1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preliminary remarks

The question "Is it possible to speak about God?" is important for the inquiry towards the understanding of God. Several positions have been taken in history in the attempt to answer this question: theism, deism, atheism, pantheism and agnosticism. Atheism denies the existence of God. The atheist argument is really against theism (Hodge 1982: 444). Stocker (1996:140), however, indicates that Nietzsche, who is a prominent atheist, overcomes atheism by abandoning the idea of the traditional God, namely the Christian God. It implies that Nietzsche does not deny the existence of a god, but of the Christian God. However, his concept of god differs from that of the Christian faith.

According to Christian theism, especially of reformed theology, God can be known partially, but it is impossible for man to have full knowledge of Him who is exhaustive and perfect in every way (Berkhof 1996[1938]: 30). Christian theism maintains that it is possible to speak about God on account of his revelation. It requires the language of faith. According to Jüngel (1989: 19), the language of faith presupposes revelation, and the language of faith is characterized by *metaphoria* (Jüngel 1989: 24), since the revelation of God to humans takes place in the limited medium of human language of God. Metaphor plays an important role to understand God through the interpretation of the Bible, because, as Jüngel points out, it is true that without '*analogia nominum*' (or theological metaphor) there is no adequate (proper) language of God (Jüngel 1989: 58).

Revelation reveals that there is a relationship between God and human beings. The way in which human beings were made according to the Bible indicates the possibility of their speaking about God. The concept of 'imago Dei' (the image of God) in which man was created in the beginning helps to understand human beings in their personal existence with the personal God. It does not imply that this personal relationship with God can reveal God's being. As Ott (1974: 3) points out, God is not the same as a human person.

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Ott (1974: 3) contends that all those terms in which the Bible clearly speaks of God in his relationship to man have a symbolic character. All terms in which the Bible speaks of God are not directly accessible to the senses. Therefore, some kinds of comparison have to be used, which is technically described as a metaphor or an analogy (Thurmer 1985: 14). Although God speaks and reveals Himself in human language, this does not imply that human language about God is the same as God Himself. According to Vincent Brümmer, however, if our talk about God is identical with our talk about human beings (his creatures), it would not be possible to avoid an anthropomorphism which fails to do justice to God's transcendence:

> The question about the semantic limits of talk about God seems to present us with a dilemma. If, on the one hand, the words that we use to speak about God have the same meaning as when we use them to talk about people, this implies that God shares certain characteristics with his creature. This would entail an anthropomorphism which fails to do justice to God's transcendence. We also fail to avoid this kind of anthropomorphism by merely accepting a quantitive difference between God and his creature (Brümmer 1992: 43-44).

It is possible to depict God by the concept analogy or metaphor, which suggests that human beings can understand God partially by contemplating the similarity to the picture of human beings. According to Need (1995: 243), 'metaphor constitutes an important element of human speech about God also; its double element yields a tensive interaction'. Metaphor plays an important role in human language and thought as a model of explanation. This, however, does not imply that these models do not reach their limits at a certain point (Brümmer 1992: 61).

Although the metaphor is a way to understand God's self-revelation, McGrath (1997: 247) argues that 'the Scripture has to be the primary source for doctrinal reflection within the Christian church. There is no other way of access to the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ.' The Christian believes that God is different from the philosophical God. The Christian God cannot be understood through human understanding, with

metaphor or rhetoric philosophical concepts alone, but has to be illuminated by God's revelation in the Bible. This implies the true *analogia fidei* as *analogia scriturae* through the work of the Holy Spirit (Hodge 1988: 95)[1].

In the history of the Christian church, there have been many metaphors used in the Christian doctrine, with which the church attempted to explain God. The doctrine of the Trinity is one of them. However, although Christian doctrine uses metaphorical language, the doctrine of the Trinity guards against falsehood, fiction, and fairy tales.

The word 'Trinity' implies that God is one nature and three *hypostaseis* (or persons). It is difficult for human beings to understand the expression 'one and three'. However, the doctrine of the Trinity has been accepted as the orthodox doctrine by mainstream Christianity.

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[1] According to Heppe (1950: 36), 'the analogy of faith is the argument from general dogmas which contain the norm of all that is to be taught in the church. At the same time, it must be insisted that not only what plainly confronts us in the vocabulary of H. Scripture, but also what is derived as a necessary conclusion from it, must be regarded as the content of Scripture and as the truth of revelation.' He adds 'The certainty that regenerated Christians at all times attain to a right understanding of Scripture is thus comfort which only exists for faith' (Heppe 1950: 40). Professor Wethmar (2002: 290) mentions that 'what is important is to have, whatever term one uses, determined by the insight that dogma is an integrative concept accommodating the full richness of the Christian faith. The insight that the Christian faith cannot be restricted or reduced to either knowledge or law but that it is a comprehensive reality encompassing knowledge, trust and obedience was rediscovered and emphasized by the Calvinist Reformation, and this was done on the basis of the rediscovery of the fact that the Bible is not characterized by obscurity but by clarity. This clarity is not primarily of a semantic but of a religious nature. The Bible asserts its own authority through the work of the Holy Spirit'; Bavinck (1997[1951]: 294) says 'the Bible is neither a statute book nor a dogmatics-text but it is the source of theology. As word of God not only its exact words have binding authority but so have also all conclusions that are properly derived from it. Furthermore, neither study of Scripture nor theological activity is at all possible unless one uses terms that do not occur in the Bible. Not only are such terms used in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity but in connection with every doctrine.'

The doctrine of the Trinity is closely connected to Christology (McGrath 1994: 250). Christology plays an important role in the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, since the Son, who is both God and human being was born in the world for the salvation of men. The doctrine of the Trinity encompasses the doctrines of God, Christology, and Pneumatology. It explains that there are three persons in one God. However, the key to the doctrine of the Trinity is Christology, since the incarnation of Christ provides the way to understanding the doctrine of the Trinity. It implies that the relationship between the two natures of Christ (human nature and divine nature) would be the core of the doctrine of the Trinity.

In the controversy surrounding the doctrine of the Trinity, the understanding of the relationship of two natures of Christ was an important issue. The Church needed to explain the relationship between God and man: some denied that Christ is God; others denied that Christ is a perfect man. The Son had to be both true God and true man to explain both the nature of God and the redemptive work of Christ on earth.

The history of the doctrine of the Trinity is important. The doctrine of the Trinity has a long history which goes back to the early Church's interpretation of the Bible. Therefore, it is necessary to survey its history to understand its meaning in modern theology.

The phrase 'two natures in one Person' was a problem among the interpreters of the Bible, which led to the early councils. In the case of the Nicene council (AD 325), Arius, who was an elder of the Baucalis congregation in Alexandria, caused problems by his stance towards Alexander, who was the bishop of Alexandria. Arius was of the opinion that Alexander taught Sabellianism (Socrates, I. 5. 3). The problem, however, was that Arius's dominant idea was the monotheistic principle of the Monarchians (Berkhof 1991[1937]: 84; Koehler 1951[1937]: 153).

The council of Nicea (AD 325) decided on the term '*homoousia*' which implies the consubstantiality of nature in the three Persons of the Trinity to describe the divine unity. After Alexander, Athanasius emphasized this term for the understanding of the

Trinity to underscore the soteriological understanding, that is, the salvation of humans (*propter nostrem salutem*). This term was emphasized to reject Arius' denial of the deity of Christ. Kelly (1975: 227-229) says that Arius' understanding of Christ followed three points: a) the being or essence of the Godhead cannot be shared or communicated, b) as a creature the Son must have a beginning, c) the Son can have no communion with, and indeed no direct knowledge of, His Father. Philip Schaff (1970: 643) points out that Arius' thought is based on deism and rationalism. Therefore, Arius' viewpoint was condemned as heresy at the Nicene council.

Against Arians who denied that the Son can be a Person having the same nature with the Father Athanasius maintained that the Son is same-nature (o`moou,sioj) with the Father and also defended the homoousia of the Holy Spirit (Kelly 1975[1958]: 258). The Cappadocians sympathized with the position of Athanasius (Kelly 1975[1958]: 258).

Bienert (1997: 188; Kelly 1975: 260-261) says that instead of the term '*homoousia*', St. Basil used the term '*homotimon*,' to indicate that the Holy Spirit enjoys the same worship and adoration as the Father and the Son. St. Basil considers the *homoousia* as the main idea for understanding the Trinity (Schütz 1985: 59) in the terms of the salvation of man. For Gregory of Nazianzus, although the Holy Spirit would be the Spirit of Christ, the *nous* of Christ, and the Spirit of the Lord (Or, 31, 29: 328), he calls the Holy Spirit 'the Lord Himself.' It indicates the same meaning as the term '*homoousia*.' In fact, Gregory of Nazianzus also considers the *homoousia* as the main idea of the Trinity (Schütz 1985: 59)[2]. Gregory of Nazianzus 'followed Athanasius even more explicitly in his focus on the incarnation as the keystone of salvation' (Norman 1980: 214). Gregory of Nyssa (1958: 39-40), in his book: *Quod non sint tres Dei*, states that God does not have three deities, but '*koine tes phuseos*' which is the same as the term '*perichoresis*' or '*homoousia*.' Gregory of Nyssa never used the noun *perichoresis* but for the Christological concept he used the verb '*perichoreoo*.' The verb describes

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[2] See Studer (1985: 187), Anders als Basilius scheute sich Gregor von Nazianz nicht, den Heiligen Geist Gott und Homoousios zu nennen.

the relationship between two natures in one person. With it he describes the two natures of Christ, his divine nature through the incarnation, his human nature. The meaning of the term '*perichoresis*,' however, is metaphorical language about God.

Though the term '*perichoresis*' originated in Christology, it was also applied to indicate the unity of the essence of the Trinity and of their *homoousia*. As far as the unity of essence is concerned, the doctrine of the *filioque* also takes an important place in the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. The East and the West differed on the *filioque*. In the West, the *filioque* was the logical implication of the doctrine of the Trinity. In the East, however, it was rejected.

The Church Fathers used the metaphorical term *perichoresis* to explain the biblical concept 'God,' who is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. According to them, this doctrine was the true interpretation of the Bible, expressed in metaphorical language. Although they used different terms (three persons in one essence) for the biblical metaphor (The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit) they believed that it expressed the same. McGrath (1997: 146) points out that in the patristic and in the modern age, 'the doctrine of the Trinity identifies the God of Christianity, and clarifies his relation to potential rivals'.

Bruce Marshall[3] says that in modern theology, the doctrine of the Trinity is central to any recognizably Christian belief system (Marshall 2000: 5). It indicates that the doctrine of the Trinity became the centre of modern theology as well. Many modern theologians, however, reinterpreted the doctrine of the Trinity in multifarious ways. They developed their own understanding of this doctrine along philosophical, sociological, psychological ways. There are philosophical influences on the doctrine of the Trinity in the modern theology, especially on the epistemological understanding of the relation between the terms 'being' and 'God,' the concepts 'the person of God,' and 'the act of God.'

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[3] See, pp. 17-49

O'Collins (1999: 156) points out that the philosophical input from philosophers (Descartes, Kant, and John Lock) influenced the modern understanding of 'person' as self-awareness and freedom. This notion readily produces what looks suspiciously like tritheism, when applied to the doctrine of the Trinity. In fact, the twentieth-century theologians wrestled with the agenda set by Hegel and with his contribution to specific issues (Ford 1989: 12). They have been implicitly or explicitly influenced by him. Modern protestant theologians like Barth, Jüngel, Moltmann, and Pannenberg have also been influenced by Hegel's thought in the development of the doctrine of God. According to O'Collins (1999: 158-159), Hegelian thought has its impact on Jürgen Moltmann's social theology of the Trinity. And certain aspects of Hegel's thought do 'appear to be central to Pannenberg's doctrine of God' (Jansen 1995: 193). Pannenberg, following the example of Hegel, looks for 'a pattern of union and self-differentiation in the Christian concept of God as a Trinity' (Fulljames 1993: 276). For both Moltmann and Pannenberg, 'the theological content has to be represented in philosophical terms' (Jansen 1995: 66).

The term 'dialectical' placed Barth in the sphere of Kierkegaard's philosophical method rather than with Hegel (Grenz & Olson 1992: 67). However, the term 'dialectical theology' does imply 'a mixture of philosophical thought borrowed from thinkers ranging from Plato to Kant and Kierkegaard' (Brown 1969: 251). 'Most of the neo-orthodox theologians stand in the Kantian tradition and accept Kant's critique of natural theology' (Livingston 1971: 340). Jüngel interprets Barth in the light of the Hegelian concept of the 'relation of opposites', of union and distinction, of self-correspondence in the lower medium (Bradshaw 1988: 56). Karl Barth was influenced by Hegel's thought as well (Ahlers 1989: 41).

According to Willis (1987: 34-38), the doctrine of the Trinity in Barth's theology has a relationship with Feuerbach's understanding of God in both its negative and positive aspects. It is possible to analyse Barth's understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity in the light of Feuerbach's philosophy. Through Willis' study, it is clear that Barth's thought was based on revelation when he speaks about God, but he responded to Feuerbach's philosophy, which was a critique on Christian theism (Willis 1987: 27). In

the relationship with Feuerbach (both in negative and positive terms), Barth affirms Hegel's understanding of God in order to criticize Feuerbach's understanding of God, because Feuerbach, as Kantian, criticizes traditional theism or Christian faith in God, as well as Hegel. Feuerbach criticized 'Hegel's approach that takes an absolute standpoint by beginning in thought' (Willis 1987:30). Feuerbach criticizes the entire modern philosophy from Descartes and Spinoza onwards as well (Willis 1987: 29).

Hegel's philosophy reduces 'the ontological, epistemological and moral transcendence of the Absolute simply to the all-inclusiveness of the whole in contrast to its parts' (Henry 1964: 72). In contrast to classical theism, Hegel 'reinterprets the doctrine of the Trinity and intratrinitarian relations so as to provide a foundation for the relation between God and the world' (Jansen 1995: 95). Grenz and Olson (1992: 36) says that 'three moments of the divine reality are at work in the process of the actualisation of the unity of the divine and human- somewhat analogous to divine persons bound up with the Christian concept of the Trinity.' According to O'Collins' criticism (1997: 157), if God is the world, as Hegel suggests, God cannot give the world salvation. Ultimately, his concept of God differs from traditional belief in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Barth, Jüngel, Moltmann, and Pannenberg are closely connected with the doctrine of the Trinity. Actually, as Stanley J. Grenz (2004: 33-106) demonstrates, they are the German theologians of the renaissance of trinitarian thought in the twentieth century on the basis of the thinkers in the nineteenth century like Schleiermacher and Hegel.

Their common issue in the doctrine of the Trinity is the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ in history (Geschichte) since he is identical with God himself as triune God. For Barth, the doctrine of the Trinity is a response to Feuerbach, who is atheist. Jüngel (1971: 381) says that for Barth theism and atheism play a parallel function. That the doctrine of the Trinity, which formulates the mystery of the identification of God with Jesus is mentioned as the expression of the historicity of God already in the Prolegomena of his Dogmatics, proves that every wider statement about God is already a statement about men (Jüngel 1971: 382).

Barth's understanding of the Trinity was the starting point of the views of the other three theologians. As Willis (1987: 97) points out, for Moltmann, the triune God who acts for human suffering by suffering is not that of traditional theism. Because Jesus Christ who was crucified on the cross is one of three persons in the Trinity, God suffers with human beings (Willis 1987:98). This God responds to human beings and to atheism that criticizes the abstract God of traditional theism. For Moltmann (2002[1972]: 232), the content of the doctrine of the Trinity is the crucifixion of Christ itself. And the form of crucified one is the Trinity (Moltmann 2002[1972]: 232-233).

As is the case with Moltmann, Jüngel rejects every form of metaphysical understanding of God (Courth 1993:276). As DeHart (1999:43) mentions, 'Jüngel understands the modern notion of the "death of God" and thus the phenomenon of modern atheism to be closely linked with the concept of God's "non-necessity" within the worldly or human horizon.' Therefore Jüngel, like Barth, is 'interested in the history of Jesus Christ as the concrete starting point for exegetical methodology and dogmatic substance' (Davidson 1997: 160). The slogan 'the death of God' must therefore be understood to mean 'the death of the metaphysical God', which is discredited both by the critiques of atheism and by a trinitarian conception of God (McGrath 2005[1994]: 219).

In Pannenberg's doctrine of God, the atheistic critique against theism which 'turns any attempt to deal with the question of God dogmatically into an exercise in religious subjectivism (Schwöbel1989: 268)' plays an important role. As Schwöbel (1989:268) points out, this atheistic critique of theism is the motive of his 'reflection on the question of God.' 'The crucial point of the atheistic critique is the assertion that the concept of God is not necessary for a complete and meaningful understanding of human existence.' This is in opposition to the background of Pannenberg's anthropological reflection in the understanding of God (Schwöbel1989: 268).

Pannenberg's doctrine of the Trinity implies 'the divine self-disclosure in Jesus Christ' (Grenz 2004: 95). For Pannenberg, faith in Jesus is bound to the conviction of the presence of God in him (Greiner 1988:39). As McGrath (2005[1994]: 195) points out, his Christology 'from below' could build up 'new possibilities to Christian apologetics'.

Schwöbel (1989:283) mentions that 'Pannenberg intends to present his trinitarian theology as an attempt at resolving some of the traditional difficulties of Western theism, and emphasizes the necessity of retaining the monotheistic emphasis of the Western tradition.'

Pannenberg regards the doctrine of the Trinity as 'a new approach for the solution of some of the crucial problems of the traditional conception of the doctrine of God' (Schwöbel 1989:275). For Pannenberg, atheism supplies a way to understand God as being strongly anthropological, parallel to the question about God is the question about men (Greiner 1988: 45). Today, the field of argument between theology and atheism is anthropology (Greiner 1988: 45; Hendrickson 1998:1[4]).

The four theologians' understanding of God is closely connected in their response to the atheistic critique of theism. The doctrine of the Trinity plays an important role in their theological understanding since Jesus Christ as one of the Trinity provides the answer to the atheistic critique. They are interested in the economy of salvation. Therefore, they accept the Hegelian concept of the identity between the economic and the immanent Trinity (although they understand this from different angles), and they reinterpret the notion of the 'divine person' differently from the traditional understanding.

In comparison with the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, modern protestant theologians (Barth, Moltmann, Jüngel, and Pannenberg) reject the traditional concept of 'person' of God (Jansen 1995: 67). Barth provides 'three modes of being' for the Trinitarian being of God. It displays a threefold repetition and mutuality for all God's operations. As Jonker points out, Barth's term 'three modes of being' does not imply modalism (Jonker

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[4] According to Hendrickson(1998:1), 'This having been said, that the who concerning God begins with answering the who concerning humanity, can the Christian theologian answer the question who concerning humanity without referring to the who of God? Here is the place for Christology. Christian theology and anthropology can be bound together in Christology. This binding together of anthropology, theology and Christology creates tensions.

1983: 113)[5]. The reason behind the accusation of modalism is the conviction that Barth does not put forward the independence of the divine Persons clearly (Jonker 1983: 112). However, the danger of Karl Barth's method of grounding and deriving the concept 'three modes of being' from the 'single act' of the divine being, have become manifest (Roberts 1980: 88). Although Barth's criticism of the phrase '*Vestigium Trinitatis*' would be based on denying natural theology; his rejection of the phrase is been 'historical scapegoating' (Cunningham 1998: 31-35). The phrase '*Vestigium Trinitatis*' does not imply the possibility of the negative aspect of natural theology in Augustine's concept, but the possibility of knowledge of God through the natural revelation, as the Bible holds in Rom 1: 20. It implies the phrase '*semen religionis*' in Calvin's understanding (*Institutes* I, iii, 1; McGrath 1994: 234).

According to Jansen (1995: 66), Moltmann's thought is based on his concern with suffering and liberation. In Moltmann's theology, the concept '*perichoresis*' is used for an understanding of the social doctrine of the Trinity. In eastern theology, the term '*perichoresis*' differs from Moltmann's understanding of it. The term '*perichoresis*' implies that 'the oneness, or the *communio personarum divinarum* is to be considered as *homoousia*, as ivso,thj and as pericw,rhsij evna,llhloj'(Heppe 1950: 113). The term '*perichoresis,*' as understood by John of Damascus, who was the first to use the noun '*perichoresis*' was 'trying to make a final end to all possibility of the tri-theistic conceptions,' (Jonker 1981: 19) as Eastern theology held the inherent danger of tri-theism. The term '*perichoresis*' was not used for the social doctrine of the Trinity, but to explain the unity of essence, and avoiding the accusation of 'tri-theism'. According to Ted Peters (1993: 184), 'the social doctrine of the Trinity, though increasingly popular, is wrongheaded. What attracts social Trinitarians is the category of community rather than personality for understanding God.'

Pannenberg is more concerned with the theological and philosophical inadequacy of classical theism in view of contemporary thought (Jansen 1995: 66). For Pannenberg, the purpose of the doctrine of the Trinity is the development of an ontology which

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[5] Louis Berkhof holds that Barth's term 'three modes of being' is not be Sabellianism.

includes both the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, God and the world (Fulljames 1993: 276). However, he does not look for any meaning in the traditional language of 'generation' and 'spiration' (Fulljames 1993:276). Pannenberg rejects the traditional starting point for the understanding of God which is based on the unity of God. For Pannenberg (1988: 325), the induction into the plurality of persons from the concept of essence of God leads into the difficulty of both 'modalism' and 'subordinationism.' As Miller & Grenz (1998:133) points out, 'this approach views God as primarily a single acting subject, rather than the cooperative working of three persons. So Pannenberg (1977:29) criticises Barth in the sense in which he (Barth) develops in his concept of revelation the doctrine of the Trinity as the expression of the subjectivity of God (*Subjektivität Gottes*) which constitutes the root (*Wurzel*) of the Trinity, not as their result. Pannenberg (1988: 355-357; Olson 1990:200) follows the notion of the identity of immanent Trinity and economic Trinity which comes from Rahner's axiom: *Die ökonomische Trinität ist die immanente Trinität und umgekehrt.* For Pannenberg, as Miller & Grenz (1988:133) points out, 'whatever can be said about immanent Trinity must flow out of our understanding of the economic Trinity, that is, out of the activity of the triune God in the divine economy.'

In summarizing, their (Barth, Moltmann, Jüngel, and Pannenberg) rejection and revision of the traditional doctrine of the Trinity results from their emphasis on the identity of the 'immanent trinity' and 'economic trinity', and the concept 'person'. According to Olson (1990:178), 'they (Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Jüngel) are all convinced that the classical doctrine of the Trinity has failed to bridge the gap between the being of God and world of time and history, because of the separation and the traditional strong distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity.' Actually they see Rahner's thesis of the identity of immanent and economic Trinity (Rahner' rule) as providing a significant turning point in modern Christian thinking about God. While each developed this thesis in his own way, Pannenberg believes that it has not yet been adequately worked out (Olson 1990: 178). This identity is closely connected to their Christology as 'Christo-nomism' or 'Christo-centrism.'

Their (the four leading twentieth century theologians) starting point is the humanity of Christ[6] that is closely connected to anthropology. It is the so-called 'Elevation-line Theology'[7]. The identification of the immanent and economic Trinity[8] as their starting point weakens the reason for the incarnation of the Son of God to forgive the sins of man. Every modern understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity stem from the economic Trinity on the basis of the humanity of Christ in contrast to the so-called 'speculative notion of God', which is based on the traditional distinction between immanent and economic Trinity. Suh (1982:293) says that 'the contemporary elevation-theologians argue that the creation-mediator is only the earthly and glorified Jesus of Nazareth, thus rejecting the traditional application of this term to the eternal Son.' He (1982: 293) adds that 'accordingly, modern theology wants to be concrete, starting with the historical Jesus and ending with Him. This historical person is the creator-mediator and redeemer. The pre-existence of Christ is no longer seen as a manifestation of His eternal Sonship in the sense of the classical dogma but is reinterpreted as an indication of His cosmic significance.'

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[6] In the case of Pannenberg, this implies the term 'from below' in his Christology (McGrath 1994:195; Miller & Grenz 1998:133).

[7] Suh (1982:292) mentions that "the contemporary elevation-line theology exhibits some common characteristics: Its consistent emphasis upon the glory in the eschaton through the works of Jesus Christ, its stress upon the self-condescending love as the major character and quality of God, the importance of the historical Jesus, and His significance for the creation in connection with and apart from His redemptive works. Other points of agreement are: their qualification of sin as an episode, participation in the divine being or deification as the final stage of the development of the creation, the provisional and imperfect creation, a more subordinate place for the idea of the glory of God as it is at stake in the creation and sometimes a speculative element in their thinking appealing to the eternal counsel of God."

[8] Bray (1993:187) says about Rahner's view that 'One difficulty with this is that it opens up a gap between the immanent and the economic Trinity. It seems that Rahner is prepared to insist on the existence of a personal relationship between God and human, but not within the Godhead. This viewpoint is not new of course, but it has always been rejected in orthodox theology because it suggests that God requires a being outside himself in order to manifest his love, and that therefore he is not perfect in himself. It is most unlikely therefore, that his trinitarianism will survive long, since in so many ways it seems to be little more than a return to earlier positions which have long since been superseded.

In this regard, modern protestant theologians distorted the doctrine of the Trinity with the presupposition of an anthropological starting-point, which is in response to atheistic critique, and the concept 'person' as relationship or society. They focus on the earthly Christ, the crucified one on 'the history of Jesus and on the love of God', but 'does not take into consideration sufficiently the reality of sin and guilt' (Suh 1982:294) [9].

In this process, they weaken the significance of human sin. The orthodox understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity and Christology according to the Bible is closely connected to human sin. The doctrine of the Trinity is closely connected with Jesus Christ the Son of God. This, as motioned early, implies that Christology takes an important role in understanding the doctrine of the Trinity, since the Son of God was born in the world for the Salvation of men. The reason why the Son of God becomes a human being is because of the sins [transgressions] of human beings (Athanasius *DIV*, 4). Actually, Jesus' first sermon in Mt 4:17 is his call to repentance[10].

1.2 Purpose of study and limitation

The Korean Church has a 100 year's history. However, the Church does not teach the doctrine of the Trinity. Although many pastors (church leaders) and church members confess it, they only regard it as a tradition. However, what is a more serious problem is that they are influenced by the modern understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, in spite of their reformed tradition. On the basis of this modern influence (panentheism and the social understanding of person and Church), the Church becomes a social group, which is spiritually powerless. The purpose of this study is to help the Korean Church to

[9] Suh (1982:294) says 'If God would be presented as the one who only loves, by what standards and criteria could His love be measured and recognized as love? If God would not execute any judgment upon the sinful world, could He still be recognized as God? If salvation would not be made from and against sin, and divine condemnation and judgment, then it means that salvation is nothing else than protection and release from chaos or metaphysical force. Therefore, Jesus Christ is portrayed in modern elevation-theology as having come into the world in order to elevate it, even to the divine being.'

[10] Suh (1982:295) says that the New Testament takes sin so serious that the work of Jesus Christ could not be considered without human sin.

be confirmed in the reformed tradition by being concerned about the orthodox understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, since the Korean church is generally in line with the reformed tradition of Calvin, H. Bavinck, C. Hodge, L. Berkhof, etc. As the traditional reformed approach to the doctrine of the Trinity is closely connected to the Nicence tradition in this regard, it is necessary to attend to this tradition first. The reformed reception of the doctrine of the Trinity was subsequently rejected by the early modern theology of the Enlightenment period. One of the most salient developments of twentieth century theology is the revitalization of trinitarian theology.

The second part of this study will therefore be an analysis of the revitalization of the doctrine of the Trinity by four leading protestant theologians. It is generally accepted that Barth, Moltmann, Jüngel and Pannenberg made significant contributions in this respect. This study will deal with these theologians' understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. The hypothesis of the study is that this revitalization was accomplished by a re-interpretation, in which a vital element of the original Nicene tradition and its reception in reformed theology was altered: The third part of our study will therefore focus on an assessment of this revitalization from a traditional reformed perspective.

As this study is furthermore undertaken with a view to give an account of what the implications of a reformed approach to the doctrine of the Trinity is for practical church life, especially in the Korean Church, we will also attend to this matter.

In regard of methodology, this study will therefore focus not only on the theological and historical aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity, but also on Christian praxis for 'the church, which has her origin in the triune God' (Wethmar 1997: 418). This study applies the hermeneutical method in systematic theology which requires the interpretation of texts and the explanation of their present-day relevance. This study therefore works with the presupposition that the Nicene theology rendered a faithful interpretation of the Biblical witness regarding the Triune God and that the reception of this interpretation by the traditional Reformed theology, represented by authors like Calvin, Bavinck and L. Berkhof was equally valid. Our hypothesis therefore is that this

reception was not superseded by the twentieth century positions of Barth, Moltmann, Jüngel and Pannenberg.