

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

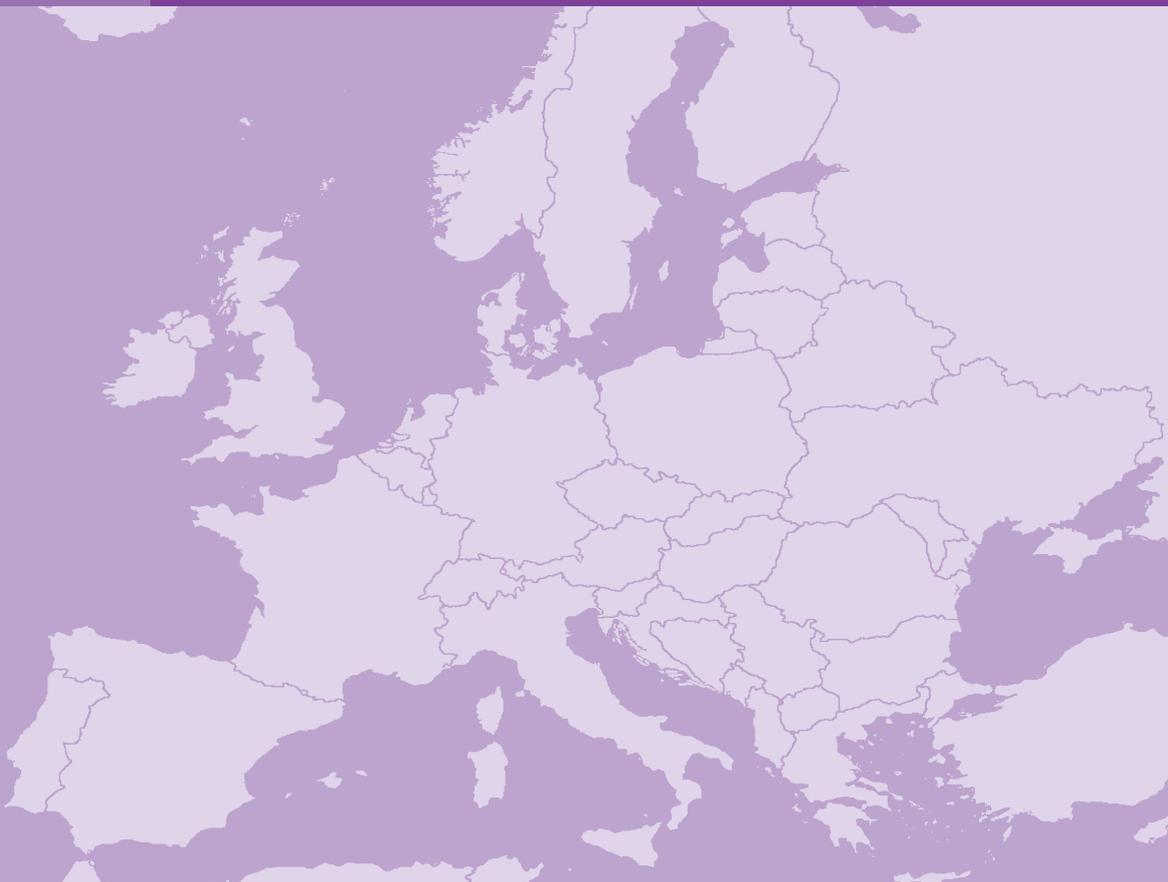
A table of contents for *European Journal of Theology* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_european-journal-theology_01.php

**EUROPEAN JOURNAL
OF THEOLOGY**

**JOURNAL EUROPÉEN
DE THÉOLOGIE**

**EUROPÄISCHE
THEOLOGISCHE
ZEITSCHRIFT**



**XXII (2013) : 2
ISSN 0960-2720**

Wolfgang Pannenberg's Concept of Testimony as Natural Knowledge – Implications for the Doctrine of Scripture and the Church

Pui Shum Ip

RÉSUMÉ

Le témoignage constitue un aspect essentiel de la compréhension que le chrétien a de lui-même ainsi que de la perception de la nature de l'Écriture. Des conceptions philosophiques du témoignage, comme par exemple celle qui assimile le témoignage à un procédé rhétorique et littéraire, s'infiltrèrent souvent dans les études de la Bible et les écrits théologiques. Pour déterminer dans quelle mesure tels outils conceptuels sont adéquats pour rendre compte du sens et de la pratique du témoignage chrétien, il est nécessaire de se livrer à un examen très attentif. Il manque à ces approches philosophiques la prise

* * * *

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Zeuge und Zeugnis machen einen wesentlichen Teil des christlichen Selbstverständnisses aus wie auch die Auffassung vom Wesen der Schrift. Philosophische Modelle von Zeugnis, wie Zeugnis als rhetorisches und literarisches Instrument, infiltrieren oft biblische Studien und theologische Schriften. Die Eignung dieser Mittel als gedankliche Werkzeuge, um die Bedeutung und Praxis christlichen Zeugnisses auszudrücken, erfordert sorgfältige Prüfung. Was diesen philosophischen Modellen abgeht ist die Analyse der göttlichen Autorenschaft bei der Abfassung und fortwährenden Weitergabe von

* * * *

SUMMARY

Witness and testimony constitute an essential part of Christian self-understanding, as does the perception of the nature of Scripture. Philosophical models of testimony, for instance testimony as rhetoric and literary device, often infiltrate biblical studies and theological writings. The aptness of these construals as conceptual tools to articulate the meaning and practice of Chris-

en compte de l'action divine dans la constitution et la transmission continue du témoignage. L'auteur étudie ici la position de Pannenberg qui considèrerait le témoignage chrétien comme une forme particulière de connaissance naturelle. Il vise à montrer que cette conception est très proche des conceptions naturalistes du témoignage proposées par les philosophes. Parce qu'il considère la constitution, la transmission et l'appropriation du témoignage comme un processus cognitif naturel humain, Pannenberg entretient une ambivalence à propos du rôle du Saint-Esprit dans sa doctrine de l'Écriture, ainsi qu'à propos de l'existence et de l'identité de l'Église comme témoin.

* * * *

Zeugnis. Dieser Aufsatz analysiert Wolfgang Pannenberg's Werk über das christliche Zeugnis als eine Art natürliches Wissen und vertritt dabei die Meinung, dass Pannenberg's Interpretation den naturalistischen Modellen nahekommt, wie sie von Vertretern der Richtung „Philosophie als Zeugnis“ vorgeschlagen werden. In Anbetracht der Abfassung, Weitergabe und Aneignung von Zeugnis als einem natürlichen Prozess menschlichen Wissens, schafft Pannenberg's Sicht von Zeugnis eine Ambivalenz hinsichtlich der Rolle des Heiligen Geistes in seiner Lehre über die Schrift und die Existenz und Identität der Kirche als Zeuge.

* * * *

tian testimony requires careful scrutiny. What is missing in these philosophical models is the analysis of divine agency in the constitution and continuous transmission of testimony. By analysing Wolfgang Pannenberg's construal of Christian testimony as a kind of natural knowledge, this essay argues that Pannenberg's construal comes close to the naturalistic models proposed by philosophers of witness. Considering the constitution, transmission and appropriation of witness as natural processes of human

knowing, Pannenberg's view of testimony engenders ambivalence regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in his

doctrine of Scripture, and the existence and identity of the Church as witness.

* * * * *

1. Testimony and its philosophical construals

Different disciplines, for instance the legal profession and the study of social epistemology, have different working definitions of the category of testimony. Answers to the question of what constitutes testimony or how to evaluate an act of bearing witness, vary according to the needs of the diverse disciplines. Witness and testimony (μαρτύριον) also constitute an essential part of the Christian self-understanding, as does our perception of the nature of Scripture. While these are biblical concepts, they have also received considerable attention from philosophers; the works of Aristotle, C.A.J. Coody and P. Ricoeur are notable examples.¹ In fact, the influence of philosophers – Aristotle's writings on witness as a subsidiary practice of rhetoric; Coody's naturalistic and expansive model of testimony, and the hermeneutic philosophy of Ricoeur – can be found in biblical studies and theological writings. The appropriation of these philosophical resources in the works A.A. Trites, R. Bauckham, A.T. Lincoln and W. Bruggemann is noticeable.²

The Christian use of the term witness to a certain extent shares the semantic field of the secular use of the term. As is evident in A.A. Trites' *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, even an attempt to define the biblical notion of witness is not entirely independent of the influence of philosophical models.³ The category of witness or testimony often appears in biblical studies and theological writings, as well as in the self-descriptions of ecclesial communities. Contrary to our expectation, the uniqueness of the Christian understanding of testimony is often assumed in these theological writings and ecclesial self-descriptions, but in many cases without being clearly articulated. Different theologians have different insights into the category, and the present essay is an attempt to reconstruct and examine the concept according to Wolfhart Pannenberg (born 1928). Through this exploration I intend to draw attention to the relevance of a robust theological understanding of testimony that underscores the centrality of divine agency in the constitution and transmission of Christian witness.

Philosophical models have merits of their own,

grounded on an anthropology of the reflective self and relying on the use of imagination and memory; the conceptions of testimony which come from these models are useful in describing testimony as a social institution for the transfer of epistemological authority and knowledge. The usefulness of these understandings of testimony can be also extended to describe the basis of human solidarity. However, the aptness of these philosophical models for theology requires careful scrutiny. As a preliminary observation we can say that what is missing in these otherwise exemplary models is the analysis of divine agency in the constitution and continuous transmission of testimony. It therefore remains doubtful whether these philosophical models can provide an adequate account of Christian Scripture and witness. The consequence of these appropriations cannot be evaluated here; suffice it to say that there is evidence, for instance in Lincoln and Bauckham, that the use of philosophical understandings of testimony has significant bearing upon how they approach both the historicity and the theological meaning of Jesus' resurrection. Also noteworthy is that, in a comparison of the doctrine of the resurrection in K. Barth and R. Jenson, K. Sonderegger points out that their different views of witness probably have a decisive impact not only on how they speak of Jesus' resurrection, but also on the subsequent shape of their dogmatic systems.⁴

In what follows I will first outline Pannenberg's concept of testimony, highlighting aspects that it shares with naturalistic philosophical models of testimony; and second, I will explore some implications of Pannenberg's view of testimony for the nature of Scripture and the Church. The concept of witness in Pannenberg resembles the naturalistic models of testimony of philosophers. A salient similarity is that testimony is consistently pitched as a type of natural knowledge. For Pannenberg the question of our reception of testimony and bearing of witness is more or less an issue of epistemology. There is an intriguing reservation in Pannenberg against explicating the role of divine agency in the nature of Christian witness, as well as in its continuous operation. This absence of a robust understanding of divine agency in testimony has its repercussions. Pannenberg's view of

testimony engenders ambivalence regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in his doctrine of Scripture, and the existence and identity of the Church as witness. In contrast, it is worthwhile to note briefly that the way Karl Barth construes the category of testimony is probably the opposite of Pannenberg in a number of respects. Without discussing the details of Barth's concept, which would require a separate essay, it suffices to note that testimony is a recurring theme in Barth's theology. For Barth, active divine agency behind Christian witness is a non-negotiable presupposition, and from time to time he reiterates the ontology of Christian witness, which has its possibility, ground and condition in the archetypal self-witness of God.⁵

2. Pannenberg's concept of testimony as natural knowledge

Wolfgang Pannenberg is an original thinker who makes no deliberate use of philosophical models of testimony in his theology. Yet his understanding of witness as a species of natural knowledge actually comes close to the naturalistic model of Coady. As he has not dedicated any specific piece of work to an analysis of the concept of testimony, one must go to a number of places in his writings, including his anthropology, hermeneutics and his doctrinal reflections on revelation, Scripture, election and ecclesiology, in order to garner his ideas. Without giving detailed expositions of each of these areas and doctrines, we will attempt a rough sketch of Pannenberg's concept of testimony.⁶ In what follows I will outline his ideas in three points. In a later section, in which their implications will be addressed, these points will be expanded and substantiated. From time to time I will draw brief contrasts between Barth and Pannenberg, the main purpose of which is to highlight the uniqueness of latter. Given the limitation of space, I do not intend these contrasts to be in-depth comparisons of the two theologians.

2.1 Creator and creatures

In Pannenberg's early writing, Christian testimony like any other form of knowledge is essentially of a natural character.⁷ What underlies this view is Pannenberg's insight that all knowledge, including knowledge of revelation and testimony of God, is natural. What buttresses this argument is his doctrine of revelation, which is inseparable from his interpretation of Romans 1:19-20.⁸ He sees a basic continuity between the Creator and

his creatures, between the divine and the human spirit. This continuity is recognisable particularly in his anthropology, where he sees no necessity in differentiating the human spirit from the divine spirit. For Pannenberg,

[the] element of transcendence in spirit suggests that after all it might be neither necessary nor wise to admit a fundamental distinction between a human spirit and a divine spirit. The ecstatic, self-transcendent character of all spiritual experience brings sufficiently to bear the transcendence of God over all created beings. The spirit never belongs in a strict sense to the creature in his immanent nature, but the creature participates in the spirit – and I venture to say: in the divine spirit – by transcending itself, i.e., by being elevated beyond itself in the ecstatic experience that illustrates the working of the spirit. We remember: the spirit is not the mind, but the human comes to life only when he is touched by the spirit... Thus the idea of spirit allows us to do justice to the transcendence of God and at the same time to explain his immanence in his creation.⁹

In the ecstatic structure of human being and also in our capacity to exercise imaginative and anticipatory power, human participation in the divine spirit is seen as occurring naturally. The continuity that is grounded in the doctrine of creation is robust and strong. For Pannenberg, the problem of sin that encumbers humans and separates them from their Creator should not be granted so much importance as to overshadow this continuity.¹⁰ In brief, the capacity to appropriate meaning in revelation, and thus also testimony of God, is securely built upon the doctrine of creation, which stipulates the continuity between the Creator and his creatures.

2.2 Scripture

Testimony is constituted by the human experience of freedom,¹¹ and Scripture as testimony is the product of our imaginative inspiration.¹² Here, imagination as an innate faculty of the human creature plays an important role in generating meaning from historical experiences:

[the] power of imagination is thus the vital element at work in freedom as the latter takes concrete form ... it can manifest itself ... as a paradigm of the relation between grace and freedom.¹³

While inspirations of the imagination do not

automatically present God's word, Pannenberg believes that God speaks through the 'inspirations of the imagination' on condition that the human beings involved have pure hearts and an openness to the world. Having God as the origin and goal of their lives, their imagination can bear witness to God. Scripture testifies to human experiences of divine acts in history, and Scripture as an inspired text is a metaphorical way of saying that there is an intimate match between the texts and the original gospel of Jesus.¹⁴ Where divine acts in history are revelatory, revelation is about worldly affairs and events (contrary to common view of revelation as revelation of God's deity); as such it needs no inspired understanding.¹⁵ The content of human experience is where the authority of revelation resides and no external authorization is required.

While I acknowledge the development of Pannenberg's trinitarian theology in his later career, my research into his view of testimony has led me to think that his approach to the category as natural knowledge remains stable over time. His decision to place the issue of testimony within the realm of epistemology remains consistent. Two examples may help to illustrate this observation. First, samples of Pannenberg's argument regarding the naturalness of knowledge (including testimonial claims of divine reality) from both his early and mature writings tend to indicate the consistency of his stance.¹⁶ Second, in considering Scripture as witness, Pannenberg's analysis of the crisis of the Scripture principle does not significantly change over time.¹⁷ This evaluation of the crisis has been a crucial consideration that leads to suggestions on how to overcome the historical distance of testimony; these proposals include the interpreter's reaching back into religious traditions and the hermeneutical assumption of universal history.¹⁸

2.3 The Church

In Pannenberg's ecclesiology, the Christian call to witness is not the core of the Christian existence; that is rather the centrality of fellowship. Testimony is subsidiary to the Christian existence and it is a practice conducive to the goal of gathering believers into the fellowship that is grounded in Christ.¹⁹ The Church's mission is to be a sign of the Kingdom of God, and this is shown forth by the liturgical activities of the Church, which demonstrate its unity. In this context, witness in the manner of public confession is inwardly directed, for the purpose of the initiation of members, as

well as the reiteration of personal agreement with ecclesial teachings.²⁰ Where the Christian attestation of Christ is transmitted through evangelism, the process becomes a collective ecclesial act, with the aim that the message received will constitute an immediate relation between the recipient and Jesus Christ.²¹ It is intriguing that while Pannenberg attributes this to the work of the Spirit, the influence of the Spirit seems to recede rapidly to the background in his discussion of the personal appropriation of faith. (More on this later on.)

2.4 Interim verdict

The above has outlined Pannenberg's concept of testimony in broad brushstrokes. There are details that cannot be adequately unpacked here, for instance, his intricate solution to overcome the historical distance of testimony. Nonetheless, in this outline of Pannenberg's concept of testimony certain features are noticeable which resemble naturalistic models proposed by philosophers of witness. In such models, human testimony tends to require no additional (external or divine) agency in order to be constituted. Likewise, its transmission and appropriation are properly natural processes, based on the innate human faculties of imagination and memory.²² For Pannenberg, human testimony emerges through the encounter of the historical experience of freedom. Where the human subjectivity is bombarded by the divine reality in the power that comes to it as an experience of freedom, witness and the subsequent practice of witnessing naturally emerge.

We are not suggesting that divine agency is missing from Pannenberg's doctrine of revelation or from his ecclesiology. The opposite is true: Pannenberg holds that revelation, when it comes to completion in the eschaton, is precisely God's self-revelation; while on the side of the eschaton, in our temporal order, revelation is God's divine acts in historical form. Also, for Pannenberg, the divine agency of the Spirit runs strong in the life of the Church.²³ It is beyond doubt that Pannenberg's pneumatology not only fills his thinking of the Church, but also permeates other major doctrines in his theological system such as creation and eschatology. But my point is that there is little in his pneumatology that is directly related to the theme of testimony and the act of witnessing.

3. Implications for the Christian understanding of Scripture and Church

Not all implications of Pannenberg's concept of testimony can adequately be addressed here; we will begin by looking at its impact on two areas – the nature of Scripture and the existence and identity of the Church. In what follows I seek to demonstrate that where the formation, transmission and appropriation of testimony are regarded as natural processes of human knowing, there is less urgency to articulate the role of divine agency in testimony. This state of affairs may have engendered the ambivalence regarding the role of the Spirit in Pannenberg's doctrine of Scripture, and in his view of the existence and identity of the Church.

3.1 Scripture and the agency of the Holy Spirit

Concerning the inspiration of Scripture, Pannenberg reasons that it is the content of the gospel which decisively determines the inspired character of Scripture. In his view, the original gospel that Jesus proclaimed is 'impregnated' ... 'by the divine Spirit, [and] has to be considered the criterion of scriptural authority and thus the basis of a doctrine affirming the inspiration of Scripture'.²⁴ The person and history of Jesus were saturated with the presence of the future of God, and thus emanated spiritual power. On the basis of this impregnation by the Spirit, it is justified to regard the apostolic writings as inspired by the same Spirit of God. Thus inspiration is to be understood with Jesus Christ as its centre and criterion. In terms of the 'literal concreteness' of the words in Scripture that bear witness to Jesus' gospel, Pannenberg has no reservation in calling them divinely inspired.²⁵ The inspired character of Scripture is the close connectedness and matching of content between its testimony and the gospel of Jesus.

Let us compare Pannenberg's view with that of Barth. Inspiration for Barth is an event that the Holy Spirit freely brings upon humans, and the whole process of inspiration is a trajectory in the form of a circle. The Spirit's movement leads from the divine revelation to the apostles, who were authorised to speak of it, and the circle of inspiration is eventually completed as the Holy Spirit moves the hearer, such that she is illuminated as the message is received in obedience. Here the self-disclosure of God happens; an additional step

has been taken so that the mystery of revelation is unveiled. Barth describes this self-disclosure in its totality as *theopneustia*.²⁶ In this miracle of knowing the revelation of Christ, Barth unpacks the idea of inspiration in three aspects; first, it is the benefit of revelation that sets the process in motion, meaning that in the first place the mystery of revelation is disclosed to elected humans, enabling them to become witnesses. Second, there is the coming forth of the spiritual man, that is, the apostle empowered by the Holy Spirit, who can speak of the revelation in the 'miracle of his existence as a witness'.²⁷ Finally, in the third movement, other humans at the receiving end of the apostolic message have to decide whether, as carnal persons, they will not receive or recognise it, or whether by the help of the Holy Spirit they will also be spiritual men and women who listen.

In Pannenberg's writings, inspiration is less described as an event and more as a completed state of affairs, a fixed property of Scripture: its content resembles, or speaks literally of, the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this literal connectedness, 'inspiration' has a static quality. Although the Spirit is still the source of inspiration, it is understood in terms of an idiom of field theory.²⁸ The emphasis is on the underlying continuity between the spirit of the human creature and that of the Creator God. As such, to speak of inspiration as an actual event (as Barth does) is not necessary. Hasel observes that for Pannenberg '[the] content of Scripture is neither divinely revealed, nor divinely inspired. Scripture does not originate directly from God as His Word because revelation is not to be understood in the same sense as direct communication'.²⁹ The consequence of this is to accept Scripture as merely a human document. For Pannenberg the origin of Scripture is from below: '... the Christian Bible originated, together with other religious texts, as an expression of religious experience. As such, Scripture is part of the history of the transmission of traditions'.³⁰ The biblical authors did not require special guidance or illumination to turn their experiences into text, because in them 'no content is communicated'.³¹

While Hasel's analysis of the origin of Scripture according to Pannenberg is accurate, it must be noted that in an article published a year after Hasel's book, Pannenberg does speak of the Scripture as inspired, albeit in a qualified way.³² In fact, Pannenberg critiques the doctrine of inspiration in the first volume of *Systematic Theology* and he offers a new foundation at the end of the second

volume.³³ In terms of the place of the doctrine – when and where one should tackle the concept of inspiration in a system of theology – his solution refuses to place it in the prolegomena, as a basis that would justify Christian doctrines. Rather, he suggests the transition between Christology and ecclesiology as the proper place where the inspiration of Scripture should be treated. He writes,

Christian theology is not entitled to use the idea of the divine inspiration of the biblical scriptures in a formal way in order to establish the authority of the Bible before dealing with the contents of Christian teachings.³⁴

As he sees it, concurring with Schleiermacher, the ‘regard for holy scripture cannot be the basis of faith in Christ; rather, faith in Christ must be presupposed to allow for special regard for holy scripture’.³⁵ In this argument, talking of Scripture’s inspired character must be built upon a solid Christology which provides the ground of trust in Christ. Again, in Pannenberg’s system this trust is a rational assent to well articulated human historical experiences in which the man Jesus has been encountered, and once again this giving of assent to christological arguments requires no external and supernatural intervention.

Yet there is another side to the inspiration of Scripture as Pannenberg sees it, which is set out in the second volume of *Systematic Theology*. He briefly argues that Scripture has power because of the Spirit which imparts the eschatological presence of salvation through Scripture and apostolic proclamation.³⁶ Yet this viewpoint seems to be only a passing thought. An overall appreciation of Pannenberg’s understanding of the inspired character of Scripture, however, convincingly shows his inclination to the concept of a concluded, static matching of content between the apostolic writings and Jesus’ gospel. When we weigh the relative attention he gives to this literal connectedness of the contents, in comparison to the movement of the Holy Spirit in the testimonial process, we can plausibly conclude that Pannenberg sees the role of the Holy Spirit as a quiet presence in the background.

The way Pannenberg approaches John 15:26 and 16:13 in *Systematic Theology* partially reflects his understanding of the relation between witness and the Spirit’s agency. The former verse mentions the Spirit whom the Father sends as the witness of Jesus; the latter verse speaks of the Spirit as the one who guides believers into the truth.

Pannenberg deals with these verses in a number of places,³⁷ in most of which the precedence of the Spirit’s agency in the constitution, operation and reception of testimony is not at the forefront of his arguments. Reference to the plain meaning of these two verses does not necessarily mean making a purposeful and constructive move that brings the consideration of divine agency into the centre of the concept of testimony. Pannenberg’s use of these verses can be summarized as follows: (a) On some occasions, they are mentioned only in passing without any significant discussion;³⁸ (b) sometimes John 15:26 is used with the aim to explicate the procession of the Spirit, and John 16:13 is also mentioned to help illustrate the self-distinction of the Spirit;³⁹ (c) in some cases, the verses are mentioned with the clear purpose to bring out the idea that the Spirit glorifies the Son.⁴⁰

Apart from the above pattern, the further use by Pannenberg of these two verses requires closer examination. In a passage in smaller font in *Systematic Theology* 2, pages 450-451, Pannenberg intends to show that the work of the exalted Christ and that of the Spirit is entirely interchangeable in content – a viewpoint that he considers evident in John and Paul. While recounting his understanding of Paul’s thoughts in this regard, Pannenberg writes, ‘the Spirit effects righteousness in us by creating faith in the message of Christ’. Yet the extent to which Pannenberg aligns his own view with this Pauline thought needs to be evaluated in the light of the paragraph that immediately follows, where he reiterates once again the naturalness of human ecstatic existence. Admittedly, ‘the Spirit lifts us above our own finitude’, yet Pannenberg is keen to point out that the believers are ‘ecstatic’ as they are in Christ, and there is ‘nothing unnatural about this “ecstasy” for our spiritual life may well be inherently “ecstatic”, a condition of life which lies in the reality of creation. When calling the human consciousness ecstatic and arguing that it enables us to be outside ourselves, Pannenberg writes about both its negative and positive effects,

we may also be estranged from ourselves, not only in extreme states of self-forgetfulness or when fury and frenzy take us outside ourselves, but also in phenomena of bondage and addiction that lead structurally to the basic form of concupiscence. ... At the same time self-forgetfulness may also be the supreme form of self-fulfilment. ... This is how it is with faith in Jesus Christ.⁴¹

The Pauline idea of the Spirit's work in effecting righteousness and creating faith is intriguingly juxtaposed with Pannenberg's affirmation of the ecstatic nature of human life and the possibility of venturing beyond ourselves through self-forgetfulness. It is plausible that for Pannenberg, where the reception of testimony and the constitution of witness is concerned, the centrality of the Spirit's agency needs no emphasis. Though the human consciousness might be dull and forgetful, it could be enthused by the historical and spiritual reality of Jesus' gospel, and the knower could rise and grapple knowledge in faith, just like any other piece of historical knowledge.⁴²

A similar tendency to render the activity of the Holy Spirit as a quiet illumination in the background is noticeable in Pannenberg's discussion of whether external help is necessary if the contents of the Christian message are to be grappled with. In an essay entitled 'Insight and Faith' he admits that with respect to the psychological process of apprehension, 'an illumination is necessary in order for that which is true in itself to appear evident in this character to a man'.⁴³ He continues, 'the materially and logically impeccable grounding [of truth] is *one* thing, but the consent of man is very often quite another matter'.⁴⁴ This means that the removal of certain pre-judgments and enlightenment are sometimes necessary for insight into a truth. This is probably the one place in Pannenberg's early writings that speaks of the need of illumination by the Spirit. This statement is made in the context of replying to criticisms of his earlier theses in *Revelation as History*, which had invited the suspicion that 'there is no place for confession of the Holy Spirit'.⁴⁵ When we weigh this argument for the need of the Spirit's illumination against the many references to the naturalness of testimony in Pannenberg's other early writings, it seems plausible that he thinks of a naturalistic view of witness as sufficient. Direct intervention of the Spirit in the process of understanding the Christian message is not something he wants to emphasise. On the one hand, for him plain human reasoning is sufficient to understand the theological meaning of revelation in the event of Jesus Christ; on the other hand, where pre-judgments coming from other religious traditions may cloud human perception, the kind of illumination required is identical with the clarity of the very reports which convey the significance of the Christ event. Where the reports of the Christ event are accessible to plain human reason, Pannenberg does not deem it

necessary or beneficial to speak, as Barth would in his discussion of inspiration, of an actual and personal encounter with the Holy Spirit in the apprehension of truth.⁴⁶ The same reticence regarding the necessity of illumination by the Spirit is also there in his later writings; his consideration of personal faith in the last volume of *Systematic Theology* lends support to this observation.⁴⁷

3.2 Christian community and the agency of the Holy Spirit

If we consider the question of how witness is positioned in Pannenberg's ecclesiology, it is evident that witness as vocation is rarely mentioned in his *Systematic Theology*, and likewise that the Christian existence as witness receives less emphasis than the concept of fellowship.⁴⁸ For instance, in his analysis of the Pentecost event, the gift of the Spirit is directly related to fellowship, whereas he argues that the theme of witnessing and mission to the gentiles should be considered as a theological statement of Luke. Weighing these two themes, Pannenberg underscores the importance of the coming into existence of Christian fellowship through the event of Pentecost.⁴⁹ He suggests that

[the] story of Pentecost in Acts 2:1ff. gives expression to the fact that the Spirit does not simply assure each individual believer alone of fellowship with Jesus Christ ... but that thereby he founds at the same time the fellowship of believers.⁵⁰

As for Luke's theological reworking of the traditions about Pentecost, Pannenberg thinks that Luke 'says nothing about the fellowship of Christians with God. ... This dominant insight of Paul's ... does not occur in Luke's account'. While Pannenberg grants that Luke presupposed the existence of fellowship, he would prefer Luke to place more emphasis on this fellowship as the position from which the act of witnessing springs forth.⁵¹

This is again in sharp contrast to Barth, who underscores the Christian existence as essentially the discharging of the entrusted task of witness.⁵² Vocation and the sending of the Church are two areas on which Barth's thought concerning Christian witness concentrates. These two are essentially alternative ways of describing human existence as witness: both 'calling' and 'sending' are accomplished in one divine act of election and reconciliation; while vocation is focused on the individual context, the sending of the Church

hinges on the collective aspect of witness. When being called, individuals rise and come into a new existence as Christians and witnesses; similarly the Church when being sent does not exist apart from its bearing witness. Pannenberg understands Christian existence primarily as fellowship of believers, which is based on each individual's fellowship with Christ. It is not that he ignores the ecclesial task of witnessing – as Stanley Grenz points out, in Pannenberg the task of the Church is referred to as both a 'sign' and a 'reminder'⁵³ – but that the motif of fellowship is more prominent and central than witness. It is Pannenberg's belief that election when expressed as fellowship serves the greater goals of God's saving actions, and he understands 'the role of intrahuman fellowship as the direct object of the divine purpose of election that aims at the consummation of our creation.'⁵⁴ Human witness in this context is merely a function of fellowship. Witness is thus oriented to the goal of fellowship.

Where the Christian practice of witnessing or the act of bearing witness is discussed, Pannenberg refers to liturgies, sacraments and confession of faith during worship as modes of witnessing, and underscores its collective and inward aspects. The Church precedes any event of personal witnessing, and the latter 'finds its full form only in liturgical worship.'⁵⁵ In its collective and inward character, witness occurs in liturgies, sacraments and the communal confession of faith during Christian worship services, which are directed inward to strengthen the fellowship. It is through their common confession that Christians understand themselves as belonging to the fellowship of believers, which of course presupposes their individual allegiance and thus relation to Christ.⁵⁶ In this context, the act of testifying can be understood as a public confession of the identity and person of Jesus, where 'public' refers primarily to the community of believers, since the act is directed to this community and its function is to initiate, to declare or to reaffirm one's membership of the community. Pannenberg writes,

[the] basic significance of common confessing for the church's fellowship finds expression in the function of the confession in the church's liturgical life. In this regard common confession of faith stands closely related to baptism on the one side and to the Eucharist on the other.⁵⁷

In his discussion of liturgies, sacraments and confession of faith during worship as modes of witness-

ing, explicit reference to the Spirit's empowering of these acts of witnessing is sparse.

Prior to Jesus' death on the cross, no criterion was needed to determine whether a confession of Jesus was valid, because '[it] was enough that Jesus himself accepted confession of him'.⁵⁸ Yet after Easter period the apostles, disciples and subsequently the Church took over this function, so that now individual confession must align with 'the church's proclamation and its liturgical acclamation of Jesus as Messiah and Kyrios'.⁵⁹ Pannenberg examines the development of early confession formulas which have eventually consolidated as creeds.⁶⁰ Our interest is not in this genealogy, but rather in the idea of witness that emerges from it. Pannenberg's discussion indicates certain functional aspects of witness, that is first of all the initiation of individuals into the Church, and secondly the ongoing practice of public witness as a way to police the boundary of the community by reiterating the individual's agreement with the teachings of the Church. In short, witnessing is a deliberate act to build up the fellowship and to maintain its identity. In this testifying, to reiterate one's belonging to the community is the primary activity, while reference to the identity and person of Jesus Christ is less prominent, though this does not mean falsifying or relegating the original meaning of the Christian confession to secondary importance.⁶¹ These two aspects of witness – giving consent and reciting the agreed confession of the community – are conscious acts of believers, and in Pannenberg's thinking they require no discrete or separate event of supernatural inspiration or guidance, because he sees a basic continuity between the human spirit and the divine Spirit.

It is true that in relation to evangelism Pannenberg does speak of the work of the Spirit, which as a transcendent movement, liberates and endows new freedom to the recipients, bringing them into the filial relation of Jesus with the Father. Yet this emphasis on the independent work of the Spirit creates unease when read alongside earlier arguments of Pannenberg which deny the necessity to differentiate between the human and the divine spirit, and which argue that living human creatures always participate in the greater reality of the divine Spirit through their own self-transcendence.⁶² It is intriguing and noteworthy that in the third volume of *Systematic Theology*, after completing his discussion of the Spirit's work in bringing together individual and communal relation to Christ, Pannenberg moves on to address the 'basic

saving works of the Spirit' in individual Christian by faith, hope and love;⁶³ in the section on faith in particular, reference to the free and sovereign intervention of the Spirit rapidly recedes into the background.⁶⁴

In this particular section Pannenberg's exploration of the concept of faith begins by speaking of the ecstatic character of the work of the Spirit, which is not altogether distinct from the natural ecstatic openness of human life. From there onwards, he moves away from the pneumatological point of reference towards an exposition of the notion of truth in Hebrew and Greek traditions, and how their relation with faith is conceived. Here, the abiding theme of Pannenberg's writings emerges once more – that faith must first be connected to historical revelation and only later to God, and that since our assessment of historical events remains probabilistic, faith's knowledge is always provisional and open to testing. Throughout this epistemological reflection on faith, it appears that if there is any description of the work of the Holy Spirit, it depicts the natural acquisition of historical knowledge; the conscious act of giving assent based on rational choice; and the constant recognition that faith's knowledge is provisional in character. As Pannenberg moves on to the discussion of the assurance of faith,⁶⁵ he continues to counsel against any recourse to the witness of the Holy Spirit in the human conscience, as it would only mean lapsing back into theological subjectivism that is no longer allowed for the modern mind.⁶⁶ Consider for instance the statement,

A supreme feature of the integrity of faith is that it does not live of itself but by the given reality of God and his revelation in the history of Israel and ... in Jesus of Nazareth... The nature of faith is to rely on God as other than itself and thus to have the basis of its existence outside itself. ... In the subjective act of faith this precedence of God and his revelation as its basis finds expression in the distinction between believing trust and knowledge of God and his revelation in the public arena of human history.⁶⁷

Although this statement speaks of the divine reality and revelation as the precedence and basis of personal faith in God, it cannot be considered as a reference point that establishes the need of the Spirit's agency in a person's appropriation of witness through faith. Especially in the light of the extended discussion of the relationship of faith to

historical knowledge in the preceding pages,⁶⁸ the reference to divine agency here is not the leading theme. In these pages Pannenberg criticises blind submission to authority, the notion of inspired text, the general reliability of testimony, and religious experience as the basis of faith; after this he returns to the need to ground faith knowledge in historical knowledge. A pneumatological point of reference for the appropriation of historical knowledge is not readily recognizable. This section on faith in the final volume of *Systematic Theology* lends support to the observation that Pannenberg's idea of testimony as natural knowledge remains relatively stable in his mature works. The constitution, operation and appropriation of witness in faith requires minimal intervention of the Spirit. The limited references to the Spirit's active agency in Pannenberg's reflections on how individuals arrive at a state of faith probably signal an abiding idea of his, which appeared in his earlier writings⁶⁹ – that for him faith is equivalent to trust, and as such it is a natural capacity of human life.

4. Conclusion

Pannenberg has not dedicated a single piece of work to an explication of his concept of Christian testimony. What we attempted in the first half of this essay was a tentative sketch of his understanding of testimony, by piecing together his ideas from different places in his writings. This sketch is by no means comprehensive and includes only salient features with immediate relevance to our discussion, omitting for instance the eschatological and hermeneutical aspects in Pannenberg's conceptualisation of testimony. A possible way to make sense of this sketch is perhaps to see Pannenberg's concept of testimony as lodged in the doctrine of creation. Christian testimonial claims, as a species of knowledge, and more precisely, as knowledge of God, have their basis in the continuity of the relation which the Creator God decreed between himself and his creatures. Where this continuity between the human and the divine is also pneumatologically understood, it could be said that for Pannenberg the concept of witness has its basis in the first and third articles of the Creed.

The second half of this essay explored some implications of Pannenberg's views for his understanding of Scripture and the Church. I drew attention to the importance of a theological understanding of testimony, which ensures the place of divine agency in Christian witness.

Understandably, such theological understanding of testimony is not something on the agenda of philosophical reflection on witness. At certain points Pannenberg's ideas of testimony come close to the naturalistic model of philosophers, and alongside his understanding of testimony there is an intriguing ambivalence in speaking directly of the active agency of the Spirit in the constitution, transmission and appropriation of Christian witness.

Pui Shum Ip is a PhD candidate at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland

Endnotes

- 1 Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. J.H. Freese (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926); C.A.J. Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); P. Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); P. Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004). See also E. Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969) and E. Lévinas *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998).
- 2 A.A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); A.T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000); R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) and W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997). See also M.D.J. Smith, 'Testimony to Revelation: Karl Barth's Strategy of Bible Interpretation in Die Kirchliche Dogmatik' (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 1997).
- 3 The structure Trites gives to the concept of witness in the New Testament is informed by his understanding of Aristotle's definition of the witness. See Trites, *New Testament Concept of Witness*, chapters 1-2.
- 4 K. Sonderegger, 'Et Resurrexit Tertia Die: Jenson and Barth on Christ's Resurrection' in J.C. McDowell and M. Higon (eds.), *Conversing with Barth* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2004) 191-213.
- 5 The theme of witness is identifiable in a number of places in Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, for instance, in the doctrine of Holy Scripture, proclamation, human vocation and ecclesiology. The root of this recurring theme can be traced back to his exegesis of John 1, in which he argues for John the Baptist as the prototype of human witness. See K. Barth, 'Erklärung des Johannes-Evangeliums (Kapitel 1-8): Vorlesung Münster Wintersemester 1925/1926, wiederholt in Bonn, Sommersemester 1933', ed. Walther Fürst, in *Karl Barth Gesamtausgabe II* (Zürich : Theologischer Verlag, 1976) = K. Barth, *Witness to the Word – A Commentary on John 1*, ed. W. Fürst (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2003). This prototype is the blueprint of Barth's consideration of testimony, which he developed and articulated in his *Kirchliche Dogmatik*. See K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics II.2* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1957) 482-502. Subsequent references to *Church Dogmatics* will be abbreviated as *CD*.
- 6 The outline of Pannenberg's ideas of testimony in this essay is not a complete picture. For instance, his analysis of historical and theological hermeneutic in relation to testimony is not covered because it has no immediate relevance to the main theme of this essay.
- 7 Pannenberg writes, 'I would not like to distinguish the knowledge logically presupposed by *fiducia*, or which in a broader sense of the term is included in faith, from natural knowledge... I cannot understand any knowledge as other than "natural."' See W. Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* vol. 2 (London: SCM, 1971) 33 [= W. Pannenberg, *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie: Gesammelte Aufsätze Band 1* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967)]. Subsequent references to *Basic Questions in Theology* will be abbreviated as *BQT*.
- 8 W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 73-75, 80-81, 116-117 [= W. Pannenberg, *Systematische Theologie I* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988)]. Subsequent references to *Systematic Theology* will be abbreviated as *ST*. For Pannenberg, the revelation of Christ presupposes the fact that the world and humanity both belong to, and 'know' God – the God proclaimed by the gospel. What Paul calls the knowledge of God from creation through divine works, according to Pannenberg, 'may be only a vague sense of infinitude' (117). This knowledge is not innate, but rather acquired through and related to experience of the world. Nonetheless, Pannenberg inclines to suggest that a certain innate intuition underlay such a sense of the infinite, that '[intuition] of an indefinite infinite, of a mystery of being which transcends and upholds human life, and gives us the courage to trust it, achieves a differentiation from finite things only in the course of experience'. See also W. Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 97 [= W. Pannenberg, *Metaphysik und Gottesgedanke* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &

- Ruprecht, 1988)].
- 9 W. Pannenberg, 'The Working of the Spirit in the Creation and in the People of God' in W. Pannenberg, A. Dulles and C.E. Braaten (eds.), *Spirit, Faith and Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970) 21.
 - 10 Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 82.
 - 11 See Pannenberg, *BQT* 3, 110, for a discussion of God's reality as the origin of freedom. Divine reality is not being conceived of as an existent being, but rather as future. The notion of future is an 'alternative to an understanding of the real ... the future is real, although it does not yet exist'. For further clarification of Pannenberg's idea of God as the basis for the absolute future of freedom, see Pannenberg, *BQT* 3, 174; see also *BQT* 3, 131 and 133 for a discussion of the totality of reality as freedom ahead of us. Note that Pannenberg also speaks of freedom not only as a gift given to us during the course of our life, but as something hardwired into the human biological constitution. The lack of specialisation of the human organs and our extensive freedom from instinct predisposed humankind to diversity of action. W. Pannenberg, *What is Man? Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970) 16 [= W. Pannenberg, *Was ist der Mensch?: Die Anthropologie der Gegenwart im Lichte der Theologie* 3. Aufl. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968)]. See C.P. Venema, 'History, Human Freedom and the Idea of God in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg' in *Calvin Theological Journal* 17 (1982) 53-77, for a critique of Pannenberg's concept of human freedom.
 - 12 W. Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985) 380-381. See also F. Hasel, *Scripture in the Theologies of W. Pannenberg and D.G. Bloesch. An Investigation and Assessment of its Origin, Nature and Use* (Berlin: Lang, 1996) 111, 150. Subsequent references to *Scripture in the Theologies of W. Pannenberg and D.G. Bloesch* will be abbreviated as *STPB*.
 - 13 Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, 381.
 - 14 Pannenberg, 'On the Inspiration of Scripture', *Theology Today* 54 (1997) 212-215.
 - 15 Pannenberg, *BQT* 1, 19. Cf. C.E. Braaten, 'The Current Controversy on Revelation: Pannenberg and His Critics', *The Journal of Religion* (1965) 225-237; Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 198-199, 238. See also W. Pannenberg (ed.), *Revelation as History* (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 125-131, 135-139 [= *Offenbarung als Geschichte*, in Verbindung mit R. Rendtorff, U. Wilckens, T Rendtorff hrsg. von Wolfhart Pannenberg, 3. Aufl. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1965)].
 - 16 Compare Pannenberg, *BQT* 2, 33 with *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, 97 and *ST* 1, 157.
 - 17 Compare Pannenberg, *BQT* 1, 6, 96-97, 188-191; vol. 2, 61-63 with 'On the Inspiration of Scripture', 212-213.
 - 18 I. Taylor's analysis of Pannenberg's separation of ontology and epistemology tends to affirm the observation that in terms of his methodological orientation towards epistemology, Pannenberg's position remains stable over time. See I. Taylor, 'How to be a Trinitarian Theologian: A Critique of Wolfhart Pannenberg's Systematic Theology', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60 (2007) 180-195. See also I. Taylor, *Pannenberg on the Triune God* (London: T&T Clark, 2007). For critique of Taylor's analysis, see the reviews of his book by B. Trainor, J. Merrick, T. Whapham and K. Eilers, respectively in *The Heythrop Journal* 52 (2011) 833-834; *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10 (2008) 353-356; *Horizons* 36 (2009) 151-152; and *European Journal of Theology* 20 (2011) 184-186.
 - 19 Pannenberg, *ST* 3, 457.
 - 20 Pannenberg, *ST* 3, 111, 114-115.
 - 21 Pannenberg, *ST* 3, 122-129.
 - 22 Using Coady's model as an illustration, testimony is being treated as a form of positive epistemology. Coady construes the receiving and responding to testimony as resembling the processes of direct knowledge formation through perception, as well as the direct access to knowledge through memory. As such, and concurring in a qualified way with T. Reid, Coady's model reckons our natural capacity and inclination to handle testimony as something resembling first principles of epistemology. As to our giving of testimony, Coady means firstly the general notion of 'certain sorts of telling', as traditionally philosophy has used the term. Second, the concept is tightened up as the performance of speech act, under certain social conventions of action and with intention. The bearing of witness is not limited to legal or quasi-legal contexts, but rather has an expansive scope covering the everyday needs of social life, the transfer of knowledge and epistemic authority. In brief, in both receiving and giving testimony, Coady's model sees human testimony originating and functioning within the innate capacity of the human mind, which he calls the 'social operation of mind'. See C.A.J. Coady, 'Testimony' in E. Craig (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998); and *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*, 25-26, 55, 120-125. It is noteworthy that in Ricoeur's philosophical and hermeneutical model of testimony, there is also an emphasis on the natural human imagination playing a crucial role in the simultaneous processes of interpreting historical testimony and the exegesis of the self. As such, creative imagination can bring liberation from conceptual strictures that limit our

- reflection on testimonial claims. See Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 116.
- 23 V. Kärkkäinen, 'The Working of the Spirit of God in Creation and in the People of God: The Pneumatology of Wolfhart Pannenberg', *PNEUMA* 26 (2004) 17-35. Kärkkäinen ably summarizes the pneumatological arguments in Pannenberg's ecclesiology into four areas: 1. The Spirit as gift is given not only for individual salvation but aims at the building up of the fellowship of believers. 2. There is an integral connection between Christology and pneumatology; the Church is the creation of both the Spirit and the Son. The Spirit makes it possible for individual believers to enter into the immediacy of Christ in the Church that is his body. 3. The Spirit releases and reconciles the tension between the fellowship and the individual in the concept of the Church, and hence, the underlying anthropological tension between society and individual freedom. 4. There is integral continuity between the work of the Spirit in creation, salvation, the Church and the eschatological consummation.
- 24 Pannenberg, 'On the Inspiration of Scripture', 213. This clearly spells out Pannenberg's idea of Scripture as inspired, as compared to a passage in his earlier writing, that, '[if] the relevant human word that rightly names the meaning of things and events, and thus brings out their truth, can be regarded as inspired, then a word of this kind is naming God as the origin of all reality. To the extent that the human word is apt and true, then, it no longer belongs to humanity alone, it is God's Word.' See Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 254.
- 25 Pannenberg, 'On the Inspiration of Scripture', 215.
- 26 Barth, *CD* I, 2, 517.
- 27 Barth, *CD* I, 2, 517.
- 28 See Hasel, *STPB*, 220 n. 1. Cf. Kärkkäinen, 'The Working of the Spirit of God', 21, 31-32; and T. Peters, 'Pannenberg on Theology and Natural Science' in T. Peters (ed.), *Toward a Theology of Nature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993) 114.
- 29 Hasel, *STPB*, 106.
- 30 Hasel, *STPB*, 218.
- 31 Hasel, *STPB*, 218.
- 32 Pannenberg, 'On the Inspiration of Scripture'.
- 33 Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 31-34, 222-225; vol. 2, 454-464.
- 34 Pannenberg, 'On the Inspiration of Scripture', 214.
- 35 Pannenberg, *ST* 2, 464 n. 170.
- 36 Pannenberg, *ST* 2, 459.
- 37 Including *ST* 1, 267, 270, 303, 305, 315, 317, 320; vol. 2, 394-395, 437, 450; and vol. 3, 4-8, 16.
- 38 Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 267, 270.
- 39 Pannenberg, *ST* 1, 303, 305, 315, 317, 320; *ST* 3, 7-8.
- 40 Pannenberg, *ST* 2, 394-395. Also consider a statement in *ST* 3, 16 where he writes, 'as the Spirit bears witness in believers to Jesus as the truth of God, they themselves are ecstatically raptured and are outside themselves in Jesus'. Yet again it needs to be pointed out that the main concern of the passage in which this statement is embedded is the Spirit's glorification of the Son, instead of an analytical statement that relates the Spirit's agency to testimony.
- 41 Pannenberg, *ST* 2, 452.
- 42 Concerning the teaching role of the Spirit, in *ST* 3, 5 we read that '[the] Spirit glorifies Jesus as the Father's Son by teaching us to recognize the revelation'. The purpose of this statement in its context is to refute Barth's view that the Spirit is the power in which Jesus Christ bears witness to himself. Pannenberg's purpose is only to accentuate a more exhaustive description of the Spirit which Barth failed to offer. Here Pannenberg's focus is the self-distinction of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, while the teaching role of the Spirit is just the plain meaning of Jn 16:13, of which Pannenberg gives no further exposition.
- 43 Pannenberg, *BQT* 2, 40.
- 44 Pannenberg, *BQT* 2, 40.
- 45 Pannenberg, *BQT* 2, 43.
- 46 Barth, *CD* I, 2, 532.
- 47 Pannenberg, *ST* 3, 135-172. I will return to this aspect in the next section; see Taylor, 'How to be a Trinitarian Theologian', 182-183 for a similar observation.
- 48 Apart from *Systematic Theology* Pannenberg has written extensively on ecclesiology in relation to anthropology, history and the Creed. See W. Pannenberg, A. Dulles and C. E. Braaten, *Spirit, Faith, and Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970); W. Pannenberg, *The Apostles' Creed in the light of Today's Questions* (London: SCM, 1972) [= W. Pannenberg, *Das Glaubensbekenntnis: Ausgelegt und verantwortet vor den Fragen der Gegenwart*, 3. Aufl. (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1979)]; W. Pannenberg, *Human Nature, Election, and History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977); W. Pannenberg, *The Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983) [= W. Pannenberg, *Thesen zur Theologie der Kirche*, 2. Aufl. (München: Claudius, 1974)]; and W. Pannenberg, *ST* 3, ch. 12-14. See also S.J. Grenz 'Sacramental Spirituality, Ecumenism, and Mission to the World: Foundational Motifs of Pannenberg's Ecclesiology', *Mid-Stream* 30 (1991) 20-34, for a concise overview of Pannenberg's ecclesiology. It is impossible to have here an adequate exposition of his thoughts in all these areas, but focusing on the concept of testimony embedded in his ecclesiology, it is evident that attention to Christian existence as witness receives less emphasis than the concept of fellowship. See Pannenberg, *ST* 3, 12-13.
- 49 Pannenberg, *ST* 3, 15.
- 50 Pannenberg, *ST* 3, 13.

- 51 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 15.
- 52 Barth, *CD IV*, 3, 573-574.
- 53 That the Church is a sign pointing to the future Kingdom of God and a reminder of 'the transience of all social orders in contrast to the finality of God's rule'. See Grenz, 'Sacramental Spirituality, Ecumenism, and Mission to the World', 22, 29.
- 54 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 461.
- 55 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 123.
- 56 There is also the aspect of saving efficacy in confession. Pannenberg does not render confession as purely a gesture to declare and maintain the boundaries of the Christian community. In fact, with Luke 12:8-9 and Matthew 10:32-33, it is clear that Jesus annexes promise to confessing him. See Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 114-115.
- 57 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 111.
- 58 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 115.
- 59 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 115.
- 60 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 116-122.
- 61 Pannenberg adds: so long as 'the normativeness of the church's faith for individual confession' remains strictly an expression and consequence of the priority of the person of Jesus and of the apostolic gospel, it is a valid criterion of authentic beliefs; but confessional formulas and creeds need constant testing and interpretation. See Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 117.
- 62 Pannenberg, 'The Working of the Spirit', 21. Pannenberg sees life as ecstatic, and he differentiates his position from that of P. Tillich: '[Tillich] uses the idea of ecstasy for his basic description of spiritual presence, i.e., of the *divine* spirit grasping the human person, but remaining distinct from the human spirit, from spirit as a dimension of life. I venture to disregard this careful distinction and dismiss it as an artificial one' (17).
- 63 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 135-210.
- 64 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 135-172.
- 65 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 162-172.
- 66 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 167.
- 67 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 153.
- 68 Pannenberg, *ST 3*, 144-152.
- 69 For Pannenberg, 'Faith as the fulfilment of life is really the same thing as trust. And trust is one of the fundamental aspects of life for every human existence.' See Pannenberg, *The Apostles' Creed in the light of Today's Questions*, 3-4.