Clement Yung Wen

An 'Open-Ended Distinctiveness'

The Contemporary Relevance of Wolfhart Pannenberg's Participatory Ecclesiology and Ecumenism for World Christianity

V&R



© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

Forschungen zur systematischen
und ökumenischen Theologie

Edited by
Christine Axt-Piscalar, David Fergusson, and Christiane Tietz

Volume 171

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

Clement Yung Wen

An 'Open-Ended Distinctiveness'

The Contemporary Relevance of Wolfhart Pannenberg's Participatory Ecclesiology and Ecumenism for World Christianity

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek:
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data available online: https://dnb.de.

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Theaterstraße 13, D-37073 Göttingen
All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Typesetting: le-tex publishing services GmbH, Leipzig

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com

ISSN 0429-162X
ISBN 978-3-647-52212-8

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

Contents

Acknowledgments 7

List of Abbreviations 11

1. World Christianity: An Ecclesiological Age of Blurred Distinctions? 17
   - 1.1 Introduction 17
   - 1.2 Ecclesiology Yesterday and Today 26
     - 1.2.1 The Reformation and the European Grid 29
     - 1.2.2 The American Religious Experiment 34
     - 1.2.3 The Impact of Secularism and Religious Pluralism 40
     - 1.2.4 The Liberationist Turn of the 1960s 42
     - 1.2.5 The Rise of World Christianity 49
   - 1.3 The Relevance of Pannenberg's Ecclesiology 58

2. Pannenberg's Ecclesiology in Formation: Experiences and Anxieties 59
   - 2.1 The Context of Pannenberg's Life and Career 59
   - 2.2 The Context of Pannenberg's Eschatological View of Truth's Coherence 62
     - 2.2.1 The Coherence of Truth 64
     - 2.2.2 Truth's Eschatological Orientation 69
   - 2.3 The Context of Pannenberg's Theology of History 75
   - 2.4 The Context of Pannenberg's Ecclesiology and Ecumenism 90

3. Pannenberg's Ecclesiology and World Christianity (I): Eschatological Orientation and Ecstatic Participation 105
   - 3.1 The Church as Sign of the Kingdom: A Requisite Distinction 110
   - 3.2 The Church's Ecstatic Participation and the Gospel 113
     - 3.2.1 The Gospel's Individual and Communal Appropriation 117
     - 3.2.2 The Gospel's Ecstatic Structure for Faith 122
   - 3.3 The Church's Ecstatic Participation and the Sacraments 128
     - 3.3.1 The Coordination of Word and Sacrament 130
     - 3.3.2 Baptism and Ecclesial Incorporation 133
     - 3.3.3 The Lord's Supper, Ecclesial Constitution, and the Ecumenical Task 139
   - 3.4 The Church's Ecstatic Participation and World Christianity 155

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

4. Pannenberg's Ecclesiology and World Christianity (II): Eschatological Orientation and the World 159
4.1 The Church as Sign of the Kingdom in the World 159
4.1.1 The Church's Missionary Task to the World 162
4.1.2 The Christian Eschatological Hope and 'This-Worldly Hopes' 167
4.1.2.1 Liberation Theology and Pannenberg's Critique of Marxism 168
4.1.2.2 World Christianity and Pannenberg's 'Christian Personalism' 175
4.1.3 The Church, the State, and the Kingdom of God 181
4.1.3.1 The State as Sign of the Kingdom? 181
4.1.3.2 The Rule of Some Over Others 184
4.1.3.3 The Irony of Pannenberg's 'Constantinianism' and World Christianity 188
4.1.4 The Church's Liturgical Life as Political 196
4.1.5 The Constructive Potential of 'Creative Love' 198
4.1.5.1 Exposition 199
4.1.5.2 Explicit Connections 203
4.1.5.3 The Place of Prayer 205
4.2 The Church as Sign of the Kingdom and World Christianity 206

5. Pannenberg's Ecclesiology and World Christianity (III): Historical Rootedness and Contextualization 209
5.1 An 'Open-Ended Distinctiveness' for the Task of Contextualization? 209
5.1.1 Pannenberg on Christianity's Historicity and its Hellenistic Contours 216
5.1.2 A Universal Ecumenical Relevance for the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed? 229
5.1.3 'Global Christianity' vs. 'World Christianity'? 239
5.2 Conclusion 244

Bibliography 247

Name Index 267

Subject Index 273

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

Acknowledgments

The present work is a lightly revised version of my doctoral thesis, which was undertaken at the University of Edinburgh from 2015–2019. In this regard, the first order of thanks goes to my primary supervisor, Prof. Dr. David Fergusson, whom I am greatly honoured and privileged to call my *Doktorvater.* Prof. Dr. Fergusson was not only always responsive to emails and time-sensitive administrative requests and favours, but he also wisely walked me through the highs and lows of the thesis task with his sound guidance and trustworthy advice. This often took place over hour-long one-on-one meetings. His encouraging words and unwavering confidence in me helped me to find and own my theological voice amidst the thesis journey. Insofar as Prof. Dr. Fergusson is one of the series editors for FSÖTh, I am additionally grateful to him, and to Prof. Dr. Christine Axt-Piscalar and Prof. Dr. Christiane Tietz, for their welcome acceptance of my manuscript for publication in the current series. Along such lines, many thanks are due also to the wonderful staff at Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, especially Dr. Izaak J. de Hulster, whose extraordinary enthusiasm, kindness, and patience as acquisitions editor have known no bounds, and Ms. Laura Röthele, whose work and advice regarding the book's layout and formatting have been invaluable.

My second supervisor at Edinburgh, Dr. Joshua Ralston, was more influential than he is aware. Not only did he always helpfully answer my random questions (asked at highly intermittent intervals), but early on, he sent me leads to resources and opportunities that would indirectly result in three crucial developments. First, his suggestion that I present a paper at the Ecclesiological Investigations 2016 annual meeting in Hong Kong served to broaden my reflections of Pannenberg's work beyond the West. Second, it was in Hong Kong that I met and enjoyed several conversations with Prof. Dr. Dale Irvin as well as with Prof. Dr. Peter Neuner. Though Prof. Dr. Irvin would undoubtedly disagree with the conclusions of the present work, I am grateful for the insights and encouraging feedback he offered me through the ensuing conversation I had with him by email. Finally, my trip to Hong Kong occasioned an excuse to visit family and friends in Taiwan. There, I met Prof. Dr. Shao Kai Tseng, who at the time, was Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology at China Evangelical Seminary (CES) in Taipei. The then Dr. Tseng kindly introduced me to CES's then President, Prof. Dr. Anne Lee-Chen Tsai. Soon thereafter, I was invited by CES's then Academic Dean, Dr. Wesley Hu, to apply for a coveted CES Faculty-in-Training scholarship, which not only fully funded the rest of my tuition fees, but also included a full-time faculty appointment at CES upon the completion of my studies. Needless to say, I am deeply indebted to all of the faculty and

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

staff at CES for their continual encouragement, prayers, and support these last few years and especially this past year, which was my first as a full-time faculty member.

In relation to my move to CES, I am also very grateful for my thesis examiners, Prof. Dr. Friederike Nüssel and Dr. James Eglinton—both of whom kindly arranged their calendars so that my viva could take place prior to my departure for Taiwan. Prof. Dr. Nüssel's and Dr. Eglinton's insightful questions and encouraging comments have prompted fresh thought in ways that are deserving of further development and I am happy to have had the opportunity to incorporate their more immediate suggestions in what follows. In addition, their uplifting words for me at the viva will stay with me for a very long time.

Incidentally, I had briefly met Prof. Dr. Nüssel in October 2016 at the third annual Pannenberg colloquium hosted by the Wolfhart Pannneberg-Forschungsstelle at the Hochschule für Philosophie in Munich. I was hosted during those two days and during a subsequent week-long research visit to the Forschungsstelle in July 2017 by its wonderfully kind director, Prof. Dr. Gunther Wenz. My conversations with Prof. Dr. Wenz, in person and by email, were of significant help. He also introduced me to Frau Pannenberg, who warm-heartedly invited me to her home for a memorable two-and-a-half-hour conversation over tea and biscuits. Providentially, all of this was made possible by the fact that my cousin, Mrs. Judy Tseng-Steltzer, and her husband, Gerhard, live in Munich and provided me a free place to stay on three separate occasions. A three-week summer school course in 'German (and) Theology' in July 2017 at the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz was also instrumental for the development of my language skills and theological reflections. I am grateful for the coordinating efforts of Prof. Dr. Ulrich Volp and Ms. Rachel Friedrich, and for a scholarship from the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst* (DAAD) that made it easier for me to take part. At Mainz, I especially benefited from conversations with Prof. Dr. Walter Dietz and Prof. Dr. Volker Küster. At the colloquium in Munich, I also gained much from conversations about Pannenberg with Fr. Felix Körner.

Back in Edinburgh, the list of names to thank is long. In terms of faculty members (both past and present) who have yet to be mentioned, I am grateful for the investment of Dr. Alex Chow (who I will say more about in a moment), Dr. David Grumett, Dr. Mikael Leidenhag, Prof. Dr. George Newlands, Dr. Zachary Purvis, Dr. Ulrich Schmiedel, and Dr. Lydia Schumacher. I am grateful also for my colleagues, especially Drs. (or soon to be Drs.) Bill Atkins, Matthew Baines, Richard Brash, Tom Breimaier, Cory Brock, Joshua Bruce, Brian Bunnell, Hannah Clardy, Cam Clausing, Ryan Collman, Karl Dahlfred, Samuel Hildebrandt, Taylor Holleyman, Daniel Jackson, Andrew Johnson, Joanna Leidenhag, Andrew Ong, Bruce Pass, Nomi Pritz-Bennett, David Robinson, Matthew Sharp,

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, Ryan Tafilowski, Sydney Tooth, and Ximian Xu. Mr. Sam Davidson, Mr. Marko Jesske, and Mr. Chao Ma (three masters students during my final year) were also of great help to me towards the end. Invaluable also was the administrative assistance of Ms. Karoline McLean in the School of Divinity Office, Ms. Flora Fisher of the Interlibrary Loans Department, and Ms. Wendy Dunn of the Postgraduate Research Student Office. The Chinese Evangelical Church of Edinburgh was a constant source of support. My small group there (i.e., the Atkins', Cheung's, Chiu's, Hsu's, and 'Injo') prayerfully carried me through the most difficult seasons of the research and writing process. My family and I also appreciated the church's monthly financial gift via their Divinity Student Sponsorship programme. A note of thanks also needs to go to Mr. and Mrs. Steven and Miaochen Gray for letting me use their flat to write while they were on holiday.

The initial inspiration for my thesis came from my time as a postgraduate student at Regent College. There, my curiosity about Pannenberg was piqued by a course offered by the late Prof. Dr. Stanley Grenz. From Regent, I am also deeply thankful for the continual encouragement and enthusiastic support of my master's thesis supervisor, Prof. Dr. Ross Hastings, who always believed I should do a PhD. I am grateful also for Prof. Dr. J. I. Packer's vote of confidence and for the help of Mr. Josh Bennick, Rev. Josh Koh, and Ms. Lynne Smith during my application process. Otherwise, my project benefited at different stages from conversations, feedback, or prayerful encouragement from Dr. Julie Canlis, Rev. Dr. Paul Chang, Rev. Hugo Cheng, Dr. and Mrs. Joseph and Eugenia Chiu, Dr. Kent Eilers, Dr. Daniel K. Eng, Pastor Alvin Lee, Dr. Chyong-Yi Lee, Dr. Sang Hoon Lee, Mrs. Ellen Lei, Prof. Dr. Hong-Hsin Lin, Rev. Dr. Jonathan Liu, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson Lu and Yu-Chen Lee, Rev. and Mrs. Chris and Susie Martin, Mr. Neil MacLeod, Pastor John-William Noble, Dr. Benjamin Paulus, Rev. Dr. Alan Rathe, Dr. and Mrs. Jonathan Shek and Vicky Lee, Mr. Kyle Shen, Mr. Tim Tang, Rev. Dr. Chun Tse, Mr. and Mrs. Nate and Faith Walter, Mr. Yinwen Wen, Dr. Donald Wood, Ms. Lily Yang, and soon-to-be Drs. Easten Law and Rev. Jeremy Rios. Dr. Manfred Zeuch kindly shared not only his encouragement, but also his French doctoral thesis with me (the main points of which have been distilled in several of his German essays).

In closing, a special word of thanks is reserved for Dr. Alex Chow and his wife Betty for their friendship over the many years we have known them and for their role in suggesting that me and my family consider Edinburgh for my PhD. More than anyone else, I thank my wife, Tracy, and my two boys, Ethan and Micah, for living through the ups and downs of this project with me with love, patience, and grace. Finally, I thank my parents, the late Rev. Prof. Dr. Yinkann Wen CFA and Mrs. Kweiyin Wen, for their unwavering encouragement and multi-faceted support throughout my life to date. My father was most proud

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

to travel to Edinburgh to see me graduate in November 2019. Sadly, he was diagnosed with cancer the following January and passed away, unexpectedly, shortly thereafter in June 2020. To him, this work is lovingly and gratefully dedicated. Even so, amidst our great loss, we still proclaim the words that my dad would undoubtedly have joined us in proclaiming upon the completion of this present work: *Soli Deo gloria.* (And, in fact, I believe he *is* proclaiming these words even now, and that he will continue do so forevermore.)

Clement Wen
Maryland, USA
July 2020

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

List of Abbreviations

Unless otherwise indicated, in cases where a work is available in both English and German and only one set of page numbers is cited, such a citation will be in reference to the pagination of the work's English edition. On the other hand, in instances where a solidus (/) separates two sets of page numbers, the first set will be in reference to the English edition and the second to the German.

Wolfhart Pannenberg

AC *The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Today's Questions,* trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1972); German original: *Das Glaubensbekenntnis ausgelegt und verantwortet vor den Fragen der Gegenwart* (Hamburg: Sibenstern Taschenbuch Verlag, 1972).

AS 'An Autobiographical Sketch', in *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques with an Autobiographical Essay and Response,* eds. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988) (TWP), 11–18.

ATP *Anthropology in Theological Perspective,* trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985); German original: *Anthropologie in theologischer Perspektive* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983).

BE *Beiträge zur Ethik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

BQT1-2 *Basic Questions in Theology: Collected Essays,* 2 vols., trans. George H. Kelm (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1970 and 1971); German original: *Grundfragen Systematicher Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze,* vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967).

BSTh1-3 *Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie*, 3 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999–2000).
1. *Philosophie, Religion, Offenbarung* (1999).
2. *Natur und Mensch—und die Zukunft der Schöpfung* (2000).
3. *Kirche und Ökumene* (2000).

CMLT 'Christianity, Marxism, and Liberation Theology', *Christian Scholars Review* 18:3 (1989), 215–26.

CS *Christian Spirituality* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983).

CSW *Christianity in a Secularized World,* trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1989); German original: *Christentum in einer säkularisierten Welt* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1988).

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

EEC	*The Church,* trans. Keith Crim (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977); part II of German original: *Ethik und Ekklesiologie: Gesammelte Aufsatze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977).
FD	'Faith and Disorder in Bangalore', *Worldview* 22:3 (1979), 37–40.
FDF	'Foundation Documents of the Faith: XI. The Place of Creeds in Christianity Today', *The Expository Times* 91:11 (1980), 328–32.
FR	*Faith and Reality,* trans. John Maxwell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977; German original: *Glaube und Wirklichkeit: kleine Beitrage zum christlichen Denken* (Munchen: Chr. Kaiser, 1975).
GPH	'God's Presence in History', *The Christian Century* 94 (11 March 1981), 260–63.
GST2	*Grundfragen Systematischer Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsatze*, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980).
HNEH	*Human Nature, Election, and History* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977).
IGHF	*The Idea of God and Human Freedom,* trans. R.A. Wilson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973). German original: Essay 1 from *Terror und Spiel. Probleme der Mythenrezeption* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1971), 473–525; Essays 2–6 from *Gottesdanke und menschliche Freiheit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971); Essay 7 can be found in *Grandfragen Systematischer Theologie. Gesammelte Ausatze,* vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980) (GST2), 66–79.
IP	'An Intellectual Pilgrimage', *Dialog* 45:2 (2006), 184–91.
IST	*An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991).
JGM	*Jesus—God and Man,* 2nd ed., trans. Lewis L. Wilkens and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977); German original: *Grundzüge der Christologie* (1964; 5th ed., Gütersloh: Mohn, 1976).
MIG	*Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, trans. Philip Clayton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990); German original: *Metaphysik und Gottesgedanke* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988).
NG	'Notwendigkeit und Grenzen der Inkulturation des Evangeliums', in *Christentum in Lateinamerika: 500 Jahre seit der Entdeckung Amerikas*, ed. Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1992), 140–54.
RAH	ed., in association with Rolf Rendtorff, Trutz Rendtorff, and Ulrich Wilkens, *Revelation as History*, trans. David Granskou (New York: Macmillan, 1968); German original: *Offenbarung als Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprect, 1961).
RB	'Report from Bangalore', *Mid-Stream* 18:1 (1979), 52–62.

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

RMAF 'A Response to My American Friends', in *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques with an Autobiographical Essay and Response,* eds. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988) (TWP), 313–36.

SFC *Spirit, Faith, and Church: The 1969 Walter and Mary Tuohy Chair Lectures,* eds. Wolfhart Pannenberg, Avery Dulles, S.J., and Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970).

ST1-3 *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991, 1994, and 1998); German original: *Systematische Theologie*, 3 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988, 1991, and 1993).

TKG *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969).

TTK *Thesen zur Theologie der Kirche,* (1970; 2nd ed., München: Claudius, 1974).

UCUH 'Unity of the Church—Unity of Humankind: A Critical Appraisal of a Shift in Ecumenical Direction', *Mid-Stream* 21:4 (October 1982), 485–90.

WIM *What is Man? Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970); German original: *Was ist der Mensch? Die Anthropologie der Gegenwart im Lichte der Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962).

Other Works

BEM The World Council of Churches (WCC), *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, Faith and Order paper no. 111 (Geneva: WCC Publicaations, 1982).

CD Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* vol. I.1, eds. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas Forsyth Torrance, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975).

CFO The World Council of Churches (WCC), *The Church for Others: Two Reports on the Missionary Structure of the Congregation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1967).

CHCT Dale T. Irvin, *Christian Histories, Christian Traditioning: Rendering Accounts* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998).

COF The World Council of Churches (WCC), *Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, Faith and Order paper no. 153 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991).

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

CRE	Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, eds., *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?,* trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, Press, 1990); German original: *Lehrverurteilungen—kirchentrennend?, Band 1. Rechtfertigung, Sakramente und Amt im Zeitalter der Reformation und heute*, Dialog der Kirchen 4 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1988; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988).
CTD	The World Council of Churches (WCC), *Called to Dialogue: Interreligious and Intra-Christian Dialogue in Ecumenical Conversation: A Practical Guide* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2016).
ELT	Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
FCTC	The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU), *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017,* Report of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlaganstalt, 2013; Paderborn: Bonifatius, 2013).
HWCM1-2	Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist's *History of the World Christian Movement,* vols. 1–2 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001 and 2012). 1. *Earliest Christianity to 1453* (2001). 2. *Modern Christianity from 1454–1800* (2012).
JDDJ	The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).
KuD	*Kerygma und Dogma*
LG	The Roman Catholic Church (RCC), 'Dogmatic Constitution of the Church', Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium,* 21 November 1964, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents,* ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 350–426.
MCT1	James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 2nd ed., vol. 1: *The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).
NA	The Roman Catholic Church (RCC), 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions', Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate,* 28 October 1965, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents,* ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 738–42.

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

PSt1 *"Eine neue Menschheit darstellen" – Religionsphilosophie als Weltverantwortung und Weltgestaltung: Eröffnung der Wolfhart Pannenberg-Forschungsstelle an der Münchener Hochschule für Philosophie, Philosophische Fakultät SJ,* ed. Gunther Wenz, Pannenberg-Studien, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

PSt3 *Kirche und Reich Gottes: Zur Ekklesiologie Wolfhart Pannenbergs,* ed. Gunther Wenz, Pannenberg-Studien, vol. 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017).

RSS Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society: Fifty Years On*, ed. Steve Bruce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 94–95; this is the fiftieth anniversary edition of a work originally published in 1966 and revised in 1969.

RWC *Relocating World Christianity: Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*, eds. Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell, and Emma Wild-Wood, Theology and Mission in World Christianity 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

TWP *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques with an Autobiographical Essay and Response,* eds. Carl E. Braaten and Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988).

WCIH Peter C. Phan, 'World Christianity: Its Implications for History, Religious Studies, and Theology', *Horizons* 39:2 (2012), 171–88.

WCPI *World Christianity: Perspectives and Insights. Essays in Honor of Peter C. Phan,* eds. Jonathan Y. Tan and Anh Q. Tran, S.J. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2016).

Other Abbreviations

BECs Base Ecclesial Communities
CA The Augsburg Confession
FSÖTh Forschungen zur systematischen und ökumenischen Theologie
LWF The Lutheran World Federation
OÄK Ökumenischer Arbeitskreis evangelischer und katholischer Theologen (known also as the Jaeger-Stählin Circle)
PCPCU The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
RCC The Roman Catholic Church
WCC The World Council of Churches
WPF Wolfhart Pannenberg-Forschungsstelle
ZöF Zentrum für ökumenische Forschung

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

1. World Christianity: An Ecclesiological Age of Blurred Distinctions?

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the theology of the late Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928–2014).[1] Part of this has included fresh exploration into his mature ecclesiology and ecumenism—aspects of his thought that, to date, have not received adequate attention.[2] Though in the German-speaking world, two recently published books have sought to stem this tide, the Anglophone world continues to lack any sort of full-length treatment.[3] Through the

1 In the past few years, at least two introductory works to Pannenberg's thought have been published in English: Anthony C. Thiselton, *Understanding Pannenberg: Landmark Theologian of the Twentieth Century,* Cascade Companions (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018); and Theodore James Whapham, *The Unity of Theology: The Contribution of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017). Meanwhile, in Germany, the WPF was instituted in 2013 at Munich's Hochschule für Philosophie. The Forshungsstelle, which houses Pannenberg's personal library, sponsors lectures and annual colloquiums, the latter of which have served as the basis for the recent PSt series.

2 Thus, in a personal email to me dated 13 April 2016, Prof. Dr. Gunther Wenz, Director of the WPF, wrote that 'Ergiebige Sekundärliteratur zu Pannenbergs Ekklesiologie und Ökumenismus gibt es in der Tat noch nicht viel.'

3 See the edited volume, PSt3 (2017), as well as Benjamin Apsel's *Geeinte Vielfalt—Versöhnte Menschheit: Der Ekklesiologie Wolfhart Pannenbergs in anthropoloscher, gesellschaftspolitischer und ökumenischer Perspektive*, FSÖTh 163 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018). Apsel's work represents the first single-authored full-length work in either German or English that is focused solely on Pannenberg's ecclesiology. He sets out to provide a descriptive summary, stating in the introduction his desire to faithfully set forth Pannenberg's main lines of ecclesiological thought while reserving his own judgments for the end of the book (15). His methodology situates Pannenberg's ecclesiological proposals as an extension of Pannenberg's theological anthropology (ch.2) and as a response to the rise of modern secularism in the West (ch.3). Though his engagement with Pannenberg's thought is somewhat thin, Apsel succeeds with regard to his descriptive aims. The present work differs from his in purpose and method. Unlike Apsel, my aim is not to provide a comprehensive description of Pannenberg's ecclesiology, but to highlight how certain aspects of his ecclesiological proposal are relevant to World Christianity. As such, my critical and constructive engagement with Pannenberg and World Christianity take place throughout rather than at the end. In addition, my method situates Pannenberg's thought by way of the present context of World Christianity (ch. 1) and by way of how his eschatological, historical, and ecumenical orientation for ecclesiology came to be formed (ch.2), since these are the developmental facets which are most relevant to my purposes. Meanwhile, insofar as PSt3 is a collection of essays that were originally presented at the third WPF colloquium in October 2016, it consists of descriptive, clarifying, and exploratory essays. While several are helpful for my purposes of elucidating certain elements of Pannenberg's eccle-

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

use of relevant German and English sources,[4] the present work partly seeks to contribute to the filling of this lacuna, but not in a manner that directly concerns itself with the modern ecumenical emphasis upon the church's visible unity, which had preoccupied Pannenberg during his career and is often associated

siological thought, none of them directly tackle the question of World Christianity. Otherwise, in the German-speaking world, apart from other chapter/article-length summaries or engagements (see note 4 below), Pannenberg's mature ecclesiological proposals have featured only in a handful of comparative theses, including Christian Maria Löhr's *Credo unam ecclesiam: Chancen katholisch-lutherischer Kircheneinheit,* Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 23, Theologie (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), which enlists the ecumenical proposals of Heribert Muhlen and Peter Neuner, from the Roman Catholic side, and Edmund Schlink and Wolfhart Pannenberg, respectively, from the Lutheran side, to highlight increasing opportunities for progress when it comes to ecumenical unity between Roman Catholics and Lutherans; Lucian-Traian Boloş' *Die Ekklesiologien von Dumitru Staniloae und Wolfhart Pannenberg: ein ökumenische-theologischer Vergleich* (Oradea: Editura Universitatii din Oradea, 2010); and Thomas Eggenberg's *Kirche als Zeichen des Reich Gottes: eine Studie zur Bedeutung des Reiches Gottes für die Kirche in Auseinandersetzung mit Küng, Moltmann, Pannenberg und Hauerwas,* Studien zu Theologie und Bibel 14 (Vienna: LIT, 2016). The nature of these works has led to Pannenberg's proposals being primarily described for sake of comparison rather than being critically engaged.

4 Examples of chapter/article-length studies or portions of larger works not yet alluded to that have appeared in German include: Sebastian Greiner's pre-ST3 *Die Theologie Wolfhart Pannenbergs,* Bonner dogmatische Studien 2 (Würzburg: Echter, 1988), 307–22; Wolfgang Greive, *Die Glaubwürdigkeit des Christentums. Die Theologie Wolfhart Pannenbergs als Herausforderung,* FSÖTh 160 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 577–642; Chien-Ju Lee, *Der Heilige Geist als Vollender. Die Pneumatologie Wolfhart Pannenbergs*, Internationale Theologie 13 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 207–23; Gunther Wenz, *Wolfhart Pannenbergs Systematische Theologie: Ein einführender Bericht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 197–269, which later appeared in English as *Introduction to Wolfhart Pannenberg's Systematic Theology*, trans. Philip Stewart (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 166–227; Manfred Zeuch's 'Einheit und Plurität, Katholizität und Partikularität. Zu Wolfhart Pannenbergs ökumenische Denke', in *Gottes Wort in der Zeit: verstehen, verkündigen, verbreiten. Festschrift für Volker Stolle*, eds. Christophe Barnbrock and Werner Klän (Munster: LIT, 2005), 381–97, and 'Zeichen des Reiches Gottes: Ekklesiologie und Sakramententheologie bei Wolfhart Pannenberg', *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche* 20 (1996), 176–91. In English: Gary M. Culpepper, 'Ecclesial Being and One Theologian: Pannenberg's Doctrine of Faith in Its Sacramental Context', *The Thomist* 63:2 (1999), 283–306; Stanley J. Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 201–56, and 'Sacramental Spirituality, Ecumenism, and Mission to the World: Foundational Motifs of Pannenberg's Ecclesiology', *Mid-Stream* 30:1 (1991), 20–34; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 113–125; Friederike Nüssel, 'Wolfhart Pannenberg', in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology,* ed. Paul Avis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 487–504; Iain Taylor, *Pannenberg on the Triune God* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 137–63; and Geoffrey Wainwright's pre-ST3 'Pannenberg's Ecumenism', in TWP, 207–23.

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

with the twentieth century (the so-called 'ecumenical century').[5] Rather, the angle taken here seeks to draw out and appropriate two of the important motivations that underlay Pannenberg's ecclesiological and ecumenical proposals. The first was his desire to maintain Christianity's and the church's 'distinctiveness' and integrity amidst the pressures of secularization and religious pluralism, as with these pressures came temptation for the church to adopt overaccommodating postures towards the task of contextualization (or inculturation).[6] In this regard, the reason why Christian and ecclesial distinctiveness is important

5 Several of the works cited in notes 3 and 4 above are concerned in some way with the modern ecumenical question of visible unity. I have elsewhere also suggested that Pannenberg's proposals regarding (a) the Bishop of Rome, (b) the reconceiving of 'transubstantiation' as involving a 'transignification', and (c) the repealing of Vatican II's pronouncement that Lutheran ordinations consist of a *defectus ordinis,* ought to be seen with a renewed relevance regarding this ecumenical task following Pope Francis' joint commemoration of the Protestant Reformation's symbolic four hundred ninety-ninth anniversary with the LWF in Lund, Sweden in October 2016 (cf. 'Pope Francis at Lund, 2016, and the Relevance of Wolfhart Pannenberg's Ecumenical Theology', *Ecclesiology* 14:2 [May 2018], 133–46). Because the focus of the present work concerns a different dimension of the contemporary ecumenical discussion, such suggestions will not be repeated here. In terms of the limitations of the present work, it is important to mention that I include under the heading of visible unity questions surrounding apostolic succession, ministry offices, ordination (e.g., for women, for those outside the RCC, etc.), mutual recognition, and, to a lesser extent, how the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist fit into such ecumenical frameworks. On a different note, for the question of whether the twentieth century should be considered the 'ecumenical century', see Brian Stanley, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History,* The Princeton History of Christianity (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 127–33, who has convincingly argued that the popular slogan lacks historical nuance.

6 Cf. Pannenberg's 'Pluralismus als Herausforderung und Chance der Kirche' (1993), in BSTh3, 23–33; 'Angst um die Kirche: Zwichen Warheit und Pluralismus' (1993), in BSTh3, 34–42; 'Zwischen Skepsis und Hoffnung: Zur Lage der Kirchen in Deutschland' (1997), in BSTh3, 43–53. Along such lines, I see the present work's contribution in part as being an extended outworking of certain insights put forth by Richard John Neuhaus in two of his essays—the first being a news article based on an interview with Pannenberg in 1982, and the second an academic piece for Pannenberg's American *festschrift* in 1988. Both were written prior to the appearance of ST3 (cf. 'Pannenberg Jousts with the World Council of Churches', *The Christian Century* 99 [17 February 1982], 174–76; and 'Theology for Church and Polis', in TWP, 226–38). I am also indebted to the recent expository work by Kent Eilers regarding Pannenberg's conception of 'ecstatic participation' (cf. *Faithful to Save: Pannenberg on God's Reconciling Action,* T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology 10 [London: T&T Clark, 2011]). On a different note, while the terms 'contextualization' and 'inculturation' are used to describe the missionary task of communicating the Christian faith meaningfully to people of different cultural contexts than one's own, the former term is typically used by Protestants and the latter by Roman Catholics. These terms are used interchangeably in what follows. Finally, a question perhaps arises here as to whether Christianity and the church are themselves to be distinguished. On this note, it ought to be mentioned that, by definition, Christianity can be seen as being inclusive of the church (both theologically and socio-historically) while also

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

to elucidate and adaptively recover here in the early part of the twenty-first century is because, in recent decades, the fields of ecclesiology and ecumenism have become increasingly broadened to a degree that they have now even regressed to a search for basic definition.[7] This is ironic given the revived interest in ecclesiology in recent years.[8] (Or is it the case that this revived interest is precisely attributable to, or even one of the contributing causes of, the current state of affairs?) Either way, at such a crucial juncture, a reconsideration of Pannenberg's unique eschatologically-oriented and historically-rooted participatory ecclesiology and ecumenical theology can offer the footholds needed for a critical refocusing of our ecclesiological and ecumenical efforts upon Christ,

---

being broader than just the church, for Christianity can also inclusively refer to (doctrinal systems of) beliefs, (spiritual and social) practices, and other (personal and non-ecclesially communal) faith commitments and identities that, while ideally connected to the church, can also transcend the formal definitional boundaries of the church. Along such lines, and especially in light of the phenomena of 'churchless' 'individual Christianity' occasioned by the church's many historical divisions and imperfections, Pannenberg himself admits that 'the worshipping community should accept the fact of Christianity outside the church, or at some distance from it, as a challenge to greater openness on its own part and also to reflection on the Christian center of its life as a community' (ST3 125–26; cf. 525; see also his essay 'Churchless Christians' [1977], in EEC, 9–22).

7 An example of this confused state is the collection of essays offered in Sune Fahlgren and Jonas Ideström, eds., *Ecclesiology in the Trenches: Theory and Method under Construction* (Cambridge: James Clark & Co, 2015). In the volume's introductory essay, 'Ecclesiology Under Construction: A Report from a Working Site' (1–28), Sven-Erik Brodd comments that 'there is confusion about what ecclesiology is as a discipline. We are doing well, but we have not managed to explain the inner coherence of the discipline' (21). In my review of the work, I observe that 'This tension is felt throughout the book as the inter-disciplinary contours explored blur the boundaries of ecclesiology in a way that inadvertently renders it difficult to definitively define' (cf. 'Uppsala School—Studies in Ecclesiological Construction', review of *Ecclessiology in the Trenches: Theory and Method under Construction,* by Sune Fahlgren and Jonas Ideström [eds.], *The Expository Times* 128:7 [April 2017], 360). Meanwhile, in view of the current climate of ecumenical confusion, R. David Nelson and Charles Raith II feel a need to reassert the twentieth-century concerns regarding a visible unity of faith and order as being the definitive formal definition of 'ecumenism' over against using the term to describe interreligious dialogue and activity (cf. *Ecumenism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Bloomsbury Guides for the Perplexed [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017], 7–11). The present confused state of ecclesiology and ecumenism will be further demonstrated as our study proceeds.

8 As Gerard Mannion put it in his 'Foreword: The Point of Ecclesiology' for Fahlgren and Ideström (ix-xiv): 'In recent years, ecclesiology has become one of the fastest growing areas of enquiry in theology and religious studies. Simply witness the rapid growth in the number of monographs, articles, collections, journals, networks, conferences, and symposia that take ecclesiology in one or more of its many forms as their focus. Or again look at how many courses and classes in universities and church-related institutions of training and education have come to the fore in these times' (x).

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

in his distinctive particularity, for sake of the church's faithful witness in the world.

The second motivation of Pannenberg's that will here be explored is the way in which his ecclesiological proposals sought to affirm and promote a contextual 'open-endedness' for Christianity and the church. This genuine 'open-endedness', however, was unlike the unbounded 'open-endedness' that characterizes much of the present ecclesiological age. As Pannenberg had correctly observed, Christianity and the church would be at risk of being inimically emptied of their inherent meaning and universally-intended significance if not for their requisite boundaries.[9] What the present study will primarily be arguing, then, is that Pannenberg's unique eschatologically-oriented and historically-rooted participatory ecclesiology and ecumenism are of critical and constructive relevance for the present ecclesiological age precisely because his proposals are properly characterized by a theologically viable 'open-ended distinctiveness'.[10]

Towards that end, in this opening chapter, a brief survey of the historical factors which have most contributed to the current ecclesiological impasse will be offered in order to set the stage for the constructive engagement with Pannenberg that follows. Two things will be shown. First, the way in which ecclesiology and ecumenism has 'widened' will be seen to have resulted in an improper blurring of several requisite distinctions. Without these distinctions, Christianity and the church are at risk of losing their inherent meaning and significance. Second, this historical trail will be seen to have culminated in the recent movement known as 'World Christianity'. Further, it will be shown that this underlying ethos of World Christianity not only corresponds well with the unbounded 'open-ended' spirit of the present ecclesiological age, but that World Christianity can even be considered the epitome of this present age. What this means is that Pannenberg's 'open-endedly distinctive' ecclesiological and ecumenical proposals specifically hold contemporary relevance *for World Christianity*.

---

9 Cf. UCUH; Neuhaus, 'Pannenberg Jousts', esp. 175.

10 My choice of this phrase (an 'open-ended distinctiveness') is drawn from the implications of Pannenberg's thought rather than from something he explicitly said. The accent I have chosen for my study is somewhat analogous, however, to his emphasis upon 'unity and plurality'. The difference is that whereas his reflections about legitimate 'unity and plurality' were typically framed by his traditional ecumenical concern for a visible unity between denominations and traditions (e.g., Roman Catholics and Lutherans, etc.; cf. many of the essays in BSTh3; Pannenberg, 'Ecumenical Tasks in Relationship to the Roman Catholic Church', *Pro Ecclesia* 15:2 [2006], 161–71; as well as Apsel, 205–47; Zeuch, 'Einheit und Plurität', etc.), the focus here will be more about 'open-endedness' and 'distinctiveness' as concerns the question of contextualization more generally.

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

Admittedly, throughout the present study, the term 'World Christianity' is at times used somewhat ambiguously. Metaphorically, part of the reason for this is because the present ecclesiological age that it refers to is also somewhat ambiguous. At the same time, however, our sometimes-ambiguous use of the term has much to do with the fact that the field of World Christianity, which came to be formalized only in the 1990s, is still in search of its definitional boundaries.[11] More will be said about this below. For now, we simply provide one distinguishing mark of how we will be using the term and its cognates. Insofar as the field of World Christianity has, to date, mostly consisted of historians and social scientists, there is a predominant *historical* or *phenomenological* side to the emerging field that has concerned itself with documenting 'the world's many Christianities', both past and present, in their historical and sociological dimensions.[12] In this regard, when we seek to refer to the historical phenomenon or study of 'the world's many Christianities' in a neutral manner, the term 'world Christianity' (with a lowercase 'w') will be used. Yet, there is also a theoretical or *theological* side to the field that is continuing to give birth to an emerging theological paradigm whose unbounded contextual 'open-endedness' is considered here to be problematic.[13] It is this 'emerging paradigm' that we will be calling 'World Christianity' (with a capital 'W').[14] Notably, 'World Christianity' includes 'world Christianity' as one of its presuppositions. Nevertheless, it is

11 Cf. Jason Bruner, 'Questioning a Paradigm: World Christianity', The University of Edinburgh School of Divinity, Centre for the Study of World Christianity blog (30 January 2018); accessed 19 November 2018: http://www.cswc.div.ed.ac.uk/2018/01/questioning-a-paradigm-world-christianity/; see also Joel Cabrita and David Maxwell, 'Introduction: Relocating World Christianity', in RWC, 1–44.

12 Cf. Charles E. Farhadian's 'Introduction' to *Introducing World Christianity*, ed. Charles E. Farhadian (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1–4, proposes a third social scientific paradigm to complement what he discerns as the two earlier phases of the field's demographic and then historical paradigms (the latter featuring Christianity's polycentricity). Farhadian's classifications all generally fall within the *historical* and *phenomenological* side of the emerging field.

13 Phan's recent essays, for example, evince a desire to press this theological agenda (cf. 'Doing Theology in World Christianities: Old Tasks, New Ways', in RWC, 115–42, esp. 117: 'A parallel focus on the impact of World Christianities on systematic theology is also emerging, especially on the way in which theology should be done (methodology) and on how the various *loci theologici* are to be reformulated (systematics)'; see also 'Doing Theology in World Christianity: New Paths, Different Themes, Strange Locations', in *Christian Mission, Contextual Theology, Prophetic Dialogue: Essays in Honor of Stephen B. Bevans, SVD,* eds. Dale T. Irvin and Peter C. Phan, American Society of Missiology Series 57 [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2018], 149–72).

14 Incidentally, Phan capitalized 'World Christianity' in what can be described as one of the more important programmatic essays about it (cf. WCIH). Phan's essay ended up occasioning a *festschrift* dedicated to him focused on World Christianity in which the term was also capitalized throughout (cf. WCPI). That said, most works within the general field do not capitalize the word 'world'.

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

'World Christianity' (with a capital 'W') that we believe reflects the general sensibilities and confusions of the present ecclesiological age.[15]

Insofar as we will be arguing that Pannenberg's ecclesiological proposals are relevant for World Christianity, chapter two will give insight into the biographical, socio-historical, and ideational context surrounding the development of his eschatological, historical, ecclesiological, and ecumenical outlook. A knowledge of this background will help to explain his assumptions and anxieties regarding the primary issues at hand while serving also to inform the expository efforts of chapters three through five. In this regard, chapter three's exposition of Pannenberg's eschatologically-oriented understanding of the church's 'ecstatic participation' in the gospel and the sacraments will serve the purpose of providing further background for chapters four and five to build upon. Chapter three will also argue that, *from a theological standpoint,* the minimum baseline for all 'world Christianities' to be considered *Christian* is 'participation in Christ'.

In chapter four, Pannenberg's eschatological orientation for ecclesiology is taken up to tackle questions surrounding the church's relationship with the world. Because the present general ethos of World Christianity is liberationist in tone and character, his belief that the church is the 'sign' (*Zeichen*) and 'tool' (*Werkzeug*) of the 'signified' kingdom of God provided him with a 'sign-signified' distinction that did not lend itself to liberationism (and its blurring of 'sign' with 'signified' in a manner that also flattened all religious distinctives).[16] This move allowed him to properly reclaim the importance of the church's evangelistic missionary task as well as the universality of the Christian eschatological hope. While the chapter will argue that World Christianity needs somehow to reclaim these universal features of the Christian faith, it will also suggest that Pannenberg's thought would benefit from further accentuation and development of his 'social' thought-structure so that it can more prominently complement the 'Christian personalism' that he has been more prone to display. Pannenberg's 'Constantinianism' and his idea of 'creative love' will also be respectively shown as being of ironic and direct relevance when it comes to

15 There is, of course, much crossover in personnel and interests between what I have here respectively distinguished as 'world Christianity' and 'World Christianity'. The lines within the field are thus somewhat blurred at present. In general, there are two groups of theorists that are informally spoken of as units. The first consists of Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh, and Kwame Bediako. The second, which is the group we will primarily be focusing on, most prominently features the voices of Dale Irvin and Peter Phan. The difference in accent between the two groups is reflected by the difference between the journal *Studies in World Christianity* (which has ties to Walls) and the more recent *Journal of World Christianity* (which has ties to Irvin and Phan).

16 Cf. ST3, 45/58; also 31–33, 45–48, 54–55.

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

facilitating an 'open-endedness' for his own ecclesiological proposal that can be critically constructive for World Christianity to consider.

Finally, in chapter five, our attention pivots from the eschatological orientation of Pannenberg's ecclesiology to its historical rootedness. Because of the nature of our dialogue with World Christianity, we will diverge from his historically-rooted ecumenical concerns over visible unity and the apostolic ministry structures which he believed were needed to support such an ecumenical task. Instead, what will be most pressing for us to explore is Pannenberg's conception of Christianity's missionary task of contextualization, which in his mind, served to maintain an 'open-ended distinctiveness' for the faith and its ecclesial expression. In this vein, we will look at his view of the Hellenistic contours of Christianity's formative development and how such for him was linked to the continuing universal ecumenical relevance of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381. A dialogue with Dale Irvin (one of the leading proponents of World Christianity) will then ensue as we seek to answer the question of whether Pannenberg's so-called 'Global Christianity' ought to be supplanted by Irvin's 'World Christianity' (these categories will be defined shortly). Our study will then be drawn to a summative close.

While talk of Christian and ecclesial 'distinctiveness' in Pannenberg might naturally suggest that his doctrine of election be covered as its own segment, we have instead weaved it into our discussion throughout so as to ensure that its most relevant points and implications are drawn to the fore (i.e., so that we will not get side-tracked by things like the debate over the classical 'abstract' views of election that Pannenberg believed were flawed).[17] Even so, it is important to here establish that the type of 'distinctiveness' which Pannenberg imagined for the church was not one that sought to exclude the non-elect, but was instead for sake of the non-elect as well as for sake of the whole world.[18] In this regard,

17 Cf. ST3, 439–62.

18 Cf. ST3, 464; somewhat related to this was Pannenberg's views on exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism (for the doctrine of election reflected both his exclusivism and inclusivism amidst a pluralistic world): 'The elements of exclusivism in the Christian truth claim, the inclusivism of the Christian faith in the revelation of the one God of all human beings, and the acknowledgement of a factual pluralism of different belief systems and conflicting truth claims belong together in the Christian self-understanding. If these conceptions of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism fall apart into alternative conceptions and descriptions of the relationship of Christianity to other religions, the result will be a onesided and truncated account of the situation of the religious encounter' ('The Religions from the Perspective of Christian Theology and the Self-Interpretation of Christianity in Relation to the Non-Christian Religions', *Modern Theology* 9:3 [July 1993], 285–97, at 297); on the difference between 'principled pluralism' and 'factual pluralism': cf. 'Pluralismus' (BSTh3), 24; 'Christliche Rechtsüberzeugungen im Kontext einer pluralistischen Gesellschaft' (1993), in BE, 55–68, at 56–57.

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

the elect church as 'sign of the kingdom' was meant to be 'the fellowship-building presence of the rule of God' in the world.[19] Related to this, the notion of Christian and ecclesial 'distinctiveness' was itself one that Pannenberg believed needed to be specifically qualified by way of the process of history.[20] While more will be said about this in chapter two, it is important to mention here at the outset that Pannenberg did not believe in any sort of 'essence' to Christianity that could be abstracted from the historical process.[21] Rather,

> The essence of Christianity *is* this history from the advent of God's future in Jesus to the future of the kingdom of God to be inaugurated by the returning Christ. This historicality characterises not only the fact of Christianity but also the content of Christian teaching. Consequently a Christology which does not in its full historical reality present the tension between the incarnation of Christ and his future remains abstract, and an ecclesiology which elaborates a concept of the essence of the church in isolation from its actual historical foundation and mission becomes ideology.[22]

Thus, he wrote that 'Even the *distinctive nature* of Christianity … can be suitably described only as the working out of the historical consequences which have flowed from the basic tension of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God and are constantly rekindled by it.'[23]

Over the course of his career, Pannenberg wrote many essays and articles which concerned ecclesiological and ecumenical themes.[24] A short summary of his early ecclesiological thought, based on lectures for a course taught at Munich on ecclesiology in 1968–69 (and earlier at Mainz in 1962–63), was published in 1970 as TTK (rev. ed. 1974).[25] While the present work will be drawing from these sources when relevant, chapters three through five will *primarily* look to Pannenberg's mature ecclesiology and ecumenism as stated in volume three of his ST (English trans. 1998/German orig. 1993). That said, the methodological reason for our choice to concentrate on volume three of Pannenberg's *magnum opus* has not only to do with expediency, but also with the fact that it is the only work of his which comprehensively lays out the full

19 Cf. ST3, 464.

20 Cf. TPS, 417–19.

21 TPS, 418.

22 TPS, 418–19; *emphasis mine.*

23 TPS, 418; *emphasis in original.*

24 Many of his important ecclesiological essays have been collected in the following volumes: TKG (1969), EEC (1977; Eng. trans. 1983), and BSTh3 (2000).

25 Cf. Vorwort to TTK, 3; Gunther Wenz, 'Liste der Lehrveranstaltungen W. Pannenbergs von 1959–1994', in PSt1, 251–62, at 252 and 254.

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

scope of his ecclesiological and ecumenical vision.[26] This is to say nothing of the discernible continuity between volume three and Pannenberg's ecclesiological and ecumenical writings both prior to and after the publication of his third volume—those prior anticipating the arguments presented in the volume, while those after in the main rehearsing such arguments.[27] Volume three is thus *mostly* sufficient as the main primary resource for our purposes in chapters three through five.

Before we finally turn our attention to our brief historical survey concerning the development of ecclesiology, one further limitation needs to be mentioned. Pannenberg's theology of the history of religions would undoubtedly be of relevance for a dialogue with World Christianity, since the latter is interested in interreligious dialogue and religious pluralism. It also would be pertinent to the general notion of an 'open-ended distinctiveness'. Sadly, because we have other more pressing priorities, we will have to leave that important task to someone else for now.

1.2 Ecclesiology Yesterday and Today

Pannenberg's astute observation that ecclesiology did not become its own theme within systematic theology until the late fifteenth century ('i.e., in the age of conciliarism and after the experiences of the Western schism and the papal captivity in Avignon') is noteworthy, especially since the Reformation itself would accelerate ecclesiological discussion and ecclesiastical polemics with and within Rome into high gear.[28] As Pannenberg would go on to imply, the solidifying of ecclesiology as its own theological theme would mostly be forged within the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries against the backdrop of the theological and ecclesiastical polemics brought about by the Reformation.[29] *In this regard, ecclesiology used to definitively mean something.* For better or worse, the sixteenth and seventeenth century battles over ecclesiology were battles

26 This is in line with another comment made to me by Wenz in the same personal email that was cited in note 2 above: 'Aber ich denke, für Ihre Aufgabe reicht es vollkommen aus, wenn Sie sich auf den dritten Band der Systematischen Theologie konzentrieren, der in dogmatischer Hinsicht alles Nötige enthält.'

27 An example of an essay that falls into the latter category is Pannenberg's 'Defectus ordinis? Zum Verhältnis von Bischofsamt und Pfarramt aus lutherischer Sicht', KuD 55:4 (2009), 342–46, which rehearses arguments offered in ST3, 399–404—the seeds of which can be found in his early reflections (e.g., 'An Ecumenical Understanding of the Church's Offices' [1973], in EEC, 99–115, at 107–8, 168 note 18).

28 Cf. ST3, 21–22.

29 Cf. ST3, 22–24.

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128

over ecclesial normativity. At stake, at least on the face of things, were not only concerns surrounding salvation but also what was considered normative for Christianity itself regarding doctrinal belief and ecclesial practice. Under the guise of such concerns, the so-called 'wars of religion' were fought—the most prominent for violence being the Thirty Years' War (1618–48).[30] At the same time, latent within the ecclesiological unrest of the time was a desire for the unity of Christianity—an 'ecumenical' spirit (if we may anachronistically so speak) which was rooted in the Reformers' initial but failed aim to reform the whole of Christianity, as well as in Rome's desire for the church to remain as one under its holy auspices.[31] Amidst stalled efforts at Christian reunion and much bloodshed that, fair or not, was chiefly ascribed to religious differences, there emerged the compromise solution of *cuius regio, eius religio,* which maintained that 'the religion of the governed should be that of their territorial ruler' and which, along such lines, allowed dissenters who preferred a different confession to relocate.[32] Though such an arrangement of established religion reveals just how deep-seated the inherited premodern sensibilities of Christendom were at the time, the ecclesiology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries cannot be described as a confused enterprise in the same way that the ecclesiology of our early twenty-first century can be. Despite the manner by which such premodern sensibilities of Christendom are judged from today's more 'enlightened' viewpoint as having inadvisably blurred the lines of church and state, and despite the general atmosphere of 'confessional fundamentalism' in the early seventeenth century that 'eventually culminated in the Thirty Years' War', there was a very strong sense from all sides that the church and its confession could be normatively defined.[33] There was also a strong conviction on all sides that the church had been entrusted with a calling to safeguard the normative distinctives and distinctiveness of the Christian faith, lest the gospel be emptied of its saving power. While the intensity of the ecclesiastical polemics over justification, the sacraments, and the ministry certainly indicate that ecclesiology in its early centuries as a separate dogmatic theme was contested

30 'Under the guise of', because the actual motives for such wars are arguably much more complex than just religious; cf. William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 123–180. Pannenberg most likely would have disagreed with Cavanaugh's assessment (cf. ST3, 516).

31 On the Reformation's failure, see ST3, xiii.

32 Cf. David Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 47 (with note 2). This was initially via the Peace of Augsburg (1555). It was reasserted after the Thirty Years' War via the Peace of Westphalia (1648).

33 On 'confessional fundamentalism' and the Thirty Years' War, see Paul Silas Peterson, *Reformation in the Western World: An Introduction* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 119.

© 2021, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen
ISBN Print: 9783525522127 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647522128