinct dimensions of time and of a whence and whither as well to the divine identities in God.

In view of the Father as the unoriginated origin of the Godhead, and the Spirit, in whose procession there is a Goal proper to God's own being, Jenson speaks of a real whence and whither in God that correspond to the Father as the *arche* of God's being and the Spirit as its Outcome. As the one whom the Father intends and whom the Spirit frees for obedience to the Father, the Son mediates the two, the Origin and Outcome as the one God.\(^{73}\) Furthermore, he writes:

> This narrative structure (in God) is enabled by a difference between whence and whither, which one cannot finally refrain from calling 'past' and 'future,' and which is identical

\(^{70}\) Jenson, *STh* 1, 160.

\(^{71}\) Jenson, *STh* 1, 160.

\(^{72}\) Barth, *CD II/1*, 610, 611, 615.

with the distinction between the Father and the Spirit. This difference is not measurable; nothing in God recedes into the past or approaches from the future. But the difference is also absolute: there are whence and whither in God that are not like right and left or up and down, that do not reverse with the point of view.74

Importantly, Jenson is quick to note that such temporal terms apply to God in an analogous way.75 On the one hand, that past and future in God apply in only an analogous way is in part because, as Jenson notes elsewhere, what God anticipates, the Spirit or Outcome in God, God uniquely possesses; the difference of whence and whither in God 'is not measurable.'76 On the other hand, just so far as the originating being of the Father and the procession of the Spirit are essential to God, the difference of whence and whither in God 'is also absolute.' This construal is essential to understanding Jenson's theology and the constructive use that he makes of the trinitarian idea of God. Notably, the governing rule here is not to work out perfect conceptual congruity between temporal distinction and wholeness in God. Rather, the rule has to do with what has been established and affirmed in the creedal statements about the triune relations of God's being.77 The begetting of the Son, for example, is a constitutive part of what it means for him to be God, essential to the very nature of God's being. He is, as such, "God

74. Jenson, STh 2, 35; see also STh 1, 218.

75. Jenson, STh 2, 35. Parenthetical edit mine.

76. Jenson, Ezekiel, 87.

from God." Here, notes Jenson, is a clear "before and after" proper to the reality of God, and yet one that cannot be plotted on a time-line in any simple way.78

The dialectic here is the very point. Or as Jenson writes in an earlier work, "only a trinitarian concept of God can contain this dialectic within itself"; God is "the reality of this dialectic."79 As the eschatological reality of God's own being, in the Spirit God is God's own future.80 And that future is as real to God as is the distinctiveness of the personhood of the Spirit, and for no other reason than that futurity consists of the Spirit's procession in God, the Spirit as the liberating power of God or God as the Goal and End of God's own being.81 That God is in possession of God's own future, writes Jenson, is not "equivalent to his having no future distinct from his present."82 Yet, in the divine unity, the future does not approach God from the outside. "There is future in God, but not so as to transcend God: God anticipates his future and so possesses it."83 Most consistently, Jenson describes this in terms a divine futurity identical to the fellowship that the Father and Son at once share and anticipate in the Spirit.84 Somewhat differently, Jenson can also articulate this conception of the presence of future in God in terms of the future of created time. He writes, the truth apocalyptic prophecy, for instance, "must depend upon the presence of the future with God . . . precisely as future. If

78. Robert W. Jenson, "Ipse Pater Non Est Impassibilis," in *Divine Impassability and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, 124; see also, *STh* 1, 102-03.


81. Jenson, "Does God Have Time?" 195.

82. Jenson, *STh* 1, 218n. 61.

83. Jenson, *STh* 2, 121.

84. Jenson, *STh* 1, 158, 161.
the future is simply what is not yet, if it is present for no one, it cannot now be shown." He attributes this to the reality of the Spirit as the goal and outcome of God's life.\textsuperscript{85}

The distinctiveness of God's self-possessed futurity leads to the central claim here: Insofar as God is Spirit, and therefore uniquely "his own future," God "is unboundedly lively."\textsuperscript{86} Herein lies a notion of God's freedom, on Jenson's view, that "is more than abstract aseity."\textsuperscript{87} But it is still a version of aseity, or of God's self-grounded life in the sense of God's self-possessed futurity that makes God unsurpassable being. The aseity of God is identical to the trithean nature of God, and specifically in the fact that the procession of the Spirit is God's own future, self-anticipated and proper to God's own being. God "is himself only eschatologically," and thus with the futurity of God's own being, God is, in one of Jenson's favored expressions, unsurpassable being.\textsuperscript{88}

A basic aim of Jenson's trinitarian theology, in sum, is to fill out the dynamic of the Spirit in God in view of the creedal era affirmations of the divine being and the eschatological activity of the Spirit within scripture. This leads Jenson, in one way, to a temporal conception of God's being in which the Spirit, as the whither of God's life, upholds God's own and absolute futurity. In another way, the same point underlies a specifically trinitarian conception of God's aseity, or what distinguishes the being of God from all reality besides God. In the section that follows I turn towards a feature of God's immanence in Jenson's conception of the way in which God envelops creaturely time.

\textsuperscript{85} Jenson, \textit{Ezekiel}, 87; see also, \textit{STh} 2, 121, 368.

\textsuperscript{86} Jenson, \textit{STh} 1, 143.

\textsuperscript{87} Jenson, \textit{STh} 1, 160.

\textsuperscript{88} Jenson, \textit{The Triune Identity}, 140-143.
2.2: Divine Envelopment

Having set forth how the temporal structure of God distinguishes God from all else I now take up the more specifically positive relation between the trinitarian God and created reality in Jenson's theology. First I consider Jenson on the way in which God envelopes created reality. In the section that follows this one I turn to the self-determining events for God in Jesus' cross and resurrection.

According to Jenson, how God encompasses created reality takes shape in a definitively trinitarian way. Jenson can even state that "the specificity of the triune God is not that he is three, but that he occupies each pole of time as a persona dramatis." The claim is closely tied up with a theory on the relation between eternity and the nature of religion that reaches back to Jenson's early work. It is also an assertion that follows upon the temporal or the originating (Father) and perfecting (Spirit) structure that characterizes Jenson's trinitarian idea of God. How the triune God, in relating to the world, occupies the distinct poles of time comes to expression most vividly in Jenson's doctrine of creation.

Jenson favors the cappadocian principle in which every singular act of God occurs from the Father, is mediated by the Son and comes to completion in the Spirit. As it regards God's creative activity, Jenson references the subsequent use of the rule in John of Damascus' claim that what the Father thinks in creation is worked out by the Logos and perfected in the Spirit. Jenson slightly reformulates the point: "God the Father is the sheer given of creation;


God the Spirit is the perfecting Freedom that animates creation; God the Son is the mediator of creation.91 The three subsist in relation to one another. With the trinitarian formulations of God's creative activity Jenson intends to convey an idea of creation, and with it, of creaturely existence in time, as an "accommodation" within the eternal life of God for others. In God we "live and move and have our being" (Acts. 17.28).92 "In himself, (God) opens room, and that act is the event of creation."93

Jenson expands on his trinitarian adaptation of John of Damascus' claim. As both the sheer given of creation, the Father is also the arche of God's being. The Father, as such, is "the absolute Antecedent of all possible other reality," including, in an appropriated role, the space of creation.94 The Father posits the being of all that is distinct from himself. Herein lies the importance of the Spirit's identity as well, which Jenson turns to next. Jenson uses a hypothetical notion to articulate the role of the Spirit. The Spirit, as the Spirit of the creator, "frees the Father from retaining all being with himself, and so frees what the Father initiates from being the mere emanation it would have been were the Father God by himself."95 The Spirit, as God own's future, "draws to and into the triune converse those from whom the Trinity makes room."96 The very diversity of God's being, inclusive of a futurity in God (the Spirit) distinct from God, and yet, that simultaneously possesses this future (in the Father and Son), allows God to give others a share in God's own life without being subsumed by the sheer sin-

92. See Jenson, *StH* 2, 34.
gularity of God's being.\textsuperscript{97} With this idea Jenson gives a temporally stylized conception of what in the theological tradition is conceived as the place for others in God as grounded in the eternal distinction of the Son from the Father.\textsuperscript{98}

The Son, as expected, plays the mediating role in God and in God's creative dealings as they proceed from the Father to the perfecting activity of the Spirit. But here the historical nature of God, or God's self-determination in and as what takes place in the history of Jesus Christ, moves to the forefront. The Son "has his own individual entity \textit{within} created time, in that he is himself one of those among whom and upon whom creatures' participation in God's story is being 'worked out.'"\textsuperscript{99} The Son mediates between the Father's originating and the Spirit's liberating \textit{in} time itself. For an understanding of the triune God's envelopment of creation, then, it is not a mere spatialized conception — the Father before, the Son with and the Spirit beyond, which would, of course, lend itself all too easily to a modalistic view. The way in which God brackets created reality is enforced through divine actions that in the cappadocián principle which Jenson maintains, are always three-fold and yet \textit{singular} works. Jenson writes, "the envelopment of our time by God is itself accomplished in the course of our time."\textsuperscript{100}

\begin{footnotes}


99. Jenson, STh 2, 27.

100. Jenson, STh 2, 27.
\end{footnotes}
In the notion of divine envelopment it becomes clear for Jenson that God relates to created reality out of the trinitarian structure of God's being. And God does so at each point of created history. Notably then, and in contrast to the claim of Thomas Weinandy on Jenson's theology, God does not simply become triune in history, even as events in God's history with creatures are definitive of God's being. What is more, God relates to created reality from the same structure that distinguishes God from created reality. The point is crucial for understanding Jenson's claim that God's encompassing of the world takes its definitive shape in the events of Christ's passion. He writes,

The crucified and risen Jesus determines the content of (the Father and the Spirit's) mutuality. Because it is the risen Jesus whom the Father eternally initiates, the Father's initiating is open to freedom; because it is the crucified Jesus whom the Spirit by raising him eternally frees, the Spirit's liberating can be the liberation of an actuality.

That God's freedom ultimately takes shape in the self-determined events of Jesus' cross and victory requires a consideration of the meaning of Jesus' resurrection in Jenson's theology. Here, according to Jenson, the historical being of God and the eternity by which God transcends death come together in a single event. I turn to this in the next section.

2.3: The Temporal Infinity of God


102. Jenson, STh 2, 27. Parenthetical edit mine.
According to Jenson, God encompasses the world by means of what happens in Jesus of Nazareth. Herein lies Jenson's account of God's eternity. He states, "the way in which the whence and the whither of the divine life are one, the way in which the triune God is eternal, is by the events of Jesus' death and resurrection."103 As the unity of whence and whither in God, centered on what happens with Jesus the Son, Jenson's view of eternity takes on an explicitly trinitarian shape. He describes this as the "temporal infinity" of God.104

Jenson turns to Gregory of Nyssa in order to account for a notion of temporal infinity. According to Gregory, the nature of God is infinite. Jenson likens this to what Thomas Aquinas calls the most appropriate name for God as 'He who is,' for "God's act of being is constrained by no form other than itself."105 The idea of infinity here is slightly different in focus from the idea of the true Infinite that Pannenberg incorporates from Hegel in the last chapter. In Pannenberg the emphasis on the true Infinite has to do with the inclusion of that which is distinct from itself, the finite, while remaining other in its infinity. The ongoing alterity of God, for Pannenberg, has much to do with what he sees as Hegel's unfortunate slip into an identification of God and the Idea that realizes itself in the self-unfolding of the logical concept in nature, a mistake that eliminates the difference of God and the world.106 Anecdotally, a similar concern seems to underlie Pannenberg's suspicion of a conflation between the immanent and economic Trinity in Jenson noted above. In Jenson's appropriation of Gregory, the notion has to do with the limitless nature of the infinite, not in endless extension,

103. Jenson, STh 1, 219.
104. Jenson, STh 1, 217.
105. Jenson, STh 1, 215. See Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 1.13.11

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but in its capacity to surpass every conceivable obstacle. Jenson cites Gregory: "The transcendent and blessed Life has neither interior nor exterior measure; no temporal process can keep pace with it." God "is infinite over the past and infinite over the future." Jenson describe's Gregory's idea of deity that "keeps things moving" as a temporal infinity. On this view, God does not lack boundaries, but, more characteristically, overcomes them. Along specifically temporal lines, Jenson writes, "to be God is always to be open to and always to open a future, transgressing all past-imposed conditions.

Jenson takes Barth to capture the movement and the temporal dimensions of the idea of God's infinity here nicely in his notion of divine eternity. Eternity, as consonant with the being of God, includes the structures of "beginning, middle and end" as well as "origin, movement and goal" in which there is no "conflict, but peace." But, as seen already in his early work, Jenson diverges from Barth in an important way. The notion of pure duration in Barth's idea of eternity can have a temporal quality to it, according to Jenson, only if source and goal are not merely present to God, but are "asymmetrical in him." Notably, Barth is willing to speak of "a direction that is irreversible" in the beginning, middle and end of God's eternity. But he does not go so far as Jenson's claim that God "is primally future to himself and only thereupon past and present for himself." Jenson has in view here the being of God

108. Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius, 1:666-672, in Jenson, STh 1, 216.
109. Jenson, STh 1, 216.
110. Barth, CD II/1, 608, 615, cited in Jenson, STh 1, 217.
111. Jenson, STh 1, 217.
112. Barth, CD II/1, 639.
113. Jenson, STh 1, 217. Emphasis mine.
in the Spirit. For as God's own future, or the Goal of God's ways, the Spirit is the vitality and
liveliness of the divine life.\textsuperscript{114} It is in this way, as a specifically temporal infinity, that the real-
ity of God eschews timelessness. Positively, writes Jenson, God is eternal "not in that he per-
factly persists, but in that he perfectly anticipates."\textsuperscript{115}

This much highlights the structural elements in Jenson's notion of divine eternity. But
the basal reality of God's eternity for Jenson pertains to events of God in time. With the same
language that Jenson uses in his subsequent doctrine of creation and conception of divine de-
velopment, he writes,

The Father is the 'whence' of God's life; the Spirit is the whither of God's life; and we
may even say that the Son is that life's specious present. If, then, whence and whither do
not fall apart in God's life, so that his duration is without loss, it is because origin and
goal, whence and whither, are indomitably reconciled in the action and suffering of the
Son.\textsuperscript{116}

Here, the way in which God brackets temporal reality out of God's eternality occurs at a more
granular, historical level. The quote can be, somewhat arbitrarily, considered in two ways:
first in terms of the relational structure of Jesus' ministry, or the 'action' of the Son; and, sec-
ond, in terms of the cross event and, above all, the resurrection of Christ, or the 'suffering' of
the Son.

\textsuperscript{114} Jenson, \textit{STh} 1, 157.

\textsuperscript{115} Jenson, \textit{STh} 1, 217; \textit{The Triune Identity}, 141.

\textsuperscript{116} Jenson, \textit{STh} 1, 219.
First, drawing upon his previous explication of the Spirit, Jenson notes that the Spirit "is God coming to us from the last future," or as in the case of Matthew's gospel, the immanence of the coming kingdom of God in the acts of Jesus, performed in the Spirit (12.28). In keeping with its divine identity, the activity of the Spirit is unsurpassable, demonstrated in such things as the unconditional nature of the gospel and the divine, and not creaturely, establishment of the kingdom in the world.117 Differently, the Father "intends himself in the Son."118 His will remains ever before Jesus, who, in turn, "does not cling to what he is or has," but "lives utterly for his mission, that is, for the Father."119 The Son's obedience to the Father is the enactment of their living union. The Spirit mediates this union, as seen in the events of Jesus' baptism and, differently, at his conception (Mt. 3.16-17; Lk. 1.35).120

"Jesus' life is bounded," states Jenson.121 It is bounded by the givenness of the Father, on the one side, and the triumph that results from the presence of the Spirit in his works, on the other side.122 And as inexhaustible acts, or acts that no creative occurrence can hinder, they are universal in scope. As noted before in the section on divine development, God encompasses created reality from within. If one reflects on this point with the cappadocian principle that Jenson maintains, every creative work of God as triune is both three-fold in nature — bracketing the world in which it takes place — and a singular act of God — and so taking place in the process of created time itself. In the activity of Father, Spirit and Son,

117. Jenson, STh 1, 219.
118. Jenson, STh 1, 219.
119. Jenson, STh 1, 220.
121. Jenson, STh 1, 219.
writes Jenson, "the temporal infinity (of God) opens before us and so embraces us at the triune God's eternity."  

And second, whence and whither in God "are indomitably reconciled" not only in the life and ministry of Christ, but in the "suffering of the Son."  

The events of Jesus' death and resurrection have a definitive place for the being of God, on Jenson's view, for at least two reasons. First, Jenson writes, "as it is, God's story is committed as a story with creatures. And so he too, as it is, can have no identity except as he meets the temporal end toward which creatures live."  In this way, death, and with it, the subsequent event of Christ's resurrection, settles the question of God's identity.  

And second, as highlighted in part 1 of this chapter, Jenson largely takes over Barth's notion of election in the sense of a divine decision that takes place in time. At the heart of the divine decision is what happens with God in the freely willed suffering and victory of Christ. This second point on election is the presupposition of the first. Election is "God's will — its eternity undiminished — as an event in history . . . an event which occurred in time at the Cross."  And therefore the self-defining dimension of election for God is historical; it has a basis in the

123. Jenson, STh 1, 221. Parenthetical edit mine.
125. Jenson, STh 1, 219.
126. Jenson, STh 1, 65.
127. Jenson, STh 1, 189.
128. Jenson, Alpha and Omega, 163, 165; see also, "Jesus in the Trinity," in Pro Ecclesia 8.3 (1999): 317; STh 2, 175-78.
eternal will of God, but its object is Christ and its actuality is what takes place with the proceedings at Golgotha and the empty tomb.

In the crucifixion of Christ, the Son, in "selfless obedience to the Father's mission to us," carries out the antecedent will of the Father. That his death does not undermine the divine unity has to do with the Spirit. For the Spirit, notes Jenson, in its anticipatory being and as the Spirit of the Father, maintains the divine unity as it rests on the Son both in his mission and through his death and resurrection. In other words, the same Spirit that raises Jesus from the dead is the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit that makes the Father's will triumphant in the resurrection event by which the Father and Son remain one. Everything hinges here on Christ's resurrection, which Jenson describes as the "great occurrence of dramatic causality in God," or the way in which the being and activity of God are themselves ordered in view of an Outcome — the Spirit — that is God's own. For with the resurrection of the Son, death becomes a thing of the past for God. And with death behind him, Jesus the Son lives in the unlimited future that belongs to God alone. The resurrection, as a triune and self-defining act of God, means that whence and whither in God have their definitive form in the unbounded and eschatological life of God as Father, Jesus, risen from the dead, and Spirit.

God is eternal by the events of Jesus' death and resurrection. What makes eternity a temporal infinity, on the one hand, lies in the way that God brackets or envelops the created

129. Jenson, STh 1, 192.

130. Jenson, STh 1, 65, 200.

131. Jenson, STh 1, 158, 161.

132. Jenson, STh 1, 160.

order, even as God acts within it. Father, Son and Spirit "bracket time and occupy time and just so reach through time." But more specifically, God's eternity is defined by the way that the Origin and Outcome of God's being are "indomitably reconciled" in the passion and triumph of the Son. In a basic way, the risen Jesus, an individual whom the gospel portrays as one amidst his fellow creatures, is present in a history with past and future tenses. The futurity into which he is raised is thus a temporal infinity, the eternity in which God's antecedent will flourishes through the liberating power of the Spirit. The risen Christ who executes the Father's will in the power of the Spirit as one in history means that God is eternal in a temporal way.

On the other hand, what makes eternity a temporal infinity lies in the fact that God, in the identity of the Spirit, is uniquely God's own future. As the Spirit rests on Jesus, both in his mission and as the power by which the Father raises him from the dead, his deeds are inexhaustible acts of God. The Spirit makes his mission succeed in triumph over death and, likewise, his obedience to the Father unsurpassable acts of God. That God is eternal in the events of Jesus' death and resurrection means that the being of God is eternal in a temporal way. But insofar as God is Father, Jesus, risen from the dead, and Spirit, God, at one and the same time, relates to history out of the transcendent future of their mutual life. In this way, Jenson claims, God's "transcendence is his futurity to what already is." Or to repeat the trinitarian structure from the initial section of part 2 of this chapter, in the eternal relationality of God's being "there is future in God, but not so as to transcend God: God anticipates his future and

134. Jenson, STh 1, 222.
135. Jenson, STh 1, 201.
136. Jenson, God after God, 159.
so possesses it."\textsuperscript{137} As the Spirit, God is uniquely God own's future. God, as such, is not contained by the contingencies and predictabilities of created life. Rather, to note again, as uniquely future to Godself, God is "unboundedly lively."\textsuperscript{138}

2.4: The Triune God's Presence in Futurity

In the final section of this chapter I will bring together the elements from the previous sections of part 2 above (1-3) in order to make the constructive claim that Jenson's trinitarian theology makes possible a conception of the divine vitality in God's eschatological relation to history. The basis for this notion lies in the way that Jenson conceives of God's freedom along historical lines and in view of the identity of the Spirit in God.

God, according to Jenson, is \textit{historical being}. The point has surfaced in numerous ways throughout this chapter, from Jenson's notion of narrative identity to his critique and adaptation of Barth's doctrine of election. Election is not, he quotes Barth, a "decision and achievement here below of what is decided and achieved by God Himself up above."\textsuperscript{139} It is the decision of God in view of what happens with Jesus Christ. It is, more specifically, an eternal decision achieved in the concrete events of his life, death and resurrection. As the object of election his history becomes definitive of who God is.

A temporal notion of God's being, likewise, comes to the fore in Jenson's trinitarian construal of divine envelopment. God encompasses created reality as the unoriginated Origin (Father) and the final Outcome (the Spirit) of all things. In Jenson's construal this takes shape

\textsuperscript{137} Jenson, \textit{STh} 2, 121.

\textsuperscript{138} Jenson, \textit{STh} 1, 143, 160.

\textsuperscript{139} Barth, \textit{CD} III/2, 66, cited in Jenson, \textit{Alpha and Omega}, 85-86.
in view of the cappadocian rule of God's three-fold and yet singular acts. Through the mediating work of Jesus the Son, antecedent Will (Father) and Goal (Spirit) in God are one in the actuality of his life. The same point comes to expression in a more specific way in the Spirit-mediated acts of Jesus' ministry and obedience to the Father that precedes his death and manifests the futurity of God's coming kingdom. Most explicitly, Origin and Outcome are one in God in the event of Christ's resurrection. Jesus, who executes the antecedent will of the Father, is raised into God's future, into the eternal life of God. His specific temporal identity belongs to the infinite nature of God. God, therefore, is eternal in a temporal way.

Essential to the notion of God's historical being here belongs the idea of God's futurity. The concept of God's futurity or the eschatological being of God for Jenson is synonymous with the reality of the Spirit in God. The procession of the Spirit is the Goal of God, an object of hope in God's own being that is at once anticipated and possessed. God is uniquely God's own future. In the anticipated fellowship of the Father with the Spirit, mediated by the Son, God is "unboundedly lively." The concrete expression of this activity in Jesus' resurrection being the primal (and eschatological) instance, and likewise, the determinative way in which God envelops created reality. God, as Spirit, is eschatological being, inexhaustible as God's own future and, with it, unsurpassed by any creaturely happening.

But what makes this eschatological relationship to history a living relation lies in the fact that God is imminently historical and transcendent being at once. Herein lies the decisive point in the constructive appropriation of Jenson's trinitarian theology. On the one hand, God does not act in history apart from the being of God as Spirit, or apart from the transcendent futurity of God. On the other hand, the defining event of God's futurity in Jesus' resurrection

140. Jenson, STh 1, 143. As noted above, a similar construal of the Spirit mediated relation of the Father-Son relation is possible as Jenson conceives of the inner-relations of God as triune.
means that his temporal identity belongs to God's eternity. Put succinctly: God's "transcendence is his futurity to what already is."141 This futurity need not be understood as future time — although that is, of course, where the analogy derives from — but from the temporal structure of God's being as triune, and specifically as the Spirit. It is the eschatological being of God that gives the notion of transcendence here a *temporal* structure, making it a temporal transcendence, and so allows for a conception of the genuine presence of God in time and, likewise, a notion of God's living relation to history.

With a notion of God's freedom over temporal reality from within it, Jenson need not make recourse to a notion of God's being-in-and-of-itself, apart from creatures. In previous chapters I noted the plausibility of this idea in Barth's trinitarian doctrine of God leading up to *CD II/2* and as an implication of Pannenberg's tendency to reduce the idea of the unity of God's deity and lordship to an epistemic principle. A conception of God's freedom that rests on a notion of God's being-in-itself, apart from who God is for creatures, lends itself, as Jenson argued previously, to a radical vision of God's own time as timelessness, or as I suggested in previous chapters, to a conception of God's eternity as a kind of parallel reality to the being of God in revelatory history. Both work against a conception of the vitality of God's living relation to history; one by setting God in *opposition* to the process of time and the other by calling into question the truth of God in *that* history itself. Differently, with an eschatological notion of God, what makes God unsurpassable being, infinite in the mutual relations of God as triune, is the futurity of God as the Spirit by which God relates to time. Rather than undermining a notion of God's living relation to history, or doing away with a notion of God's dis-

tinction from created reality, the concept of God's futurity opens up a way to conceive of God's transcendent and historical being as one and the same.

I began part 2 of this chapter by noting a criticism that Pannenberg makes of Jenson in relation to the eternal or the immanent Trinity. With Jenson in view Pannenberg writes, the "'immanent' Trinity, the eternal communion of Father, Son, and Spirit, and the 'economic,' Trinity almost vanishes."142 I believe it is clear at this point that Jenson maintains a notion of the eternal Trinity's transcendence, and with it, distinction from created reality in the futurity by which God relates to time. The specific criticisms that come from the loss of a notion of God's distinction from the world, particularly as they bear on a conception of God's relation to history, such as the inability to deliver fallen creatures or, more poignantly, the entrapment of God by either the finite condition of death, do not pertain here.143 Of course, the objective on the part of Jenson is to speak of God's transcendence in a way that simultaneously invokes the temporal nature of God's eternity. Jenson might, in fact, affirm Pannenberg's claim; the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity 'almost vanishes,' but it is the almost here that is indicative of the truly temporal nature of God's eternity — the unity of the Father and Spirit in the temporally abiding identity of the risen Jesus. The immanent Trinity transcends created reality out of its own temporality. And the triune God does so as its own futurity, identical to the triumphant reality of Christ in the Spirit, opens up a future that transcends death for others.

Two critiques of Jenson's trinitarian idea of God and God's relation to history, more poignant than the criticism of Pannenberg above, pertain to his way of associating the divine

persons with time as a whole and one of the ways that Jenson relates God to the future. The first point, Jenson's association of the distinct dimensions of time as a whole to the divine identities, raises the question of a modalistic conception of God in relating to the world. Jenson claims that that the Father, Son and Spirit each occupy a pole of time as a persona dramatis. To be clear, I do not think that Jenson, in fact, sets out a modalistic view of God's triune being. His employment of the cappadocian rule in which every act of God is a singular act, and his primary way of identifying time in God not by way of creaturely time, but in reference to the eternal relations of God (i.e., futurity as procession in God), work against any simplistic labeling of modalism in Jenson's trinitarian theology. The more important question is whether it is really necessary to conceive of the divine identities as individually situated in relation to the poles of time at all, and not merely to account for God's living activity in history and temporal transcendence by way of God's trinitarian being, which is Jenson's ultimate concern. In the conclusion to this work I will argue for a conception of God's relation to time along precisely these lines. At this point it can simply be said that the specter of modalism, even though it is not something Jenson ultimately succumbs to, makes the association of the divine identities with the dimensions of time more trouble than it is worth.

The second critique of Jenson's trinitarian idea of God, connected to the first, relates to a criticism made of Pannenberg's theology in chapter 3. At the end of the previous chapter I noted the claim from Jenson that Pannenberg leaves open a notion of timelessness in his doctrine of eternity. Pannenberg writes, the "eternal God does not have ahead of him any future that could be distinguished from his present." Jenson's way of relating temporal distinctions in God — not as God as triune is related to the poles of time — by way of the futurity of the Spirit better distinguishes the future from the present in God's eternity than in

144. Pannenberg, ST 1, 410. English translation slightly altered.
Pannenberg's conception. Following the unity-in-distinction pattern of the triune relations, the future that God at once possesses is also distinctly future, the anticipated Goal of God's being. At the least, Jenson avoids a timeless conception of God by invoking the relational distinctions, and with it, the diverse life of the eternal God as triune. Ambiguity emerges, however, in regards to the relation of the Spirit with a general idea of the future.

In his treatment of the eschatological being of God Jenson can equate the futurity of God not only with the Spirit's unique procession in God and its identity in relation to the risen Jesus — the primary or most basic ways he understands futurity to pertain to the life of God — but with future time itself. This is slightly different, or more specific, than Jenson's general association of God as triune to the poles of time. As noted in section 1 of part 2 above, Jenson claims that the truth of apocalyptic prophecy rests on "the presence of the future with God." Unlike creatures, that future for God is more than "what is not yet."145 Jenson qualifies this not as a kind of foreknowledge of God, but simply with the reality of the Spirit in God.146 This seemingly singular identification of the Spirit with time future does not cohere with Jenson's typical fidelity to the cappadocian principle of the mutuality of the activity of the Father, Son and Spirit. But more critically, a conception of future time's presence to the Spirit, even if somehow still future to God, makes for a peculiar notion of the reality of history to God. The presence of future to the Spirit, not properly distinguished from the liberating reality of the Spirit in God or its identity in relation to the risen Son, but simply as the reality of the created future to God, results in a conception of God's relation to time that seemingly overwhelms it. The problem here is not so much a notion of a timeless reality of eternity, but

145. Jenson, Ezekiel, 87; see also, STh 2, 121, 368.
146. Jenson, Ezekiel, 87.
a static idea of history. If the future is already present to God in the Spirit, and yet even as somehow still future, in what sense can one speak of a still open future? The notion of the Spirit's identification with future time itself, or the unqualified presence of the created future to the Spirit, would seem to occlude a conception of God as one who lives out a history with creatures, a history with the genuine reality of the present.

A similar move to what was done with Pannenberg's principle on the unity of deity and lordship in the previous chapter needs to be made here. There I made the case that the ontological side of this principle, the idea that history really bears on the definitive establishment of God's lordship, not only for creatures but for God as well, needs to be taken more seriously than Pannenberg himself does. Here the conception of the vitality of God's eschatological relation to history hinges on the aspect God's futurity in the Spirit, and specifically in the relational dynamics of God's own life, the Spirit's procession and its identity to the Father mediated by the risen Jesus. More than this, that is, the strong identification of the Spirit with time future, risks undermining the very vitality of God's eschatological relation to history. In this context, the identification of the Spirit with future time needs to be made with greater caution than Jenson himself does. The Spirit, as Jenson says, is not only God's future, but creatures as well. But that is because the Spirit's liberating activity, itself based in the unique procession and futurity of the eternal relations of God, is, and will be, what the future holds for creatures as grounded in God's own being, and not because creaturely time is somehow already present to him.

Conclusion
In this chapter I have set forth a reading of Robert W. Jenson's trinitarian theology in order to make the case for a notion of the vitality of God's eschatological relation to history. The value of Jenson's trinitarian theology in this regard lies in his conceptions of the futurity of God in the identity of the Spirit and the eschatological being of God that comes to expression in the event of Christ's resurrection. From these two focal points Jenson is able to set out a historical notion of God's freedom that sets aside the need to speculate on the transcendent being of God apart from creatures. And, likewise, the eschatological relationship between God and history is a living relation insofar as God transcends the temporal reality that God indwells at one and the same time. More critically, I made the case at the end of this chapter that Jenson's secondary way of identifying the Spirit along eschatological lines, here in terms of its identity with future time, risks undermining a conception of the authenticity of the present for God and of the future as truly future for God, as well as for creatures. Jenson's eschatological doctrine of God can be constructively employed for a notion of God's living relation to history, as I have argued here. This requires, however, basing the concept of futurity primarily on a notion of the Spirit and the reality of God gleaned from the event of Christ's resurrection.
Conclusion

In this study I have taken up the question of how the eternal God relates to history. The guiding concept has been the doctrine of the Trinity. It is the relational life of the one God, or the way in which Father, Son and Spirit are unto one another, and as gleaned by their revelatory acts, that makes possible a way of conceiving of the eternal God's self-enabled and living relation to history. In the conclusion to this work I offer an overview of this study. In the previous chapters I have put forward a set of interpretations and adaptations of the work of Isaak A. Dorner, Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Robert W. Jenson that, taken together, offer a way to conceive of the vitality of God in God's pre-temporal, internal and eschatological relation to history. Interpretation is always constructive, and a critical adaptation of another's work is explicitly so. But my intention in the assessments of the previous chapters is not only to mine certain productive notions from and renderings of the trinitarian theology of these figures. Following the overview of this study I return to the central problem of this work and offer own my proposals in regards to the question of how the eternal God relates to history out of the Trinity of God's being. This will not be a full restatement of God's relation to history; but, in critical and constructive engagement with the findings of this study, I will make the case for (1) a methodological approach to conceiving of the eternal relations of God and propose a way forward in (2) a construal of the immanent Trinity as the eschatological Trinity and, along similar lines, (3) the relation between the eternity of God and time.

Overview

In chapter 1 I began with the mediating theologian Isaak A. Dorner and his essay on the immutability of God. My use of Dorner's immutability essay had to do with the lucid way that
Dorner treats the question of reconciling this doctrine with the revealed vitality of God in history and, furthermore, what possibilities his trinitarian solution to this problem raises in further examining the question of the relation between the eternity of God's being and the being of God in history. Dorner perceives of divine immutability in terms of the actualization (Spirit) of God's ethically necessary (Father) and free (Son) being. The idea of God as triune, on his view, functions as the grounds for God's activity ad extra. But, notably, Dorner does not evenly apply the doctrine to God's relation to history, seen in the way that Trinity moves to the background when he accounts for God's activity in history in terms of God's involvement with ethically independent creatures. Dorner provides an initial way of understanding the idea of God as triune as the basis or foundation for the revealed vitality of God in history. One of the key unanswered questions with Dorner, however, is how the idea of God as triune can be understood as not only the grounds of God's activity ad extra, but as the way in which Father, Son and Spirit indwell history and, more precisely, live out a history with others.

Karl Barth's trinitarian understanding of God's relation to history was the subject of chapter 2. In the first part of this chapter I looked at Barth's early notion of God in revelation and his trinitarian idea of God in CD I/1 and CD II/1. Barth points to a foundation of God's activity in history in CD I/1 in what he calls the antecedent being of God (God as 'ours in advance') that forms the basis of God's sovereign self-disclosure in revelation. In his doctrine of the divine constancy in CD II/1 Barth puts the idea of the triune God's antecedent alterity and fellowship to use in order to conceive of God's real history and salvific relation to creatures. Barth's trinitarian idea of God, up through the material treated in CD II/1, primarily serves as the grounds for God's revelatory acts in history, positively giving this activity its basic order as it proceeds from the eternal Trinity of God's being. But with the heavy emphasis that Barth places on the foundational aspect of the eternal Trinity, he makes only little of an advance on
Dorner's use of this classical doctrine to conceive of God's living history. And the ways in which Barth bases God's worldly activity in God, through notions of lordship, alterity and fellowship, remain at a generic level. Most critically, however, the idea that God's acts ad extra correspond to the eternal Trinity, and, again, with the emphasis on God's antecedent being, Barth maintains a conception of God's being that is seemingly closed off from the world, even as God has interactions with it. The result is a notion of the eternal reality of God's being distinct from God's ongoing historical activity, a notion that ultimately undermines a conception of God's true presence in history.

In the second part of the chapter I traced a development in Barth's consideration of Christ's concrete history for his notion of the eternal being of God in his doctrine of election in CD II/2. With the self-determining nature of divine election, Barth's fixation turns towards the being of God as it becomes manifest in Christ, and significantly, in his conformity to the Father's will. This leads Barth to posit an obedience on the part of the eternal Son that adds a layer of depth to his previous formulations of the eternal Trinity. I then showed how the idea of the Son's obedience identifies an essential point of continuity between the pre-temporal being of God and the history that God lives. The notion of the Son's obedience underlies the vitality of God's being between these two points: What God wills in view of the Son's eternal conformity to the divine will is actualized in the particular history, in the obedience, of Jesus. Against the critiques of Pannenberg, Jenson and others, I argued that despite Barth's ill-suited term of a 'primal history' of God to describe election, Barth's broader conception of the divine decree as an eternal decision actualized in time does not give way to the specter of an alternative reality of God like the self-contained idea of God's triune being that I objected to in CD I/1 and CD II/1 above.
In chapter 3 I turned to Wolfhart Pannenberg's view of the trinitarian mediated history of God. Early in this chapter I gave extended attention to Pannenberg's critique of Barth on the divine subjectivity. I defended Barth's trinitarian idea of God against Pannenberg's criticism that the notion of subjectivity in Barth leads to a heteronomous relation between God and the world. However, incorporating Jürgen's Moltmann related assessment of Barth, I argued for the validity of Pannenberg's claim that Barth's specific concern for the subjectivity of God in revelation detracts from the eschatological dimension of God's self-disclosure in scripture and its impact on an understanding of God's triunity.

In his trinitarian construal of God, which is at least partially motivated by the critique of Barth above, Pannenberg sets forth a notion of mutuality that characterizes the relations of the divine persons, or what he calls their reciprocal self-distinctions. In this idea of reciprocity Pannenberg introduces the idea of the dependent monarchy of the Father, a notion that I connected explicitly to his view of God's self-actualization in the world in order to make the case for a view of the vitality of God in history. Concretely, the deity of the Father, dependent on the activity of the Son, means that every working of God in history proceeds as the enactment of God's lordship in time, mediated entirely along trinitarian lines and out of the antecedent monarchy of God's being. God, in this way, is understood to both act out of the actuality of the eternal monarchy of God, on the one hand, while history remains determinative of God's own being, for it is the locale in which the lordship of God, and thus the deity of God, is (still) at stake, on the other hand. Both points are critical. Of the two, Pannenberg problematically downplays the latter, or reduces his principle on the unity of deity and lordship to an epistemological point. The result is a notion of revelatory history as a kind of double or mirroring of a more pristine reality in which the monarchy of God and its establishment has already been played out, merely being repeated in time. The view in which the establishment of
God's lordship in history is only a matter of appearance to creatures, like the critique of Barth in CD I/1 and CD II/1 above, ultimately undoes the veracity of God's history as a real history. Rather, Pannenberg's own principle must be upheld with more consistency than he himself does. My use of Pannenberg's trinitarian theology for a notion of the vitality of God in history has sought to constructively adapt Pannenberg's insights with this basic corrective in place.

I concluded chapter 3 on Pannenberg with a critique of his later notion of eternity, highlighting two plausible renderings of it as the futurity of God and as the simultaneous presence of time to God as a whole. In view of the latter idea, the encompassing presence of God, certain claims of Pannenberg on the identification of present and future to God result in a conception of eternity absent of the temporal distinctions that Pannenberg himself claims as the basic elements of life and vitality. This raises, I claimed, the need to consider further an idea of eternity as God's futurity and in view of the trinitarian distinctions of God.

The specifically eschatological side of God's living relation to history was taken up in Robert W. Jenson's theology in chapter 4. I began this chapter with an overview of Jenson's critiques of Barth's idea of eternity and his adaptation of Barth's notion of election. Jenson can overstate the case with the criticism of a timeless idea of eternity in Barth. Nonetheless, Jenson rightly points to the need for a more historical idea of divine freedom, one that avoids the plausible renderings noted at specific points in the chapters on Barth and Pannenberg of an idea of God at a remove from the self-determined history of God with creatures.

In his trinitarian theology Jenson posits a notion of futurity in terms of the Spirit in God, or as the eschatological nature of God's being. Jenson's way of distinguishing present and future in God, or the basis of time's distinctions in God's eternity, by way of an appropriation to the divine persons, better provides a foundation for the difference between past and future in God's eternity than does Pannenberg's idea of simultaneity and its slip into the con-
flation of present and future in God. However, the close association of the temporal qualities of the divine persons with the poles of creaturely time, however, can tend towards a conception of the Father, Son and Spirit as fixed to points on a timeline, or a kind of modalism. Ultimately, I show that Jenson avoids this outcome, but it raises the question of whether such an appropriation or association should be made at all. More critically, Jenson's way of linking the Spirit to future time itself, albeit a minor node of his pneumatology, can lead to a conception of eternity that overwhelms history, of a somehow realized future in God that would seemingly diminish the reality of God in time present. However, the primary way that Jenson conceives of the eschatological nature of the Spirit pertains to the distinct future that the Spirit holds as the Goal of God's own being, and can be put to more constructive use. As future to God's own self, the Spirit who proceeds, God in the Spirit is uniquely unsurpassable being. As such, in relating to history God undergoes the great fact of finitude and overcomes it in Jesus' resurrection, or as God raises him by the power of the Spirit. This notion of the Spirit enables an eschatological conception by which God both relates to and transcends history, and does so at once. This thus rules out the need for a conception of God's freedom in an idea of God wholly apart from creatures, and, positively, allows for a notion of God's real and transcendent relation to history in eschatological perspective.

The critical engagements with Barth, Pannenberg and Jenson of this study set forth three interpretations and adaptive renderings of God's living relation to history. How this has taken shape can be articulated in two different ways, but which are simply matters of difference in perspective. First, I have shown how in the divine decision of God, God's pre-temporal reality, God enacts a history that centers around and takes place with Jesus of Nazareth consistent with the triune nature of God's own being. In history itself God acts out of the mutuality that characterizes the eternal Trinity and which enables God's own history. In that
same history the futurity of God's being makes its possible for historical events to be determinative of God as triune while God remains transcendent being. This, in sum, is to show how the adaptive renderings of Barth, Pannenberg and Jenson's trinitarian theology can be used to articulate God's living relation to history in pre-temporal, inner-historical and eschatological perspective. The second way makes the same point in terms of the appropriated activities of the divine persons. The history God enacts from eternity is identical to the Son's obedience in God. The dependency of the Father's monarchy sets in motion the mutuality in God that enables God's activity \textit{ad extra} to be lively activity, to be a history. And the futurity or unsurpassable being of God as Spirit makes God's activity \textit{ad extra} at once historical and transcendent. In either formulation, it is clear that the eternal God relates to history in a living way out of the Trinity of God's being.

\textbf{The Problem Revisited}

The central problem of this work has taken up the relation between God and history, of a notion of eternal reality and that of time, and how to conceptually reconcile the two. At stake in depicting the relationship of the eternity of God's being and the being of God in time lies the tension, to put it one way, of conceptualizing the freedom of God over the world with the divine immanence; or in another way, it is the tension of conceptualizing the foundational or everlasting nature of the eternity of God with the revealed vitality of God in history. The problem is not new. Going back to Augustine, the idea of eternity is manifest, owing at least to some significant degree to platonic influences, as sheer timelessness. In describing the eternity of God in connection to the trinitarian nature of God's being, Augustine writes, "the (Son) has from the Father that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him. But one must not think of any time in this matter, which would include before and after, because there is ab-
olutely no such thing as time there at all."¹ Shortly after Augustine Boethius would set forth the definition of eternity as the "complete possession of human life" that would impact the theological tradition up through the figures treated in this study.² Critically, Thomas Aquinas adopted Boethius idea so as to depict eternity as without succession and as "simultaneously whole." Thomas described eternity so as to include all times in itself, and yet in its simultaneity it is without succession in a way "that time is not so."³ God "is present to all time," and "his glance is carried from eternity over all things as they are in their presentiality."⁴ The timeless conception of eternity accentuates the importance of the question of this work, or how God, from the eternity of God's being, relates to time and the created reality that in the scriptural depiction of God, God relates to, God acts within and God indwells. I have used the work of Dorner in this study to make this question explicit. I have summarized the treatment of Dorner above, and laid out how I have modified his conceptual comparison between divine immutability and the revealed vitality of God to be the central question of this work in how the Trinity of God's eternal being enables a conception of God's living relation to history and the reality of God therein. Once more though, Why Trinity?

As Dorner is right to see, Trinity allows for a view of the divine nature in the form of a relationality that is basic to God's being. And while I highlight the limitations in Dorner's application of this doctrine to the notion of the living history of God, the idea is there to be developed. As triune, God is relational being that exists in exuberant and self-giving life. As

¹. Augustine, De Trinitate, IV.47; see also, Confessions, XI.11-31.
³. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 1.10.1-2, 1.10.4.
⁴. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 1.14.13, 1.57.3.
triune, there is alterity and fellowship that can be construed along the lines of God's revealed inner-relations between the Father, Jesus the Son and the Spirit. In view of the biblical God's dynamic involvement in history, the doctrine of the Trinity provides the means or the conceptual grounds for understanding how God relates to history in a living way.

The possibilities here cannot be exhausted. Given the question of how the doctrine of the Trinity is conceived in view of God's revealed acts; given the difficulties as well as the possibilities for conceiving of the transcendence and freedom of God as triune in relation to history; given, perhaps, above all, the complexity and riches of the inner-relations of the divine persons; given all these things, it is little surprise that trinitarian theology is an ongoing task. Likewise, it is little surprise that there remains unaddressed or not yet adequately addressed questions and constructive possibilities for conceiving of the triune God's living relation to history. What is a suitable way to conceive of the relation between the immanent and the economic Trinity, for example? Is it possible to retain a notion of eternity as simultaneity in view of the vitality of God in time? In the following sections I will examine these and other questions in conversation with the findings of this study. This is not meant to be an overview of the expository points of the work per se, but rather an analysis of how the central problem in conceiving of the eternal God's living relation to history has been adequately (or inadequately) resolved; what solutions in the main figures of this work successfully (or unsuccessfully) address this problem; and to note where there lie other solutions to and ways forward on this question.

I will proceed in view of two questions: first, how does the Trinity of God's being serve as the grounds for a notion of God's living relation to history? In response to this question I make the case for (1) a methodological approach to conceiving of the eternal relations of God in light of their historical ends and offer my own proposal (2) on the immanent Trinity
as the eschatological Trinity. And, second, how does a conception of the eternity of the triune God best suit a notion of God's presence and transcendent reality in time? In response to this question I argue for (3) a view of eternity that gives priority to the conception on the inner-relations of the divine persons as they relate to temporal reality. Based on this notion I set forth the beginnings of a trinitarian conception of the relation between the eternity of God and history by which God as triune brackets temporal reality, indwells time and serves as the possibility of the future.

**Trinity and History**

How does the Trinity of God's being serve as the grounds for a notion of God's living relation to history? The first point to note here is simply that the eternal Trinity of God's being can be understood to ground God's activity in history. This move, which has been basic to all of the figures addressed in this study, proceeds on the basis that the self-revelation of God occurs in the person of Jesus Christ. The mission of the Son, driven by the Spirit of God, makes the Father known (Mt. 11.27; 12.28). These three in God, in the fellowship that they have in the eternal life of God, serve as the basis for the gracious fellowship that extends to creatures and which orders the activity of God ad extra in revelation history. The question now is this: Given that the Trinity of God's being is the grounds of God's activity ad extra, how, if the historical aspect of this activity is to be taken with full seriousness, the specific history that God has and lives with others, ought this externally directed activity be conceived?

I have attended to a plausible response to this question in chapter 2 and the overview above. On this view, the activity of God ad extra accords with the eternal Trinity from which it proceeds. This is Barth's notion of correspondence in CD I/1. Where God is lord in time, where God relates to the reality that is not-God and where God creates a kinship with others,
God, so to speak, is all of this already beforehand in Godself. And so what God does in the externally directed acts of God "corresponds to what God in His own being is antecedently in Himself." What God does in history manifests, confirms and demonstrates the triune God anew.

Barth is right to conceptualize the eternal or antecedent Trinity of God's being as that which orders the activity of God ad extra. The triune life of God is the means by which God acts in and transcends historical reality. What is potentially problematic in Barth's account is the idea of a generalized correspondence between the eternal Trinity of God's being and the being of God in history. To conceive of the revealed being of God in history, on the one side, and the corresponding reality of the eternal Trinity, on the other side, leaves open a kind of nebulous space in-between. Barth's intent, of course, is to stake out a notion of God's sovereignty in revelation, or that which, conceptually speaking, keeps the subjectivity of God in revelation in place. But the idea of a corresponding reality of God, and one the places its emphasis on both the antecedence and, particularly, the demonstrative nature of God's works in time — herein lies the real pitfall in Barth's use of a theory of correspondence — risks a conception in which the real locus of God's activity is a thing of eternity, not history. Moreover, it makes way for the notion of an ulterior reality of God, different than the one of God in history itself; or, more detrimental, to think of a parallel reality of God that is ongoing and distinct from what God does (or is doing) in history.

What is needed then to conceive of the eternal Trinity of God's being as the basis for a notion of God's living relation to history? I argue two points in what follows; one in terms of

5. Barth, CD I/1, 425. Emphasis mine.
a methodological procedure for conceiving of ends or a telos to the eternal relations of the divine persons and, the other, an account of the immanent Trinity along eschatological lines.

The first point can be understood as the positive response to the problem that I have just highlighted once again in Barth's theory of correspondence. A theological description of the eternal relations must have in view not only a point of reference in regards to the eternality of God's being, or the inner-relations of God as triune, but also a reference to the historical revelation of God and the history that God lives with others. I will return to why this point matters for the central question of conceiving of the eternal God as the basis of God's living history momentarily.

What the biblical depiction of God offers is a notion of God as one who is revealed in a salvific history with others. What we have, or what is simply given, is a narrative of God with creatures. In that narrative it is clear that God is sovereign lord over all things. "I work and who can hinder it?" (Isa. 43.13). God is eternal being. "From everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Ps. 90.2). But, again, the identity of God is given in the specific history that God has with Israel, the church and the nations. It is telling that in conceiving of the most fundamental relations by which the eternal being of God is — the begetting of the Son from the Father and the procession of the Spirit (Jn. 1.18; 3.16, 15.26) — the tradition took its cues from relational features in the specific history between the Father and Jesus and their shared Spirit. What is given, again, is a story, a history God lives with others.

The positive point to be made here, I am arguing, is that a theological formulation of the eternal relations of the divine persons must keep before it the historical ends of the Father, Son and Spirit. To posit a corresponding reality of God in relation to the being of God in history safeguards a notion of divine freedom. A theory of correspondence need not be entirely rejected. But when the accent here falls on the manifestation or confirmation of an antecedent
reality in time, then a shadow is cast over the notion of God's living presence in revelation history. Barth's idea of a correspondence to the antecedent lordship, alterity and fellowship in God, provides what are true grounds for God's activity in history. But it does so in a way that risks conceptually severing the reality of this lordship, for example, from the way in which it is an enacted, historical reality for God — and not merely in the sense of God's thrice repeated lordship in time, but the lordship of God as gained with Israel and the church. A notion that takes its cue for the eternal relations in God from the revealed history of God cannot make much use of a theory of correspondence like this. It is too general. It leaves more to be said, too much more be said, about how the eternal Trinity, in fact, moves and acts in history with others by means of trinitarian relations of God's being.

For this reason I think that a conception of the eternal relations in terms of, for example, the dependent monarchy of the Father or the liberating power of the Spirit towards an end more successfully relates the eternality of God's being with the revealed history of God. These notions derive from Pannenberg and Jenson respectively. They are more successful insofar as they conceive of the eternal relations in God to have a historical telos. The critical point is this: The dependency of the Father's deity on the divine Son, and likewise, the liberating power of the Spirit towards an end, are not only eternal realities of God. They certainly are this! There is a place, a need, for reflection on the inner-trinitarian life of God out of which God acts in history. But the very same thing that can be said of these points of reference to the eternal relations of God can be said of what God does in history. What is the gain to be had here? The eternal relationality of God's being is understood to not only ground God's free activity ad extra, but, as consistent with what God does in history, this relationality of God's being also enables the history that God lives with others. It is a construal of the divine relations that does greater justice to the capacity of God to indwell and to live out a his-
tory with creatures, the history that God, in fact, is revealed in scripture to have. It is a construal, in short, that rightly denotes the grounds in God for a living relation to history.

One other note in regards to the idea of the historical telos of the divine persons ought to be made before turning to the second point in response to the initial question of how the eternal Trinity of God's being serves as the basis for a notion of God's living relation to history. The idea of the historical telos of the divine persons is not only pressed upon us because of the limited capacity to identify God by way of revelation history and, moreover, to conceive of God as truly present therein. But, also, because this is God's way with creatures. God has an end, a point of fulfillment, in the history that God lives with others. The apocalypse of John depicts this in terms of the victory of God who dwells with the faithful in the redeemed order of a new creation, a celebration of the slain lamb that lives and now reigns. Ezekiel's apocalyptic imagery is also telling. In the midst of the prophet's detailing of the measurements of the eschatological temple, he points out that the gate through which the Lord enters to be with the people, the fulfillment of all things, remains shut. "The Lord said to me . . . it shall not be opened" (Ezk. 44.2). God has a telos, a point of fulfillment. And it is not an ultimate reality from that end towards which God lives with others: "Mortal, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will reside among the people of Israel forever" (Ezk. 43.7).

This first point on the historical telos of the eternal relations secures against the positioning of a self-contained idea of God in the midst of God's history with creatures, or a Trinity of God's being that remains distinct from the triune being of God in history. I now turn to the second point. It is possible to conceive of the Trinity of God's being as the conceptual grounds for God's living relation to history if, as I propose, the immanent Trinity of God is the eschatological Trinity.
Both Jenson and Pannenberg affirm versions of the immanent-economic Trinity relation along these lines. However, neither develops their trinitarian theology, and with it, claims around the way in which the triune God relates to history, by explicitly unfolding its meaning. For this reason Andrew W. Nicol, for instance, can claim that for Jenson the immanent Trinity, in its "futurist (eschatological) dominion," is conceived so as to ensure "that God's telos is not severed from God's becoming. . . . The relations between the persons of the God of Israel enact the occasion of God's being." In chapter 4 I have laid out a reading of Jenson that would argue for a more extensive and grounding role of the immanent Trinity in Jenson's thought than Nicol claims. But the point to note here is simply that Nicol's rendering is, at least in one way, understandable. Jenson does not quite spell out how this works. My desire to note an identification between the immanent and eschatological Trinity of God for the purposes of establishing a notion of the grounds for God's living relation to history requires a more clear account than has been offered by the central figures in this study up to this point.

The idea that the immanent Trinity is the eschatological Trinity does not mean, as Nicol seems to suggest of Jenson's construal above, that the economic Trinity is only truly itself, only truly achieves itself, in the eschatological end. While also a rather unwieldily conception of divine becoming in history, the notion is problematic for reasons already noted. For the idea of an economic Trinity on its way to the definitive, consummating end, where it becomes one with the immanent-eschatological Trinity, is an idea of the immanent Trinity of God so 'ahead' of temporal reality as to be different than God in or who lives out a history —

and all of the subsequent problems that I have already noted in an idea of God distinct from who God is for creatures in this study. Rather, in saying that the immanent Trinity is the eschatological Trinity I mean that God has always been, is and will be eschatological being as the triune God. God is eschatological in nature.

Next, what about God's eschatological being grounds God's living relation to history or God's capacity for it? In chapters 3 and 4 I have identified two features in Pannenberg and Jenson's trinitarian theology that serve to designate the eschatological character of God's being in explicit and implicit ways. More explicitly, Jenson's idea of the Spirit as the Goal of God's being makes his entire trinitarian construal of God eschatological. My use of this concept hinged, however, less on the question of God's movement in history and more so on the problem of God's transcendent presence in history. More implicitly, an eschatological orientation underlies Pannenberg's idea of the dependent monarchy of the Father. I linked this idea to his notion of God's self-actualization in the world. The importance of this lies in that it shows how the movement and vitality of the eternal relationality of God itself animates the teleological nature of God's activity in history. Whether Pannenberg would consent to this is unclear. He speaks of the Son as "winning form" for the Father's monarchy in time; but then, almost immediately thereafter, calls God's acts in time a "repetition or reiteration of his eternal deity in his relation to the world." In what follows I propose a way to conceive of how the Trinity of God's being as the eschatological Trinity provides the grounds for an understanding of God's living relation to history. I begin with the just noted interpretive rendering of Pannenberg, even though this, in all likelihood, goes beyond the use that he makes of the notion of the dependent monarchy of the Father.

8. Pannenberg, ST 1, 389. The same tension underlies Pannenberg's use of the principle of the unity of deity and lordship. See chapter 3, 3.3.
In the eternal Trinity of God's being, the monarchy of the Father rests on the honor that he receives from the Son through the power of the Spirit. The Father is not divine as sheer unoriginate being, in isolated lordship, but in a vulnerability that rests secure in the person of the Son. In other words, there is an end in regards to the Father's deity, a telos in the constitutive nature of the Father's relation to the Son and the lordship of the Father that rests on this relation. Likewise, the Father has an end in the procession of the Spirit who unites the Father and the Son. I will return to the latter point momentarily. In history, the telos of this relational dynamic in God, or its eschatological character in the reliance of the monarchy of the Father on the Son and in the Spirit, makes the activity of God lively. For the Son is one with the Father; and so when he acts in the unity of the triune God — the only way that he acts — he acts so as to establish the lordship, and with it, the monarchy of the Father in the world. In other words, the telos of the Father's lordship in the Son means that when the Son acts he, based on their consubstantial union, sets in motion the realization of the Father's lordship in history anew.

Moreover, that the activity of the Son mediates the Father's lordship, and with it, his rule in the world by the Spirit, gives the activity of the triune God its forward moving direction. The Son does not act in history, as Pannenberg claims, in the repetition of the eternal monarchy of God in time. His activity is for the purpose of establishing, truly establishing anew, the lordship of the Father in creation. That lordship, which is basic to who God is, is, at least in one important sense, not yet. History still awaits its coming to be as the divine rule that has its basis in the being of God before all things and which gives history its rightful end. When the Son acts in history, he acts in the Spirit in view of the kingdom's coming (Mt. 12.28). The Son acts in the Spirit to gather all things under the consummating rule of the Father. And he does this by way of a perfect obedience in the Spirit that, in keeping with the re-
ality of the eternal monarchy of God, actualizes the Father's lordship in the world. The Son acts and the end of history, so to speak, moves nearer.

Still more, there is the Spirit's life in God. The significance of the eschatological reality of the Spirit for God's living relation to history could be shown in different ways. I have argued for Jenson's idea of the Spirit as the goal or the futurity of God's being in chapter 4, which enables a conception of God's transcendent being in time. In what follows, though, I am proposing a different aspect of the living history that the Spirit enables in God. I show that the Spirit as the Father and Son's mutual end in God, or in the traditional idea of the Spirit as the bond of love in God, both facilitates this bond and is the condition for the possibility of history for God.

The Father and Son relate to one another in the Spirit. The Father has life in himself, and gives this life to the Son (Jn. 5.25). The life he gives to the Son is mediated by the Spirit, as its explicit in the events of his conception and his resurrection from the dead (Lk. 1.35; Rom. 8.11). The Son, in turn, "filled with the power of the Spirit," obeys the Father's commands as guided by the Spirit in his mission (Mt. 3.16-17, 4.1-16; Lk. 4.14). What the Spirit mediates between the Father and Son, their unity in the distinctiveness of their persons, is the living reality of God in the world. The Spirit mediates the specific history in which the mutual love of the Son and the Father takes place in terms of the faithfulness of Jesus and the Father's affirmation, "this is my Son, the Beloved," a history that is directed towards the eschaton (Mt. 17.15; Jn. 3.35; Acts 1.7-8). It only remains to note that the Spirit is itself the love that it simultaneously facilities in the Father-Son relation. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom 5.5; cf. Gal. 5.22; 1 Jn.
4.12-23). As Augustine writes, "the love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit."9

As the love that exists between the Father and Son, the Spirit is the end that the Father and Son share in God. And it is the Spirit's role as both this end, the bond of love in God, and the mediator of this end, the divine loving, that makes possible what the Spirit enacts: the living history of God. The Spirit, as the bond of love between the Father and Son, mediates their fellowship in the eternity of God. In time, this enactment takes shape in terms of the realization of the Father's lordship in the faithful obedience of Jesus the Son. That the Spirit mediates this relation, a relation that is both animated by and has the love of the Spirit on both ends of it, means that the Spirit mediates a history. For the Spirit is the end in God that enables the realization of the kingdom in present history and, as its continues to facilitate the Father-Son relation, sees to its end in the eschatological consummation, the point at which the Son returns the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15.28). I develop this point further in the next section. But for now the point stands to note that the Spirit as the bond of love, or the end of the Father and Son's relation, makes God's living history possible.

In sum, the eschatological reality of the immanent Trinity lies, as I have argued here, in both the dependent deity of the Father's lordship, or his end in the Son's obedience in the Spirit, and the Spirit as the bond of love in God, or the Father and Son's mutual end in the uniting activity of the Spirit. In both cases the eschatological dimension of God's eternal being animates the vitality and forward moving nature of God in history. In the latter case, the mediating activity of the Spirit in God is taken to be the condition for the possibility of God's living and eschatological history.

In this section I have made the case for a notion of God's triune being as the grounds for a conception of God's living relation to history. The idea of the Trinity of God's being accomplishes this insofar as the eternal relations of God, based on the revelatory acts of God, are conceived in light of their historical ends. And, likewise, a notion of the immanent Trinity as the eschatological Trinity affords a conception of the vitality of God in history and demonstrates the end towards which God acts in history. I now turn to the relation between the eternity of God and time.

**Eternity and Time**

How does a conception of the eternity of the triune God best suit a notion of God's presence and transcendent reality in time? Following the problem in this study of conceptually reconciling the eternal Trinity of God's being with the revealed vitality of God in time has been the question of how to speak of the *reality* of God in time. The reason for dealing with the question of the reality of God in time has to do with the question that a notion of eternity poses for conceiving of God in history, or, following the scriptural depiction of God's liveliness, to, in fact, live a history with others. When a concept of eternity lays emphasis on the distinctiveness of God's transcendent being in relation to time, the question of the actual presence of God in temporal reality looms. The doctrine of eternity and the question of the reality of God in time are not unrelated. In what follows I consider the question above on how a conception of the eternity of the triune God best suits a notion of God's presence and transcendent reality in time. The nod to God's *presence* in this question has to do with taking seriously a conception of the reality of the eternal God in time.

To begin, the conception of the reality of God in time, and likewise, what conception of divine eternity suits a notion of God's presence in time, raises the question of whether
there is time in God. It has been a basic insight of the figures of this work which I adopt here that the Trinity of God's being is the basis or the condition for the possibility of time. Because God is triune, and therefore being inclusive of movement, diversity and life, there is time or a time-like quality that belongs uniquely to God. To put this another way: the temporality of God pertains to God as Father, or the unoriginate Origin in God; as the Son who is begotten, and thus being-in-Mediation; and as the Spirit who proceeds, also being-in-Mediation, but uniquely, too, as the Fulfillment of the one God's relational being. The position that I am arguing for here, notably, lines up with both the traditional affirmation of the Father as the fount of deity and Jenson's eschatological doctrine of the Spirit as the Goal of God's being. The unique temporality of God is God as this relational being, as Father, Son and Spirit.

While I differ greatly from Katherine Sonderegger's insistence on a notion of God's eternity as "apart from and beyond all creaturely life," I can readily follow her in the claim that "eternity just is God"; it "expresses the Dynamism that is powerful Light, the eternal Generation that is God's life as Procession and Radiance."

The relational notion of God as triune makes way for a notion of the divine being compatible with the temporal reality that God indwells. Eternity is not, as in the age old Greek conception which the earliest Christian theologians had to reckon with directly, timelessness. Time, I will add to this, and in response to the question above about time in God, belongs to the being of God, insofar as God makes temporal reality part of God's own life — most concretely, in the second person of the Trinity. One the one hand, if divine incarnation has in fact occurred, there must be the condition within the transcendent eternity of God's be-

10. Other formulations are possible. If the Father is Father only in relation to the Son, or if his monarchy depends on the obedience of the Son in God, then there is a way in which his deity is mediated via the Son as well.

11. Sonderegger, Systematic Theology 1, 343.
ing that makes a real becoming of God in time possible. And, on the other hand, in view of the reality of the incarnation, of God in time as the divine Son, God experiences time, assumes it into the divine life. Neither assertion is problematic given the trinitarian nature of God. Or, positively, out of the unique temporality of the relational life of God's being, God as Origin, Mediation and Fulfillment, God makes the time of creaturely reality God's own.

God as Father, Son and Spirit, and the relational dimensions that exists between them, or what the tradition affirms as the subsistent relations of God, are, as I argue here, the basic ingredients for an account of the relation between the eternity of God and time. This has not prevented specific formulations on the nature of God's eternity to be conceived. Barth proposes the idea of the eternity of God as the pure duration of God, clearly demarcating the presence of a unique temporality in the eternity of God along trinitarian lines. But the idea of pure duration, even in a trinitarian framework, admittedly, tends toward a conception of God's reality as a kind of eternal now, and that is hard to square with the presence of God in the movement of history itself. There is, in other words, a kind of irresistible draw to a singular focal point in the idea of eternity as pure duration, and one that makes subordinate how aspects of source and goal, beginning and end, the aspects that form the transcendent grounds for God's real becoming in time, are truly proper to the eternal life of God.

Pannenberg's idea of eternity as the simultaneous presence of time as a whole to God is more complex, and I affirm a limited version of it below. For Pannenberg specifically the problem is that he does not differentiate far enough within the notion of simultaneity. His claim that the present and future cannot be distinguished in God's eternity unavoidable suggests an idea of God's reality that would seemingly overwhelm historical reality. In this way,
and specifically in this case and not in all of Pannenberg's ideas on eternity, he is closer to the classical idea of eternity as an eternal now, or of God's all-encompassing gaze over past, present and future at once. There are minor instances in Jenson as well where the futurity of the Spirit is linked too closely with future time, leading to the same outcome in Pannenberg's theology. The idea of duration or simultaneous presence need not necessarily be jettisoned in an account of God's eternity. Nothing in time, as noted before, is lost on God; God is the everlasting one, the beginning and end (Ps. 90.2; Rev. 1.8, 1.18). But, decisively, how a depiction of God's eternity delineates the relation between the being of God and future time is significant. Everything hinges on whether God, in the eternity of the divine being, be understood in transcendent sovereignty, capable of a real history with a future, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, as transcendently sovereign being for whom that future is already real, making any kind of genuine history for God hard to imagine.

The point: a concept of eternity, say as simultaneity, cannot be governing. What governs, I am arguing, is the notion of the inner-relations of God as triune and the transcendent life that God lives as triune with others. This must have primacy in a notion of divine eternity and an account of the relation between eternity and time. The view of God as triune that I have articulated above, drawing from both the traditional idea of the genetic relations and Jenson's notion of the Spirit, of God as Origin, being-in-Mediation and Fulfillment, provides a helpful way to think of God's eternity as temporally structured; and, likewise, to denote the temporal basis that belongs to God and out of which God acts in history. And while inspired by Jenson's doctrine of the Spirit to speak of a Fulfillment in God, I will not follow him in precisely linking together the dimensions of time as the situated locales of the divine persons,

or how God envelops time in the association of the past with the Father, the future with the Spirit and, consequently, the Son with the specious present. This seems to me to be more trouble than it is worth. It is not Jenson's intention to do so, and I do not think that he ultimately succumbs to this charge, but there is always the risk here that these situated locales (e.g., the Father with the past) appear as fixed points on a timeline that the divine persons inhabit. The eschatological future, for instance, is the triumphant reality of not only the Spirit, but is a reality that the Father and Son fully share in as well. That said, I will retain some temporal ascriptions as they pertain to the being and inner-relations of God as triune, as I have noted in the idea of the Father as Origin and Spirit as Fulfillment. At any rate, much of what Jenson intends can be affirmed: a notion of envelopment, of God in time and, critically, of God as the future of creation. There is a way, as I argue in the paragraphs below, that clings more closely to the relational aspects of the divine persons in order to do this, which is precisely what I have been arguing is essential all along for a view of God's relation to time that avoids the problems of timelessness and notions of God's eternity that would seemingly overwhelm historical reality. I do this by way of setting forth a trinitarian schematic for the relation between God's eternity and time. Moreover, I take up how the eternal God encompasses temporal reality, acts within time and opens up and assures the future.

God, sovereign in the divine being, encompasses the reality of time. God is before and is the end all things. By the Father, or the unoriginate Origin in God, all things come into being through his creative will. But what the Father wills takes place in and through the begotten Son, from his being-in-Mediation in God and, in turn, his mediating activity in the world (Jn 1.1-3; Rom. 8.11; Col. 1.16-17). Moreover, what the Father wills at the beginning has a corresponding goal in the end of all things, the Spirit. The Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, empowers the Son's ministry in time so as to bring the original will of the
Father, mediated in the Son, to fulfillment in history, again based on the sovereignty of the Spirit's unique being as Fulfillment in God (Mt. 12.28). In this way, out of the temporally structured relational life of God, of God's eternality, God acts in the temporal world. And furthermore, in this way God brackets the temporal world as triune. God does not accomplish this merely as the unoriginate Origin at the beginning and the unique Fulfillment of God at the end — which is the risk that Jenson's trinitarian idea of envelopment faces. Rather, the establishment of the divine will by which the world comes into being and has its end, and the accomplishment of this work by the divine persons, is at every point a trinitarian mediated act. What the Father wills at creation is the origin of all things mediated in the Son and achieved by the Spirit. What the Spirit brings about at the eschaton is the universal fulfillment of the Son's death and resurrection in glorification of the Father and his salvific willing of this event.

God acts in time. The idea is already implicit, at least, in the paragraph above that God relates to time via the Son and Spirit. The Son is the mediating principle of God's eternity, and the locus of God's activity in time. The begotten Son, who in his being-in-Mediation in God is likewise the mediating factor of the Father's original will, has his being in time, and actualizes the primal will of God in his specific history. Importantly, his historical actions are also and always works of the triune God, acts that carry out the Father's will with the intent to glorify him, and, likewise, acts that are brought to fulfillment by the Spirit (Jn. 16.7-15, 17.1). Again, from the temporally structured eternity of God's being, God acts in the world. The key point to note here is that alongside the way in which God brackets temporality, as noted in the

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14. See chapter 4, 2.2.
paragraph above, God acts, primarily by way of the Son — but always as a triune act — *in the course of time* itself.

Lastly, and the point which I give most attention to due to the ongoing problems around the reality of the future in formulations of eternity with the main figures of this study, God *opens up and makes possible the future*. This point is critical for the trinitarian notion of eternity that I am arguing for here. In God's eternity God *encompasses* time, and therefore gives creaturely life in time a holistic sense of meaning, a point of origin and an end in what God makes temporal reality to be. From God's eternity God *acts in time*, and therefore is not the encompassing element of creaturely reality abstractly, but in proximity and relation to the creatures that God intimately sustains. What is at stake in the question of the *future*? The reality of time and history, and therefore also the two just noted points on the truth of God's way of encompassing time and the divine activity in history. If the future that creatures hope for is, in fact, already realized on the part of God, if God is in some way already 'there,' then the present is reduced to a mere semblance.

But as the triune God this is not, in fact, the case, or at least it need not be. As triune, I argue, God can both enable a genuine future, one worth hoping for, and be the grounds for the certainty of its coming to be. This is true because God is Spirit. The Spirit is not the futurity of God in the sense of a distinctive presence of what lies ahead in future time as already real for God. The Spirit, rather, is the *possibility* of the future. The Spirit is the power of God that holds open a real future for creatures. How is this possible?

I build here on the claims from the previous section in which I argued that the Spirit makes history possible in facilitating the Father-Son relation. The same point holds for the reality of time future. The Spirit facilitates the Father-Son relation in time, at once manifesting and bringing to realization the fellowship of the divine unity. The Spirit facilitates a history.
The Father-Son fellowship is, at once, actual in the divine life and ever anew in the fulfilling dynamic of God that is the Spirit. Importantly, when the Spirit maintains the Father-Son unity in and through death, he does this in view of the still outstanding future of the eschatological end in which the Father-Son relation will be the culmination of history in the divine loving, or the return of the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:28). The mediating activity of the Spirit opens up a future, first for God, and with it, for creatures whose ultimate hope is a sharing in this divine fellowship as one with the risen Jesus (Col. 3.3). There is no need to posit a future that is simultaneously before God as is present reality. Such a view of God's eternity would nullify the reality of the present. Rather, the fellowship that the Spirit facilitates in God, as seen in Jesus' resurrection, is capable of undergoing and overcoming finitude's great fact. And, for this reason, the Spirit as the power of God, the principle of Fulfillment in God, not only enables a future for God and creatures, but is also the guarantor that God can and will make good on God's promises for the future (Eph. 1.14). The Spirit is the possibility of the future.

One final and summarizing point will be made in this regard. That the Spirit, as the principle of Fulfillment in God, opens up a future is a vital aspect for reflection on how the eternity of God relates to time. If the future is already realized in view of the eternal being of God, then the points of God as encompassing time and active within it turn into hollow observations; for this would undermine the idea of the reality of God in time present. Likewise, the idea of the eschaton or abstract futurity that "comes from the future to draw the time of this world ever onward" will not do either, as Kathryn Tanner observes. This idea is closest to the work of the early Pannenberg. And yet the future is not left to mere contingency. What

makes the God of the Bible the God of history is that God indwells temporal reality with an end in view. The notion that I have proposed in which God acts in history out of God's own end, the Fulfillment in God as Spirit — distinct from the temporal future, but its basis and its hope — avoids this pitfall. The future has content: a sharing in the triumph of the triune God through the risen Jesus. And as the Spirit, the power of God, it will come to be. It has been established ahead of time in the resurrection of Jesus. But as the reality to come, it is still future; not yet a set reality, not even in view of God's eternal being. And so, the way that the eternal God encompasses time in the present and acts within it as well are as lively and real as is the trinitarian being by which God dwells and works in history.

In response to the initial question of this section: How does a conception of the eternity of the triune God best suit a notion of God's presence and transcendent reality in time? A definitive term for God's eternity is not, in fact, necessary here. It is, perhaps, though, possible to conceive of eternity as the simultaneous presence of time to God. What is important here is that this is conceived insofar as it means that no time is lost on God, and, critically, does not mean that the future is already real for God, even as God is the one who makes it possible.

Far more significant, I have argued throughout, is that the eternity of God be understood in terms of the inner-relations of the divine persons and their transcendent activity in history. I have made the case for a construal of God's eternity in view of those relations as indicative of Origin, Mediation and Fulfillment in God. And what is more, in focusing on the relational aspects of the divine persons and their ways of relating to history, I have avoided the problematic conception, or the tendency towards such a conception, of understanding the divine persons as fixed to locales on a timeline. Through this temporally structured notion of God's eternal being I argued for a way in which God encompasses temporality, acts in time...
and opens up the future. But even here there are notably other expressions to be developed. When I considered the idea of the Spirit, for example, as the possibility of the future, based in its being as Fulfillment in God, I utilized ideas of the Father-Son relation as establishing the divine lordship and unity in time more so than their relation as origin (Father) and mediation (Son) of all things in the Spirit, though the two conceptions are not unrelated. The complex reality of the trinitarian relations, gleaned from the revelatory dealings of God, need not be conceptually restricted to one set alone. The point stands to note that these are beginnings for a way forward in conceiving of the relation between the eternity of God and time in view of the relations of the divine persons.

Following an overview of the assessments of the work of Dorner, Barth, Pannenberg and Jenson in this study, I have taken up some of the remaining issues and further constructive possibilities for an understanding of the triune God's relation to history in this concluding chapter. To summarize: in the last two sections ('Trinity and History'; 'Eternity and Time') I have made the case for (1) a conception of the eternal relations of God in view of their historical ends, a point that both avoids the idea an ulterior reality of God in a theory of correspondence and, positively, that has a deeply scriptural dimension to it in view of God's eschatological end. I also argued for (2) a conception of the immanent Trinity along eschatological lines, and specifically in view of the Father's monarchy and the Spirit's facilitating activity in God, in order to conceive of the divine basis for God's self-enabled and living history. And finally I proposed (3) a notion of eternity that gives priority to the inner-relations of the divine persons as they relate to temporal reality. The construal I set forth, intended as a way forward for conceiving of the relation between God's eternity and time, reflects on the triune nature of God as Origin, being-in-Mediation and Fulfillment, and offers a way to conceive of the triune God that encompasses, acts within and opens up a future in created time. In short, the proposals
here, alongside the engagements with the work of Dorner, Barth, Pannenberg and Jenson of this study, have intended to convey how just versatile the triunity of God's being makes God in history. God is Father, Son and Spirit, and out of the relational life of the one God, God acts and has a history with others as the living God.
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